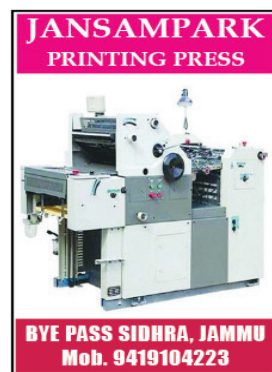


# JINDRAH IMAGES

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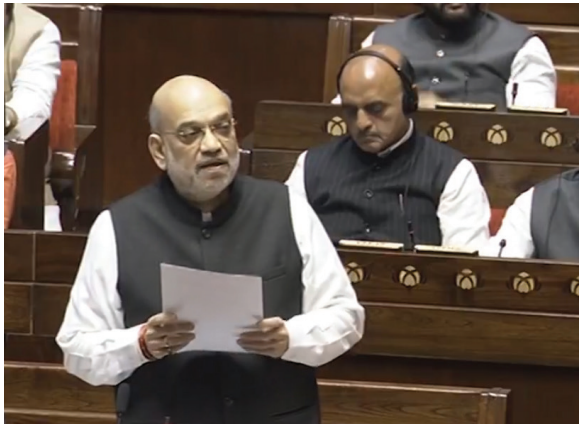
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## Cong considered constitution 'private fiefdom' of one family, amended it to stay in power: Shah

**AGENCIES**  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday attacked the Congress for bringing various amendments to the Constitution, saying the opposition party considered it as the "private fiefdom" of one family and amended it to remain in power.



Replying to a discussion on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India", Shah also accused the Congress of being anti-reservation and said it never worked for the benefit of the backward classes.

The minister also chided the Congress for "finding faults" in EVMs after losing elections.

At the outset, he noted that the Constitution strengthened the roots of democracy and the trans-

fer of power happens without shedding even a drop of blood.

Shah listed many amendments made to the Constitution by the Congress, claiming the party did so for its own benefit.

Even before the first elections in the country, Jawaharlal Nehru effected the first Constitutional amendment to curtail the freedom of expression, he

claimed.

"The Congress considered the Constitution as 'private fiefdom' of one family and deceived Parliament," Shah said.

He also charged that the Congress deprived Muslim women of their rights for years only for vote bank politics.

"They (Cong) did nothing except eulogising one family," Shah said.

## Article 370 removal integrated J&K completely with India: JP Nadda

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DEC 17

Union Minister, JP Nadda on Tuesday said that the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, marked the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India.



Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, he discussed the historical and legislative issues surrounding Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

According to the news agency, he stated that the provision had long hindered the region's integration with India, limiting the applicability of central laws and curtailing basic rights.

"This provision also excluded women from property rights if they married non-Kashmiri men, a rule that contradicted India's broader efforts to promote gender equality," he added.

"Article 35A, introduced in 1954 through a Presidential Order under Article 370, was implemented without par-

liamentary debate," he said, adding that Article 35A defined citizenship in Jammu and Kashmir, restricting it to those who resided in the region before 1944.

## Bill introduced in LS to synchronise J&K poll cycle with parliamentary election, sent to JPC

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DEC 17

In a significant move, the Union Government on Tuesday introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha to amend "The Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019" for integration of Jammu & Kashmir Territory's Assembly poll cycle with Lok Sabha polls.

While the amendments in the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 and the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 have been proposed respectively for integration of assembly polls of Puducherry and Delhi with Lok Sabha polls, the amendments in J&K Reorganisation Act-2019 will align J&K's electoral cycle with Lok Sabha polls as part of Union Government's "one nation, one election" initiative.

According to news agency, Union Law Minister Arjun Meghwal today introduced The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill-2024 for amending the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reor-

ganisation Act, 2019.

After being introduced in the House today, both the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024 and "The Union Terri-

tories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 were sent to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for detailed discussion.

According to the changes proposed in J&K Reorganization Act-2019, the five-year period from the date of the first meeting of the Legislative Assembly shall be referred to as the full-term of the Legislative Assembly.

## BJP likely to send notices to MPs absent during introduction of simultaneous elections

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

The BJP on Tuesday indicated that it will be asking several of its MPs in the Lok Sabha on why they were absent from the House when voting for the introduction of the crucial "One Nation One Election" Bill was underway.

had pre-decided official engagements and had informed the party floor managers as a three lined whip had been issued by the party ahead of the introduction of the Bill. While the introduction of the Bill itself does not take more than a simple majority, when the Bill is retabled after a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) goes into details of it, it will require two thirds majority of members to ensure passage.

Sources in the BJP confirmed however that a few Union Ministers and some MPs who were not present in the House on Tuesday,

## Heavy traffic jam in Jammu as ABVP block Tawi Bridge over 'ignoring' Hindi, Sanskrit in recruitment



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DEC 17

Alleging discrimination by the Jammu and Kashmir government against Hindi and Sanskrit in recruitment, the activists of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of BJP, blocked the main Tawi Bridge of

Jammu, resulting in a massive traffic congestion and jams in entire city till late evening. The commuters remained stranded for about four-five hours while people blamed traffic authorities for mismanagement and chaos.

However, the authorities tried to divert

## GoC 16 Corps reviews operational readiness along LoC after major drug smuggling bust

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DEC 17

A day after the major drug smuggling operation was thwarted along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant General Naveen Sachdeva, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 16 Corps, also known as 16 Corps, visited forward areas along LoC on Tuesday to assess operational readiness.

Accompanied by Major General Kaushik Mukherjee, GOC of the Ace of Spade Division, Lt Gen Sachdeva inspected the snow-covered Tristar and Anita sectors in the Pir Panjal range in the Jammu region.

mended their dedication and called for maintaining high professional standards during the operations.

According to the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO), General Sachdeva during the visit interacted with soldiers stationed in these challenging terrains. He com-

pleted their dedication and called for maintaining high professional standards during the operations.

"GOC White Knight Corps, accompanied by GOC Ace of Spades, visited Tristar and Anita sectors to review operational preparedness. GOC commended the troops for their commitment and dedication to duty and emphasised maintaining the highest standards of

## Vibrant sports ecosystem is fulfilling aspirations of our youth: LG Sinha



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 17

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha addressed the Prof. Chaman Lal Gupta Khel Ratna Award 2024 ceremony today and felicitated the recipients of the prestigious sports award. The Lieutenant Governor also paid tributes to Prof. Chaman Lal Gupta.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor congratulated the talented sportspersons and sports officials, who have been conferred with this year's award.

for the country through their performances and continue to inspire young generation," he said.

"All the sports personalities awarded today are living embodiments of the positive change taking place in J&K. I am confident they will work with dedication to earn glory

Remembering Prof. Chaman Lal Gupta, the Lieutenant Governor said the former Union Minister devoted his life for the welfare of the people of Jammu Kashmir. "The rapid development J&K UT has witnessed in the

## CM inaugurates MRI, CT Scan Center at SVMM Charitable Hospital Ambphalla, Jammu



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 17

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today inaugurated the MRI and CT Scan Center at Swami Vivekananda Medical Mission (SVMM) Charitable Hospital in Ambphalla, Jammu. Member of Legislative Assembly (Udhampur East) Pawan Gupta, President SVMM Charitable Hospital Anil Gupta, Patron Dr. Subash

Gupta, President Jammu Chamber of Commerce & Industry Arun Gupta, along with members of the hospital's managing committee, faculty, staff, and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

spirit of service, providing affordable and quality healthcare.

Speaking at the launch, the Chief Minister commended the hospital for its exceptional services to the people.

"The hospital operates like a private institution in terms of its services but ensures affordability, charging even lower than government hospitals," Omar Abdullah said.

He remarked that institutions like SVMM Charitable Hospital exemplify the

Reflecting on the hospital's journey, the Chief Minister acknowledged its humble beginnings as a single-room

## Cold Wave: MeT issues 'yellow' alert for isolated regions



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DEC 17

Amid no forecast of a major weather activity till December 26, the local Meteorological department here has issued a yellow alert, predicting a cold wave at isolated regions for the next one week.

further at several places of Kashmir including Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir where a night temperature of minus 5.3 degree Celsius was recorded against the previous night's 3.4 degree Celsius.

According to the details available with the news agency, the MeT has sounded a yellow warning for isolated regions, saying that the cold wave conditions would prevail for the next one week from December 17 to December 23.

At Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, the minimum temperature settled at minus 4.0 degree Celsius while in Pahalgam, the mercury settled at minus 6.8 degree Celsius.

The warning has been issued for the isolated places of both the regions including Jammu as well as Kashmir.

In Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, it settled at minus 6.0 degree Celsius. North Kashmir's Kupwara recorded a low of minus 5.6 degree Celsius while Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded a minimum temperature of 5.7 degree Celsius.

In the meantime, the mercury has plummeted

Shopian, was the coldest place in

## USRBL project completely ready: GM Northern Railway

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
ANANTNAG, DEC 17

The much-hyped Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) has been fully completed, while the work on Tunnel T1, located at Reasi, is set to be completed within a week, Ashok Kumar Verma, General Manager (GM) of Northern Railway, said on Tuesday.

"Track-laying work at Tunnel T1 has been completed, and electrical work is currently underway. This is expected to be finished within a week. The CSR inspection will also be conducted in the next 15 days. Rail service from Katra to Srinagar will commence soon," he said.

that the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project is 100% complete.

He also said that premium trains like Vande Bharat Express and others would soon operate in the Kashmir Valley, enhancing travel options for locals and visitors alike.

The General Manager Northern Railway visited several railway stations across the Kashmir Valley on Tuesday to review operations and assess ongoing infrastructure development.

Responding to a question about the stoppage of the Vande Bharat train at Anantnag, he said, "We have to decide it overall, and deciding station-wise is a bit difficult. No doubt, people have expectations, but many trains, including

Vande Bharat and others, will come. However, deciding stoppages station-wise is a challenging task."

The General Manager further said that it was quite a herculean task to carry out work in the Himalayan region. "There was no soil data available, and constructing tunnels in hard rock is relatively easy. However, the Himalayas have fragile soil. While working on the T1 tunnel, it even collapsed once, and it took eight years to redo the work. Now, with experience

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## DLSA, Ganderbal conducts Training/Orientation program for Panel Lawyers

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 17

On the directions of the National Legal Services Authority and as per the calendar of activities for the year 2024 issued by J&K Legal Services Authority, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Ganderbal today conducted a training cum orientation program for Panel Lawyers of DLSA Ganderbal and TLSC Ganderbal/ Kangan.

The training programme was held under the supervision of Abdul Nasir, Chairman, DLSA Ganderbal, and under the guidance Sheikh Babar Hussain, Secretary, DLSA Ganderbal.

The program aimed to enhance the advocacy skills of Panel Lawyers, enabling them to provide more effective legal assistance to the needy and marginalized sections of society.



The training session covered various topics, including plea bargaining, rights of arrested persons, bail, premature release and interlocutory reliefs.

Secretary DLSA Ganderbal informed the Panel Lawyers about their role and responsibilities and sensitized them about societal expectations.

He also covered the constitutional perspective behind legal services, legal aid movement in India, and an overview of the schemes made under the

Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

He highlighted that legal aid is not a charity or bounty but a constitutional obligation of the state and right of citizens. He added that legal aid strives to ensure that the constitutional pledge is fulfilled in its letter & spirit and equal justice is made available to the downtrodden and weaker sections of the society, and in achieving all this panel lawyers have a pivotal role.

He encouraged the

panel lawyers to remain focused and determined in the profession and advised how to present your case & how well prepared you are, speaks a lot about the efficiency of a lawyer.

Adv. Ghulam Rasool Rather, the trainer polished the skills of the Panel Lawyers for effective delivery of legal services in the district. He provided grounding in basic lawyering skills in civil and criminal laws, drafting skills, witness examination, and building arguments.

The training cum orientation program was a huge success, with active participation of all Panel Lawyers. This initiative is expected to enhance the skills of Panel Lawyers and contribute to the effective delivery of legal services in the district, especially for the benefit of weaker and marginalized sections of the society.

## DC Doda discusses arrangements for Republic Day 2025

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
DODA, DECEMBER 17

Deputy Commissioner Doda Harvinder Singh convened a meeting here today to firm up the arrangements for the Republic Day 2025 celebrations.

The meeting was attended by SSP Sandeep Kumar Mehta, ADDC Pran Singh, ADC Sudershan Kumar, ACR Sunil Bhutyal, ACD Manoj Kumar and other officers. Discussions focused on ensuring coordinated efforts to celebrate the National event with patriotic spirit. The meeting decided to host the District Level function on the Sports Stadium.

Discussions centered on arrangements of sanitation, the face-lifting of the venue, provision of power supply, drinking water availability at the venue, traffic management, stage decoration, security arrangements etc. The DC directed the



Public Works Department (PWD R&B) to prioritize stage construction, drainage upgrading and the installation of Kota stone at the venue. The Municipal Committee was tasked with beautification of the town, while Social Forestry was instructed to plant trees at prominent locations. The ACD was mandated to ensure the hoisting of the National Flag in every Panchayat, symbolizing inclusivity and fostering patriotism across the district. Additionally, the Power Development

Department (PDD) was instructed to ensure uninterrupted power supply and illumination of government buildings, bridges, and key structures on the day of celebration.

For the cultural segment, the ADDC was tasked with organizing performances highlighting local traditions, including a special segment showcasing the HADP scheme. The Education and Youth Services departments were directed to involve schools and colleges in the parade and cultural programs.

Security arrangements were reviewed, with SSP Doda assuring robust measures, effective traffic management, and designated parking areas. Medical teams were also instructed to remain on standby to handle emergencies.

The meeting concluded with discussions on the distribution of invitation cards and the finalization of the event schedule. DC Harvinder Singh emphasized flawless coordination among departments to ensure the smooth execution of the event.

## DDC Kup, MD JJM review progress under Jal Jeevan Mission at Kupwara

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, DECEMBER 17

The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan and Mission Director (MD), Jal Jeevan Mission J&K, Khurshid Ahmad Shah today jointly chaired a meeting of all concerned officers in the Meeting Hall of D. C Office here to review the progress of works under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in district Kupwara.

Chief Engineer PHE Kashmir, Bharam Jyoti, Superintendent Engineer PHE Kupwara, SE PHE Mechanical, DPM JJM, Executive Engineers of PHE Division Kupwara/ Handwara, PMGSY, PHE-Mechanical, Ground Water; Consultant JJM, DFOs, AEEs, JEs and other concerned officers were present in the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, the Mission Director JJM impressed upon all the officers of Jal Shakti Department to take responsibility

of the execution of works under JJM, and work with utmost dedication and sincerity to ease the sufferings of the people across the district. He stressed upon the officers to gear up the execution of works without further delay so that the people are facilitated with the piped drinking water.

The DDC in her address, enjoined upon the officers to make concerted efforts for completion of all ongoing works within the stipulated time frame. She highlighted the efforts of the District Administration in resolving various bottlenecks coming during the execution of JJM works and impressed upon the officers to gear up their men and machinery for the completion of the works so that people in large are benefitted under the ambitious Jal Jeevan



Mission. On the occasion, the meeting was apprised through a detailed Power Point presentation about the status of various ongoing JJM schemes in the district.

Reviewing the progress in execution of civil works,

it was informed that out of 226 allotted works pertaining to PHE Divisions of Kupwara, Handwara and SSD Tangdar, 72 works have been completed so far and work is going on the rest of the projects.

It was also informed that 11 Dug wells, 22 Bore-

wells, 3 OHTs, 49 Pipe Network, and 7 SSFP have been completed in PHE Divisions Kupwara/ Handwara and SSD Tangdar. Besides, 20 Mechanical works and 27 Electric Sub stations have also been completed in the district.

Under FHTC, it was informed that 7106 households have been connected during the ongoing financial year 2024-25 out of the targeted 34393 households and efforts are underway to fulfill the target.

The Managing Director warned about action against any official showing lethargic approach towards the execution of the developmental works. He directed the Executive Engineer PHE Division Handwara to monitor the performance of his subordinates including AEEs, AEs and JEs as frequent complaints

regarding different water supply issues are being received by the department majorly from the Handwara division.

The MD fixed timelines on execution of different works and directed the concerned officers to ensure completion of these works within the given timelines. He also took a detailed review of various other schemes sponsored under JKIDFC and NABARD, besides, reviewing lift/gravity, source and filtration based schemes. He also directed the concerned officers to ensure availability of tankers to the water deficit areas to meet the needs of the people living there till they are connected with piped networks.

The Mission Director also directed the Executive Engineers to certify all Har Ghar Jal reported villages as per the guidelines of National Jal Jeevan Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.

## KVIB Ganderbal organizes one-day awareness camp at Safapora



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 17

Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) Ganderbal today conducted a one-day awareness camp at the Block Development Office (BDO) Safapora to educate and inform artisans and unemployed youth about various self-employment opportunities under the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JKREGP) and Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).

The camp was presided over by the Deputy CEO, J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board, Kashmir Division, Srinagar. Addressing the artisans and unemployed youth, he emphasized the importance of these schemes in fostering entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

The event witnessed participation from prominent officials, including District Development Council (DDC) Member Safapora, Lead District Manager Ganderbal, Naib Tehsildar Safapora, and the District Officer, KVIB.

Representatives from the BDO Office Safapora also attended, along with local artisans and unemployed youth eager to explore the benefits of these government initiatives.

During the camp, detailed information about the procedures, benefits, and eligibility criteria for availing financial assistance under JKREGP and PMEGP was shared. Attendees were encouraged to utilize these schemes for setting up small-scale businesses and generating employment opportunities within the district.

## Bicycle Man visits district Ramban, promotes Horticulture Development Schemes, HADP



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
RAMBAN, DECEMBER 17

Neeraj Kumar Prajapati, widely known as the 'Bicycle Man of India' today reached Ramban district after covering Kathua, Bhandarwah, Doda and Kishtwar to promote Horticulture Development Schemes under Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) among the farmers to enhance their income.

Prajapati along with the Chief Horticulture Officer Anil Gorka, HDO Sunil Gupta, Assistant Grading & Marketing Officer Raju

Zutshi visited orchards of some prominent farmers in Batote and Sanasar, besides a newly opened Rural Business Service Hub at Batote - all sponsored by the HADP to motivate the farmers to adopt horticulture to enhance income and get all other facilities.

During his mission, Prajapati has been promoting the Horticulture Project - Ultra High Density Apple and Rejuvenation of old and senile orchards, Project-9, P- 15, P-21, besides Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).

Under the aegis of Principal Secretary APD Shailendera Kumar, Mission Director HADP Rahul Yadav, he had started from Jammu on December 11 and has been on this mission to cover on bicycle about 1100 km across Jammu province till December 23. He will conclude his Yatra on National Farmers Day in the Directorate of Horticulture.

Rural Business Service Hub will be a one stop centre where the farmers shall get seeds, feed, fertilizers, machines, packaging material etc.

## DC Srinagar chairs District Level Committee meeting of NCORD

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 17

A meeting of District Level Committee on NCORD was today held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex, here to curb the drug menace and tighten the noose against drug peddlers in Srinagar District.

At the outset, DC took first hand appraisal from Officers of all line Departments and other stakeholders regarding the progress achieved in ongoing fight against the drug menace. He reiterated the Government's commitment to ensure adoption of 'Zero Tolerance Policy' against drug trafficking to curb the menace of drugs by strengthening institutional structure, coordination among all narco agencies and extensive public awareness campaign. He added that through a coordinated and multi-pronged approach which includes prevention, enforcement, treatment, rehabilitation and IEC strategies, the menace of drugs will be eliminated from Srinagar soon.

On the occasion, the DC stressed on conducting intensified mass awareness



programs to particularly educate the youth against the detrimental effects of drug abuse. He directed the Departments for organizing joint awareness programmes in collaborations with NGOs and civil society groups to spread awareness about substance abuse, both in rural and urban areas of the District.

During the meeting, the DC expressed his concern regarding the drug abuse by the youth including students and emphasized on intensifying the deterrence measures against the drug menace and its peddling particularly identified hotspots in the District.

With regard to 100% installation of CCTVs and implementation of online billing at Retail and Wholesale pharmacies, the DC asked the concerned Department to ensure all pharmacies strictly adhere to the guidelines.

During the meeting, the

Officers briefed the chair regarding the action taken by their respective Departments to achieve drug free Srinagar District.

The meeting was informed that 88 cases were registered in the District involving 150 persons. The substances seized during the current year include 1.17 kg of Brown Sugar, 2.90 Kgs of Heroin, 13 Kgs of Charas besides Psychotropic Syrup 273 bottles, Psychotropic Capsules 2430, Ganja 10.16 Kgs, poppy straw/ bhung/cannabis 44.18 Kgs and cash of Rs 489696 was also realized.

In addition, to tighten the noose of drug peddlers the District Police has seized properties with 4.13 crore in 10 attachment cases.

Besides, Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr. Khalid Hussain Malik, SP Headquarter Umar Shah and SDM West, SDM East, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Social Welfare Officer, Assistant Labour Commissioner, the meeting was attended by the Officers of Excise Department, Drug Control Organization, Health, IMHANS, Rehabilitation Centers, Postal Department, Airport Authority and other concerned Departments.

## DLIC approves 529 cases under HADP in Bandipora

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 17

The District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) meeting for the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP) was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, here.

The committee approved a total of 529 cases across various departments. Out of the approved cases, 321 belong to agriculture, 100 to horticulture, 34 to animal husbandry, sericulture 17, and 57 to the sheep husbandry sector.

During the meeting, the DC underscored the vital role of these initiatives in creating employment



opportunities for youth. He called on all concerned departments to extend their full support to unemployed individuals pursuing opportunities in agriculture and related sectors. He also stressed the need to achieve the established targets within the specified timeframe to guarantee timely and efficient implementation.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, and other officials from the concerned departments.

## 3-Day Skill Development programme commences in Bandipora



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 17

The Department of Sericulture on Tuesday inaugurated a 3-day Farmers' Skill Development Training programme under Capacity Building Activities at the Sericulture Nursery in Ayatmulla, Bandipora.

The programme, under HADP aims to equip farmers with practical knowledge and hands-on experience in modern sericulture techniques and practices.

The training focuses on empowering farmers by enhancing their skills in

modern sericulture practices and guiding them on how to avail beneficiary-oriented schemes offered by the Department of Sericulture.

On the occasion, the District Sericulture Officer Bandipora emphasized that the initiative underscores the department's commitment to improving productivity and empowering farmers with innovative techniques to advance the sericulture sector.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation of a large number of farmers, senior officers, and technical staff of the department.

## MVD seizes 05 vehicles with tempered/masked HSRPs amid massive drive against safety violations



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DEC 17

Motor vehicles Department Jammu today launched a special drive in the district to book violators found plying their vehicles with tempered /masked High Security registration plates (HSRP).

As many as 5 vehicles, found plying with tempered HSRPs, were seized. The enforcement drive was conducted under the guidance of the Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Jammu, Pankaj Bhagotra as per the instructions received from Transport Commissioner Vishesh Mahajan.

The enforcement drives are being conducted following complaints that some vehicle owners were deliberately tampering with or masking their registration numbers to avoid detection by enforcement agencies and to evade capture through e-challan devices.

As per official statement, it was informed that during the recent drives which were conducted at different locations viz-viz,

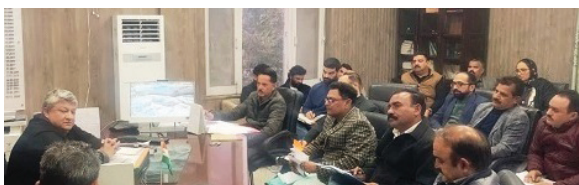
Jammu-Srinagar National Highway- Purmandal Morh, Sidhra.

The teams checked 578 vehicles out of which 05 vehicles were seized and 127 vehicles were e-challaned for different violations. The total expected revenue from the e-challans issued during the drives is Rs. 2.72 Lakh.

During the drive, the Transport Department reiterated its commitment to reinforce compliance to traffic regulations and take serious note of any attempts to bypass enforcement mechanisms. The Vehicle owners were urged to adhere to the prescribed rules to avoid penalties and seizure of their vehicles.

Earlier in the day, a road safety awareness program was also organised by the MVD team in Birla Open Mind International School in collaboration with Radio Mirchi 98.3. The School Children were imparted Road Safety tips to avoid mishap due to road accidents which is the main cause of fatalities in present times.

## MVD mulls major drive against Number Plate Masking, carriage of goods by passenger vehicles



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 17

Transport Commissioner Vishesh Paul Mahajan today reviewed the working of offices of the Motor Vehicle Department at a meeting here today. The ARTOs of Jammu Division attended the meeting in person, while RTO and ARTOs of Kashmir Division participated through virtual mode.

The Transport Commissioner directed the officers to streamline the functioning of the field offices to provide hassle free services to the general public being offered by the Transport Depart-

ment. He further directed the officers to launch special drives against Number Plate masking and carriage of goods by the passenger vehicles.

The Transport Commissioner directed the officers and officials of the Motor Vehicles Department to be polite and at the same time firm in dealing with any kind of violations by the drivers and emphasised to deal strictly against overloading, drunken driving, rash driving, driving without helmet. He wanted them to go for seizure of vehicles and cancellation of Driving License of habitual offenders.

## Poshan Project Hiranagar organises awareness program under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KATHUA, DECEMBER 17

As part of the ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and empower the girl child, an awareness program under the flagship initiative Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) was today organized by the Child Development Project Office (CDPO), Poshan Hiranagar in collaboration with Social Welfare Department Kathua.

The awareness program featured an impactful Nukkad Natak presented by the renowned theatre group Rangyug, which captivated the audience with its powerful message. The event, held at Government Higher Secondary School, Kootah and subsequently at GHSS Hiranagar, witnessed active participation from students, teachers, and members of the local community.

The thought-provoking street play highlighted the critical importance of educating girls, eliminating gender discrimination, and ensuring equal opportunities for their growth and development.

Speaking on the occa-



sion, Child Development Project Officer, Poshan Hiranagar Priyalakshmi, said, "The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao program is not just a campaign but a call to action for everyone to ensure the survival, protection, and education of the girl child. Events like these help spread awareness at the grassroots level, inspiring communities to embrace positive change."

She also underscored the synergy between Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Poshan Abhiyaan, saying, "Our efforts under the Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi initiative focus on integrating child nutrition with early education, empowering Anganwadi workers and educators

to ensure holistic development for children. By combining good nutrition with quality education, we are building a stronger foundation for the future, especially for young girls who hold the key to a progressive society."

Principal GHSS appreciated the efforts of Poshan Project Hiranagar for reaching out to the stakeholders and sensitised about them about the scope of BBBP scheme and how it ensures the overall social security of the girl child.

The program concluded with an interactive session where community members expressed their commitment to supporting the cause.

## DC Kupwara reviews implementation of PMJKV scheme

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KUPWARA, DECEMBER 17

In order to review the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJKV) scheme in the district, the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan Monday convened a meeting of concerned officers to discuss the preparations under the scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme, launched by the Ministry of Minority Affairs which is aimed at infrastructure development in minority concentration areas. The objectives of the scheme is to improve the socio-economic condition of the communities living in the areas through community infrastructure development support and provide basic amenities for improving quality of life of the people.

On the occasion, the DC enjoined upon the concerned officers to identify various impactful works in their departments which can be developed under



the PMJKV scheme.

She directed them to propose the construction of buildings for those Anganwadi Centres, Health Centres and Schools which are rented or in a dilapidated condition. She also asked for the development of sports infrastructure including Indoor Stadiums under the scheme which shall boost the sports sector in the district.

Ayushi impressed upon all the officers to ensure equal representation of every block of the district while proposing the works for development so that people in large numbers

across the district are benefitted under the PMJKV scheme.

The meeting held a thorough discussion and explored different sectors which can be developed for the larger welfare of the general public. Skill Development and augmentation of Sub District Hospitals with state of the art equipment were also discussed during the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Programme Officer ICDS Kupwara, District Social Welfare Officer, CMO, CPO, Dy. CEO, BDOs and other concerned officers.

## Mission YUVA: Training program held for Master Trainers & Supervisors at Bandipora

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 17

In an effort to ensure the effective implementation of Mission YUVA, a comprehensive training program for Master Trainers and Supervisors, appointed for the conduct of Baseline Enumeration/Survey, was held on Tuesday at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat Bandipora.

The training session led by Dr Murtaza Rashid, OSD to CEO Mission Youth, aimed to address key operational concerns and ensure the seamless execution of the baseline survey. The program brought into discussion many important aspects that need to be ensured for the task ahead.

Speaking on the occasion, the Additional

Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bandipora, Zaffar Husson Shauk stressed the importance of thoroughly assessing the availability of trained manpower. He emphasized the need to ensure sufficient manpower is in place, aiming to prevent any disruptions during the survey process.

During the event, the ADC said that the project involves the active participation of every department, with each contributing to the program's overall objectives. He emphasized the importance of a unified approach to create a strong foundation for the program. Dr Murtaza provided valuable insights regarding the roles and responsibilities of both Master Trainers and Supervisors during the Baseline Enumeration

process to ensure optimal management and execution. He presented an overview of the five-year project, outlining the preparatory phase and the creation of a robust ecosystem for its success. He emphasized that the program's focus is to ensure the continuous hand-holding of entrepreneurs.

Earlier, a short video presentation showcasing the successful entrepreneurs was shown to the participants, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness among budding youth entrepreneurs about the benefits of the mega scheme.

Among others the event was attended by Assistant Labour Commissioner Bandipora, Block Development Officers and other concerned officials.

## JKRTC introduces direct bus service from Baba Mei Mal Dev Sthan Dager to Jewel Chowk Jammu



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 17

In a landmark move addressing the long-standing demand of the residents of Tehsil Kharah Balli in the Chhamb area, the Jammu and Kashmir Road Transport Corporation (JKRTC), on the instructions of the Minister for Transport Satish Sharma, today started a direct bus service connecting Baba Mei Mal Dev Sthan Dager to Jewel Chowk, Jammu.

The initiative comes as a result of representations made by the people of this remote area, highlighting the lack of adequate transport facilities.

Taking swift action, Satish Sharma directed the transport department to ensure the immediate commencement of the bus service, recognizing the critical need for improved connectivity in the region.

Residents of Tehsil Kharah Balli have wholeheartedly welcomed this move, expressing their gratitude to the Minister for his proactive and people-centric approach.

Local residents gathered during the flag-off ceremony and hailed the Minister's efforts in fulfilling a long-pending demand.

The introduction of this bus service is expected to bring a range of ben-

efits to the area, including better access to education, healthcare, and markets, thereby boosting the overall development of the region.

The connectivity will also help enhance the local economy by facilitating the movement of goods and services between rural and urban areas. The people of Tehsil Kharah Balli have expressed their hope that more such initiatives will follow, further improving their quality of life. With this step, the Transport Department continues to align its services with the aspirations of the people, delivering impactful solutions promptly.

## Deputations call on Dy CM; raises issues seeking speedy redressal

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 17

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Kumar Choudhary, today said that ensuring prompt redressal of public grievances is top most priority of the present government.

The Deputy Chief Minister was interacting with scores of deputations who called on him today to project several issues related to welfare and development of their respective areas.

A deputation of Brahman Sabha Jammu called for allocation of Sanskrit lecturers in the recent notification issued by the education department.

Another delegation from Gurudwara Baba Sundar Singh Ji Jasrota, Kathua, and JK Blood Donors & Welfare Society raised their issues and concerns.



During interaction with the delegations, the Deputy Chief Minister shared his vision for creating a more inclusive, prosperous and progressive society. He emphasized the importance of fostering unity among communities, improving infrastructure in underserved regions and promoting initiatives that uplift the socio-economic standards of all citizens.

The Deputy CM expressed his commitment towards empowering youth, enhancing

healthcare facilities and supporting volunteer-driven organisations. He highlighted the need for greater collaboration between the government and community stakeholders to address pressing issues effectively and ensure sustainable development. Several legislators, DDC members and former Sarpanchs from different areas also called on the Deputy Chief Minister and projected several development related issues of their respective constituencies.

## Jt. Director Information Kashmir convenes meeting of Divisional & District Officers

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 17

Joint Director Information Kashmir, Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari, convened an introductory and review meeting on Tuesday with the Heads of various units from the Divisional office and District Information offices in his office chamber, here.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Director Information & PR, Ahsan ul Haq Chishti, Cultural Officer, Burhan Hussain; District Information Officers; Assistant Accounts Officer; and Section Officer.

During the meeting, the Joint Director reviewed the functioning of the department, particularly the coverage of official meetings, dissemination of information, and the organization of cultural events aimed at achieving the department's objectives.

Bukhari issued a series of directives to optimize



the operations of both Divisional and District Offices. He emphasized the importance of teamwork and urged staff to collaborate effectively to enhance the department's outreach and overall performance.

He also stressed the need to increase vibrancy and efficiency within the offices while expanding their presence on digital platforms to ensure the timely dissemination of news and information about government welfare schemes with special

focus on Employment schemes. Bukhari further underlined the importance of combating disinformation.

The Officers apprised the Joint Director of various infrastructural challenges hindering the effective functioning of their respective offices, particularly the shortage of staff.

Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari assured the Officers that the issues flagged will be taken up with higher authorities for prompt resolution.

## Medical Camp organised in village Khanpur by Janta Sahara Society



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DEC 17

A medical camp was successfully organized at Village Khanpur, Block Nagrota, under the sponsorship of Nehru Yuva Kendra Jammu as part of the Janjatiya Gaurav Divas celebrations. The event witnessed a large gathering of people on November 15, 2024, who availed free medical check-ups and treatments, including allopathic and Ayurvedic medicine.

The camp was conducted under the direction of C.M.O Jammu, on the order of B.M.O Dr. Manzoor Hussain. A dedicated team of medical professionals, including

Dr. Aditya Kapoor, Pharmaceutical Rishi Sharma, Helper Roshan Din, and Driver Maqbool Ahmed, worked tirelessly to serve the attendees.

The camp was also attended by key local representatives, including Sarpanch Iqbal Choudhary, Secretary Madan Mohan, and Malaria Inspector Ramesh Kumar. Their presence ensured smooth execution and highlighted the community's commitment to healthcare.

The initiative was part of ongoing efforts to provide essential health services to rural communities, promoting health awareness and accessibility in underserved areas.

## DC inspects upgraded Anganwadi Centre in Poonch



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
POONCH, DECEMBER 17

Deputy Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kundal today visited the upgraded Anganwadi centre. The visit marked a crucial effort in the ongoing mission to improve nutrition and developmental facilities for children.

The visit focused on assessing the critical aspects, including the status of supplementary nutrition, staff strength and facilities for children.

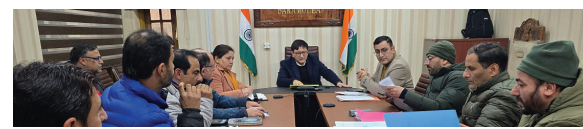
The Deputy Commissioner inspected the

kitchen facilities, storage of nutritional supplies, and overall hygiene standards. He engaged with children, inquiring about the facilities available for them and their experiences and needs.

The Deputy Commissioner also encouraged staff members to stay vigilant and perform their duty with commitment, reinforcing the significance of their contribution towards child welfare.

Present during the visit were the POICDS, CDPO Haveli, and other concerned officials.

## DDC Baramulla chairs DLC meeting; 1454 Applications approved under HADP



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 17

The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa chaired a District Level Committee (DLC) meeting today at the meeting hall DC's office to review the implementation of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

The meeting approved 1454 applications under the HADP scheme, aimed at promoting sustainable agricultural practices and empowering the farming community in the district.

During the meeting, a detailed review was carried out on the status of sanctioned projects under HADP, Yuva Vani Figures, and registrations on the Daksh Portal. The officers also revisited decisions made in previous meetings to ensure the effective implementation of the programme.

DDC emphasized the importance of timely execution and called

for better coordination among departments to achieve the desired outcomes.

The approval of 1454 applications marks a significant step toward strengthening the agricultural sector in Baramulla, improving resource access, and supporting local farmers.

DDC reaffirmed the administration's commitment to enhancing the livelihoods of farmers and ensuring the success of the HADP by working collaboratively with all stakeholders.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, the Dean of Faculty of Agriculture SKUAST Wadoora, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, Area Marketing Officer HM&M Baramulla/Sopore, Assistant Director Fisheries Baramulla/Sopore, District Lead Bank Manager Baramulla and Representatives of Agriculture, Horticulture departments.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

### Article 370 removal..

He pointed out that key national laws, such as the Prevention of Atrocities Act, the Human Rights Act, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, were not applicable in J&K under Article 370.

He criticized the lack of parliamentary scrutiny over the provision's far-reaching consequences, calling it a significant oversight.

Participating in the discussion on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India," Nadda emphasized the contributions of the Constituent Assembly while cautioning against mismanagement of constitutional principles.

Quoting B.R. Ambedkar, Nadda said, "However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad." He added, "The bad lot has interfered with the Constitution many times."

Targeting the Congress, Nadda criticized former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for the inclusion of Article 370, claiming that B.R. Ambedkar had opposed it. He also referenced Syama Prasad Mookerjee's opposition to Article 370, noting his ultimate sacrifice for the cause. "Mookerjee raised the issue of Article 370 and sacrificed his life for it. His mother wrote to Nehru and sought an investigation, but the request was ignored," Nadda said.

Nadda highlighted the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, as a historic achievement that fully integrated Jammu and Kashmir with India. "Because of the Prime Minister's wisdom, Jammu and Kashmir is now an inseparable part of India," he remarked. Calling the event a turning point, he said, "It is a question of the good lot and the bad lot. After the bad lot, we got the good lot."

He also said that the abrogation of Article 370 ended J&K's special status, enabling the full application of Indian laws and granting equal rights to all its citizens.

### Bill introduced in..

According to the bill, simultaneous elections would come into effect on an "appointed date" to be notified by the President on the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election.

Since the first sitting of the Lok Sabha elected in 2024 has already taken place, the earliest the appointed date for simultaneous elections can be notified is the first sitting of the House elected in the 2029 elections. This means that simultaneous polls could be held by 2034, when the full term of that House ends.

It becomes clear now that the bill would not affect the existing five-year term of J&K Assembly which started from October 08, 2024. However, it would cut short the tenure of the UT's next assembly by six months in 2034.

According to the bill, in case the J & K Assembly gets dissolved before completing its five-year full term, the mid-term election would be held only for the remaining period of five years.

### Vibrant sports ecosystem...

last few years is our tribute to him," the Lieutenant Governor said.

"Sports is a powerful tool for positive change and has always served as a bridge to connect people of different cultures. Today, J&K is emerging as a hub of national and international sporting events. Our renewed thrust on state-of-the-art sports infrastructure and allied facilities and nurturing young talent have revolutionised the sports sector of J&K," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated the commitment of the government, under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, to provide the platform and necessary handholding to the budding sportspersons of J&K.

He highlighted that the vibrant sports ecosystem is fulfilling the aspirations of the youth of Jammu Kashmir.

The new sports policy has kindled brighter hope for our talented sportspersons. Last year, we have witnessed a record 53 lakh participation from children and youth of the UT in various sports disciplines, besides 30,000 players from Jammu Kashmir participated in national and zonal tournaments and 46 players represented India in international tournaments, he further added.

"It is our dream to make J&K sportiest UT and a leading power in various sports disciplines. I am hopeful that our sportspersons will continue the tradition of success and valour in National and International games to realise this dream," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also commended the important contribution of Sports Department, Sports Council and all the stakeholders in the promotion of sports in J&K.

Arun Gupta, President, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jammu; Sh Anil Gupta, President, J&K Amateur Kabaddi Association; members of Vansh Sabre Sports Foundation, prominent sports personalities and representatives of various sports associations were present.

Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner Secretary, General Administration Department; Sh Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary, Youth Services and Sports Department; Ms Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council and senior officials were also present on the occasion.

### CM inaugurates MRI..

dispensary and praised its evolution into a reputable healthcare institution. "This transformation is truly remarkable and worthy of admiration," he added.

The Chief Minister also lauded the hospital's neonatal section, noting with satisfaction that the recovery rate for infants in the ICU stands at an impressive 100 per cent.

"This achievement is reassuring not only for the hospital but also for the parents whose children are being treated here," he said.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister took a round of the hospital, inspecting various sections, and interacted with faculty members and patients alike to understand their experiences and concerns.

Emphasizing the importance of humanitarian service, Omar Abdullah remarked, "To serve God, we must serve humanity."

The Chief Minister reiterated his government's support for the hospital, promising assistance from his administration and cabinet colleagues to further strengthen its healthcare initiatives.

### Heavy traffic jam...

the traffic towards Beli Charana-Bhagwati Nagar bridge and Bahu Fort-Gujjar Nagar bridge but the blocked of main Highway, resulted in server traffic jams in entire city, with several school buses and public transporter buses also remain standstill at several locations, giving nightmare to the commuters.

Though the protest dispersed in the afternoon, jams continued till late evening in Jammu city. As per details, ABVP led student activists assembled near Jammu University and marched towards Bikram Chowk where they staged a protest march and sat on a dharna, blocking the main Tawi bridge, which connects North and South of Jammu City.

The demonstrators accused the National Conference-led government of sidelining Hindi and Sanskrit in a recent recruitment notification issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) for 10+2 Lecturer positions. They also alleged that the government was promoting foreign languages such as Arabic and Persian, which were included in the recruit-

ment notification.

Akshi Billowria, ABVP State Secretary said that the main demand of students is to get immediate action to address this issue and ensure that the national language is given its due importance in the education system.

She claimed that the students protest was peaceful and ABVP blocked Tawi Bridge to draw attention to the issue.

She further said that posts for languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, and Dogri should also be created. There are posts for subjects like Urdu and Persian, but not for Hindi and Sanskrit. This is a conspiracy to eliminate languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, and Dogri from Jammu and Kashmir.

ABVP leader Anita Devi echoed similar sentiments, saying, "This is not just about recruitment, it is a fight for our cultural identity."

The protesting students expressed frustration over the JKPCSC's omission of Hindi and Sanskrit lecturer posts in its notice dated November 12, despite advertising 575 other teaching positions.

"We blame Education Minister Sakina Itoo and warn the Omar Abdullah-led government that students in Jammu will not accept this silently. The Kashmir-centric policies of this government are unacceptable, and we will fight this discrimination tooth and nail," said one of the protestors.

Several protesting students courted arrest and senior police and district administration officers spoke to the student leaders to lift the blockade. Many of the protesters were also detained by police. The BJP and several Jammu-based organisations have condemned the government's move and warned of serious repercussions.

"The NC government has barely resumed power and has already begun pushing its Kashmir-centric policies, sidelining the legitimate aspirations of Jammu's youth. This is unacceptable and we will not stand for it," BJP MLA Vikram Randhawa said.

Randhawa urged the JKPCSC to ensure fair representation for regional languages by adding 200 posts for Hindi and at least 20 posts each for Dogri, Punjabi, and Sanskrit.

### GoC 16 Corps reviews...

cross-border drug smuggling attempt. Moreover, two local drug dealers were arrested.

The General Officer Commanding's recent visit to the region underscores the Indian Army's commitment to safeguarding the Line of Control and preventing infiltration and smuggling activities.

### USRBL project...

new technology, and top consultants involved, the work has become more efficient," he added.

### Cold Wave: MeT...

Kashmir where the mercury settled at minus 8.9 degree Celsius followed by Pulwama at minus 8.5 degree Celsius.

Meanwhile, the MeT director, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad has predicted generally dry and cloudy weather conditions for the next three days and predicted light snow over a few higher reaches on December 21 and 22.

Furthermore, he said that generally dry weather is expected from December 23 to December 26. He also added that nothing significant is expected till December 26.

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.

## SAI launches FIT India cycling Tuesdays campaign in J&K

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DEC 17

FIT India Cycling Tuesdays Campaign was launched in Jammu and Srinagar on Tuesday under the aegis of STC Jammu to propagate the message of pedalling to Fit, clean, and disease-free India.

The initiative aims at sensitising the masses to shun vehicles and use only cycles to commute on Tuesdays to reduce the rising pollution levels and also to attain fitness, read a communique.

It further read that in Jammu, 35 riders including men, women, and children participated in the event that was flagged off by Dr. Sushil Sharma HoD Cardiology Government Medical College Jammu and a celebrated fitness enthusiast of the city.

Aman Sharma, CIC STC Jammu explained the purpose and the objective of the event.

The participants thanked the PM and Union Minister of Sports for their vision towards building a healthier India.

They also thanked SAI for organising the event to propagate their vision.

The participants were given souvenir caps and certificates of participation.

Prominent among those present on the occasion included SS Gill, General Secretary J&K Cycling Association, Anil Kumar Sharma, Director NIC, Sudhir Anand, leading fitness icon, and Coaches and staff of SAI STC Jammu.

In Srinagar, it read that 15 Cyclists hit the road amid biting chill to propagate the message of Fitness through the 'Cycling Tuesdays' campaign.

Mohd. Akbar, the leading biker of the state flagged off the cyclists on Srinagar-Gulmarg Road.

The participants expressed their gratitude to the PM and Minister of Sports for launching such a campaign in Kashmir to sensitize the masses towards health and fitness.

The cyclists were given participation certificates and Souvenir caps on the occasion.

## BJP likely to get new President in February

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

The new BJP president, who will succeed incumbent J P Nadda, is likely to be elected by the end of February, according to a senior party functionary.

Party sources said the ongoing organisational election is on track to complete the polling process in more than half of its state units by mid-January, an exercise that will unveil the process of electing its new national president.

A senior leader said the tenure of nearly 60 per cent of the BJP's state unit presidents is over, and their replacements are likely to be in place by the middle of the next month.

The BJP's constitution stipulates that organisational polls should be completed in at least half of its state units before the process to elect the national president is started.

"We expect that a new BJP president will assume the charge by the end of February," the functionary said.

Asked whether the new BJP president may be someone who is currently serving as a Union minister, he said it could be either from the government or from the organisation, adding that nothing has been finalised yet.

Incidentally, Nadda, also the Union health minister, had taken over as the party's national president in February 2020.

Though the tenure of a president is of three years, he was given an extension in view of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in which the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance returned to power for a their straight term under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

## Transport Dept launches crackdown on number plate masking

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DEC 17

The Transport Department has started a drive against number plate masking and commercial use of personal vehicles.

According to the news agency, Transport Commissioner Vishesh Paul Mahajan on Tuesday reviewed the work in offices of the Motor Vehicle Department. He directed the officers to streamline the functioning of the field offices to provide hassle-free services to the general public being offered by the Transport Department.

The Commissioner directed the officers to launch special drives against number plate masking and the carrying of goods by passenger vehicles, according to a government spokesperson.

He directed the officers and officials of the Motor Vehicles Department to be polite and at the same time firm in dealing with any kind of violations by the drivers. "Deal strictly against overloading, drunken driving, rash driving, driving without helmets," the officer said.

Mahajan, the spokesperson said, directed seizing vehicles and cancelling the driving licences of habitual offenders.

## Awareness Camp on Women-Centric schemes organized at Ganderbal

**JINews SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 17

Sankalp Hub, Department of Social Welfare in Collaboration with National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), today organized an awareness camp on women-centric schemes at Ganderbal.

The camp aimed to educate women about various women-centric schemes, the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace (POSH Act), and the functioning of the SHE-Box portal.

During the camp, experts highlighted several women-centric schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), which provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating mothers, and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), aimed at addressing the declining child sex ratio and promoting the education of the girl child.

They also discussed the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) for promoting institutional deliveries, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, a savings scheme for the girl child.

Special focus was given to the POSH Act, which ensures a safe and harassment-free workplace for women. Participants were also introduced to SHE-



Box, an online platform launched by the Government of India that enables women to file complaints related to workplace harassment. The speakers emphasized the importance of knowing legal rights and mechanisms available to women to address such issues.

Representatives from Sankalp Hub and NRLM urged women to take advantage of these schemes and provisions to improve

their social and economic status. The session witnessed active participation, with women engaging in discussions and seeking clarifications on various schemes and legal provisions.

The camp concluded with a call to spread awareness at the grassroots level, ensuring that every woman is empowered with the knowledge and support needed for her safety, dignity, and development.

## BHSS Kurhama clinches Victory in Open Volleyball Tournament organized at Ganderbal

**JINews SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 17

A two-day open Volleyball Tournament, organized under the Civic Action Program by 115 BN CRPF Zakura in collaboration with the Department of Youth Services & Sports (DYSS) Ganderbal and Education Department Ganderbal, concluded successfully today at BHSS Ganderbal.

The tournament witnessed participation from eight Higher Secondary Schools across the district, showcasing remarkable sportsmanship and enthusiasm among the young players. On the final day, the event featured two semi-final matches, a hardliner match, and the much-anticipated final face-off between BHSS Ganderbal and BHSS Kurhama.

The final match turned into an exciting contest, with both teams demonstrating exceptional volleyball skills and determination. After an intense battle, BHSS Kurhama emerged victorious, defeating BHSS Ganderbal by 2-1 sets.

The closing ceremony was attended by Chief Education Officer (CEO) Ganderbal, S.K. Sharma,



DYSSO Ganderbal, Sheikh Shafiq Iqbal, Commanding Officer 115 BN CRPF S.K. Pradhan, Deputy CEO Ganderbal and Principal BHSS Ganderbal.

The dignitaries felicitated the winning team, runners-up, and second runners-up with cash prizes of Rs15,000, Rs10,000, and Rs 5,000, respectively, along with trophies, uniforms and certificates.

CO 115 BN CRPF congratulated the participants and emphasized the importance of organiz-

ing such tournaments to engage and motivate the youth towards constructive activities. He further highlighted that sports not only promote physical fitness but also foster teamwork, discipline, and leadership skills among the younger generation.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by CEO Ganderbal appreciating the joint efforts of the CRPF, DYSS Ganderbal, and the Education Department for promoting sports culture in the district.

## DIC Ramban organises awareness camps to promote Youth Empowerment Schemes

**JINews SERVICE**  
RAMBAN, DECEMBER 17

District Industries Centre (DIC) Ramban, on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, organized awareness camps at Pan-chayat Ghar-Tether and Kaskoot in Banihal to sensitize local youth about employment schemes being implemented by the Industries & Commerce Department.

Project Manager Kuldeep Singh sensitized participants about the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme



(PMEGP). He explained the procedure for filing the application, benefits of enrollment, and financial assistance available under the scheme for both manufacturing and service sectors.

Awareness about the PM Vishwakarma Scheme was also highlighted, encouraging aspiring youth to avail these

schemes to establish their ventures. Queries from participants regarding online application procedures were resolved on the spot.

The camps successfully motivated unemployed youth to opt for self-employment, leveraging the subsidies and support provided under these initiatives.

## Director AHK reviews departmental activities, progress achieved under various schemes at Ganderbal



**JINews SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 17

To review the departmental activities, especially progress achieved under

various beneficiary oriented schemes, the Director Animal Husbandry Kashmir (AHK), Dr. Parvinder Singh Sudan today conducted a comprehensive visit to District Ganderbal.

The Director took holistic stock of progress made by the district, especially review-

ing benefits provided to Self Help Groups through implementation of HADP.

He directed the staff to achieve all the targets assigned to them in a time bound manner. He also emphasized on timely completion and uploading of FMD Vaccination under NADCP and 21st

Livestock census.

Later, the Director interacted with the members of Humsafar Dairy SHG, and also visited Tulmulla Dairy Cooperative Society adopted by the department for organized Milk Marketing and Milk Value addition under HADP.

## J&K ARC felicitates gold medalists of 62nd National Roller Skating Championship



**JINews SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 17

J&K Additional Resident Commissioner (ARC), New Delhi, Anil Sharma, today felicitated Ankush Kohli from Department of Hospitality & Protocol and Gagan Singh Jamwal from Department of Information and Public Relations for clinching gold medal in the 62nd National Roller Skating Championship held at

Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Complimenting the promising players for their 6th consecutive win in the National tourney, Anil Sharma termed the victory of Ankush and Gagan and their team as phenomenal. He extended wishes to the team for their future endeavours.

## Rs 8.5k fine imposed on erring FBOs at Ganderbal

**JINews SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 17

The Court of Adjudicating Officer, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ganderbal, Gulzar Ahmad today imposed a fine of Rs 8500 on Food Business Operators (FBOs) including manufacturers, wholesale dealers and retailers for violating the Sec.51 and 52 of FSS Act-2006.

The fine was imposed on the erring traders (miss branded and sub standard food) during the proceeding of cases of various blocks of district Ganderbal related to the Food Safety and Standards Act-2006, listed before the Adjudicating Officer.

The Adjudicating Officer also warned them to abide by the legal regulations adding that non-compliance of food safety and standards Act and rules thereunder by the food business operators of the district will be dealt with more strictly in coming time.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Concerned Enforcement Agency was directed by the Adjudicating Officer under FSS Act-2006, to take stern action against the Violators so that consumers can be provided wholesome and safe food.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**Walk-In-Interview for Contractual Medical Practitioners over Firozpur Division**  
Walk-in-interview for the engagement of 07 full time Contractual Medical Practitioners over Firozpur Division will be held on 08.01.2025 at Committee hall, DRM Office, Firozpur. Candidates can download detailed Notification and Walk-in-interview application form from the website <https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/News&recruitmentinfo/Recruitmentinfo/>. For any query contact on 9779232631, 9540096053 or can email on [srdpotzr@gmail.com](mailto:srdpotzr@gmail.com)  
For Northern Railway Manager (P) Northern Railway/Firozpur 3859/2024  
**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**E-Auction Notice**  
The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following services over Firozpur Division.

Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFZR-SLR24-87	02/01/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 14604-F1, 14618-F1, 14650-F1, 12242-F1, 14730-F1, 14505-F1, 14028-F2, 14730-R1, 14624-F1, 14028-R1, 14730-F2, 14028-F1 & 15652-F1.
EAFZR-PACKING23	02/01/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for packing of two wheelers and other parcel packages at Ludhiana, Amritsar & Firozpur Cantt.

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). 3859/2024  
**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**E-Auction Notice**  
The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:

Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFZR-PnU24-5	24.12.2024 at 12:30 Hrs	Allotment of contract for operation and maintenance of Pay & Use Toilets for 6 months at Jammu Tawi Railway Station.
EAFZR-OH24-20	30.12.2024 at 11:00 Hrs	Allotment of contract for Commercial Advertisement rights: 1) On exterior of Overhead of Water Tanks at Sujanpur, Sahnawal, Bari Brahma, Jammu Tawi, Pathankot, Amritsar, Jalandhar City, Baramulla Sopur, Budgam, Srinagar, Anantnag, Qazigund & Banihal Railway Station. 2) Through static media at Level crossings adjoining to Chhina, Verka, Jaintipura, Batala, Bhagatwala & Patti Railway Station.
EAFZR-MIS24-13	30.12.2024 at 12:30 Hrs	Allotment of contract for Peaceful/Relaxed Zone by installation, operation and maintenance of Body Relief chairs at Railway station Jalandhar City & Pathankot Cantt.
EAFZR-OH24-21	31.12.2024 at 12:30 Hrs	Allotment of contract for Commercial Advertisement rights: 1) Through static media/overhead of water tank at Makhu, Nakodar & Samba Railway Station. 2) Through static media at Goraya, Madhopur Punjab, Lohian Khas, & Bhogpur Sirwal Railway Station.

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) No. MC/38015/Pub/E-Auction/FZR/22 Date: 17.12.2024 3861/2024  
**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR**  
**OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION UDHAMPUR**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**e-NIT No. 92 of 2024-25 Dated 16.12.2024**

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 the following work:-

S. No.	Name of Work	Advertised Cost (Rs. in lacs)	Cost of documents (in Rs)	Earnest Money	Time Allowed for completion	Class of Contractor	Head of Account
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1.	Const. of drain on Jib Thathi road Km 5 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> (under ARD).	14.50	600/-	@2% of advertised cost	30 Days	"B/C/D"	"ARD"

**Position of AAA:-** Accorded  
**Position of T.S:-** Submitted  
**Position of Funds:-** Demanded

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:-

S. No.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	16-12-2024
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	16-12-2024
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 16-12-2024 to 27-12-2024, 1800 Hrs
3	Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting.	20-12-2024 at 1200 Hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division, Udhampur.
4	Bid submission Start Date	17-12-2024 from 900 Hrs
5	Bid Submission End Date	27-12-2024 up to 1800 Hrs
6	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	28-12-2024 on or after 1200 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division, Udhampur.
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, name of work duly crediting to 0059 (Revenue) favoring Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division, Udhampur uploading a copy of treasury challan and EMD/Bid Security in the shape of CDR/FDR (The date of Treasury Challan/ Bid Security/Affidavits between date of start of bid submission and bid submission end date) duly pledged to Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division, Udhampur** as mentioned in the bid documents. The earnest money of the unsuccessful bidder shall be released only after submission of Treasury Challan.

No:- \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated:- 16-12-2024

Executive Engineer  
PWD (R&B) Division  
Udhampur

DIP/J-8249/24  
Date: 17-12-24

## EDITORIAL

## Unacceptable favouritism?

The ongoing saga surrounding the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking eviction of former Ministers and legislators from ministerial bungalows in Jammu and Kashmir has once again exposed the deeply entrenched culture of entitlement among political elites. Despite clear directions from the Division Bench of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, the Estates Department's lackadaisical approach raises serious questions about governance, accountability, and respect for judicial authority. The case highlights a disturbing trend where certain privileged individuals continue to occupy government accommodations, seemingly immune to the rules applied to others. While the Estates Department has successfully evicted numerous unauthorized occupants, the selective leniency shown to 43 so-called "blue-eyed" individuals smacks of favouritism and political patronage. This unequal treatment undermines the principle of one law for all. The High Court's insistence on updated status reports, along with its warning of summoning the Commissioner/Secretary of the Estates Department for non-compliance, underscores the judiciary's seriousness with the administration's apparent unwillingness to act decisively. It is telling that even former Chief Ministers and other influential politicians remain in unauthorized occupation despite repeated court orders and the completion of elections. The PIL has not only drawn attention to the misuse of public resources but also exposed systemic inefficiencies. The Estates Department's reliance on outdated processes and its half-hearted reports reflect an institutional inertia that benefits entrenched interests. Moreover, the government's own guidelines—such as the 2018 order mandating penal rents for prolonged unauthorized occupation—are being selectively enforced, further eroding public trust. While the Division Bench's directive to vacate unauthorized occupants after the elections is commendable, the delay in implementing these orders is unacceptable. It is equally troubling that penal rent notices, a necessary deterrent, have only been issued against a handful of individuals. The reluctance to act decisively against high-profile defaulters signals a disturbing compromise of principles in the face of political pressure. This episode must serve as a wake-up call for the administration. The Estates Department, as a custodian of public property, must prioritize transparency, fairness, and efficiency in enforcing eviction orders. Any deviation from these standards not only tarnishes its credibility but also perpetuates a culture of impunity. The government, too, has a duty to uphold the rule of law and ensure that public resources are allocated judiciously, free from political interference. The judiciary's proactive stance in this case deserves applause, but it cannot singlehandedly rectify systemic issues. The onus is on the government to demonstrate its commitment to good governance by enforcing its own policies and holding errant officials accountable. Without such accountability, the public's faith in the justice system and the democratic process will continue to erode. As the High Court prepares to take up the matter again on January 2, 2025, it is imperative that the Estates Department submits a comprehensive and transparent status report. Anything less would amount to a betrayal of the public interest that this PIL seeks to protect. The citizens of Jammu and Kashmir deserve a governance system that prioritizes accountability over privilege, and the resolution of this case could set a vital precedent in that direction.

## Call for fast-tracking WTO agricultural negotiations

UTTAM GUPTA

In a meeting of the Committee on Agriculture (CoA) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) held in Geneva on December 4, 2024, India insisted that negotiations on unresolved/previously mandated issues in agriculture, including a permanent solution to public stockholding, special safeguard mechanism (SSM) and elimination of trade-distorting cotton subsidies by rich countries etc, be 'prioritised' and 'fast-tracked' by treating them as standalone issues instead of clubbing them with other issues.

The US, on the other hand, criticised the prioritisation of certain issues over others, stating that this was the primary cause of the longstanding stalemate in agriculture. India also rejected a new proposal presented by Guyana to advance agricultural negotiations ahead of the WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) tentatively scheduled to take place in Cameroon in 2026 by adopting a so-called 'non-traditional approach based on convergence'. India reiterated that any facilitator-led process should be 'consensus-based' and respect WTO's multilateral principles. It emphasised on Text-based negotiation (TBN). TBN refers to the process of working up the text of an agreement that all parties are willing to accept and sign. Negotiating parties may begin with a draft text prepared by the Chair of the particular committee dealing with the subject.

The draft is based on discussions amongst the member countries and is fine-tuned till all the nations are in agreement with it. This is in sharp contrast to a convergence-based approach that involves super-imposition of non-multilateral trade regimes on the multilateral trading system (MTS). The theorists dealing with international trade in particular, WTO-related issues describe it as a process of 'gradually aligning different trade regimes, in particular preferential trade agreements (PTAs) and the MTS'. Others define convergence as requiring 'greater coherence between trade rules and policies, norms and standards in other areas of international cooperation'. Shorn of jargon, this is a well-orchestrated attempt by the developed countries - the US, the European Union (EU), the UK, Australia, etc (they exercise disproportionately greater influence during actual confabulations at the WTO, set the agenda of meetings, float proposals more often through small countries such as Guyana and get away with what they want) to scuttle the standard practice of taking decisions by consensus where every member country has an equal voice.

Therefore, India has rejected this approach, rightly so. But, what happens to India's demand for 'prioritising' and 'fast-tracking' negotiations? In a meeting of the CoA held on October 2, 2023, in Geneva, the EU agreed to consider India's demand



for a permanent solution to the public stockholding (PSH) program for food security.

Accordingly, India had urged WTO members to start TBN on the issue as soon as possible and get this deliberated at the WTO MC-13 slated to be held in Abu Dhabi from February 26-29, 2024. But, that was not to be. The Ministerial Conference ended in a deadlock. On the issue of finding a permanent solution to the (PSH) for food security, India's stance was vehemently opposed by the USA/EU. Earlier attempts by India also met with the same fate. At the Trade Policy Review (TPR) meeting held at WTO in January 2021, India insisted that the three issues should be taken up on a priority basis at the MC-12. But, in that Ministerial Conference held in Geneva on June 12-17, 2022, the issues were not even put on the table. The deadlock has existed for more than two decades despite India taking up these issues at WTO under what has come to be known as the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). Developed countries had junked DDA at MC-10 held in Nairobi

(2015). On the most contentious issue of a permanent solution for PSH, a ray of hope emerged when in the WTO-General Council (GC) meeting in Geneva (July 31, 2014), India insisted on a time-bound action plan on the subject matter to be executed before the end of 2014 co-terminus with approval of Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) - an area of great interest to developed countries. This was a good strategic move but it was abandoned midstream. In December 2014, even as the developed countries got away with the TFA, the developing countries got an "extension of the peace clause till a permanent solution was found." Put simply, India had literally surrendered its right to secure a permanent solution; that it was "Ok" with "the benefit of peace clause."

## What is the peace clause?

To understand this, let us look at the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) of the WTO. Under it, a developing country cannot give aggregate measurement support (AMS) - an acronym for subsidies - over 10 per cent of the value of its farm production.

The AMS includes "product-specific" subsidies and "non-product specific" subsidies on agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, seed, irrigation and power. The "product-specific" subsidy is the excess of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) paid to farmers over the External Reference Price (ERP) multiplied by the quantum of agri-produce. Whereas the MSP is taken for the relevant year, say, 2023-24, the ERP is the average of the global price prevailing during 1986-88 fixed in rupee terms. If the subsidy given by a developing country exceeds 10 per cent, it will be treated as a violation of its WTO commitment. This has been a major worry as India could face action in a situation of AMS exceeding the 10 per cent threshold. In this backdrop, the MC-9 in Bali (2013) had agreed to a "peace clause" under which "if a developing country gives AMS in excess of 10 percent, no member will challenge this until 2017, when the WTO would look for a permanent solution to address their food security concerns." It came with several riders such as submission of data on food procurement, stockholding, distribution and subsidies. These also include establishing that subsidies are not "trade distorting." Besides, programs implemented after 2013 are not covered under the ambit of the 'peace clause'. In December 2014, the WTO-GC modified the above decision to provide for "extension of the peace clause till a

permanent solution was found". Unfortunately, India concurred with this modification. This took away the sanctity of the 2017 deadline by which time members were to find a permanent solution as per the MC-9 mandate.

A decade since then, India is still looking for a solution! In regard to SSM - it allows members to temporarily raise tariffs beyond the "bound levels" (this is the maximum permissible duty that a member country can impose under a bound rate agreement) to counter surges in import or price drops. The 2015 MC-10 in Nairobi recognized that developing countries will have the right to take recourse to SSM as envisaged under the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration. That was at MC - 6 (December 2005).

Since then, it has been almost two decades. Even now, these countries can't take recourse to SSM. They haven't also been able to prompt developed countries to eliminate their cotton subsidies. To conclude, despite the deft handling of negotiations at the WTO and representing the majority of the developing countries (India leads about 80 countries - the G33 including India, African, Caribbean and Pacific countries or ACP) so far, India hasn't succeeded in securing the intended outcomes. Given the intransigence of developed countries and their clout at WTO, there is little hope from the MC - 14.

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

## Workplace Surveillance

SHAINY SHARMA

In the modern workplace, the rise of remote and hybrid work has led to significant shifts in how businesses operate, manage and monitor their employees. Among the most controversial developments is the growing use of tattleware or brassware, the common nicknames of software applications that monitor employees' activities during work hours.

With the advent of normalised remote work, employer surveillance of workers has accelerated. Today, such tools can track a wide range of data, including keystrokes, mouse move-

ments, screenshots, and even video or audio feeds from an employee's device. Not only this, but the much-advanced systems may also use artificial intelligence to analyse patterns, flag unproductive behaviour, or even detect potential security breaches. Employers claim these tools provide valuable insights into work habits, protect sensitive data, and improve overall efficiency. It allows businesses to track productivity metrics thereby ensuring that the employees meet deadlines and work efficiently, especially in remote setups where physical supervision is absent.

Also, such surveillance tools help prevent data

breaches or intellectual property theft by monitoring unauthorised activities. Moreover, these wares provide evidence in disputes about working hours or performance, thereby offering an objective record of employee activity. When implemented transparently and ethically, these tools even foster accountability and help underperforming employees improve. Despite the above-mentioned benefits, the use of tattleware raises significant ethical concerns wherein the most common one talked about is privacy. Employees believe that privacy is a fundamental right, and excessive surveillance can infringe upon it. A survey

conducted recently found that nearly 78 per cent of employers use monitoring software to track employee performance or online activity.

When employees are monitored constantly, they often feel dehumanised, as though they are untrusted or reduced to mere data points resulting in eroding trust between employers and their teams, making it harder to foster collaboration and loyalty. Additionally, the psychological impact often leads them to stress, anxiety, and burn-out. Employees may feel pressured to overwork or engage in performative productivity - appearing busy rather than genuinely contributing. Over time,

this can harm creativity, innovation, and overall job satisfaction. Not only these, but the use of tattleware has also resulted in legal challenges, including claims of unpaid wages for work performed away from computers or intrusion upon privacy. Some employers face allegations of unfair labour practices if monitoring interferes with protected activities, such as union organising? To adhere to the challenges posed by tattleware, businesses must strive to balance productivity goals with respect for employees' rights. As rightly said transparency is the key to success.

Only when employees are informed about them

being monitored, the necessities for the use of such tattleware or how the data will be used can help build trust and foster a sense of shared responsibility. As businesses navigate the complexities of remote and hybrid work, they must adopt a thoughtful and balanced approach to workplace monitoring. Only by prioritising transparency, fairness, and respect for individual rights, companies and business organisations can create an environment that values both productivity and human dignity.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Persisting Central Information Commission vacancies challenge transparency claims

PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

Recently on December 10, Dr. Jitendra Singh, MoS (Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension) made a pitch for Vikashit Bharat, 2047 while addressing the 16th Annual Convention of Central Information Commission at Bharat Mandapam in Pragati Maidan. Ironically, it was the last date allowed by the Supreme Court for the central government to file a status report on the eight posts of Information Commissioners lying vacant out of a total of ten in the Central Information Commission (CIC) for the last year. It might be remembered in October 2023 Anjali Bharadwaj had brought to the notice of the Supreme Court that whereas seven posts were already lying vacant in the CIC, four incumbents were due to retire within a week. Sadly, the situation has worsened over the

last year, notwithstanding the government's claim to transparency and accountability. At present, there are two Information Commissioners viz. Anandi Ramalingam and Vinod Kumar Tiwari in addition to Chief Information Commissioner viz. Heeralal Samariya. As per the Pending Cases Report available on the website of CIC, there were a total of 3134 cases - comprising 2310 second appeals and 824 direct complaints with the Commission as of November 1, 2023.

A year later on November 1, 2024, the total number of pendency has risen to 20,437 - comprising 17,717 second appeals and 2720 direct complaints. At the time of writing this piece, the total pendency clocked 22,957. This figure is not quite a compliment to the government's alleged commitment to transparency and accountability. A recent RTI appli-

cation filed by Commodore Lokesh Batra (Retd) elicited the reply that 161 applications were received for filling eight vacancies in CIC in response to the DoPT's advertisement dated August 14, 2024. Under Section 12 (3) of the RTI Act, 2005 the appointments are to be made by a committee chaired by the Prime Minister, and comprising the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and another Union minister nominated by the Prime Minister. Filling these positions before the 16th Annual Convention on the RTI would have been a favourable gesture.

However, the government did not prioritize the task. A second appeal from this columnist filed on September 13, 2023, is indicated at no 18162 in the list of pendency. The matter was transferred to IC Vinod Kumar Tiwari, after IC Ms. Saroj Punhani retired on November 11,

2023. The high amount of pendency incentivizes the CPIOs/ Appellate Authorities in the ministries/ departments to display a cavalier attitude towards applications filed under the RTI Act, 2005.

This columnist, however, was able to obtain the information through a fresh application. Though



in both cases, the Appellate Authority within the division, who in an IAS officer colluded with the CPIO, in one of his decisions he stated that the reason for denying information was that the file was under submission with the Joint Secretary.

The columnist filed a third application under

the RTI Act, 2005 asking the CPIO whether the Joint Secretary has been 'exempted' from the obligation to provide information under the RTI Act, 2005. If the Joint Secretary had been 'exempted', the CPIO must produce the necessary official order, and further inform who else in the ministry had

been similarly 'exempted'.

Any claim that a Joint Secretary has been 'exempted' from the obligation to provide information would have become controversial for the government. It could have sullied the service record of the officer attracting a minor if not major penalty for disregarding a Parliamentary statute. The RTI Act, 2005 provides no authority-wise 'exemption'. Exemption under Section 8 of the Act applies only to certain well-defined matters based on merit like security/diplomatic/ trade secrets, matters expressly forbidden by court from publication, or cabinet papers etc. This time the CPIO quickly provided the information. The episode, however, underscores a few grievous lapses. First, had the Central Information Commission (CIC) been working at full strength, the second appeal would have been decided within a few

months, and the delinquent CPIO might have to pay the monetary penalty for denying information.

Second, it underscores that Appellate Authorities, who are part of the department, actually help the CPIOs to suppress the information, where it is in their interest. Instead of this obligation, they can manipulate the CPIOs in other matters. The high amount of pendency in CIC could be attributed to the devious behaviour of the Appellate Authorities. The RTI Act, 2005 should have provision to penalize not just the CPIO but also the First Appellate Authority if the Information Commissioner declares him/her guilty of deliberate suppression of information.

(The writer is an author and an independent researcher based in New Delhi. The views expressed are his personal)

## Quadrivalent HPV vax affordable & more effective against cervical cancer: Jitendra Singh

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

The quadrivalent HPV vaccine, developed in India, is affordable and more effective for cervical cancer, said Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh on Tuesday.

Cervical cancer ranks as the second most prevalent cancer in India and accounts for nearly one-fourth of the world's cervical cancer deaths despite being largely preventable.

"Quadrivalent HPV vaccine is a boon for the Indian population where mortality among women due cervical cancer is reported to be around one lakh annually, and



over 90 per cent of these women have a history of HPV infection," Singh said, at the Health Conclave organised by NDTV at Hotel Hyatt.

Singh announced India's first indigenously developed vaccine, "CERVAVAC" for the prevention of cervical cancer in September 2022.

CERVAVAC, developed by the Department of Biotechnology in the Ministry of Science and Technology "is unique because of being quadrivalent and thus being highly effective HPV 6,11 and 16,18 which are closely associated with cervical cancer in women," Singh noted.

Further, Singh "strongly" advocated the use of the HPV vaccine, and noted that "its administration is easy with recommended two-dose regimen for girls below the age of 15 years and a three-dose regimen for girls above 15 years of age".

The Minister also highlighted India's advancements in preventive healthcare, women's health, and indigenous

vaccine development during his address at the "Together Against HPV" conclave.

The event focused on the national fight against cervical cancer, which remains a significant health challenge. The Minister also stated that India is now recognised globally for its preventive healthcare initiatives.

The Minister reiterated that prioritising women's health is central to realising India's vision for 2047, underscoring women-led development as a national priority.

He also addressed the need to tackle taboos and stigma associated with diseases like cervical cancer, particularly in rural areas.

## Indian deep brain stimulator market to grow at 10pc CAGR by 2033: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

The deep brain stimulators (DBS) market in India is projected to witness an anticipated compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 10 per cent by 2033, according to a report on Tuesday.

The report by GlobalData, a data, and analytics company, attributed the growth to the increasing prevalence of movement disorders in India. Besides, the inability of many patients to access appropriate surgical intervention has resulted in a substantial treatment gap.

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) is a treatment widely used for illnesses including Parkinson's dis-

ease, epilepsy, and other neurological diseases. The system uses an implanted device to send an electrical current directly to specific parts of the brain. The electrodes generate electrical impulses that improve brain function.

As per the report, the rechargeable deep brain stimulators market in India accounts for around 8 per cent of the Asia-Pacific market in 2024.

This has been strengthened by a rising patient base, cost advantages, skilled neurosurgeons, and an expanding healthcare infrastructure.

"As global life expectancy rises, age-related neurodegenerative disorders are becoming more prevalent," said Divya Soni, Medical Devices Analyst at

GlobalData. "DBS systems have emerged as a treatment for these conditions but are limited by a battery life of 3-5 years, requiring periodic surgical replacement for non-rechargeable models, thus increasing patient burden and surgical risks," Soni added.

Soni noted that although DBS devices serve as an effective treatment option for patients with movement disorders, they present notable shortcomings.

She pointed out the need to introduce "advanced DBS technologies that offer a transformative solution in providing personalised, data-driven therapy," Soni said. This will set new standards in precision care, and improve quality of life across the country.

## Study links PM2.5 with incidence and mortality rates of SARS-CoV-2 virus

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

While the rapid spread of Covid-19 can be attributed mainly to the high transmissibility of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a new study has linked the high incidence and mortality rates with environmental factors, particularly with PM2.5.

Researchers from the National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University in Taiwan proposed the theory that PM2.5 influenced the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and the subsequent severity of the disease.

Many previous studies have demonstrated a correlation between the morbidity of Covid-19 and air pollution levels. The studies hinted that PM2.5 may act as an environmental carrier facilitating the transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

The novel research,



tein abundance of ACE and ACE2 in the lungs of mice, and upregulated the morbidity of SARS-CoV-2," the team said in the paper.

Another recent study, published in Environmental Health Perspectives, linked air pollution with longer duration of long Covid symptoms like fatigue, breathlessness, and cognitive issues.

Researchers from the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal) in Spain showed that air pollution can impact the severity of acute infection. As a result, exposure to PM2.5 and PM10 can raise the risk of persistent long-Covid symptoms.

While air pollution was not directly responsible for long-Covid, it could increase the severity of the initial infection, which, in turn, raises the risk of long Covid, the researchers noted.

## 36.16 CR AYUSHMAN CARDS CREATED UNDER PMJAY SCHEME: CENTRE

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

About 36.16 crore Ayushman Cards have been created for beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), said the Union government on Tuesday.

"As per the PMJAY dashboard, as of December 12, 36.16 crore Ayushman Cards have been created for such beneficiaries. Of these, 29.87 Crore cards have been created for the beneficiaries residing in rural areas," the MoS said. said Union Minister of State (MoS) for Health and Family Welfare Prataprao Jadhav, in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

Launched in 2018, PMJAY provides financial protection to deprived rural families. It also identifies occupational

categories of urban workers' families.

The flagship scheme "offers a benefit cover of Rs 5,00,000 per family per year (on a family floater basis). Services include a range of procedures covering all the costs related to treatment, including drugs, supplies, diagnostic services, physician's fees, room charges, surgeon charges, OT and ICU charges, etc," Jadhav said.

Further, he also listed the achievements made under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) -- aimed to develop the backbone necessary to support the integrated digital health infrastructure of the country.

"ABDM intends to make healthcare more transparent, secure, inclusive, accessible, timely delivery, and most importantly citizen-centric," Jadhav



records have been linked with ABHA".

"Around 3.54 lakh health facilities have been registered on the health facility registry (HFR), and about 5.37 lakh healthcare professionals have been registered on the healthcare professional registry (HPR)," he noted.

Jadhav also informed on significant targets achieved under the National Health Policy.

"Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) reduced from 103 per 100,000 live births in 2017-2019 to 97 per 100,000 live births in 2018-20 (against a target of 100 by year 2020)," the MoS said.

"Infant Mortality Rate reduced from 32 per 1,000 live births in 2018 to 28 per 1000 live births in 2020 (against a target of 28 by the year 2019) and Total Fertility Rate is

reduced from 2.2 in 2015-16 as per NFHS-4 to 2.0 in 2019-21 as per NFHS-5 (against a target of 2.1 by year 2025)", he added.

Separately, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel informed that more than 5.46 crore children and 1.32 crore pregnant women have been vaccinated in all phases of Mission Indradhanush conducted so far.

"Mission Indradhanush is a special catch-up vaccination campaign under the Universal Immunisation Programme, conducted in areas of low immunisation coverage to vaccinate left out and dropped out children and pregnant women," Patel said, in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today. She informed that 11 types of vaccines are provided under the programme.

## Different fungi groups behind allergy-induced sniffles, asthma: Study

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

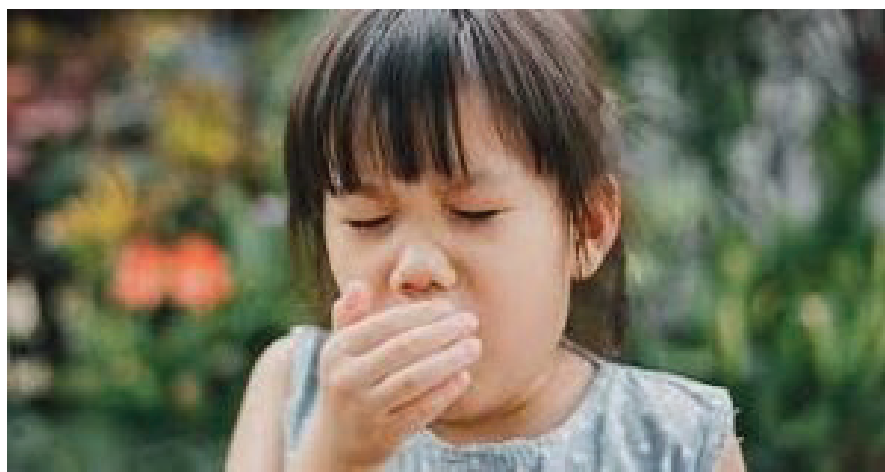
People with allergy-induced sniffles and asthma may have different fungal colonies or mycobionms in their noses, finds a study on Tuesday.

The common respiratory disease, formally called allergic rhinitis, has frequently been associated with asthma.

Typical symptoms of allergic rhinitis include sneezing, itching, inflamed nasal mucous membranes, and a blocked and runny nose. It's often comorbid with asthma, which also involves inflammation and obstructed airways.

Researchers from the University of Porto, Portugal, showed that this association may be because of different fungal colonies or mycobionms in their noses.

"We showed that allergic rhinitis samples dis-



played a significantly higher fungal diversity and a different fungal community structure compared to those of healthy controls," said Dr. Luis Delgado of the University of Porto.

"This may suggest that allergic rhinitis increases the diversity and changes the composition of the upper airway's microbiome."

To study the nasal myco-

biome, the researchers recruited 214 participants from among children and young adults attending an immunology and asthma clinic in Porto.

About 155 patients had both allergic rhinitis and asthma, while 47 were only diagnosed with allergic rhinitis and 12 with asthma. The team also enrolled 125 healthy controls.

The team analysed 306 samples, taken via nasal swabs.

DNA sequencing revealed Ascomycota and Basidiomycota as the most common fungi families across all samples. In these two families, 14 genera dominated the mycobionms.

"Among these dominant genera we detected common fungi that

have been recognised in humans as allergenic or opportunistic pathogenic fungi," said Delgado. "This suggests that the nasal cavity is a major reservoir for fungi that could be involved in allergic rhinitis and asthma."

The findings, published in an article in the Frontiers in Microbiology journal, showed a very clear and statistically significant difference between the patients with respiratory diseases as well as the healthy controls.

The fungi sampled from patients with both allergic rhinitis and asthma also showed more evidence of connections between them than the fungi in the healthy participants' noses and those who only had allergic rhinitis.

This could indicate that the fungi are affecting the nose's immune environment, the researchers said.

## Indian economy to grow at healthy pace in coming quarters: Sitharaman

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

Terming the subdued GDP (gross domestic product) growth in July-September quarter of current financial year 2024-25 as a temporary blip, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said that Indian economy would see healthy growth in the coming quarters.

Replying to members during the discussion on supplementary demands for grants in the Lok Sabha, the Minister said that Indian economy has recorded an average growth rate of 8.3% in the last three years.

"Out of 12 quarters in the last three years, GDP growth rate was lower than 5.4% in two quarters (Q4 of FY22 and Q3 of FY23). So, it's important to understand that this



batch of supplementary demands for grants for 2024-25. The approval is for an additional gross expenditure of Rs 87,762.56 crore.

"We are seeking the authorisation of the Parliament for gross additional expenditure of Rs 87,762.56 crores. The net cash outgo or cash supplementary is about Rs 44,182.87 crores. The technical token supplementaries are also mentioned," Sitharaman said while replying to the discussion. Out of total expenditure, a sum of Rs 19,416.35 crores is towards capital spending. "Expenditure on capital account is something I would like to take a minute to say that it is about Rs 19,416.35 crores. The balance of Rs 68,346.21 crore is on revenue account," the Finance Minister said.

drop happened in just two quarters in the last 12 quarters that we are talking about. So, let's not, sort of, pick that one and predict future. This has been a steady growth and sustained growth," she said.

India's GDP growth in July-September quarter of current fiscal 2024-25 fell to 5.4%, the lowest level since Q3FY23.

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed the first

## Holding pharmaceutical companies accountable has proven difficult: K'taka Health Minister on maternal deaths

AGENCIES  
BELAGAVI, DEC 17

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said on Tuesday that holding pharmaceutical companies accountable has proven to be difficult, emphasising that it needs to be tackled through national-level legislation.

"I want to convey that drug-related laws are not strong. There is no history of action being taken

against pharmaceutical companies," said the minister on the floor of the Legislative Council while addressing the series of maternal deaths which occurred at the Ballari hospital.

He highlighted that many drugs have failed due to substandard quality, but holding pharmaceutical companies accountable has proven difficult.

"This issue needs to

be seriously discussed at the national level. If quality medicines are not manufactured, it will have serious implications for people," Rao stated.

Substandard drugs can result in fatalities and ineffective treatment of diseases. Most drug manufacturing companies are based in states like Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. They receive support from the administration, and in order to protect their

reputation, pharmaceutical companies are granted immunity, Rao alleged.

He further claimed that pharmaceutical companies are shielded from regulatory laws and protected by the courts. "Some drug manufacturers have one standard for medicines exported to foreign countries and a different, lower standard for medicines distributed in India," Rao pointed out.

"There should be no dif-

ferentiation in drug quality, whether they are meant for export or for the poor in India. Quality should not be compromised. The system currently fails to ensure this," the Minister emphasised.

He added that the Drug Control Department wrote a letter regarding the certification of drug quality, but the state laboratory reported otherwise.

"We cannot dispute the findings of accredited

national labs and must accept their reports. The batch of medicines was tested five times before being supplied to the Ballari hospital," he said

He also pointed out that all laboratories declared the medicine as compliant. However, questions have arisen regarding the management and functioning of nationally accredited labs.

"A team has been formed to investigate this

issue, and a report is awaited," he said.

Minister Rao insisted that there should be no attempt to cover up such cases.

"This is a systemic failure. Similar incidents have occurred nationwide. Initial steps are taken, but the issue is later forgotten. This should not happen. It needs to be discussed at the national level, and systemic flaws must be addressed in light of this

tragedy," he urged.

He said that following visits by teams from the state government, the Drug Control of India, and the West Bengal government to the pharmaceutical company in question, concerns were raised about the manufacturing process.

"A stop-production notice has been issued to the company, halting all drug manufacturing activities," Rao informed.

# India emerging as major centre of affordable medical tourism: President Murmu

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

India is emerging as a major centre for affordable medical tourism on the global stage, and doctors in the country play a significant role in this development, said President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday.

Addressing the first convocation of AIIMS Mangalagiri in Andhra Pradesh today, the President said that with talent and hard work, Indian doctors have earned a leading position in the world. Andhra Pradesh tourism guide

"India is developing as a major centre of affordable medical tourism on the world stage and doctors have a major role in this development. People from other countries visit India



to take advantage of the medical facilities available here," Murmu said.

Of the young doctors who received their degrees today, two-thirds were young lady doctors.

The President expressed happiness that more young women are participating in the profession, which indicates a developed society.

"My special congratulations to these daughters who have done us proud. The rising participation of women in the medical profession and their significant contributions demonstrate that we are becoming a truly developed society," Murmu said.

"This also highlights the fact that given oppor-

tunities, our daughters excel in every field," she added, while also lauding the guardians of the young lady doctors.

Further, she told doctors their medical profession is "the path of serving humanity."

To achieve success and respect, the President advised doctors to pay attention to "service orientation, learning orientation, and research orientation".

She added that between fame and fortune, "they should give priority to fame".

"You will get invaluable opportunities to save people's lives and improve their health. You have developed the competence to make use of such opportunities. I am sure that you will dedicate yourselves to continuous

learning, and keeping your capabilities at par with the best and the latest".

The President also urged for "new solutions" to counter the challenges that medical science faces according to time and circumstances.

She also called on young doctors "to give priority to providing medical care and services to people living in rural, tribal, and remote areas".

"Providing inclusive health care is our national goal. Doctors, especially young doctors like you, have a key role in achieving this goal.

I hope that all of you will discharge this responsibility with utmost dedication and make an invaluable contribution to building a healthy, prosperous, and developed India", President Murmu said.

# Sikkim organises outreach campaign to promote sustainable practices in fisheries

AGENCIES  
GANGTOK, DEC 17

The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), in collaboration with the Fisheries Department of Sikkim Government, organised an outreach campaign on different schemes of the central government in Gangtok, officials said on Tuesday.

A senior official said the programme aimed to create awareness about Central government schemes in the fisheries sector and promote sustainable practices, entrepreneurship, and cooperative development.

In her address, Roshni Rai, Secretary of the Fisheries Department of the state government, emphasised the critical role of fisheries in Sikkim's economic development and the importance of capac-

ity building for fish farmers.

She applauded the NFDB for its continuous support and urged fish farmers to actively utilise the opportunities offered under schemes like Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), which aims to modernise and expand the fisheries sector.

Rai highlighted the state's potential for trout and cold-water fish farming, describing it as a niche sector with vast opportunities for entrepreneurship and value addition.

She also stressed the importance of creating strong linkages between farmers, cooperatives, and markets to ensure better returns for their efforts.

The official reiterated the Sikkim Government's

commitment to sustainable fisheries development, noting that initiatives like this campaign are vital for increasing awareness, fostering innovation, and ultimately enhancing the livelihoods of fish farmers.

She expressed optimism about the future of the fisheries sector in Sikkim, driven by collective efforts and effective implementation of government schemes.

The campaign provided fish farmers with a platform to interact with experts, learn about innovative solutions and explore opportunities for entrepreneurship. This initiative aligns with the Sikkim government's vision for sustainable aquaculture development and enhancing the livelihoods of fish farmers in the state.

# DEVENDRA YADAV, HASAN QUIT CORE COMMITTEE OF JAN SURAAJ PARTY

AGENCIES  
PATNA, DEC 17

The Jan Suraj Party, led by Prashant Kishor, appears to be facing significant internal challenges as prominent leaders resigned from its core committee on Tuesday.

This development comes even before the announcement of the Bihar Assembly elections, raising concerns about the party's stability.

Former Union Minister Devendra Prasad Yadav and former MP, M Hasan have stepped down from the party's 125-member state core committee.

Both leaders cited "unavoidable reasons" for their resignations but refrained from providing detailed explanations.

In his resignation letter Devendra Prasad Yadav stated, "I voluntarily resign from your 125-member state core committee due to unavoidable reasons."

Similarly, Hasan, in his letter, acknowledged the formation of the 125-member core committee but mentioned, "Due to



unavoidable reasons, I will not be a part of the core committee, and our resignation should be accepted."

Despite resigning from the committee, Hasan clarified that he has no immediate plans to leave the party.

These resignations highlight growing discontent within the party's ranks and present a challenge for Prashant Kishor as he attempts to consolidate the Jan Suraj Party's position ahead of the elections.

When they joined the Jan Suraj Party, Prashant Kishor was aiming to obtain the support of Muslim and Yadav voters through Hasan and Deven-

dra Prasad Yadav and their resignation from the core committee is definitely a setback for the party.

The Jan Suraj Party, led by Prashant Kishor, faced a significant setback in the recently-concluded Bihar Assembly bye-election, losing all four contested seats.

The party suffered heavy defeats in Ramgarh, Tarari, and Belaganj constituencies, highlighting its struggle to gain traction in these regions.

However, there was a glimmer of hope in Imamganj, where the party's candidate Jitendra Paswan managed to secure a respectable number of votes.

# Kerala temple trusts moves SC challenging restrictions on elephant management in Thrissur Pooram

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

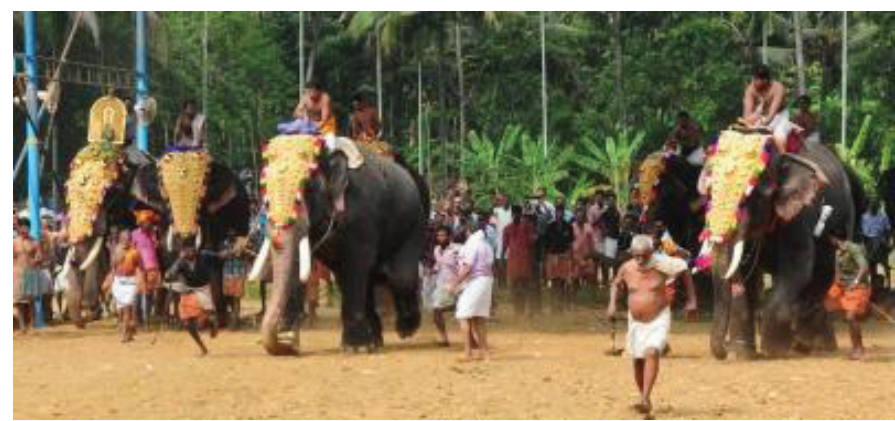
The temple trusts of Thiruvambady and Paramakkavu Devaswoms have petitioned the Supreme Court challenging the restrictions imposed by the Kerala High Court on elephant management in Thrissur Pooram.

Billed as the "mother of all festivals" in Kerala, the Thrissur Pooram was started by Sakthan Thampuran, the Maharaja of the erstwhile Kochi state, in the late 18th century.

The most keenly watched event of the Pooram festivities is the elephant parade -- of more than 50 jumbos, besides the firecracker displays, that starts in the afternoon and continues till the early hours of the next day.

The special leave petition filed before the apex court said that the Kerala HC erred in issuing directions for festival-specific matters without any violation of the Central statute such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 or the 2012 Rules.

It added that judicial interference was warranted only in the absence of a



statutory framework and by ignoring the robust statutory scheme provided by the 2012 Rules, the Kerala High Court "has arbitrarily supplanted the role of the legislature and executive in regulating such festivals".

The appeal, filed through advocate Abhilash M.R., said that the "spatial restriction" mandating a minimum distance of 3 meters between elephants brings the historic festival to a grinding halt, as the thousand-year-old venue, the Vadakkumathan Temple, integral to Thrissur Pooram, cannot accommodate such constraints.

"This venue, with its traditional layout, has

been the epicentre of the Pooram for centuries and the direction by the Kerala High Court disregards the significance of the historic and UNESCO-recognised tradition," it added.

The Kerala High Court had restrained the use of elephants in the state's temples on the pretext of tradition, while considering a batch of writ petitions for the prohibition of cruelty against captive elephants in Kerala by their parading and exhibition in temples and festivals.

In its impugned decision, the Kerala HC said: "We do not believe that there is any essential religious practice of any religion that mandates the use of elephants in festivals. In

other words, the animal is treated as a tradable commodity with its owner or custodian being concerned only with commercial returns. Reportedly, the festivals in Kerala are now so commercialised that even before a festival, there is a war or a sort of competition amongst temple committees tasked with the conduct of festivals regarding the number of elephants being paraded as well as the fame of particular elephants/elephants being paraded."

It took note of the submission that between 2018-2024, 160 captive elephants have died or in other words, in Kerala, for the years 2018-2024, nearly 33 per cent of the

total number of recorded captive elephants (509 in 2018) have died during this short period of seven years.

Looking into all aspects, the Kerala High Court ordered that henceforth, festival organisers must submit applications with all the relevant details before the authorities concerned at least one month prior to the festival.

It also directed the authorities concerned that they should ensure that elephants must get a rest period between two exhibitions which will not be less than three days; besides, the exhibitors have to ensure that elephants are given sufficient food, a continuous supply of potable water and a temporary tethering facility which is clean and spacious.

Further, it ordered that elephants must not be paraded on public roads between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and they should not be transported between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. besides elephants must get at least eight hours of rest during a continuous period of 24 hours.

# Am I a toy in your hands: Chhagan asks Ajit after exclusion from Cabinet expansion

AGENCIES  
NASHIK, DEC 17

Upset over his exclusion in the recent Cabinet expansion, senior NCP legislator and Samata Parishad founder, Chhagan Bhujbal on Tuesday slammed the party President and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, Ajit Pawar and Working President Praful Patel and asked whether he was a "toy in their hands."

Bhujbal, who is sulking over not getting a ministerial berth decided to skip the ongoing Winter Session of the House and reached Nashik on Tuesday.

He met a large number of supporters and declared that he would find out who had denied him the ministerial berth despite Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis being in favour of his induction into the Cabinet. Chhagan Bhujbal told his supporters at Nashik that he would soon take a decision on the future course of action.

"Ajit Pawar and Praful Patel had said that they



will discuss with me about giving me a ministerial berth. But they did not sit down for a discussion. No one from Ajit Pawar or Praful Patel's office called me. I am not a toy in their hands. If I resign, what will the people of my constituency think if I decide to consider their offer to go to Rajya Sabha," he commented.

Targeting Ajit Pawar and Praful Patel, Bhujbal further said, "Chhagan Bhujbal is not that kind of a person who if told to sit down will sit down and if told to stand up, will stand up."

"I will discuss with all the workers in the state and think about the next step. In a democracy, everyone has the right to express his or her views. I am trying to find out who rejected me for the ministerial post.

"The decision for every party is taken by the party chief. Just like Devendra Fadnavis takes the decision for the Shiv Sena. Similarly, Ajit Pawar takes the decision for our group," said Bhujbal.

"Chief Minister Fadnavis had insisted that I

should be in the Cabinet. I have confirmed this myself. I did not declare my name in the Lok Sabha.

"The Rajya Sabha seat came up. I said 'let me go', but I was not given a ticket. Party legislator Makrand Patil's brother Nitin Patil was given a nomination.

"I have been here for 40 years. At that time, the party told me that I was needed in the state and asked me to contest the Assembly election. I fought and won.

"Now the party has offered me a Rajya Sabha seat saying that as Makrand Patil has been inducted into the Cabinet his brother Nitin Patil will be asked to resign from the Rajya Sabha," said Bhujbal.

He added that he has rejected the party's offer as it would be a betrayal of the electorate from the Yevala constituency who overwhelmingly voted for him.

"I contested the election and won. My workers risked their lives for my victory. What can I tell them? So I cannot

resign from the Legislative Assembly now. If I want to go to the Rajya Sabha, I will have to resign from the Legislative Assembly. I told them that I will leave after two years. Till then, I will solve whatever issues there are in the constituency.

"After that, they said that we will discuss. But they did not sit down for a discussion," said Chhagan Bhujbal.

"Everyone wants a ministerial berth. The issue is not about the ministerial berth, but the way it was disregarded.

"Union Minister Amit Shah had personally observed that Chhagan Bhujbal should contest the General Elections from the Nashik seat. All preparations were made, a lot of supporters approached me. If they wanted to make me contest, then they should have announced my name. They took a month for that and thereafter I announced my withdrawal from contesting the General Election from Nashik," he said.

# 98.5 pc land records digitised under Central scheme: Rural Development Minister

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

Almost 98.50 per cent of the existing land records (record of rights) have been digitised in the country under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP), the Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

In a reply in the Lok Sabha, Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that the Government has been implementing a comprehensive programme for digitisation and computerisation of land records and registration processes under DILRMP, with 100 per cent financial assistance from Central Government since 2016-17.

The Minister said, "The objective of this scheme is to accelerate and complete the modernisation and digitisation of land records, ensuring that rural land records are accurate, up-to-date, and



seamlessly integrated with various Government Schemes and Banking Sector." Highlighting areas of slow progress, he said, "Some of the areas of northeastern states do not have land records like other States due to community ownership and the Union Territory of Ladakh has started digitisation in the last couple of years."

Elaborating on measures taken by the Government for achieving 100 per cent digitisation of land records across all States and UTs, the Minis-

ter said, "The Department is regularly monitoring the implementation of the DILRMP with concerned officials of States/UTs, through regular video conferences, review meetings, regional review meetings and field visits by the senior officers of the Department."

The Minister said the Department of Expenditure had issued Scheme Guidelines on the 'Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2024-25' on August 9, 2024.

# MORE THAN 880,000 PEOPLE DISPLACED IN SYRIA: UN

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, DEC 17

More than 880,000 people have been displaced since the latest escalation of hostilities in Syria, UN humanitarian said.

UN partners estimated that around 6 per cent of the displaced are living with at least one form of disability, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Return movements remain dynamic, with partners recording more than 220,000 returnees yesterday (Sunday)," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said. "Additionally, over 40,000 displaced people are staying in around 250 collective centers across northeast Syria."

The office said the United Nations and partners continue to support the response by supplying food, water, cash, tents, and blankets. The world body is also deploying medical teams and sup-



plies.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross, in collaboration with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), conducted a joint mission to the Tishreen Dam's facility in Syria's Aleppo governorate on Friday for urgent and critical repairs.

UNICEF also secured

fuel to power the backup generator, enabling the safe drainage of the dam and safeguarding water supplies. Hostilities near the dam last week led to an extended electricity outage and disrupted water and other key services, affecting millions of people in the area.

On Monday, Tom Fletcher, UN under-secretary-

general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, met Syrian transitional authorities in Damascus to discuss the relief response. "At a time of such rapid changes and long-standing needs in the region, Fletcher's trip will also include stopovers in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan," OCHA said of his one-week Middle East

visit.

Authorities also reported a complicated flow of displaced people across the Lebanon-Syria border.

OCHA said that since December 8, Lebanese authorities recorded less than 10,000 Syrian refugees returning from Lebanon to Syria.

Meanwhile, the UN Refugee Agency reported that Lebanese authorities estimated around 30,000 displaced people returned as of Friday from Syria to Lebanon, including mostly Syrians but also Lebanese nationals, since the November 27 cessation of hostilities announcement for Lebanon.

The International Organisation for Migration reported a fluid situation with fluctuating movements continuing daily through both formal and informal border crossings. Humanitarians reported earlier that Syrian border officials abandoned their posts following the Damascus takeover.

# 'No change in status' of closed Syrian embassy in Washington: US State Department

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, DEC 17

There has been "no change in status" of the Syrian embassy in Washington that has been closed since 2014, a spokesperson for the US State Department said.

"No, there is not," Matthew Miller, the spokesperson, responded during a regular press briefing when asked by a reporter to confirm that "there's no change in status of the Syrian embassy in Washington, D.C.," Xinhua news agency reported.

Miller's remarks came a day after Syria TV, a state broadcaster now controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham -- the main militia group that toppled the government of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad -- reported that the Syrian embassy in Washington would reopen as soon as Monday.

Miller said the US government doesn't "control" the building housing the



Syrian embassy in downtown Washington, nor does it "control the operations that happen there."

On the reported raising of the Syrian opposition flag at the embassy, Miller said the decision was made by the Syrian permanent representative to the United Nations, having gained no recognition from the government of the US.

The US ordered the shutdown of the Syrian embassy and the departure of Syrian diplomats in March 2014, reasoning that the al-Assad government, facing domestic upheaval for three years at the time, committed

"atrocities" against the Syrian people.

A news advisory provided Monday by the National Press Club (NPC), a US domestic association for journalists, said the reopening of the Syrian embassy was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time, and that Debra Tice, mother of Austin Tice -- the American freelance journalist reportedly abducted in Syria who remained unaccounted for -- would attend the reopening ceremony.

Xinhua has reached out to the NPC, seeking confirmation of the embassy's reopening.

# Canada political crisis deepens, PM Trudeau faces fresh calls for resignation

AGENCIES  
TORONTO, DEC 17

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau faced fresh calls for resignation, hours after Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland quit in a surprise move after disagreeing with him over US President-elect Donald Trump's tariff threats.

A third of the ruling Liberal Party's MPs have called for a change in leadership in Canada further deepening the political crisis in the country.

On Monday evening, Canadian media outlets reported that Trudeau has not yet decided whether he will continue as Prime Minister or resign.

The number of rebel MPs who have sought his ouster has grown to nearly 60 of the 153-strong caucus in the House of Commons.

Freeland also stepped down as Canada's Finance Minister, and her resignation marked the first open dissent against Prime Min-



ister Trudeau from within his cabinet threatening his hold on power.

Liberal Party leader Trudeau lags 20 points in polls behind his main rival, Conservative Pierre Poilievre, who has tried three times since September to topple the Trudeau government and force a snap election.

"Our country today faces a grave challenge," Freeland said on social media platform X in her resignation letter, pointing to Trump's planned 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian imports.

"For the past number of weeks, you and I have found ourselves at odds about the best path forward for Canada," she wrote in her resignation

letter.

First elected to Parliament in 2013, former journalist Freeland joined Trudeau's cabinet two years later when the Liberals swept to power, holding key posts, including trade and foreign minister, and leading free trade negotiations with the EU and the United States.

Most recently, she had been tasked to help lead Canada's response to moves by the incoming Trump administration.

Canada's main trading partner is the United States, with 75 per cent of its exports each year going to its southern neighbour.

In her resignation letter, Freeland said Trudeau wanted to shuffle her to another job, to which she replied: "I have concluded that the only honest and viable path is for me to resign from the cabinet."

As finance minister, she explained the need to take Trump's tariffs threats "extremely seriously."

# New York state judge lets Trump's conviction in hush money case stand

AGENCIES  
NEW YORK, DEC 17

The state judge in the hush money case against President-Elect Donald Trump has let his conviction stand, rejecting his argument that a Supreme Court ruling on presidential immunity applied to the case.

Judge Juan Merchan's ruling casts the shadow of a criminal conviction over Trump as he prepares to assume the presidency next month.

The judge said that the Supreme Court ruling applied only to his official actions and not to his personal conduct.

The judge, however, had earlier agreed to indefinitely postpone the sentencing in the case Trump was convicted of falsifying business records because the hush money payments to a porn star were shown as legal expenses.

The payments had been made through his lawyer at the time to get the porn star to remain silent about her claims of a tryst



with him and each of the cheques were shown as separate offences giving the impression that Trump had been convicted of 34 crimes.

The case was brought by a local prosecutor, who under the New York system was elected on a Democratic Party ticket.

Trump has another petition pending in the hush money case, asking it to be thrown out because it would hamper his functioning as President.

Two federal cases against Trump have been dismissed by judges at

the request of the Special Prosecutor following his election as President.

One of the cases was about election interference because of his alleged role in the events leading to the January 6, 2021 riots by his supporters who crashed into the Capitol while Congress was in the process of certifying Joe Biden's election as President.

Trump has promised to pardon the scores of people who have been convicted of participation in the riots or have cases pending.

The other case charging him with mishandling classified documents when he left office at the end of his first term was dismissed by the judge in July on procedural grounds.

Another local election interference in Georgia is tangled up in allegations of misconduct by the prosecutor who hired her ex-boyfriend to help prosecute it.

Trump scored a victory last weekend when ABC News and its star anchor George Stephanopoulos agreed to settle a defamation suit he brought against them for having said that he had raped a woman.

The two agreed to publish their "regret" for making the allegation and to pay \$15 million to settle the case which will go to a foundation for setting up Trump's presidential library, rather than to the pockets of billionaire Trump.

Saying at a news conference on Monday, "We have to straighten out the press", Trump threatened

to go after the media that he said misreport or those who encourage them.

One of his targets, he said, was the Des Moines Register in the swing state of Iowa which published an election-eve poll that he was losing there. But he won the state by a 13 per cent margin.

Trump called the erroneous report election interference and said he would sue it.

He also criticised the Columbia University-based Pulitzer Prize Board, which awards the top US journalism prizes.

He has a libel case pending against the Pulitzer Board for a prize it gave The New York Times and The Washington Post for their reports claiming there were ties between Russia and his campaign during the 2016 election.

After a two-year enquiry, Special Counsel Robert Mueller debunked the allegations of Russian interference in elections, but the Pulitzer Board affirmed its award to the newspapers.

# PM Justin Trudeau appoints Dominic LeBlanc as Canada's new Finance Minister

AGENCIES  
OTTAWA, DEC 17

Canada's Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc was appointed as the new Finance Minister on Monday in a swearing-in ceremony held at the Rideau Hall in Ottawa.

The new Finance Minister said after the ceremony that his top priority will be lowering the cost of living for Canadians and strengthening ties with the United States.

LeBlanc, a personal friend of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau since childhood, joined Trudeau for dinner with US President-elect Donald Trump at the Mar-a-Lago resort recently. The 57-year-old New Brunswick MP, first elected in 2000, is the son of former Governor-general Romeo LeBlanc.

LeBlanc said he will keep the post of Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs.

Chrystia Freeland abruptly resigned as



the Finance Minister on Monday morning in a letter to Trudeau, saying they were at odds about the best path forward for the country.

The Liberal government's economic update was released Monday noon, revealing that the deficit was much larger than the target for the fiscal year that ended March 31.

The update put the figure at 61.9 billion Canadian dollars (\$43.5 billion) against the target of 40.1 billion Canadian dollars (\$28.2 billion).

Chrystia Freeland resigned in a blow to

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who is facing declining approval ratings and opposition from within his own party, as well as the prospect of a trade war with the US.

In her resignation letter, which was posted on X on Monday, Freeland revealed that Trudeau had informed her last week that he no longer wanted her to serve in the role and would instead offer her another cabinet position.

Trudeau did not immediately respond to the resignation, which comes just days after he met with Canada's provincial lead-

ers to outline his plans to respond to threats of a trade war with US President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office on January 20.

Trump has vowed to impose 25 per cent tariffs on goods from Canada and Mexico if the neighbouring countries do not stop what he called an "invasion" of undocumented migrants and drugs.

The Trudeau government has reportedly been developing plans to invest in increased border security and monitoring in response, but has faced mounting pressure to take a harder line on Trump.

The government was set to further present details of the border plan to the Parliament of Canada on Monday, in an economic update that was to be delivered by Freeland.

Freeland also had her differences with Trudeau on government spending and details of the update emerged after she tendered her resignation.

AGENCIES  
BERLIN, DEC 17

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a parliamentary vote of confidence on Monday, triggering early elections set for February 23. The embattled Chancellor, whose three-party coalition collapsed in November this year, decided that calling the vote was his best shot at reviving his party's flagging political fortunes.

Scholz, now leading a minority government, said the snap elections would give voters the power to "determine the political course of our country," calling the upcoming polls a critical moment for Germany's future.

The German Chancellor had called the vote in order to deliberately lose it, urging the Bundestag, or lower house of Parliament, to declare its lack of confidence in him so that the first formal step could be made towards triggering new elections.



Scholz will now ask the President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to dissolve Parliament, and to formally call new elections which have to take place within 60 days and have been pencilled in for February 23. The embattled chancellor required 367 votes of no confidence on Monday to succeed in his aim, and in the end 394 MPs obliged him. There were 207 yes votes, and 116 abstentions.

Despite the defeat, Scholz welcomed the outcome, with Bild tabloid dubbing his strategy a "kamikaze" move to dissolve Parliament and prompt elections. The rarely used mechanism has been employed by German Chancellors five times since World War II to break political stalemates. "My goal is to bring the

federal election forward," Scholz had told a packed chamber in a forceful speech. "This is about having trust in our country and not putting our future at risk."

Scholz said his aim was to shore up confidence in the future of the country, insisting: "Germany's best days lie ahead of us."

Scholz's three-way "traffic light" coalition collapsed in November after the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) quit in protest over the Chancellor's sacking of the Finance Minister, Christian Lindner, over deep disagreements around debt management.

The move left Germany with a minority government of Scholz's Social Democrats (SDP) and Greens at a time of deep economic crisis and geopolitical uncertainty.

Scholz is to remain in place as head of the government until a new administration is formed.

He used his half-hour

address in Parliament to defend his decision to push for early elections, arguing that disunity in the government could be tolerated no longer.

"Politics is not a game," he said, harshly critical of the FDP's behaviour amid accusations it had plotted the government's collapse.

"I deeply regret this damage," Scholz said. Friedrich Merz, the head of the opposition conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) who is poised to succeed Scholz as Chancellor, spoke fervently about the election being a chance to vote against the government and "a day of relief".

Germany, he said, faced a tough period if it wanted to overcome its extensive economic challenges. Germans would need to work harder, he said, as he promised fiscal rewards for those who decided to put off retirement to participate in what he called a necessary "massive national exertion drive".

# India added 15 GW of green energy capacity in April-Nov: Pralhad Joshi

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

India has added nearly 15 GW of renewable energy capacity during April-November in the current financial year, which is almost double the 7.54 GW added during the same period last year, Union New and Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Tuesday.

Addressing the CII International Energy Conference and Exhibition (IECE) here, the Minister further stated that India's total installed capacity in the non-fossil fuel energy sector has reached 214 GW, marking an increase of over 14 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Additionally, he pointed out that 2.3 GW of new capacity was added in November 2024 alone, reflecting a four-fold increase from the 566 MW added in November 2023.



Joshi reiterated the government's commitment to achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based capacity by 2030.

"What India does in renewable energy is not only keenly watched by the world, but also adopted by several countries," he remarked.

He highlighted the role of the International Solar Alliance as a formal setup for global collaboration under India's initiative with 120 countries as signatories.

Highlighting India's remarkable growth in renewable energy, Joshi said that India is not only witnessing an energy revolution but also becoming the renewable energy capital of the world.

Despite having one of the largest coal resources globally, India maintains one of the lowest per capita emissions, at one-third of the global average. The Minister highlighted that India is the only G20 nation to have ensured that the Sustainable Development

Goals made at the Paris Climate Change Summit in 2015 were fulfilled even before the deadline. He said that the ongoing transformation of India's energy sector is driven by a strong belief that achieving a Viksit Bharat by 2047 is intrinsically linked to sustainable and green growth.

The Minister also outlined several key steps taken by the Union Government to boost the growth of the renewable energy sector such as the introduction of the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, with an outlay of Rs 24,000 crore, aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing of solar panels and modules. He also mentioned the ongoing initiative to establish 50 solar parks, with a cumulative capacity of 38 GW by 2025-26.

Additionally, provisions have been made for the declaration of a trajectory

for Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) up to the year 2029-30. Joshi also said that PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana is targeting 1 crore installations by 2026-27, with an outlay of Rs 75,021 crore.

He also said that a meeting is being planned in Mumbai in January with representatives of banks, industry and state government officials to find solutions to existing bottlenecks in the renewable energy sector. He invited global leaders and industry stakeholders to partner with India in its journey toward a green and sustainable future.

The minister also launched the CII-EY Energy Transition Investment Monitor Report at the event. The conference, themed "Global Dialogue on Energy Transformation" was attended by a distinguished gathering of industry leaders, policy-makers, and experts.

# 94 pc of Indian desk workers feel urgency to master AI: Report

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, DEC 17

Amid the rising influence of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, 94 per cent of desk workers in India feel the urgency to master the advanced technology, according to a report on Tuesday.

Slack's new Workforce Index showed that AI adoption is on the rise in India with 61 per cent of Indian desk workers using AI in their jobs and 80 per cent excited about the prospect of AI replacing some tasks.

India's progress in AI adoption underscores the growing prioritisation of AI among its executives and reflects a heightened sense of urgency among business leaders to unlock its transformative potential.

The report, based on a survey of 1,029 desk workers in India, showed that although 94 per cent workers are keen to skill up on AI, 40 per cent have



Sharma, Vice President - Sales, Salesforce India.

"However, to fully harness AI's benefits, there remains uncertainty that agents can address. By introducing AI agents with clearly defined roles and guidelines, businesses can reduce worker anxiety and foster seamless integration into daily tasks," Sharma said.

While Indian workers are leading the way on AI adoption globally, the research points to some uncertainty and discomfort around AI usage. About 21 per cent of Indian workers report feeling uncomfortable admitting AI use to their managers for fear they might be seen as incompetent, lazy, or cheating.

To realise the benefits of AI, employers need to encourage employees to use the technology and equip them with the training and guidance needed to work successfully in this new era, the report suggested.

spent less than five hours total learning how to use the technology. About 30 per cent of global workers said they've had no AI training at all, including no self-directed learning or experimentation.

"India's workforce is leading the way in AI adoption, with 61 per cent of desk workers already integrating AI into their roles. This enthusiasm highlights the transformative potential of AI and its alignment with leadership priorities for innovation and upskilling," said Rahul

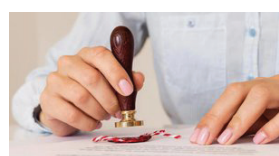
# Fadnavis tables bill to amend the Maharashtra Stamp Act

AGENCIES  
NAGPUR, DEC 17

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday presented a bill in the Assembly to amend the Maharashtra Stamp Act, 1958, to increase the stamp duty on affidavits, agreements, and related documents to Rs 500 from the present Rs 100.

The amendment, proposed on the lines of Karnataka, also increases the stamp duty on share capital to Rs 1 crore from the present Rs 50 lakh.

The state government, ahead of the Assembly election, had issued an ordinance to increase the stamp duty on October 14 as both the houses of the legislature were not in session. The state cabinet, chaired by then Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, had cleared the amendments



at the meeting held on September 30.

"Schedule I to the Maharashtra Stamp Act is amended to simplify the charge ability under the various articles and in general wherever Rs 100 is provided, it is substituted by Rs 500. Article 4 is amended to charge a minimum stamp duty of Rs 500. Affidavit needs to be executed before government or semi-government bodies are brought into the purview of this Article. Article 10 is amended to increase the stamp duty rate and maximum limit on share capital and increased share capital," reads the bill.

Further, Article 47 is amended to change the minimum stamp duty of Rs 500 and a maximum of Rs 50,000 for the instrument of partnership and to change the stamp duty of Rs 500 in case of dissolution of partnership. Articles 52 and 58 are amended on the lines of the general amendment to charge a stamp duty of Rs 500 instead of Rs 200.

According to the Revenue Department, the amendments to the Maharashtra Stamp Act will help increase the revenue from the stamp duty and registration to the tune of almost Rs 2,000 crore. Stamp duty and registration are one of the major sources of revenue mobilisation after the state GST. In 2023-24, the state had mopped up Rs 40,000 crore through stamp duty and registration.

# CBDT launches e-campaign to help taxpayers resolve income and transaction mismatches

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has launched an electronic campaign to assist taxpayers in resolving mismatches between the income and transactions reported in the Annual Information Statement (AIS) and those disclosed in Income Tax Returns (ITRs) for the financial years 2023-24 and 2021-22, according to an official statement issued on Tuesday.

The campaign also targets individuals who have taxable income or significant high-value transactions reported in their AIS but have not filed ITRs for the respective years, the statement said.

The initiative is part of the implementation of the e-Verification Scheme, 2021. As part of this cam-



campaign, informational messages have been sent via SMS and email to taxpayers and non-filers where mismatches have been identified between transactions reported in AIS and the ITRs filed.

The purpose of these messages is to remind and

guide individuals who may not have fully disclosed their income in their ITRs to take this opportunity to file revised or belated ITRs for FY 2023-24, according to the CBDT statement.

The last date to file these revised or belated ITRs is December 31, 2024.

For cases pertaining to FY 2021-22, taxpayers can file updated ITRs by the limitation date of March 31, 2025. Taxpayers can also provide their feedback, including disagreeing with the information reported in the AIS, through the AIS portal accessible via the

e-filing website (<https://www.incometax.gov.in/iec/foportal/>).

This initiative reflects the Income Tax Department's commitment to leveraging technology to simplify compliance and ensure transparency. By utilising third-party data, the department aims to create a more efficient, taxpayer-friendly system that aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat, the statement said. The CBDT encourages all eligible taxpayers to take advantage of this opportunity to fulfil their tax responsibilities and contribute to the nation's economic development. This effort not only supports the government's vision for a developed India but also promotes a culture of transparency, accountability, and voluntary compliance, it added.

# India's long-term growth story intact, equities to stay buoyant next year: Report

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, DEC 17

The structural long-term growth story for India remains intact driven by favourable demographics and stable governance, and Indian equities are likely to stay buoyant next year, a report showed on Tuesday.

Private banks, capital goods and digital commerce are projected to see strong earnings growth in 2025, according to a note by ITI Mutual Fund.

In 2024, bellwether indices - Nifty 50 and Sensex - generated positive returns of 14.32 per cent and 12.55 per cent, respectively.

While indices related to different market capitalization - large, mid and small represented by Nifty 100, Nifty Mid Cap 150



and Nifty Small Cap 250 were up by 17.80 per cent, 27.60 per cent and 30.71 per cent, respectively, on an absolute basis. (as on December 13).

"Indian equities are expected to perform strongly in the coming

year. We believe that sectors like private banks, IT, digital commerce, capital goods and pharma, etc. may have a clearer path to stronger earnings and are expected to perform well," said Rajesh Bhatia, Chief Investment Officer-

ITI AMC.

The Indian economy has shown positive indicators, including an uptick in Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections and favourable Kharif crop sowing numbers.

Rural demand has

strengthened, with the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) and exports showing positive momentum, the note stressed.

India is in the midst of an important, multi-year capital expenditure (capex) cycle, which is expected to provide a strong foundation for future economic growth.

Private sector investment is projected to hit a decadal high of Rs 55,122 billion, indicating a broad-based growth phase that could accelerate in the coming years, according to the note.

The financial services sector in India is showing promising resilience, with a narrowing gap between bank credit growth and deposit growth, which is expected to ease margin pressures.

# Women's workforce in Indian tech sector to grow 5.5 pc annually in next three years: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

The overall annual growth in the women's workforce in the tech sector is anticipated to be 5.5 per cent over the next three years, according to a report.

The report by Team-Lease Digital showed that the Women's Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) in the tech industry in India is projected to experience growth, rising from 10.8 per cent in 2022 to an estimated 14.9 per cent by 2027. Companies are actively recruiting women to lead innovation and bring unique perspectives to high-demand tech roles. As more women join the workforce in India, they account for 1.92 mn of the total tech workforce in India.

The rise of women in tech to 35 per cent by 2027 in Global Capability Centers (GCCs), highlighting in-demand roles and challenges faced.

Efforts are needed to bridge the gender gap and provide equal opportunities for women in tech. For women aspiring to make their mark in technology,



the financial year 2024-25 presents significant opportunities in various emerging and critical domains, the report said.

As per the report, the top tech roles where women are in high demand include data scientists and analytics professionals.

These are the experts who are skilled in analysing vast datasets to uncover patterns, trends, and insights that can drive innovation and efficiency. Roles including data scientist, data analyst, and ML engineer are the most sought-after roles for women in tech.

The field of cybersecurity also offers women a

chance to safeguard digital assets and protect sensitive information. Roles including security analyst, security engineer, and ethical hacker are among the popular choices for women.

Cloud computing is another tech area where women are in high demand. The demand for cloud professionals is expected to reach 2 million by 2025, driven by the increasing need for businesses to migrate to the cloud, the report said. Due to the cloud adoption acceleration, roles like cloud architect, cloud engineer, and DevOps engineer are becoming the most sought-after roles.

# Fadnavis tables bill to amend Maharashtra GST Act

AGENCIES  
NAGPUR, DEC 17

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday tabled the bill to amend the Maharashtra Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, in order to implement the decisions taken by the GST Council and to maintain uniformity in applicability of the provisions of the Central Goods and Services Act, 2017 and the state Act.

The bill proposes to make the Input Service Distributor procedure mandatory for the distribution of Input Tax Credit in respect of input services procured by the head office from a third party but attributable to both the head office and branch office or exclusively to one or more branch offices. The bill proposed not to levy a state tax on un-denatured extra-neutral alcohol or rectified spirit used for manufacture of alcoholic

liquor for human consumption.

It also proposes to empower the government to regularise non-levy or short levy of state tax where it is satisfied that such non-levy or short levy of state tax where it is satisfied that such non-levy or short levy was the result of general practice. It also proposes to specify the time of supply of services in cases where the invoice is required to be issued by the recipient of services in cases

of reverse charge supplies.

According to the bill, the registered person shall be entitled to take the input tax credit in any return for the financial years 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 which is filed up to the 13th day of November 2021.

It proposes to empower the state government to prescribe conditions and restrictions for revocation of cancellation of registration.

# 3rd Test: Akash-Bumrah salvage follow-on for India on rain-hit Day 4

AGENCIES  
BRISBANE, DEC. 17

The entertaining partnership between Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep for the 10th wicket stole the show on Day 4 as the duo saved India from follow-on and guided the side to 252/9 in 74.5 overs at stumps in the third Test against Australia on Tuesday.

In the last session of the day, India were in deep trouble after the dismissal of Ravindra Jadeja (77) as they were 33 runs behind the follow-on total. Akash joined his senior bowling partner in the middle and went on to play a memorable knock for India as the pair stitched an unbeaten 39-run partnership off 51 balls to frustrate Australia on the rain-marred day.

Despite playing his first Test on foreign soil, Akash displayed remarkable commitment and determination to face Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins in the final session of the day. With Bumrah on the



other end, Akash not only played cautiously but also hit Starc for four on cut. Before that, Bumrah also hit a six off Cummins over fine leg.

In the final over of the session, Akash edged over gully to get a boundary off Cummins to avoid a follow-on which was celebrated by the Indian dressing room and the fans in the stadium. After winning the first battle, just a ball later, Akash opened his arms and smashed Cummins for a six over midwicket which left Virat Kohli and others in awe.

Akash remained

unbeaten on 27 off 31 balls while Bumrah went not out on 10 runs as stumps were called early due to bad lights. India still trail by 193 runs and the possible result of the match depends on the weather conditions on Wednesday.

Earlier, Jadeja's composed half-century dragged India to 201/7 at tea in the rain-interrupted second session. India lost Nitish Kumar Reddy (16) and added 34 runs in 13.2 overs of the truncated session as the rain gods helped the touring party with regular interruptions since the start of play on

Day 4. Post lunch, Jadeja and Nitish Kumar Reddy weathered the storm and tackled Australian pacers Cummins and Starc well as Josh Hazlewood's calf injury restricted him to just one over in the day. The duo stitched a 53-run stand before Cummins dismissed Reddy on an inside edge that hit the stumps.

In the opening session of the day, Australia bagged two crucial wickets of Rohit Sharma (10) and Rahul (84) while India added 116 runs to the scoreboard in the extended opening session which saw 32 overs being bowled despite a brief rain interruption.

It was not an ideal start for Australia as Steve Smith dropped Rahul on the first ball of the day at the second slip off Pat Cummins. Rahul was batting on 33 at that time and went on to add 51 more runs to his tally before Smith finally redeemed himself at first slip off

Nathan Lyon.

Resuming from an overnight score of 51/4, India desperately needed someone to step up and show resilience. Rahul rose to the challenge and appeared a class apart from his teammates. The Aussies set an attacking field with three slips and a gully, leaving gaps in the covers and point region, tempting Rahul to play his trademark drives. However, he was astute enough to resist the temptation, only going for the shot when the bowlers pitched the ball firmly into his driving zone.

He struck his second half-century of the series. For Australia, Cummins and Starc shared seven wickets between them while Lyon and Hazlewood shared one scalp apiece.

Brief scores: India 252/9 in 74.5 overs (KL Rahul 84, Ravindra Jadeja 77; Pat Cummins 4-80, Mitchell Starc 3-83) trail Australia 445 (Travis Head 152, Steve Smith 101; Jasprit Bumrah 6-76) by 193 runs.

## BGT: Hazlewood likely to be out for series as scans confirm calf strain

AGENCIES  
BRISBANE, DEC. 17

Australia suffered a major injury blow as the experienced seamer Josh Hazlewood is likely to be ruled out of the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against India after the scans confirmed he had strained his right calf.

Hazlewood hurt his right calf during Australia's warm-ups on Tuesday morning. He bowled one over in the first session before leaving the field with calf soreness in the first session on Day 4.

The 33-year-old pacer then underwent scans to assess the severity of the injury. Medical scans later in the day confirmed he had strained his right calf and is likely to miss the rest of the series.

"Josh Hazlewood has sustained a right-sided calf strain, which will prevent him from playing any further part in the Test match against India in Brisbane. He is likely to miss the remainder of the Test series," Cricket Australia said in a statement as quoted by ICC.



"A squad replacement will be made in due course," said a CA spokesperson.

The pacer arrived late on the field at the start of play and appeared to struggle when he began his spell, rarely exceeding 131 kmph. During the drinks break following that over, Hazlewood engaged in an extended discussion with Pat Cummins, Steven Smith, and physio Nick Jones before leaving the field.

Coming into the third Test, Australia made only one change in their playing 11 with Hazlewood replacing Scott Boland. Hazlewood missed the second Test at Adelaide

Oval due to a side strain. In Hazlewood's likely absence, Scott Boland is firmly back in contention to play the Boxing Day Test, starting from December 26 at the MCG.

Notably, Hazlewood hurt the same calf in August ahead of Australia's limited-overs tour of the UK, which led him to miss the T20 series against Scotland, but he featured in matches against England.

Australia and India are locked at 1-1 in the five-match series, with both teams still, to this point, in the running for a World Test Championship Final spot, to be played at Lord's in June 2025.

## Gurbaz ruled out of Zimbabwe ODIs with quadriceps and hip flexor injuries

AGENCIES  
HARARE, DEC. 17

Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz has been ruled out of the three-match ODIs series against Zimbabwe due to a Grade 2B quadriceps injury along with a hip flexor injury, said the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB).

Mohammad Ishaq has been named Gurbaz's replacement for the series, scheduled to commence on Tuesday. The 19-year-old Ishaq, who played five T20Is scoring 76 runs, is yet to make his ODI debut.

ACB said confirmed spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman was rested as the team management has "decided not to rush him back" after injury.

"Additionally, after care-



ful evaluation of Mujeeb Ur Rahman's recovery process, the team management has decided not to rush him back. He will be given a rest from the #ZIMvAFG ODI series, which begins today in Harare," ACB posted on X.

Gurbaz in the three T20Is against Zimbabwe scored only 26 runs as Afghanistan, after losing the first T20I, bounced back to win the next two

and seal the series 2-1.

Mujeeb was sidelined since June due to right phalanx (hand) sprain and only returned to competitive cricket for the first time in five months at the Abu Dhabi T10 on November 21. Later, the off-spinner was added to the national side for the white-ball squad for the Zimbabwe tour.

Afghanistan updated squad: Mohammad Ishaq Shirzad (wk), Rahmat Shah, Sediqullah Atal, Darwish Rasooli, Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Fazalhaq Farooqi, AM Ghazanfar, Nangeyalia Kharote, Fareed Ahmad Malik, Ikram Alikhil, Abdul Malik, Bilal Sami, Naveed Zadran.

## AKASH-BUMRAH'S FIGHTBACK CAN PROPEL BELIEF INTO INDIA'S TOP ORDER: VETTORI

AGENCIES  
BRISBANE, DEC. 17

In an unexpected turn of events, Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep put on an unbeaten 39-run partnership to foil Australia's hopes of enforcing a follow-on on Day 4 of the Third Test at The Gabba.

With India's top order once again failing to hit the mark, barring KL Rahul who continued his fine showing in Australian conditions with a valiant 84-run innings, Australia assistant coach Daniel Vettori believes the showing by Bumrah and Akash can propel belief back into India's top order for the remainder of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

"I think we expect everything, I think we



understand that any batter on any given day can step up and deliver, so I don't think we assume that anyone's going to live up to the average. I think you look at those averages and you think there's not much there, but Bumrah has proven that. He's been able to put on partnerships, he's been proven that he can attack and he can defend, and I think Akash's better than a number 11, so the

team within themselves all understand that every wicket's vitally important, so there was no reason to back off at all," said Vettori at the post-day press conference.

Akash Deep, who is playing his first game in foreign conditions, walked into bat at 213/9 while the visitors needed 33 runs to save the side from getting a follow-on which could have potentially lost them the game.

Concerns arose for the hosts as Australia suffered a major injury blow with the experienced seamer Josh Hazlewood likely to be ruled out of the series against India after the scans confirmed he had strained his right calf. Hazlewood hurt his right calf during Australia's warm-ups on Tuesday morning. He bowled one over in the first session before leaving the field with calf soreness in the first session on Day 4.

The 33-year-old missed the second Test at Adelaide Oval due to a side strain. In Hazlewood's likely absence, Scott Boland, who replaced Josh in the 2nd Test is likely to be called into the squad for the remaining two games as confirmed by Vettori.

"He's (Josh) pretty despondent. Obviously, he felt it this morning in warm-ups and gave it a good crack, but yeah, it's just unfortunate for him too. He made a come back and put so much effort in another injury with a side strain from the last test and then to pick up a calf injury here, particularly in these circumstances, was really tough on him.

"I think Boland speaks for himself. I mean, the way he bowled in Adelaide, the way he's consistently been the back-up seamer, and every single time he's been asked to step up, particularly in Australia, he's been outstanding. So, I think that would be the logical thing to conclude," concluded Vettori.

## Akash-Bumrah partnership will give us a lot of confidence: Rahul

AGENCIES  
BRISBANE, DEC. 17

India batter KL Rahul credited tailenders Akash Deep and Jasprit Bumrah for their unbeaten 39-run partnership for the last wicket that avoided a follow-on in the third Test against Australia on Tuesday.

The pacers batted their hearts out to rescue India from a dire situation on rain-hit Day 4 in Brisbane. India were 252/9 at stumps with Akash remaining unbeaten on 27 off 31 balls while Bumrah went not out on 10 runs. India still trail by 193 runs, and the possible result of the match depends on the weather conditions on Wednesday.

"It's very good to see when the lower order chips in and scores runs. That's something that we discuss a lot in our meetings and the bowlers work really hard on their batting as well and so it's really good to see that they could go there and get that little partnership and avoid the follow-on makes a huge difference knowing that there's a bit of rain around and so much of the game has been lost to rain. We



need to find a way to stay in the game and I think Akash and Bumrah did that at the end and so a good way to end the day for us," Rahul, who scored 84 in the match, said in the press conference at the end of the day's play.

"I'm happy that they could really play some shots and very exciting shots and it was a great contest at the end, the last half an hour, when they batted not just the runs that they got, just the heart that they showed to keep away the bouncers. There's a lot of pace and bounce in the wickets, so to get behind the ball, defend really well, leave the ball and hit some nice shots is really good. It will give them confidence and will give us as a group a lot

of confidence," he added. When asked about the message from the dressing room during the last-wicket partnership between Akash and Bumrah, Rahul said it was all about avoiding rash shots and reaching the follow-on target.

"Yeah it's very simple, try and get those runs and don't have to try and do it with a boundary; you can still knock it around and get those singles because they spread the field, so those singles were there to be taken to stay a bit more patient. Because we saw just before the message went out, Akash tried to hit a boundary. So just a message to calm it down and see if they can get five or six singles and get the follow on," the opening batter said.

Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja were the only Indian batters to score half-centuries in the first innings, and the duo also stitched a 67-run stand before the former was dismissed by Nathan Lyon for 84 in the opening session of the day. Rahul praised Jadeja's crucial contribution of 77 runs and backed his batting skills.

"He was brilliant today. He has been brilliantly batting down the order for us for many, many years, that's what we expect of Jadeja and he's proven that he can do this and he's done this for so many years. Really happy that firstly I could stitch a partnership with him. When he came in it was really needed at that stage and then he went on to score 70-80 runs with the tail, which was crucial for us just to get past that follow-on firstly and see how many runs we can put on board.

"He made that possible and yeah he's a very experienced guy he's played there for so many years so he understands exactly what he needs to do and how he needs to perform and get runs for the team at that stage.

## Kane Williamson makes 156 as New Zealand sets a target of 658 for England

AGENCIES  
HAMILTON, DEC. 17

Kane Williamson made 156 as New Zealand amassed a lead of 657 runs before both England openers were dismissed to leave the hosts in a commanding position at the end of the third day of the third cricket test on Monday.

To compound an already dim day for the tourists, England captain Ben Stokes limped from the field with a recurrence of a hamstring injury.

Williamson's 33rd test century was his seventh at Seddon Park and his fifth in consecutive tests on a home ground on which he averages more than 100.

New Zealand finally was dismissed for 453 after leading by 204 on the first innings and in five overs before stumps England slumped to 18-2.

Tim Southee bowled Ben Duckett (4) off an inside edge in the second over of the England innings as the opener charged the veteran seamer who is playing his final test.

Zac Crawley (5) was dismissed by Matt Henry for the sixth time in the series, trapped lbw one over before stumps. Jacob



Bethell 9 not out and Joe Root had yet to score were at the crease at the close.

"Whenever you take a wicket for New Zealand it's special," said Southee who now has 390 test wickets. "Playing for New Zealand has been such a big part of my life and it's been such an honor to do what I've been able to do.

"Hopefully the next couple of days will be a good couple of days but an emotional couple of days too." Stokes was bowling the second ball of his 13th over when, on his follow-through, he clutched at the hamstring of his left leg. He immediately walked from the field with his hand covering the lower half of his face on which was etched both pain and

distress.

Stokes suffered a serious injury to his left hamstring while playing in The Hundred in August for the Northern Superchargers against the Manchester Originals. He was on crutches for some time and forced to miss England's test series against Sri Lanka and the first test of the subsequent series against Pakistan.

Ollie Pope took over the captaincy in Stokes' absence.

During his six-hour innings, Williamson overtook South Africa's Graeme Smith to move up to 17th place on the list of leading test run-scorers six behind another South African, Hashim Amla.

He shared partnerships

on Monday of 107 with Rachin Ravindra (44) and 92 with Daryl Mitchell (60). His century came from 137 balls and his 150 from 196 balls, the third 50 from 59 runs as New Zealand stepped up its scoring towards an expected declaration.

The entire first session on the third day was lost to rain and a damp outfield. Play resumed at 1.30 with New Zealand 136-3, Williamson 50 not out and Ravindra 2.

Williamson scored fluently throughout the day, hitting 14 fours and a six in his century. He was typically powerful square of the wicket, particularly in his use of the cut shot.

Ravindra was sometimes bogged down, at the start of the day when he added only a handful of runs in the first hour and later when he found his scoring options limited.

At times England bowled to a 7-2 offside field which plugged some scoring zones. With wide gaps on the leg side, Ravindra tried to drag a ball from Matthew Potts outside his off stump through midwicket but edged it from the outside half of the bat to Brydon Carse at mid-off.

## DC Rajouri reviews implementation of HADP; Stresses speedy processing of credit applications

JNEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 17

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, today chaired a meeting here in the Conference Hall of DC Office to review the implementation of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

The meeting was informed that a total of 249 applications have been submitted to banks to date, out of which 25 cases have been sanctioned.

The DC directed the concerned banks to prioritize and expedite the processing of pending applications. He further instructed all departments to proactively follow up the submitted cases to ensure timely approvals.

Reviewing other related schemes, the DC assessed the progress under the



Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) and the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF). He directed the Animal Husbandry Department to take immediate steps for the establishment of a Milk Processing Unit in the district to enhance dairy production and provide better marketing opportunities to farm-

ers. The status of the National Livestock Mission and the performance of the Horticulture Planning & Marketing Department were also reviewed. The DC stressed effective planning and implementation to ensure farmers benefit from these schemes. Additionally, area-wise applications received

under the Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) initiative were discussed. The DC urged all stakeholders to encourage participation and ensure widespread awareness about the scheme to maximize its outreach.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated the district administration's commitment to promote agriculture and allied sectors under HADP and other flagship schemes to improve the economic prospects of farmers and entrepreneurs in the region. The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Maqsood Ahmed, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer (DSHO), District Animal Husbandry Officer (DAHO), Lead District Manager (LDM), and other district officers.

## DLSA Kishtwar organizes awareness programme on Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act-2013

JNEWS SERVICE  
KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 17

Under the aegis of J&K Legal Services Authority, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Kishtwar on Tuesday organized an awareness program with the objective to sensitize the citizens on gender-related issues and the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Held at the District Court Complex, the awareness programme was inaugurated by Chairman District Legal Services Authority (Principal District & Sessions Judge) Manjeet Singh Manhas.

Sub Judge, Secretary DLSA Slahuddin Ahmed was the resource person. In his inaugural address, Manjeet Singh Manhas highlighted the



importance of generating awareness about legal protection against sexual harassment at workplaces. He emphasized that such harassment is not only a violation of individual dignity but also a grave social injustice that undermines professional environments, stifles growth, and perpetuates fear and inequality.

Slahuddin Ahmed provided an in-depth overview of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and addressed various aspects of gender sensitization. He explained key issues like

gender discrimination, stereotypes, prejudices, and gender equality. He also detailed the Act's provisions, including the procedure for complaints, inquiry mechanisms, punishments under the Act, and the role and responsibilities of employers, district officers, internal complaints committees and local complaints committees.

A technical session was conducted to educate stakeholders about the complaint process and inquiry procedures under the Act.

The event witnessed active participation from Addl. SP, Pawan Kumar

Sharma; BDO Trigam Chandan Manhas; BDO Hqrs Chahat Bharti; SHO P.S. Women Cell Si Sakshi Sharma; teachers nominated by the CEO, police officials nominated by SSP, members of internal complaints committees/ local complaint committees from the District Administration and District Court, Kishtwar and members of the Bar.

The programme aimed to equip stakeholders with the knowledge and tools to address workplace harassment and promote a culture of gender equality and dignity.

## Satish Sharma attends 16th annual day function at DPS Udhampur

JNEWS SERVICE  
UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 17

Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Transport, Science & Technology, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports and ARI & Training, Satish Sharma, today chaired the annual day celebration of Delhi Public School, Udhampur.

The school celebrated its annual day with great enthusiasm and cultural splendour on the unique theme "Manvantar Manthan; The Churning of Yugas".

The event showcased a mesmerising depiction of all four Yugas - Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga through a captivating dance-drama performance by the students.

While addressing the gathering, the Minister lauded the efforts of the school in blending culture, history and creativ-

ity to deliver an inspiring performance.

Congratulating the school's management for organizing this event, the Minister praised the school's dedication towards fostering artistic talent and cultural awareness among students. He encouraged the young learners to remain connected to their roots while striving for excellence in all areas of life.

He highlighted the significance of all four Vedas and its relevance in our lives. He commended the students' performances, particularly those themed around the teachings of Vedas and Sanatan values. Emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage, Satish Sharma highlighted the significance of promoting sports and co-curricular activities for holistic development.

He encouraged the students to respect and cherish their parents, grandpar-



ents and elders, fostering family values.

The Minister appreciated the teachers' efforts in conducting activities that contribute towards all-

round growth of students.

Students from various classes presented vibrant, theme-based cultural performances, showcasing their talents through

colorful costumes and artistic expressions. The program included a variety of traditional and contemporary performances, captivating the audience.

On the occasion, the Minister distributed certificates of appreciation and awards among the students excelling in academics and co-curricular activities. Later, the Minister visited Palaash and Parisha, the childcare homes for boys and girls, and inspected the facilities being extended to the home inmates there.

While interacting with the staff members and children, the Minister motivated them to work hard in academics, while keeping equal focus on extracurricular activities.

While interacting with the children, the Minister assured all possible support to them and said that all their concern/issues will be redressed at the earliest. Earlier, the Principal of DPS

Udhampur, Dr. Kunal Anand, highlighted the school's achievements in academics, sports and co-curricular activities at the UT and national levels.

He also presented the school's annual report, reflecting the institution's continuous commitment towards excellence and holistic education. The programme was attended by Member Legislative Assembly Udhampur West, Pawan Kumar Gupta, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Prem Singh, DDC Member Puran Chand, DSWO, Kanika Gupta, Ashok Sharma, Dr K C Sharma, Shyam Kalsotra, Chairman, Chamber of Commerce, Udhampur besides PRO Vice Chairman of School, Dr JC Gupta, MD of School, Vivek Gupta, Director Academics of School, Sucheta Gupta, Principal of School, Dr. Kunal Anand besides staff, students and parents.

## District Ganderbal gears up for GGW-2024 under 'Prashasan Gaon ki Ore'

JNEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 17

The District Administration Ganderbal is all set to observe Good Governance Week (GGW2024) under the nationwide campaign "Prashasan Gaon ki Ore" from December 19 to December 24, 2024.

The initiative aims to strengthen public service delivery and promote good governance practices at the grassroots level.

As part of the campaign, a series of events and activities have been planned across the district. Special Gram Sabhas will be conducted focusing on public grievance redressal through dedicated camps at the tehsil level. Additionally, special workshops on good governance practices will also be organized at the tehsil level to foster awareness

and participation.

To further engage the community, debates, painting competitions, and a district-level workshop will be held, encouraging participation from various sections of society, particularly the youth.

In a significant prelude to the week-long activities, a Special Block Diwas is scheduled to take place on December 18, 2024, in Block Sherpathri. The Block Diwas will address local grievances, promote public participation, and highlight various government schemes and services.

The District Administration has urged all stakeholders, including officials, local representatives, and citizens, to actively participate in the campaign to make 'Good Governance Week' a success.

## MLA Randhawa, Commissioner JMC take stock of developmental activities in Gandhi Nagar

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 17

Member Legislative Assembly, Vikram Randhawa, accompanied by Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), Dr. Devansh Yadav today undertook an extensive tour of Gandhi Nagar, Jammu South to take stock of developmental activities and public amenities in the area.

The visit was aimed at reviewing the ongoing developmental projects being executed under the Jammu Smart City Limited project.

During the tour, the team inspected the progress of work on a major drainage system, being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 1.5 crore from Swam Theatre to the Last More Gandhi Nagar Road. A vital component of the Locality Infrastructure Development, the project aims to address long-standing drainage issues in the area.

Emphasizing the importance of adhering to quality standards, the MLA and JMC Commissioner directed the executing agency to complete the drainage



project within the set timeline. "The project should not face any delays and that all safety and engineering norms must be adhered to during its construction" they stressed.

Calling for removing encroachments along the nullahs including illegal residential and business establishments, they said that these pose potential risk to public safety and hinder the effective functioning of the drainage

system. The MLA stressed the need to work out an effective solution to balance the development needs and the rights of the residents.

The Commissioner informed that certain steps are being taken to avoid future encroachments on or along nullahs. "Public utilities will be created in the area to make it more accessible and convenient for the general public, ensuring the space is used

for community-friendly purposes," he added.

Stressing the need for overall beautification and cleanliness of the Gandhi Nagar area, the Commissioner directed the concerned to relocate the food court currently situated at Gole Market to improve the market and reduce congestion in the area.

To stop the parking of two-wheelers at Apsara Road, the Commissioner said that space would be provided at Dussehra Ground, adding that the step would go a long way in minimizing congestion and snarl.

"Fines will be levied on defaulters who continue to park their vehicles in the designated area despite the directive," he maintained.

Among others, Deputy Commissioner (South) Lal Chand, representatives from Revenue Department and other senior officers from Jammu Municipal Corporation accompanied the Commissioner during the tour.

## J&K Students secure top positions, bag prestigious Awards at National Level Eco Hackathon at Delhi

JNEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 17

The students of Jammu and Kashmir have exceptionally shone in the National Level Eco Hackathon held at NDMC Convention Centre, Delhi on 17th December, 2024, adding one more feather in the cap of Department of School Education Jammu & Kashmir.

Two students from J&K came out with flying colors by bagging first two top positions at national level in Eco-creativity & Innovation Hackathon. With Humaira Showkat from HSS Danow Kulgam securing 1st Prize and Sheikh Anzar, HSS Fatehgarh Baramulla obtaining 2nd Prize.

Among Districts, Pulwama, Samba, Budgam and Udhampur emerged as top performers in Jammu & Kashmir; while students from Baramulla, Kulgam and Kupwara were selected for awards and presentation of their Novel and Innovative Ideas.

Besides these, Jammu and Kashmir was also awarded for ranking among 5 top contributing states/UTs across the nation.



It is worth mentioning that the Eco Creativity and Innovation Hackathon is an initiative by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change in collaboration with Amazon Future Engineer and Pi Jam Foundation, and was launched on 5th June 2024 on 'World Environment Day'.

The Jammu and Kashmir team was headed by Director School Education Kashmir, Dr. G.N.Itoo,

Director School Education Jammu and Project Director Samagra Shiksha J&K. Students, Teachers and Principals of selected schools also attended the felicitation ceremony.

The nationwide showcase was conducted at NDMC Delhi on 17th December, 2024 with 35 top ideas selected from a pool of 6.9 lakh participants. Key guests included Secretary Environment (MoEFCC), Secretary Edu-

cation (GoI) and other key dignitaries from participating states.

The Director School Education Kashmir, Dr. G.N.Itoo congratulated the students for their exceptional feat. He said, "we are committed to improve the standards of Education in JK and to develop an innovative ecosystem in our schools so that our students can become job providers in future instead of job seekers."