

**DENGUE WARNING SIGNS**

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

**Watch out for dengue warning signs!**

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

- Increase and continuous fever above 102°F
- Persistent vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool, urine or vomit
- Redness on the skin

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

# JINDRAH IMAGES

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## Security roadmap for 2025, 'undetected infiltrations' in focus as Amit Shah chairs key meet on J&K



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DEC 19

Union home minister Amit Shah Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review security in Jammu and Kashmir, with a detailed discussion on the roadmap for 2025, sources said. This was the first meeting Amit Shah chaired after the 2024 assembly elections and the formation of a popular government led by Omar Abdullah. Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor

Manoj Sinha, Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, National Investigation Agency Director General Sadanand Date, BSF Chief Daljeet Singh Chawdhary, J&K Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, J&K Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat, ADGP Law & Order Vijay Kumar and ADGP CID Nitish Kumar also attended the meeting.

Sources told news agency Amit Shah took a threadbare review of the

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## Kulgam Encounter: Top commander among 5 Hizb terrorists killed

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KULGAM, DEC 19

Five terrorists were killed, and two army personnel were injured during a fierce encounter at Kadder village of Behibagh, Kulgam, on Thursday. The security agencies have hailed the operation as a major step forward in their mission to eradicate terrorism from the region.

As per the news agency Correspondent, acting on a credible intelligence about the presence of terrorists in the area, a joint team comprising the Jammu and Kashmir Police, the Army's 34 Rashtriya Rifles, and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) launched a cordon-and-search operation late Wednesday night.

The operation culminated in a five-hour-long gunfight, during which five militants belonging to the Hizbul Mujahideen outfit were neutralized.

The slain terrorists were identified as Farooq



Ahmad Bhat, Mushtaq Ahmad Yatoo, Irfan Yaqoob, Adil Hajam, and Yasir Javed—all residents of Kulgam district. Farooq Ahmad Bhat, the oldest among them, had been active since 2015 and was a key commander of Hizbul Mujahideen. He had 37 FIRs registered against him. Mushtaq Ahmad Yatoo had joined the Hizbul Mujahideen cadre in 2020 and according to police, was also deeply entrenched in terrorist operations.

Brigadier Anirudh Chauhan, Commander of 2 Sector Rashtriya Rifles,

while addressing the press after the gun-battle, lauded the coordinated efforts of the security forces. "We achieved significant success when we received news last night that a group of Hizbul Mujahideen cadres was present in the residential area. The operation was planned meticulously and launched jointly by the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and CRPF. Farooq Ahmad Bhat, who played a pivotal role in reviving terrorism in the region, was among those neutralized.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## CM Omar meets with Amit Shah, discusses statehood restoration among other issues



**AGENCIES**  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday met with Union Home Minister Amit Shah here and discussed various key issues, including an early restoration of statehood and involving the elected government in the fight against terrorism.

Meeting Shah for the second time after taking over as the chief minister of the Union territory on October 16, Abdullah said the talks took place in a "cordial manner". "We

hope to always work in a better environment so that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are benefited from this," he added.

After the meeting that lasted 30 minutes, the chief minister told reporters that he briefed the Union home minister about the situation in the Union territory and the experience of his government in the last two months.

"Yes, I raised the issue of early restoration of statehood with the home minister," Abdullah said, adding that "we hope

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## SIA files chargesheet against Mian Qayoom in Babar Qadri murder case

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DEC 19

SIA Kashmir Thursday filed a supplementary chargesheet against senior lawyer and former president High Court Bar Association Kashmir Mian Abdul Qayoom in Babar Qadri murder case. Babar Qadri was allegedly killed by terrorists at his residence, in Hawal area of Srinagar in September 2020.

In a statement, issued to news agency, SIA said that a case FIR No.62/2020 U/S 302 IPC 7/27 I A Act 13/16/18/20/39 UAPA was registered and investigation was taken up by an SIT framed by IGP Kashmir to be headed by SP Hazratbal.

"The SIT conducted the investigation and presented the chargesheet against six accused persons on 06.05.2021 before the Special NIA Court, Srinagar.

Thereafter, further investigation in the case U/S 173 (8) CrPC was started by SDPO Zadibal. However, on 20.07.2023, PHQ J&K transferred the further investigation of the case to SIA J&K following which a SIT was formed, which was specifically tasked to unravel the larger conspiracy behind the killing," reads the statement.

It reads that the SIT took over the investigation and on the basis of sufficient oral, documentary and technical evidence arrested Mian Qayoom on 25.06.2024 as the principal conspirator behind the deceased's killing. "It was revealed during the in-depth investigation conducted by SIA SIT that Mian Qayoom, who had an inimical relation with the deceased, got Babar Qadri eliminated through terrorists of TRF and their handlers in Pakistan

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4



## Parched J&K: Deficit rainfall rises to 78% since Oct 2024, Shopian tops with 96%

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DEC 19

With the no forecast of a major weather activity till the end of this month, the deficit rainfall in Jammu and Kashmir has increased to 78 per cent during the last two and a half months with South Kashmir's Shopian topping the list with 96 per cent deficiency from October 01, 2024 to December 18,

2024.

According to the details available with the news agency, J&K is witnessing an increase in the deficit rainfall with each passing week as the prolonged dry spell has continued for the last two months at multiple places.

The deficiency increases at a time when the cold wave has tightened its grip across Kashmir where the summer capital of Jammu and

Kashmir, Srinagar has recorded the coldest night of the season at minus 6.0 degree Celsius.

Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, recorded a low of minus 5.0 degree Celsius.

In Pahalgam, the mercury settled at minus 6.8 degree Celsius while in Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, it settled at minus 7.0 degree Celsius. North

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## J&K Govt constitutes JK RERA authority

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DEC 19

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir, under the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, has established the Jammu and Kashmir Real Estate Regulatory Authority (JKRERA), effective December 16, 2024.

As per a notification issued by the J&K Housing and Urban Development Department, the authority will oversee the regulation and development of real estate activities in the region. It would be headed by Satish Chandra, IAS (Retd.), with Virender Singh Pathania, DG, Coast Guard (Retd.), as Member, ensuring compliance and efficient governance within the sector.

## Cop found dead in mysterious circumstances

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DEC 19

A policeman was found dead in mysterious conditions near district police lines in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday.

Officials said that a cop was found in an unconscious state near DPL Rajouri followed which he was shifted to nearby hospital where doctors declared him brought dead.

The deceased has been identified as Havaldar Nazir Hussain Kohali resident of Kewal Budha.

Meanwhile, police have started an investigation in this regard.

## India moving forward at 'unprecedented' speed under Modi govt: Rajnath

**AGENCIES**  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

India was left behind in terms of modern weapons and technology but it moved towards self-reliance in the defence sector at an "unprecedented" pace after the Modi government came to power, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday. In an address at an event, Singh said modern warfare is changing rapidly and there is a need to adopt high-end technology to deal with future and national security challenges.

The defence minister exhorted scientists and engineers to gain command over critical technologies, such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing in tune with the changing times, and

urged them to never forget India's heritage. Singh was speaking at the Indian National Academy of Engineering's Annual Convention at IIT Delhi.

The defence minister emphasised that the niche technologies are going to impact almost every sector in a big way in the coming times. "Right now, we are in the initial phase. Our aim should be to first gain command over these technologies, so that in the future, they can be used for the welfare of the people to fulfil their immediate basic needs," he said.

Singh pointed out that the world is continuously evolving, and the defence sector cannot remain untouched by this change. He stated that earlier, due to some reasons,



India was left behind in terms of modern weapons and technology, but ever since the Modi government came to power, the country has moved towards self-reliance in defence at an unprecedented pace, according to the defence

ministry. "Modern warfare is changing rapidly, therefore there is a need to adopt high-end technology. Towards this, we have brought out schemes like Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and Technology

Development Fund (TDF) to bring out the talent of the youth, through which their as well as the nation's dreams can come true," he said.

The iDEX was launched in 2018 to create an ecosystem to foster innovations

and encourage technological development in the defence and aerospace sector. Singh asserted that India is passing through a "defining moment" as it is exporting even those weapons which it once imported.

The defence minister credited this "revolutionary transformation" to the collective efforts of the public and private sectors, academia, and engineers and innovators. He exuded confidence that the country will soon achieve a formidable technical edge in the global arena.

Singh lauded the role of IITs in the scientific development of the country in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation and called for establishing an even better

organic relationship among the industry, research and development organisations and academia.

"In developed countries, academic campuses play an important role in progressing frontier technologies. There is a need to explore ways on how to co-opt IIT Delhi and similar institutions of higher scientific learning and excellence with the government's development campaign," he added.

"India is the youngest country at present. Our youth have the passion and the ability to innovate. Our government stands with them at every step." Singh noted that the government has been supporting the youths in their quest for innovation and

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## RTO Jammu launches major crackdown against traffic violators

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

On the direction of Transport Commissioner J&K Vishesh Pal Mahajan and under the guidance of RTO Jammu Pankaj Bhagotra, the Motor Vehicles Department Jammu conducted extensive enforcement drive on National Highway Jammu-Udhampur, Sidhra, Nagrota.

The drive focused on checking overloading by passenger Vehicle, use of mobile while driving, driving 2 wheelers Without helmet, defaced/tempered number plates and the vehicle plying without documents, rash and negligent driving, triple riding, driving under the influence of liquor etc. besides seizing unfit vehicles. The drive was conducted jointly by the ARTO Flying Squad Bipen Singh Charak and ARTO Board of Inspection Pas-



senger, Er Kuldeep Singh alongside a team of Motor vehicle Inspectors S Jasbir Singh MVI and SMVI Amanish Sharma and supporting staff.

A total of 140 vehicles were checked out of which 36 were challaned and 4 were seized under relevant sections of M.V. Act & Rules. Total expected amount from e-challans is Rs 1.42 lakh.

During the ongoing enforcement drive a road safety awareness camp was also organised at Khanpur Nagrota.

The Team RTO Jammu interacted and imparted counselling to the drivers, conductors and Vehicle owners.

The drivers were made aware about the road safety devices in the vehicle, periodic preventive maintenance of vehicles (PM) and to follow all motor vehicle, traffic rules and norms to be safe and save human lives on the road. They were further asked to install Reverse Camera in the transport vehicles for easy manoeuvring and safe driving.

## Deputy Commissioner reviews progress of eKYC for Ration Cards, Food Schemes in Poonch



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
POONCH, DECEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal on Thursday conducted a comprehensive review of the progress of eKYC of ration cards and other schemes of the Food Civil supplies and consumers affairs department.

Chairing a meeting, the DC sought detailed reports across all schemes. Assistant Director FCS & CA presented an in-depth overview of the department's operations. Key discussion points included the status of stock, supply distribu-

tion, grievance redressal mechanisms etc.

The Assistant Director reported that the district maintains sufficient reserves of essential commodities, including wheat, rice, LPG, petrol, and diesel. To enhance accessibility, the department operates seven stores, 167 fair price shops, and 20 government sale depots for ration distribution.

The Deputy Commissioner focused on the status of e-KYC, NFSA, Non-NFSA, and PMFSS schemes, categorizing them into Non-Priority Households (NPHH), Priority Households (PHH),

and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). He reviewed the challenges faced by Tehsil Supply Officers (TSOs) across various zones in the district.

Emphasizing the urgency of the eKYC process, the Deputy Commissioner instructed all TSOs to ensure 100% linkage within the current week. He warned that failure to do so could result in the cancellation of fair price shop licenses. Additionally, he reviewed the status of Aadhaar seeding and discussed the rationalization of manpower, addressing various employee-related issues.

## DC Samba inaugurates awareness mela on PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
SAMBA, DECEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma today inaugurated an awareness mela on the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana here in the DC Complex Samba. The event, organized by Electric Sub Division Samba, ED-Vijaypur, aimed to promote rooftop solar installations and spread awareness about the scheme's benefits among local residents.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Jagdish Singh; ACR, SDM Ghagwal, Chief Planning Officer Samba, Chief Education Officer and Executive Engineer JPDCL Vijaypur, along with other district officers and banking representatives. Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner empha-

sized the significance of rooftop solar installations and highlighted the various benefits available under the scheme. The DC also emphasized the crucial role of Common Service Centers (CSCs) in facilitating applications.

Executive Engineer, JPDCL ED-Vijaypur, conducted an interactive session addressing public queries regarding the scheme's implementation. He highlighted how the initiative would help reduce monthly electricity bills of consumers and announced plans to organize similar awareness camps across various blocks.

The mela witnessed participation from different stakeholders including J&K Bank representatives and CSC operators, making it a comprehensive platform for public engagement.

## DC Rajouri reviews achievements under Cooperative sector, execution of World's Largest Grain Storage Plan

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma on Thursday chaired a meeting in the DC Office Complex to review the cooperative sector achievements and the implementation of the plan for strengthening the world's largest grain storage plan.

Emphasizing the need for better implementation of cooperative schemes, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of increasing the number of food processing units across the district. He directed departments to work in close coordination, particularly Agriculture, Fisheries, and Sheep Husbandry, to ensure holistic development.

Highlighting the potential for crop-specific pro-



cessing in different areas, the Deputy Commissioner noted the scope for maize processing in Nowshera, where the functioning of the cooperative society was reviewed.

The Deputy Registrar Cooperative briefed the chair that land has been transferred at Thandapani for grain storage, and similar arrangements in Kalakote and Budhal would be expedited.

Reviewing the functioning of Self-Help

Groups (SHGs), DC Sharma emphasized their engagement in tourism activities. He directed that SHGs should be involved as tourist guides and tasked with providing trekking materials and tentage on rent to boost local tourism. The meeting was attended by senior officials, including CPO, Maqsood Ahmed, ACR, Mohd Jahangir Khan, Deputy Registrar Cooperative Adnan Mir, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, AD Fisheries, and other district and sectoral officers, who were instructed to ensure the seamless execution of plans and schemes under their respective domains.

## J&K Athletes continue to shine at National Competitions

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

Minister for Youth Services and Sports, J&K, Satish Sharma, today extended felicitations to the J&K Roller Skating team for their 6th consecutive win in the 62nd National Roller Skating Championship held in Mysuru and Coimbatore from December 5 to December 15, 2024.

The Sports Minister appreciated the athletes, saying "Winning 23 medals in a national championship is no small feat. These skaters have made the region proud with their achievements. Their hard work and dedication, coupled with the relentless efforts of their coaches, are evident in their results. My best wishes are with the team and their mentors for even greater success in the future."

Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary, Youth Services and Sports, expressed his pride in the athletes, stating "The roller skating team's success showcases the immense talent that exists in Jammu and Kashmir. It also underscores the importance of provid-



ing world-class coaching and facilities, which the Sports Council remains committed to."

Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council, also felicitated the winning team saying that this victory in roller skating and the spirited performance of the Santosh Trophy team highlight the growing sports culture in our region. Our athletes are demonstrating that with the right support, they can compete and excel at the highest levels, she added. She assured that

the Sports Council will continue to nurture and support this talent to bring further laurels to Jammu and Kashmir. Pertinently, this incredible achievement is a testament to the athletes' hard work and the specialised training provided under the guidance of J&K Sports Council coach Krish Gupta. Their rigorous practice sessions at the Skating Rink, MA Stadium, Jammu, have clearly paid off, setting a new benchmark of excellence for roller skating in the region.

## Principal Secretary reviews JPDCL functioning, asks for focus on reducing AT&C losses

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

Principal Secretary, Power Development Department (PDD), H. Rajesh Prasad, today reviewed the functioning of Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDCCL), exhorting for maximising revenue and reducing Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses.

Present in the meeting were Managing Director JPDCCL, Managing Director JKPTCL, Additional Secretaries, Chief Engineers, Chief Electrical Inspector and other JPDCCL officers.

The Principal Secretary reviewed the performance of JPDCCL's all 1400 feeders and observed significant improvements in many areas with reduced losses. He instructed the MD to conduct case studies of the best-performing districts to replicate successful practices in other areas. He also called for recognizing and rewarding high-performing officers while taking strict action against the underperformers.

He also took stock of smart metering projects and appreciated notable progress in different districts of the UT. He expressed satisfaction with the outcomes, particularly in smart metered areas, where losses had decreased. He directed



that 100 percent smart-metered areas should be ensured continuous power supply.

The Principal Secretary reiterated Government's top priority of achieving 100 percent smart metering on all Feeders and Distribution Transformers (DTs). He called for effective implementation of smart Feeder & DT Metering projects. These initiatives will improve energy accounting and load management, he added. He was informed that JPDCCL is close to completing feeder metering for all 1400 feeders, ahead of other states and UTs. He also advised addition of more features to feeder metering systems to improve tracking and remote monitoring of energy parameters, curtailments and outages. This initiative will go a long way in overall automation and modernisation of Power Distribution sector, ultimately leading to enhanced consumer satisfaction, he added.

The Principal Secretary asked the officers to focus on reducing losses at all divisional and sub-divisional levels to 15 percent. He said that J&K has one

of the lowest power tariffs in the country, while power purchase prices are much higher and require advance payments. He emphasized the importance of educating consumers to pay their dues on time.

Earlier, MD JPDCCL, Yasin Chaudhary, during his detailed presentation, provided an overview of performance parameters including billing efficiency, collection efficiency and other commercial metrics. He highlighted that the total revenue collection of JPDCCL as on November 2024 had reached Rs. 1661.54 crore, marking an increase of 20.49 percent compared to the previous year.

He also apprised that the overall power situation in Jammu had significantly improved, with unscheduled power cuts largely minimised, except on a few occasions due to low frequency/technical constraints at the northern grid, particularly during peak load times. He credited the smart metering system as a key tool in reducing wastage, leading to improvements across various aspects.

## Commerce College organises awareness program on Road Safety, Rules



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

Government SPMR College of Commerce today organised an awareness program on Road safety and Traffic rules here under the supervision of Principal of the College Prof (Dr.) Rajinder Singh. The PG (pursuing M Com) students of Commerce spoke on the theme. The Students were

updated on the road safety measures through a powerpoint presentation. The program was aimed to educate the youth regarding the traffic norms and to avoid reckless driving. It was divulged that the youth accidents have increased because of reckless driving and following speed control limits and the traffic rules can save human lives.

Asha Rani also quoted major themes that one should understand and abide by while driving. The students of M Com Ajmeet Kour, Nikhil Singh, Muwahid Khan, Devika Sharma shared their experiences and stated the Pros of taking traffic rules into consideration. The vote of thanks was presented by Dr Asha Rani.

## Bicycle Man of India Neeraj Prajapati visits District Udhampur

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 19

To promote Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and best agri practices, the Bicycle Man of India Neeraj Prajapati visited the District Udhampur today as a part of his 12 day campaign.

Neeraj Prajapati is on cycle tour of Jammu Division to promote and popularize different components of HADP in Horticulture Sector viz P-9, P15 & P-21. The tour started from Chenani Tunnel covering different orchards at Mada, Sattani, Chenani and Ghantwal. Near about 60 farmers interacted with the Bicycle Man of India.

Later, a farmers'

interaction programme was held in the office of Chief Horticulture Officer Udhampur. Around 50 farmers participated. Chief Horticulture Officer B.V. Gupta welcomed the visiting guest and gave a detailed outline of the Horticulture Sector in District Udhampur. He urged the farmers to avail the benefits of HADP Scheme especially in the creation of irrigation infrastructure, establishment of nurseries, rootstock bank etc.

Neeraj Prajapati explained the wide range of components of the Horticulture Sector under HADP. He advised the farmers to be a part of HADP Scheme for the development of Horticulture in the district.

## MVD launches special enforcement drive in Doda District

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, DECEMBER 19

The Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) Doda, under the directions of Transport Commissioner Vishesh Paul Mahajan and Deputy Commissioner Doda Harvinder Singh, conducted a rigorous enforcement drive in Doda and Bhaderwah towns. The operation, led by ARTO Rajesh Gupta and a team of MVIs, AMVIs, and Motor Vehicle Traffic Assistants (MVTAs), aimed at curbing traffic violations, particularly those involving bike riders. During the drive, 200

vehicles were inspected, and 40 were challaned for offenses such as riding without helmets, using mobile phones while driving, and failing to produce valid documents. Key violations included four cases under Section 194(B) for not wearing helmets, 17 under Section 194(D) for overloading, and seven under Section 3/181 for driving without a valid license. Additionally, four vehicles were seized, and seven driving licenses were recommended for



suspension. The total expected e-challan amount is Rs 99,500. Special attention was given to violations that contribute significantly to road accidents, such as underage riding bikes, mobile phone usage while driving, and reckless driving. Officials emphasized that helmet usage is mandatory for both riders and pillion passengers to reduce the risk of fatal injuries. Public awareness was also a focus, with pamphlets distributed to educate citizens on

the importance of adhering to traffic rules, carrying valid documents, and avoiding reckless driving. The authorities reiterated their commitment to strict enforcement of traffic laws to ensure public safety. They emphasized that future drives would prioritize serious violations like mobile usage while driving, drunk driving, rash driving, and operating unfit vehicles. Citizens were urged to cooperate by following traffic rules and adopting responsible driving habits to prevent accidents and ensure safety for all road users.

## Kishtwar admin hosts Autumn Fest, All-India Kavi Sammelan, awareness program by BOPEE

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 19

The District Administration Kishtwar, led by Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Kumar Shavan, on Thursday organized the Kishtwar Autumn Fest at the historic Chowgan Ground, Kishtwar, and an All-India Level Kavi Sammelan/Mushaira at Government Degree College, besides an Awareness Program by BOPEE.

The Autumn Fest and Awareness Program by BOPEE witnessed participation from over 30,000 people.

Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Kumar Shavan inspected the various stalls set up during the event.

Ace Para Archer and a proud daughter of Kishtwar Sheetal Devi, was warmly welcomed by the Deputy Commissioner. Local MLA Shagun Parihar was also honored during the event.

The program was inaugurated by lighting the ceremonial lamp by the guests.

The Deputy Commissioner congratulated Sheetal Devi, recognizing her as the pride of Kishtwar. He also highlighted the implementation of flagship Centrally Sponsored Schemes in the district.

Chairperson of BOPEE Meenu Mahajan, along with Secretary Shabeer



Ahmed Keen, provided insights into the mode of Entrance Examination conducted by the Board.

Renowned singers including Chaman Lehri and Zahida Taranum graced the event with their performances. Local singers, including Vivan Goswami, Shafkat Rasool, Nidhi Aryan, Suraj Aryan, Falak Bilal, and Burhan Sheikh, Anuj Manhas also captivated the audience with their talent.

A mesmerizing group dance performance by Kishtwar Act Production added to the festive atmosphere. Tavishi Anand, International gold medalist in dance, delivered an enthralling performance. All participants were honored with mementos as tokens of appreciation.

The event saw active participation from senior government functionaries including SSP Javed

Iqbal; ADC Pawan Kotwal, PO ICDS/CEO KDA Rishi Kumar Sharma; CPO Shah Nawaz Bali; ACR Idrees Lone; ACD, SDM Marwah, SDM Chatroo, SDM Paddar, and others. In another event, an All-India Level Kavi Sammelan/Mushaira was organized at the GDC Auditorium, featuring renowned poets from across the country.

Prominent poets included Shakeel Azmi, Sampad Saral, Liaquat Jaffery, Deepak Arsi, Varun Anand, Ramesh Mastana, Suhail Sidique, Adil Farhat, Ramesh Chander, Dr. Shaista, Surinder Sen, Ashok Koul, K.K. Sharma, Parvez Ibnetyab, Ab Salam Zargar, Sagar Sarfraz, Altaf Kishtwari, Om Goswami, Dr. Tariq Tamkeen, Prabhat Sharma and Ahmed Arsalan, Dr Rajinder Kumar (CMO Kishtwar).

## Good Governance Week 2024

## DC launches "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" Campaign at Ramban

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAMBAN, DECEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary today inaugurated the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign under the 'Good Governance Week 2024.'

The initiative aims to address public grievances and enhance services delivery across the district. The campaign will run from December 19 to December 24, 2024.

The launch event, held at Maitra Panchayat in Block Ramban, witnessed the participation of senior officials including ADCC Roshan Lal; ADC Varunjeet Singh; ACR S. Harpal Singh; CPO Dr. Shakeeb Ahmed Rather; ACD Shrinath Suman; GM DIC Ravinder Anand; ACP Ashfaq Ahmed and other senior functionaries from the district administration.

The Deputy Commissioner said that the campaign will focus on effective grievance redressal, improved services delivery and saturation of centrally and UT-sponsored schemes.

Talking to media persons, the Deputy Commissioner stated that "Good Governance holds the key to the nation's progress. 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' is a transformational



initiative aimed at bringing effective governance closer to rural communities, ensuring quality service delivery at the grassroots level."

Key Features of the Program includes On-the-spot grievance redressal, addressing complaints through CPGRAMS and state portals, expedited disposal of services delivery applications, dissemination of best governance practices and success stories. Additionally, workshops on good governance practices and service delivery improvement will be organized across all blocks in the district. Guidelines for the campaign have been shared

with all blocks and tehsils to ensure its successful implementation.

Several departments, including ICDS, Handicraft and Handloom, Agriculture, Horticulture, DIC, ITI, JJM, FCS&CA, UMEED, Labour and Employment, and banks, set up stalls to address public grievances and raise awareness about their schemes.

The District administration resolved more than 150 public grievances on the spot, earning appreciation from the public.

A similar camp was held in Block Gandhri, where a large number of residents participated and availed grievance redressal services.

## Interaction cum workshop on Eat Right Initiatives, FSS Regulation organized at BBIA Bhawan

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

Commissioner Food and Drugs Administration J&K Hashmat Ali Yatoo today attended One day interaction cum workshop on Eat Right Initiatives & FSS Regulation held here at BBIA Bhawan for Food Business Fraternity.

The Commissioner interacted with member units, officials from ICDS and several other Departments. He also inaugurated the stalls put up by Agriculture Department, Horticulture Department, ICDS, Social Welfare Department and those by BBIA Member Units including Sarveshwar Overseas Mills, Nav Bharat Flour Mill, VKC Nuts, Farm Fresh Milk.

BBIA President Lalit Mahajan welcomed the Commissioner Food and Drugs Administration J&K, Officials of Food Safety Department & BBIA Members in the Food Business Operator Meet. He drew the attention of the Commissioner towards the issues related to the Industrial Sector like Road Freight Subsidy to explore the Domestic as well as International Market of



various Food & Pharma products being manufactured by Industrial Units of J&K.

The gathering was also addressed by Ravnish Gulati, Gagan Jain, Archit Puri, from Industrial Units, besides Sanjeev Kumar Gupta, Jt. Commissioner Food Safety Department J&K, Madan Magotra and Dy. Commissioner Food Safety Department, Jammu.

In the course of discussion, the Commissioner, Food and Drugs Administration J&K assured that the Department will work to resolve the issues related to the Industrial Sector on priority basis.

The meeting was also attended by President J &

K Pharmaceutical Association & Resident Director, Emsure Pharmaceutical Ltd Satish Koul; Vice President, BBIA Ajay Langer; General Secretary BBIA Viraj Malhotra; Dy. Commissioner Food Safety Department Jammu Pankaj Soni; Assistant Commissioner, Food Safety Department Rajan Kapoor and a large number of Food Processing Manufacturing Units along with their Employees.

A camp was also organized to register and provide licenses to new vendors by the Commissioner, Food and Drugs Administration J&K.

General Secretary, BBIA Viraj Malhotra presented the vote of thanks.

## Divisional Commissioner reviews implementation of National Clean Air Programme in Srinagar



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 19

The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri on Thursday chaired a meeting of Srinagar Smart City Limited to review implementation of National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in Srinagar.

He also reviewed developmental works being executed under NCAP, proposal plans and Saving Action Plan.

Besides CEO SSCL/Commissioner SMC, Dr Owais Ahmad and Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, the meeting was attended by senior officers of SSCL, R&B, Social Forestry, Traffic, Transport, Pollution Control Board, I&FC, Floriculture, other concerned departments and experts.

At the outset, CEO SSCL gave a detailed presentation of developmental projects executed for implementation of NCAP and the proposed plans.

He briefed the chair regarding Annual Targets/Reduction values achieved for PM10 levels, status of funds under the National Clean Air Programme, activities undertaken by Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) to improve

air quality, projects under Annual Action Plan, major ongoing projects under NCAP, creation of green zones, upgradation of roads, landscaping of parks and procurement of Mechanical Road Sweepers and Water Sprinklers for dust control.

While addressing the meeting, Div Com directed the officers to undertake plantation activities in the medians of roads solely during the designated plantation season. He emphasized that no planting should occur during the winter months.

He directed for completion of fencing & land filling of medians and other civil works & developmental projects within the stipulated timelines.

Besides, Div Com called regulation of different sources of air pollution including industrial effluent & brick kilns.

To enhance the air quality within the city, the Div Com mandated the implementation of green landscaping along the central verges of roads, the maintenance of dust-free

footpaths and ensure pot-hole-free roads. He also gave instructions for the innovative development of areas located beneath flyovers.

## Handicrafts, Handloom Department Poonch organises one day mega awareness camp



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, DECEMBER 19

The Department of Handicrafts and Handloom organized a one-day mega awareness camp at Dak Bunglow Poonch, aimed at promoting the rich art and crafts of the Pir Panjal region.

The event was graced by the presence of Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal, as the chief guest.

Under the supervision of Assistant Director Handicrafts/Handloom Poonch, Joginder Mangol, the camp showcased a variety of traditional crafts, including Crewel embroidery, Chasme Bul-Bul blankets, Lois, Chikri woodcraft, traditional Gojri Topics, pottery, Sozni embroidery, basket

weaving, and staple embroidery. Attendees enjoyed live art stations and a vibrant folk fiesta featuring traditional Gojri and Pahari songs, celebrating the cultural heritage of the region.

During the event, the Deputy Commissioner distributed cheques to newly formed cooperative societies, sanction letters to loan recipients, and appreciation letters to eminent artisans and craftsmen from District Poonch, recognizing their contributions to preserving and promoting local handicrafts.

This initiative not only highlights the artistic talents of the region but also aims to enhance the livelihoods of local artisans through support and recognition.

## Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore: KVIB Anantnag organises Awareness Camp at Utersoo

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 19

The Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) Anantnag Thursday organized an awareness programme in Utersoo, Shangus, under the government's 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' Initiative.

The programme aimed to educate the public about various schemes implemented by KVIB, including the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JKREGP).

Experts highlighted the potential of these schemes in uplifting rural industries and creating employment opportunities through the establishment of income-generating units.

Addressing the gathering, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Anantnag, Dr. Ilyas Ahmad, emphasized the government's commitment to empowering



rural youth. He encouraged them to establish income-generating units by leveraging schemes offered by KVIB, Mission Youth, and other related departments.

He remarked that such awareness programmes serve as a platform for the youth to familiarize themselves with the numerous government schemes and programmes designed to support them.

Key speakers at the event included the District Officer KVIB Anantnag, Block Development Offi-

cer (BDO) Shangus, Lead District Manager (LDM) Anantnag, and branch managers of Jammu and Kashmir Bank (JKB) branches in Shangus, Chittergul, and Nowgam. Officers from other line departments were also present and contributed to the discussions.

The event witnessed active participation from local youth and community members, who expressed keen interest in the opportunities presented under various government initiatives.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Security roadmap...

security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly about recent terror attacks in the Union Territory. They said that the home minister also had a detailed discussion over the security roadmap for 2025, and the undetected infiltrations reported along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. "Security agencies operating on the ground gave a detailed overview of the new challenges ahead of the new year," they said.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, who heads the Unified Command (UHQ), represented various stakeholders operating in Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting took place at the Ministry of Home Affairs in North Block, Delhi.

This was the first security review meeting chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah after the assembly elections and formation of Omar Abdullah-led popular government. Earlier, similar meeting was chaired by Amit Shah in June this year.

The meeting also came in the backdrop of sporadic terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir over the past few months. In October this year seven people, including a doctor were killed in a terror attack on a construction site in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. Prior to that, there have been several terror incidents in which outside labourers were targeted.

The meeting, sources said, took note of these incidents and measures to be taken on how to stop such incidents in the future.

Ahead of the meeting, Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah also met Amit Shah to discuss several issues, including restoration of statehood and security situation in the Union Territory.

Speaking with reporters after meeting Amit Shah, Omar Abdullah said that the meeting was regarding the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, restoration of statehood. "The meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere. The experience and the hurdles that we faced in the past two months after taking over the reins following the formation of the popular government also came up for discussion during the meet," he said.

On being asked about notifying Business Rules for Jammu and Kashmir, Omar Abdullah said that the government of India has nothing to do with it and that these are to be decided by the elected government and the cabinet.

"Cabinet sub-committee will finalise the business rules, cabinet will approve it and then it will be sent to the Lt Governor. The Government of India has nothing to do with it," he remarked.

He also said that for now the responsibility of security, and law and order lies with the Lt Governor, and he only apprised the home minister that the fight against militancy cannot be fought by creating a vacuum. "I have always said that we cannot fight militancy in a vacuum, but by taking people into confidence and for that we need to take the elected representatives and the popular government in confidence," he said. KNO

Kulgam Encounter: Top...

With the elimination of these five terrorists, not only has Hizbul Mujahideen's presence in Shopian and Kulgam been wiped out, but terrorism in Kashmir has suffered a significant setback," he told reporters.

He further credited the success to the cooperation of local residents. "I would like to thank the people of Kulgam, who provided crucial information and extended their full support during the operation. The synergy of security forces and the commitment of the Indian Army to establish peace in Kashmir could be gauged by today's success," Brigadier Chauhan added.

During the encounter, two soldiers sustained gunshot injuries and were promptly evacuated to the 92 Base Hospital in Srinagar. Both are reported to be in stable condition and are expected to recover soon.

According to Javed Iqbal Matoo, DIG South Kashmir, the operation also led to the recovery of arms, ammunition, and important documents. "These items will be examined as part of the ongoing investigation and have been included in the FIR. The sustained surveillance and intelligence-sharing among security agencies proved effective in today's gun-battle," Matoo said during a press briefing.

By the security grid, elimination of these key figures is being hailed as a significant victory. "The killing of Farooq Ahmad Bhat and his associates has dealt a severe blow to Hizbul Mujahideen's capabilities in south Kashmir," Matoo said. He reiterated the security forces' resolve to root out terrorism from the valley. KNO

CM Omar meets...

that Jammu and Kashmir gets its statehood restored soon".

On whether the talks included the militancy situation in the Union territory, he said security and law and order are the responsibility of the lieutenant governor.

"I have always said and I told the home minister that 'you cannot fight militancy and terrorism in a vacuum, you will have to take the public of Jammu and Kashmir in confidence....they will also have to be brought into this battle, and for that, you will have to take into confidence their elected representatives and their elected government'," Abdullah said.

The chief minister said the talks did not include the framing of business rules for the division of powers between the elected government and the lieutenant governor's office and made it clear that the Centre had no role in it.

"Business rules have nothing to do with the government of India. We have to decide it and the Cabinet has to approve it. The Cabinet sub-committee will finalise it and then, we will send it to the LG for approval," he said.

Abdullah will be attending the Goods and Services Tax meeting in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer on December 20. To a question about the proposed hike of 28 per cent on handloom products, he said, "I have not seen such a proposal. If it comes, we will contest it. Not only us, other states will be affected too." Immediately after Abdullah's meeting ended and he left, Shah began his second meeting with Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and other senior officers to review the law-and-order situation in the Union

DC Kupwara flags-off exposure tour of CWSN



JI NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, DECEMBER 19

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today flagged-off a Bus carrying CWSN students for an exposure tour to different places from CEO Office Kupwara. Chief Education Officer (CEO) Kupwara was also present on the occasion. The Tour was organized by the Inclusive Education Wing of Chief Education Officer Kupwara under the banner of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA. Meanwhile, 39 Children with Special Needs (CWSN) enrolled in different Govern-

ment Schools across the district took part in the exposure tour. The DC appreciated the move of the Education department Kupwara and emphasized the need for organizing such programmes for these students in future as well so that they get opportunity to fulfill their dreams and serve the society.

Moreover, 12 Parents also escorted their children to explore and support them during the visit.

Parents of CWSN students also praised and applauded the move for providing such opportunities to their children.

territory.

Earlier, Abdullah met with Shah on October 23 during his first visit to the national capital after assuming office on October 16.

SIA files chargesheet...

by hatching a criminal conspiracy," it reads. It added that though Babar Qadri was very active on social and electronic media which he also used to criticize Mian Qayoom, he had a premonition on the fateful day itself. "Interestingly he went live on Facebook on 24.09.2020 afternoon, and while denouncing Mian Qayoom for his polices, also expressed his fears of being eliminated at the hands of Mian Qayoom and his coterie. Ironically, few hours later he was killed in cold blood at his own residence," it reads.

As per the statement, the SIA today presented a 340-page supplementary chargesheet against Mian Qayoom for offences U/S 302/120-B/109 IPC 13/18/18-B/38/39 UAPA. "Further investigation in the case U/S 173 (8) shall continue."

It reads that the initial chargesheet in the case had been filed before the Special NIA Court Srinagar, however, in December 2023 the High Court had transferred the trial to Jammu taking a serious view of the interference in judicial process by Mian Qayoom as well as threat and intimidation to the deceased's family. "Mian Qayoom is since then lodged in District Jail Amphalla, Jammu," it added. KNO

Parched J&K: Deficit...

Kashmir's Kupwara recorded a low of minus 6.2 degree Celsius while Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded a minimum temperature of 5.3 degree Celsius.

Meanwhile, the deficit precipitation has gone further up to 75 per cent across Jammu and Kashmir from October 01, 2024 to December 19, 2024. Against the normal precipitation of 97.1mm, J&K has recorded a rainfall of 21 mm during the period.

The highest deficit has been recorded in Shopian with 96 per cent followed by Poonch with 95 per cent while Kulgam and Budgam have recorded a deficit rainfall of 94 per cent and 90 per cent respectively.

Srinagar has recorded a deficit rainfall of 87 per cent. However, Samba is the only place across J&K where above normal rainfall has been recorded as against the normal precipitation of 41.76 mm, the station has recorded a precipitation of 47 mm during the period.

Kupwara, has recorded a deficit rainfall of 41 per cent during the period, the data reads.

Moreover, the weather is expected to remain dry for the next 24 hours while light snowfall is expected over a few higher reaches on December 21 and 22, Director Meteorological department (MeT) said.

From December 23 to 24, a dry weather condition is expected in J&K followed by a light snowfall over higher reaches towards 27th late evening or night to 28th forenoon, he said, adding that the weather would remain generally dry on December 29 & 30.

He added that the light snow is also expected at a few higher reaches on December 31st.

Furthermore, the MeT in its advisory has said that the cold wave is expected to continue at isolated scattered places.

In view of fresh snowfall, sub-freezing temperature & icy conditions over roads of important passes and higher reaches, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to follow administration and traffic advisory. KNO

India moving forward...

providing funds as per needs. "Today, India has become a hub of innovation and start-ups, due to which we are continuously gaining technological prowess. We will always stand with our engineers and innovators. With our combined efforts, we will realise our dream of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India)," he said.

The defence minister commended Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE) for playing a "crucial role" in making India self-reliant. By focusing on innovation, collaboration and modernisation, this institute has started a technological revolution in India, he said. (Agencies)

District Administration Reasi launches special camps to mark Good Governance Week 2024



JI NEWS SERVICE  
REASI, DECEMBER 19

In a significant initiative to promote transparency and citizen-centric administration, the District Administration Reasi has launched special camps and awareness drives across all tehsils to commemorate Good Governance Week 2024. The stakeholder departments, including Revenue, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and others, are actively participating in this week-long program.

As part of these drives, a range of grievances will be addressed on the spot, ensuring timely resolution and effective service delivery to the public. Citizens can

avail themselves of multiple services, including revenue document issuance, agricultural advisories, and veterinary assistance, among others. This initiative underscores the district's commitment to bridging the gap between governance and grassroots citizens. A meticulously planned schedule has been prepared to ensure smooth execution of events throughout the week. The district administration invites active participation from the public, encouraging them to engage with officials and avail the benefits of these services. This initiative is a step towards fostering accountability, efficiency, and good governance at all levels.

Formulate plans for year-round supply of green fodder: Javed Rana



JI NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana, today emphasised the need for increased fodder production and pasture improvement to coup up with the fodder demand.

The Minister was chairing a meeting at Civil Secretariat here held to review the functioning of Agrostology. Highlighting the adverse impact of grazing on natural regeneration and reduction in palatable species of grasses, Javed Rana pointed out the need to enhance the production and productivity of fodder, thereby reducing pressure on forests. He said that significant focus should be given to Agrostology which is aimed at fodder production by planting palatable grasses and tree species which provide high quality fodder. He added that

areas with high cattle density and routes of nomadic graziers should be prioritised for taking up the interventions.

Underlining the importance of green fodder round the year for sustained and economical milk production, Rana asked for formulating cropping plans to ensure round the year supply of green fodder. He said that dairy farmers have been looking towards the improved technology for continuous flow of green fodder through out the year.

During the meeting, availability of timber and firewood in far flung areas also came up for discussion. The minister directed for close coordination to ensure availability of timber at all locations. He also called for devising a system so that fallen timber does not decay, while calling for a mechanism to lower the costs of extraction and transportation costs.

DC Poonch reviews pendency of court cases across Departments

JI NEWS SERVICE  
POONCH, DECEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal, chaired a crucial meeting today at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex to review the status of pending court cases across different departments.

The meeting focused on cases awaiting resolution in the subordinate courts of District Poonch, as well as in the High Court, Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), National Green Tribunal (NGT), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and Central Information Com-

mission (CIC). The Deputy Commissioner sought comprehensive briefings from the concerned officers regarding the current status of these cases.

During the discussions, specific cases pending for replies from various departments were examined in detail. Demonstrating an unwavering commitment to expeditious justice, DC Vikas Kundal emphasized the urgency of filing replies for pending complaints and directed all concerned departments to submit reports on outstanding cases

DM Jammu chairs district level border committee meeting



JI NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

District Magistrate Sachin Kumar Vaishya, today chaired a review meeting of the District Level Standing Committee on Security along the Indo-Pak border.

Senior Superintendent of Police Joginder Singh,

along with officers from different security agencies and defence forces, attended the meeting.

The meeting emphasised the importance of inter-agency coordination and the need for continuous monitoring to ensure the safety and security of the border regions.

CEO SSCL inaugurates Intelligent Traffic Management System



JI NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 19

In a significant step towards modernizing urban management, Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) launched the Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS) through its Integrated Command & Control Centre (ICCC) located at HMT Zainakote.

The system was inaugurated by Dr. Owais Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer of SSCL, with the aim of enhancing city governance through data-driven decision-making in daily operations and crisis response. The ICCC acts as a central hub, integrating applications and services across various departments and agencies. It provides critical infrastructure, including computing power, storage, networking, and security, to support Smart City projects with 24/7 operational capabilities. Key features of the ICCC include a Data Centre, secure server farm offering 2PB storage, hybrid cloud capabilities, dedicated leased lines, and a NOVAC fire suppression system.

Network Operations Centre, equipped with a video wall and workstations maintains continuous surveillance for optimal performance. A computational system integrating applications offers secure access, work allocation

and KPI monitoring.

Additional facilities include a convention centre, war room, multi-communications hub and robust power infrastructure with fail-safe provisions.

The ITMS is a cutting-edge solution for improving traffic regulation and enforcement. Cameras have been strategically deployed at 66 key junctions in the city, monitored from the ICCC and the Office of the SSP, Traffic Police Srinagar.

Key features and benefits of ITMS Traffic Enforcement Red light violation detection (RLVD) are automatic number plate recognition (ANPR), helmet compliance, seat belt monitoring, and checks on speeding and wrong-way driving.

Under this advanced technology, a total of 1,052 cameras, including RLVD (249), ANPR (453), PTZ (101), and box cameras (249), provide comprehensive coverage.

Enhanced Safety, introduction of an e-challan system, panic buttons and connectivity through SDNet are other important aspects.

Srinagar Smart City Limited remains committed to leveraging innovative technologies to create a safer, smarter, and more efficient urban environment, setting a benchmark for other cities in India.

promptly. This is crucial for legal vetting by the Law Department before final submissions are made.

The DC also stressed the importance of maintaining transparency and accountability in handling court cases. He directed all officers involved to uphold the highest ethical standards and prioritize the community's best interests in these legal matters.

Additionally, the Deputy Commissioner

announced that all cases under SRO-43 have been resolved, with no pending matters remaining in that category. He encouraged a knowledge-sharing approach among departments to strengthen their legal capabilities and contribute to the overall development goals of Poonch district.

The meeting was attended by several key officials, including SSP Poonch, ADC Poonch, DFO, Assistant Commissioner Development, Executive Engineers from PWD, Jal Shakti, JPDCL, PMGSY, AD FCS & CA, ARTO, CEO MC

## District Hospital Ramban achieves major landmark in Surgical Excellence



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAMBAN, DECEMBER 19

The District Hospital Ramban has achieved a remarkable landmark in healthcare by successfully performing six major surgeries in a single day, under the expert guidance of Dr. Yassar Arafat and Dr. Muzammil. This extraordinary accomplishment, encompassing a range of complex surgical procedures, highlights the hospital's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional medical care with the available resources.

The procedures included four cholecystectomies for gallbladder removal, a critical surgery for patients

suffering from gallstones or inflammation, ensuring pain relief and preventing complications. Additionally, an anal fistula surgery (Fistula in Ano) was conducted to address a condition causing significant discomfort, while an open TAR (Transversus Abdominis Release) surgery was performed for abdominal wall reconstruction, improving patients' quality of life.

The success of these surgeries was supported by the skilled anesthesia team led by Dr. Riyaz Dagloo and Dr. Shahid from GMC Srinagar, ensuring patient safety and comfort operating with a single

operating theater and one surgery day per week, the hospital's surgical department continues to deliver results comparable to leading state medical institutions.

Dr. Yassar Arafat expressed gratitude to the District Administration, the Medical Superintendent of District Hospital Ramban, and the Chief Medical Officer Ramban, OT staff for their steadfast support. This milestone underscores the dedication and expertise of the hospital's surgical and support teams, setting a new benchmark in healthcare delivery for the region.

## Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore: Grievance Redressal Camps organized across all 26 Blocks of B'la

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 19

As part of the nation wide campaign 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore,' the District Administration Baramulla today organized grievance redressal camps across all the 26 blocks of the district, addressing the concerns of the public at the grassroots level.

This initiative, a key highlight of the 'Good Governance Week' celebrated from December 19 to December 24, brings the administration closer to rural areas for prompt grievance redressal and efficient service delivery.

The grievance redressal camps witnessed enthusiastic participation from citizens, including Panchayat representatives, community leaders, and residents from diverse backgrounds voicing their concerns related to essential services such as water supply, electricity, health care, education, road connectivity, and welfare schemes.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa accompanied by the officers from all the line departments hosted a grievance redressal camp at the Govt. Higher Secondary School Chandoosa Baramulla, where the con-



cerned citizens put forth their grievances seeking prompt resolution.

The DC swiftly resolved a range of issues on the spot and instructed the concerned departments to expedite the resolution of other grievances raised by the citizens.

Meanwhile, Minga Sherpa highlighted various welfare schemes run by the government such as Mission YUVA, PM-Vishwakarma, HADP and PM-Kusum, underscoring their transformative potential. He urged the public to actively and wholeheartedly take advantage of these schemes to improve their livelihoods and overall

well-being. Later, the DC visited the Community Health Centre (CHC), where he conducted a thorough inspection of the hospital's facilities. During his visit, the DC engaged with patients, personally inquiring about their satisfaction with the services and amenities provided at the facility.

Such redressal camps were held in all the 26 blocks of the district including far flung areas like Uri, Rampora Rajpora, Rafiabad Kandi Belt, with officers from all the line departments, attentively listening to and addressing the grievances raised by the concerned citizens.

## Green Drive organized at Ganpat Pul Doda



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, DECEMBER 19

The Department of Social Forestry, Jammu and Kashmir, organized a significant Green Drive today at Ganpat Pul, Doda, under the theme "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam".

The event, spearheaded by the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Social Forestry Division Doda, witnessed enthusiastic participation from district administration and the community.

Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh inaugurated the plantation drive alongside the DFO of Social Forestry Division and Tehsildar. Teams from the forest department and local volunteers actively participated in planting a variety of saplings to enhance green cover and promote environmental

awareness. The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of community participation in such initiatives and emphasized the role of trees in combating climate change, preserving biodiversity, and improving overall quality of life. The theme "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" was appreciated as a heartfelt dedication to mothers and the nurturing role trees play in sustaining life.

The Green Drive serves as a step towards making Doda greener and more sustainable, aligning with the government's vision of environmental conservation. The Department of Social Forestry extends gratitude to all participants and encourages the community to continue supporting such efforts for a healthier and greener future.

## Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore: Mega Grievance Redressal Camp held at Markundal

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 19

As part of the nation-wide 'Prashasan Gaon ki Ore' campaign, Chairman District Development Council (DDC) Bandipora, Abdul Gani Bhat along with the Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri on Thursday presided over a mega grievance redressal camp at Markundal, Hajin.

Addressing the gathering, Chairman DDC emphasized that the week-long activities as part of Prashasan Gaon ki Ore are aimed to disseminate information about various welfare schemes and ensure public grievances are addressed at their doorsteps.

He said these initiatives are part of efforts to enhance public outreach, raise awareness about government programmes and directly engage with the public to understand and resolve their issues effectively.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Com-



missioner highlighted the schemes available to the public, particularly the 'YUVA' initiative and urged the youth to take benefits of this mission.

During the event, several issues were raised by the public including concerns about the availability of health services, slow pace of work on the flood channel protection wall, uninterrupted filtered water supply and others.

Responding to the above issues, the Deputy Commissioner assured the residents that all these concerns will be addressed promptly and urged the concerned authorities to take appropriate action to resolve them at the earliest.

Among others, the event was attended by District Programme Officer Bandipora, Chief Agriculture officer, Lead Bank Manager, District Information Officer, BDO Naidkhai, public representatives and a large gathering of the general public.

missioner highlighted the introduction of various online services, including revenue records, ration cards, and Tap water and electricity connections, emphasizing the convenience and efficiency these services bring to the public.

He also underscored the importance of the Public Services Guarantee Act, which ensures the timely delivery of services within specified timelines.

The DC urged residents to take full advantage of these online services, making access to essential government services

easier and faster. During the event, the DC further urged the residents to prioritize registering their grievances with the concerned departments, assuring them that all issues would be addressed within the designated timelines.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Agricultural Officer Bandipora highlighted the transparency in the processing of applications, ensuring that all procedures are fair and accessible to the public. Programme Manager Umeed NRLM elaborated on several welfare

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, DECEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal on Thursday chaired a meeting to assess the progress of projects funded under the NABARD Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) in the district. The focus was on expediting ongoing construction of roads and bridges while resolving local disputes to ensure speedy completion of the projects.

During the meeting, the Executive Engineer pre-



sented updates on the construction status and highlighted various disputes affecting road works. The Deputy Commissioner urged concerned officials, including executive engineers and SDMs, to engage with local residents to address and resolve these issues promptly.

The Deputy Commis-

sioner stressed the need for accelerated forest and revenue clearance processes to streamline development efforts. He called for enhanced inter-departmental coordination to eliminate developmental bottlenecks and conducted a comprehensive review of road projects across all three subdi-

visions of the district. The Deputy Commissioner urged executing agencies to prioritize both physical and financial progress in order to facilitate timely infrastructure development for the community. The meeting was attended by SE PWD(R&B), ACR, CPO, DFO(T), SDM Surankote, SDM Mendhar, Executive Engineer PHE Div. Poonch, Executive Engineer and AEE PWD(R&B), Poonch, Mendhar and Surankote besides other concerned.

## Handicrafts Department Samba organizes awareness camp at Border Village Rajpura

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, DECEMBER 19

The Handicrafts Department organized an awareness camp at Rajpura, a border village in Samba district, to inform local artisans about various government schemes aimed at promoting and preserving traditional handicrafts.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from artisans, reflecting their keen interest in availing the department's support and benefits.

Addressing the gathering, Assistant Director, Handicrafts, Ms. Ekshu Sharma, emphasized the importance of preserving traditional handicrafts and



supporting local artisans. She elaborated on initiatives like Calico Printing, a unique program providing skill training and financial assistance to artisans to promote and sustain traditional craft forms.

Ms. Sharma highlighted the government's

commitment to uplifting the handicraft sector by ensuring artisans have access to resources and opportunities to thrive in today's competitive market. The camp also served as an interactive platform for artisans to raise queries about gov-

ernment schemes and gain clarity on the application process. The Handicrafts Department reiterated its dedication to empowering artisans and preserving the region's rich handicraft heritage for future generations.

### OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, SEED DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, JAMMU. E-TENDERING

Short Notice Inviting Tender: e-NIT No.07 of 2024-25 dated: 18.12.2024 under CAPEX

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Jammu & Kashmir, e-tenders are invited from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K Govt./Central Govt. Organizations for the following works:-

**Name of Work**

S. No.	Name of work	Adv. Cost (Rs. in lac)	Earners Money	Class of Contractor	Cost of Tender Document	Time of completion	Receiving/Opening Authority
1	Estimate for custom fencing including upgradation of meshwire fencing in Sidhra Nursery of Seed Development Division Jammu JKFR	0.90 lac	1800	A, B, C, D, Class	Rs.600/-	Three months	Tender Opening Committee

The e-NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, bill of quantities, (B.O.Q), Set of Terms & Conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental Website:- [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in)

**Bid Security Declaration:** Bidder to sign "Bid Security Declaration" (on Affidavit duly attested) accepting that if they withdraw or modify their bids during period validity etc., they will be suspended for the time specified in the tender documents. (As per Annexure-A)

**Position of funds: approved**  
**Position of AA/TS: accorded**

Publishing Date	18.12.2024 from 04:00 PM
Download Start Date	18.12.2024 From 04:00 PM
Bid Submission Start Date	18.12.2024 At 06:00 PM
Bid submission End Date	27.12.2024 from 02:00 PM
Date of opening of Technical Bid	28.12.2024 at 12:00 PM (in the Office of DFO SEED DIVISION, JK FRI, Janipur, Jammu).
Date of opening of Financial Bid(online)	28.12.2024 at 01:00 PM (in the Office of DFO SEED DIVISION, JK FRI Complex, Janipur, Jammu).

- The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the Departmental Website: - <https://jktenders.gov.in>.
- The price bids uploaded on the website in time will be opened on 28.12.2024 at 01:00 PM in the Office of DFO SEED DIVISION, JAMMU). In case of public holiday on the date of opening of the bid, the same will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. Sd/-

Divisional Forest Officer  
Seed Development Division,  
Jammu.

No. JKFR/SDD/J/F-181/2024-25/889-95  
Dated: 18.12.2024

DIP/J-8353/24  
Date: 19-12-24

## EDITORIAL

## Congress party's unending introspection

The delay in submitting the Fact-Finding Committee's report on the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee's (JKPCC) historic defeat in the Assembly elections raises serious questions about the party's ability to confront its internal issues and move forward. Over two months have passed since JKPCC chief Tariq Hameed Karra tasked the committee with analyzing the reasons for the electoral debacle and fixing accountability, yet the panel has failed to deliver its findings. This failure undermines the credibility of the party's efforts to address its worst-ever performance in the region, where it managed to secure only six of the total 90 assembly seats and a solitary win in the Jammu region. The formation of the Fact-Finding Committee initially signaled a commitment to introspection and reform. By visiting district headquarters and engaging with grassroots workers, the panel sought to uncover the root causes of the party's dismal performance. However, the reluctance to assign responsibility—particularly to senior leaders whose detachment from ground realities and preoccupation with internal rivalries have been consistently criticized—reflects a deeper malaise within the party. The committee's hesitancy to confront these hard truths diminishes the significance of its extensive exercise and risks alienating the very workers and supporters the party aims to rebuild its base upon. Grassroots feedback paints a grim picture of leadership failures. Workers have highlighted how senior leaders sidelined local voices, failed to craft voter-centric strategies, and allowed personal agendas to overshadow the campaign's objectives. These shortcomings, coupled with internal factionalism, eroded trust and morale among both the electorate and party workers. The committee's inability to consolidate this feedback into actionable recommendations only exacerbates the perception of disarray within Congress. The delay in submitting the report has also placed JKPCC chief Karra in a precarious position. His promise of decisive action and organizational revitalization now appears hollow. The missed deadline has not only frustrated party workers but also fueled skepticism about the seriousness of the party's reform efforts. Without a clear timeline for the report's completion, doubts about the committee's efficacy and the leadership's resolve will only deepen. To salvage its credibility, the Congress must urgently address this crisis. The Fact-Finding Committee should finalize and present its report without further delay, prioritizing transparency and accountability. Senior leaders implicated in the feedback must own up to their roles and work towards rebuilding trust with the grassroots. Moreover, the party's leadership must demonstrate a genuine commitment to reform by implementing the committee's recommendations swiftly and effectively. This moment of reckoning offers the Congress an opportunity to turn its fortunes around in Jammu and Kashmir. However, continued inaction and reluctance to confront uncomfortable truths will only reinforce its image as an organization mired in inefficiency and disconnected from ground realities. The party's future in the region hinges on its willingness to learn from its failures and take bold steps toward meaningful change.

## Education: From Kothari Commission to NEP-2020

JS RAJPUT

The most comprehensive initiative in education in post-independence India was the report of the National Commission on Education, usually referred to as the Kothari Commission. It submitted its report entitled "Education for National Development" on June 29, 1968. The first two sentences say it all: "The destiny of India is now being shaped in its classrooms. This, we believe, is no rhetoric." It was this report that led to the first national education policy of 1968. For the first time, science and mathematics became compulsory for both boys and girls up to tenth standard!

Yes, it was generally believed that only boys could handle the tough subjects of science and mathematics, and girls could opt for lighter options of spinning weaving, home science; and the like! The compulsory study of science and math was resisted and opposed as being unjust and unfair to girls! This one change transformed the lives of millions of girls and has brought global accolades to the Indian advancements in the world of science, technology, ICT and the space research. Policies once formulated and formalised deserve support in vigilant implementation, persistent monitoring, and scrutiny based on their relevance 'in the great enterprise of national reconstruction'. India today has great challenges ahead, both national as

well as global.

It has the manpower and enough experience to confront these successfully. In the third decade of the 21st century, it's the quality of education and skill acquisition that would equip India shall remain its prime contributory tool against every challenge. The content and process of education shall have to specifically equip itself against nurtured negativity, increasing mutual distrust and ballooning bitterness in public life. Solutions shall certainly not emerge from those that thrive only on negativity and are ill-equipped to see light and positivity around them.

Who must come forward and accept responsibility to normalise such an unacceptable socio-cultural environment? Why not ask the Gandhi ji? Once, before independence, one Dr Mote posed a query to Mahatma Gandhi: what he thought was the greatest problem facing his country! The expected answer could have been, in those days, related to slavery, poverty, illiteracy, ill health, or in the social context.

While narrating it in his Gandhi Katha, Narayan Desai tells the audience: that the answer was the 'callousness of the intellectuals' Narayan Desai Goes ahead: "Give it a thought. If we stand by and watch the poor blaming their poverty on fate, Gandhi is relevant today. If we can see the callousness of the intellectuals, then Gandhi is relevant today. What are the problems according to



intellectuals?

"Why X or Y has become Vice-Chancellor and not me! They think only of this and are unaware of other social issues". Their concerns for critical social, cultural, social cohesion and religious amity are minimal.

One's obvious inference would be that solutions to major national concerns shall - and must - emerge from institutions and the educated and the learned responsible for attaining their stated objectives. It includes the dilapidated structures running Sarkari schools, much sought-after private schools, and the universities.

It also includes the glittering campuses of national institutions that have brought international repute to our educational enterprise.

So, mainly it points out to teachers; from primary schools to professors of the universities, and researchers working

in institutions of science, technology, psychology, social sciences and every other area.

One wishes each one of them recalls the assessment of Gandhi shuns away the dreaded callousness and strives to create centres of dialogue and discussions on improving the life and living standards of our people, particularly the 'last man in the line' who was so dear to the Mahatma!

At first glance, the existing climate makes such a transformation rather impossible!

Despite all the odds, sincere attempts must be launched to create institutional think tanks with open boundaries that provide for healthy academic, scholarly and intellectual deliberations, not constrained but individual ideological affiliations. For an academic, who shapes the lives of numerous individuals, it is the well-being of others that must precede

his own!

And this is no rhetoric or a cliché in the Indian context and culture. For a broad-minded person, this becomes a must, an integral part of his thought and action and hence, an achievable premise.

This is the main task of every teacher preparation institution, from where it shall percolate to schools via teachers trained there, and then to the establishment and the society. After the education policies of 1968, 1986 and 1992, and a gap of around three decades, another policy formulation comes before the nation in the shape of the National Education Policy; NEP-2020. It has been under implementation for the last four years. Having been associated with the implementation and also policy formulations, one could venture to infer that the NEP-2020 was prepared with unprecedented enthusiasm from teachers, scholars aca-

demics institutions, organisations and individuals.

As the process was long overdue and rightly very extensive, it inspired active participation from practically every section of society. Unfortunately, its implementation stands hampered in certain states on grounds that may not necessarily be academic.

India has a developed well-knit interactive system of the national and state-level bodies and institutions that have learnt over the years how to arrive at a national consensus in the sectors of education and teacher education. This institutional strength of consultation, collaboration and cohesion need not be diluted in cases where the union and state governments belong to different ideological affiliations.

Intellectuals in education and research must convincingly internalize that they are making the future of individuals and creating the future of India. No one else is destined and better placed than them to reconstruct India. The moment each one of them expands his horizons, thinks holistically, and takes a long-term view, the road ahead would emerge very clearly; how to proceed individually and also collectively to sed the intellectual callousness and lead the nation on the right path.

(Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion and religious amity. He is Atal fellow with the PMML, New Delhi; views expressed are personal)

## The power of positivity

RAJYOGI BRAHMKUMAR NIKUNJJI

Nowadays there seems to be a crisis, disappointment and conflict of duality at every step of life. How do we deal with this? How do we prevent the self from becoming pessimistic or disheartened? Today the great modern disease of human consciousness is all about looking outward to find means to derive happiness without examining the inner self, values, attitudes and motives; relying and depending more on the external signals and hoping for the best. However, in practicality, life cannot be created with such hopes, as there are no shortcuts to achieving happiness. In today's

world, no individual and nothing can create a permanent state of wellbeing within us, as it is our prerogative and responsibility. The external factors can contribute, guide and inspire us but ultimately our life is what we make out of it.

True happiness or a lack of it does not come from external things but from what is inside oneself. For example, money is not the means to happiness nor is it the cause of one's unhappiness. In reality, it is our attitudes and values that determine the use or misuse of external instruments, whether that is money, a person, an event or an object. A life that has value and is worthy of living is only possible when there is a

reflective examination through which there can be illuminating change. So, to reorientate our consciousness, we would require a consciousness based on self-knowledge i.e the knowledge of the spiritual self which creates self-respect and positivity, enabling us to gain the right perspective on life which in turn would help us to deal with any kind of negativity in a balanced and less painful way. Accordingly, with positivity, we experience inner strength to cope with external issues affecting the sense of balance in our lives. When we are more positive towards ourselves, obviously we express the same attitude towards others and in all situations. Inner strength

also comes when we interact with others in such a way that love, peace and happiness are honestly expressed and experienced.

The pivotal point is "honesty" because there cannot be a sense of fulfilment through falsehood, imitation or duality expressed through attitude. Hence the need of the hour is to live a life based on "Eternal Spiritual Principles" that would allow us to keep a positive attitude towards the self and others, thereby making our life joyful rather than conflicting or a bundle of confusion. Spirituality is not a system or technique of worship or ritual, it is in essence, knowing how to lead a life and through this know-

ing there is happiness. A spiritual person has found that spark of eternal reference within, which gives him or her not only deep contentment but also a sense of purpose. The first prerequisite for spirituality is a life that functions appropriately and thinks and cares about one's self in the most decent way. Thinking and caring about one's self inappropriately creates too much dependence on others, too many needs, too many demands, too much possessiveness.

So the right way to proceed is to first examine oneself and then acknowledge the positive and the negative traits within us. By doing so, we get the courage to change whatever needs to be

transformed without any kind of fear and, without pretence. The basis of successful change for betterment is to understand the attitudes, feelings and motives that drive us for the change by accepting the original positivity of the self, the immortal goodness of the soul. It is this goodness of the self that forms the foundation of our dignity as human beings. The expression of this original goodness in our life is what is called 'divinity' which makes us truly human. So let us awaken the expression of the divine within us to live a fulfilling joyful life amidst all the chaos & crisis around.

(The views are personal)

## Guarding digital India: The urgent need for cybersecurity in a rapidly evolving digital space

VINAY PATHAK

In the fast-evolving digital landscape of India, a silent battle is being fought—not with traditional weapons but through malicious code, complex algorithms, and increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks. As the country embraces its "Digital India" initiative, the rise of cyber threats demands immediate attention. Protecting the digital future requires strong cybersecurity frameworks, skilled professionals, and widespread public awareness. The call for "Digital Guards" or "Cyber Warriors" has never been more urgent.

The scale of the digital threat is staggering. The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) recorded 53,117 security incidents in 2017. By October 2023, this number soared to an alarming 1.32 million—a twentyfold increase that exposes critical national vulnerabilities. Globally, the situation is no less concerning. Operations like INTERPOL and AFRIPOL's

2024 Operation Serengeti, which arrested over 1,000 cybercriminals across 19 African nations, underscore the scale of the problem. These operations identified over 35,000 victims and uncovered financial losses nearing \$193 million, demonstrating the global reach and devastating impact of cybercrime.

Phishing remains a primary weapon for cybercriminals, accounting for 22 per cent of all incidents. These attacks manipulate victims into revealing sensitive information or downloading malicious software. Credential theft, responsible for 16 per cent of incidents, further exposes individuals and organisations to system breaches, financial fraud, and corporate espionage. Emerging threats like mobile app malware are amplifying risks. For instance, 15 SpyLoan malware apps on Google Play, downloaded over 8 million times, went beyond data theft to harass and extort victims, underscoring cybercriminals' growing ingenuity.



The economic toll of these attacks is devastating. About 65 per cent of Indian enterprises have been forced to pay ransoms to recover critical data, with average demands reaching \$4.8 million. Recovery costs add another \$1.35 million per incident, straining even large corporations. Smaller businesses, lacking resources for robust cybersecurity measures, are particularly vulnerable. This systemic vulnerability has been termed

the "cybersecurity poverty line," where approximately 60 per cent of Indian companies lack the infrastructure and expertise to defend themselves against cyber threats.

High-traffic online shopping periods, such as Black Friday and Cyber Monday, are prime targets for cybercriminals. During these events, fraudsters employ phishing scams, fake e-commerce websites, and malware to exploit consumers and businesses alike.

Recent high-profile incidents highlight these vulnerabilities. In November 2024, a ransomware attack on Blue Yonder disrupted Starbucks' operations, forcing a return to manual processes. Similarly, McLeod Russel's system compromise sent shockwaves through the corporate sector, emphasising the interconnectedness of digital systems and the widespread disruptions that a single attack can cause.

India's cybersecurity pre-

paredness is worryingly insufficient. Only 4 per cent of Indian enterprises have robust infrastructure capable of withstanding advanced attacks. This shortfall is a national security concern, as cyberattacks transcend corporate interests, threatening essential services and critical infrastructure.

Initiatives like the Cyber Challenge 2024, a joint effort by the Delhi Police and CyberPeace Foundation, offer hope. This programme engages developers, engineers, and cybersecurity experts to craft innovative solutions using cutting-edge technologies such as AI, blockchain, and quantum computing. Collaboration with institutions like DRDO, MeITY, and the National Forensic Science University underscores the comprehensive approach needed to address these challenges. Experts emphasise that cybersecurity must move beyond being an IT department's responsibility to become a core component of every organization's strategy.

This shift involves continuous employee training, regular security audits, investments in advanced technologies, and fostering a culture of vigilance. Drawing inspiration from global models like the European Union's GDPR, India could implement stringent cybersecurity standards, offering subsidies for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to invest in security measures and penalising negligence in cyber protection.

As digital transformation accelerates across sectors such as finance, healthcare, education, and government services, robust cybersecurity is no longer optional—it is a fundamental necessity. The path forward demands a collaborative effort. Government agencies, private enterprises, educational institutions, and cybersecurity professionals must unite to build a resilient digital ecosystem.

(The writer is Assistant Professor Indian institute of information technology sonapat Haryana; views are personal)

## Gujarat's Amit Mandali explains how Ayushman Bharat became his lifeline in liver treatment

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

Amit Mandali, a resident of Patdi tehsil of Surendranagar district of Gujarat, was facing a life-threatening health condition sometime ago. Faced with financial hardships and family turmoil over his liver infection, Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) came to his rescue and emerged as a lifeline for the family.

Under the flagship scheme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government, Amit Mandali got his entire hospitalisation and treatment done for free. Today, he and his family are highly happy and relieved to have overcome the life-threatening ailment.

Amit is getting healthy



again, marking the return of happiness and joy to his family. He and his family are highly grateful to PM Modi for the Ayushman scheme.

Expressing gratitude to PM Modi, they submitted: "If the Ayushman card was not there, he would not have got the treatment at

a private hospital."

Amit Mandali's family comprises a son and wife as well as old parents.

The family's financial conditions are not strong and hence, when afflicted with the disease, their world came crashing down.

The family was broken

and filled with sorrow, when one day, they found that Amit's liver was damaged.

The situation became grimmer as he remained the sole earning member of the family.

He and his family were not in a position to bear the expenses at a private hospital.

At that moment, Ayushman Card scheme became his lifeline.

He visited IKDRC, Ahmedabad for treatment. The complete treatment and the expenses were taken care of, under the Ayushman Bharat card. Notably, AB PM-JAY is one of the biggest welfare schemes of PM Modi-led government, under which health cover of Rs 5 lakhs is provided to every family, amounting to approximately 55 crore

beneficiaries, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.

The ambit of the scheme has been on constant expansion, after its launch in 2018.

Recently, the scheme was expanded to cover all senior citizens, at 70 years of age and above, irrespective of the income slab.

Initially, 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable families comprising the bottom 40 per cent of the country's population were covered under the scheme.

In January 2022, the beneficiary base was revised to 12 crore families. The scheme was further expanded to cover 37 lakh ASHAs working across the country and their families for free healthcare benefits.

## Indian medical devices sector estimated to grow to \$30 billion by 2030: Anupriya Patel

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

The Indian medical devices, a sunrise sector in the country with growth potential, is estimated to grow to \$30 billion by 2030, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel said on Thursday.

Addressing the plenary session at the 21st Health Summit of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Patel noted that India is the fourth largest medical devices market in Asia after Japan, China, and South Korea. The country is also among the top 20 global medical device markets in the world. "The medical device sector in India is recognised as a sunrise sector because of its immense growth potential driven by the country's increasing healthcare needs,



technological innovations, government support, and emerging market opportunities," Patel said. "The size of the Indian medical devices sector is estimated to be around \$14 billion and it is expected to grow to \$30 billion by 2030," she noted. The MoS added that the MedTech industry acts as the catalyst linking patients, payors, providers, and regulators to create a stronger and more equitable healthcare

system. It also "holds the promise of revolutionising healthcare delivery and outcomes, both in India and globally".

She also informed about the launch of the Scheme for Promotion of Medical Devices Parks with a Rs 400 crore outlay, providing Rs 100 crore each to Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh for infrastructure development.

## Walking speed can predict metabolic health in obese people: Study

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

Walking speed can be a quick, equipment-free tool for identifying metabolic health risks among people with obesity, according to a study.

The study, published in the Scientific Reports journal, suggests that a faster walking pace can prevent metabolic diseases in obese people. More than helping in increasing mobility, it can also signal poor health. Past studies have suggested that a slow walking speed is correlated with the development of cardiovascular diseases and an increased risk of mortality in the elderly.

The study by researchers from Doshisha University in Japan explored the connection between subjective walking speed and metabolic disease risk, particularly in individuals



with obesity. The findings suggest that assessing how a person perceives their walking pace relative to peers could become a vital tool for public health.

"This study clarified that even individuals with obesity, who are at higher risk for metabolic diseases, have lower odds of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and dyslipidemia if they report a fast subjective walking speed," said

Prof. Kojiro Ishii from the varsity.

The researchers said that subjective walking speed is self-reported and readily incorporated into standard examinations, unlike objective walking speed, which needs resources, time, and space to assess.

According to the study, individuals who walk quickly may be more fit and have a lower risk of

metabolic diseases.

The team explained that walking fast can lead to better cardiorespiratory fitness, associated with lower levels of inflammation and oxidative stress - two key drivers of metabolic diseases.

The study assessed the walking speed of 8,578 individuals with obesity, 9,626 individuals with high waist circumference, and 6,742 meeting both criteria.

The results showed people who walked faster had significantly lower risks of diabetes (30 per cent lower) and smaller but notable reductions in the risks of hypertension and dyslipidemia.

"Promoting a faster walking pace may be a helpful individual behaviour to help prevent metabolic diseases, particularly in individuals with obesity," Dr. Ishii said.

## 1st malaria vaccine shows promise against rising cases: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

The first blood-stage malaria vaccine RH5.1/Matrix-M has the potential to be a component within a developing malaria vaccine strategy, said a report on Thursday.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, showed that there are 11 other malaria vaccines currently in Phase II development.

As per a recent study by researchers in Burkina Faso and the UK, RH5.1/Matrix-M is safe, effective, and highly immunogenic.

The double-blind, randomised, controlled, phase 2b trial, analysed 361 children between the ages of 5 and 17 months showed that RH5.1/Matrix-M is 55 per cent effective against clinical malaria when administered in a delayed third-dose regi-



men at 0, 1, and 5 months.

Further, the vaccine demonstrated over 80 per cent efficacy against high levels of malaria parasites, which indicates the vaccine would be effective at preventing severe disease. RH5.1/Matrix-M was found to be generally safe and well-tolerated, with no serious adverse events being reported, revealed the findings published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases.

"RH5.1/Matrix-M has the potential to be the first blood-stage malaria vaccine brought to market. This could be a much-needed addition to the

currently available malaria vaccines and provide an important second line of defense for those most at risk of contracting malaria," said Stephanie Kurdach, Infectious Disease Analyst at GlobalData.

Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease, caused by parasitic Plasmodium protozoans, spread primarily through the bite of an infected female Anopheles mosquito. Typically, the symptoms can range from fever, chills, and headache to confusion, seizures, and difficulty breathing.

Kurdach noted that although there is progress and some nations have been certified as malaria-free, the burden of malaria remains high, particularly within the World Health Organization's (WHO) African Region.

There are currently only two malaria vaccines, that are WHO prequalified and

recommended for use in children: GSK's Mosquirix and Serum Institute of India's R21/Matrix-M.

These vaccines work to intercept malaria infection by targeting the early sporozoite stage of the parasite.

However, as immunity wanes with time, sporozoites can infect the liver and lead to blood-stage clinical malaria infection.

The development of a blood-stage malaria vaccine would replace these vaccines as well provide a second line of defense.

"There are 11 other malaria vaccines currently in Phase II development, including pre-erythrocytic vaccines and blood-stage vaccines from manufacturers such as BioNTech, GSK, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and Vac4All SAS," Kurdach said

## Death rate due to diarrhoeal diseases declines in children under 5 in India: Study

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

India has seen a significant drop in mortality rates among children under five from diarrhoeal diseases between 1990 and 2021, according to a global report published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal on Thursday.

The country also has fewer children with lives lost due to premature mortality and disability due to diarrhoea during the same period, revealed the study based on the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) of 204 countries.

The findings, conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of

Washington, showed that in India, about 147 deaths per 100,000 population were reported in children under five in 1990. These dropped to more than 38 deaths per 100,000 population in 2019 and over 35 deaths per 100,000 population in 2021.

Further the death rate due to diarrhoeal diseases was between 25 and 50 per 100,000 population in males in India, while in females, it was between 50 and 100 per 100,000 population in 2021.

India, Nigeria, and Pakistan experienced the most gains due to their population sizes, with a decrease in disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) for diarrhoeal diseases.



While India saw a drop from 16.8 million (12.0-24.2) to 2.1 million (0.644-4.56), Nigeria reported a decline from 10.1 million (6.93-13.9) to 164,000

(0.452,000), and Pakistan saw a reduction from 2.47 million (1.83-3.39) to 152,000 (35,600-363,000) in DALYs, the report said. The report showed that

adenovirus, aeromonas, campylobacter, cholera, clostridium difficile, cryptosporidium, norovirus, rotavirus, salmonella, and shigella were the bacte-

ria and viruses responsible for diarrhoea-related mortality and disability in India.

Globally, the report observed a 60 per cent drop in mortality from diarrhoeal diseases, the study said.

However, it reported the highest death rates in children and the elderly, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. "In spite of the encouraging progress made combating diarrhoeal mortality, a multipronged approach is required to simultaneously tackle live-saving solutions while also prioritising preventive interventions to alleviate burdens on health systems," said Dr. Hmwe

Hmwe Kyu, study author, and associate professor at IHME.

In 2021, diarrhoeal diseases caused 1.2 million deaths worldwide, which is a substantial drop from 2.9 million deaths recorded in 1990.

The largest decrease was among children under 5 years with a 79 per cent decline, but that age group still had the highest mortality rate among all ages, followed by those 70 years and older, making it a leading cause of death across all ages.

South Asia had the highest mortality rates among those aged 70 years and older with 476 deaths per 100,000.

Major risk factors for

diarrhoeal DALYs include poor neonatal conditions such as low birthweight and preterm birth, child growth failure, unsafe water, and poor sanitation, the team said.

The decline in diarrhoeal mortality and morbidity suggests health interventions such as oral rehydration therapy, enhanced water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure, and global immunisation efforts against rotavirus are working.

The study also called for increasing adoption of WHO-recommended rotavirus vaccines; and the need to expand vaccine development to target specific pathogens that cause diarrhoeal diseases.

## Indian pharma sector 3rd largest globally, valued at \$50 bn in FY 2023-24: Centre

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

India's pharma industry is considered to be the world's third largest by volume, and in FY 2023-24 the pharmaceutical market has been valued at \$50 billion, said Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Anupriya Patel.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha Patel said that in FY 2023-24, the pharmaceutical market's domestic consumption value was at \$23.5 billion, and exports were valued at \$26.5 billion.



The Indian pharmaceutical industry has a strong presence at the global level. It is also the 14th in terms of value of production with an extremely diversified product base covering generic drugs, bulk drugs, over-the-

counter drugs, vaccines, biosimilars, and biologics. "According to National Accounts Statistics 2024, published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, total output for industry that is, pharmaceuticals,

medicinal and botanical products is Rs. 4,56,246 crores for FY 2022-23 at constant prices, of which value added is Rs. 1,75,583 crores.

9,25,811 number of persons are engaged in Pharmaceuticals, medicinal and botanical products industry during FY 2022-23," Patel said.

Meanwhile, the MoS also informed that the Department of Pharmaceuticals has set up seven National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPERs) as institutes of national importance. These insti-

tutes impart postgraduate and doctorate education, as well as conduct high-end research in various pharma specialisations.

Further, the Department has also framed a national policy to boost research, development, and innovation in pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

It is also aimed at creating an ecosystem for innovation in the sector in order for India to become a leader in drug discovery and innovative medical devices through incubating an entrepreneurial environment.

## One more confirmed Mpox patient admitted in Kannur medical college hospital

AGENCIES  
KANNUR, DEC 18

Kerala Health Minister Veena George on Wednesday urged people who came in contact with Monkeypox (Mpox) patients to inform the health department if they have any symptoms after the second case of the fatal disease was confirmed at the Kannur Government Medical College hospital.

The Health Minister confirmed the fresh incidence of the viral disease, which took the number

of such cases in the district to two. The first case of Mpox was confirmed on December 16, when a 26-year-old youth of Wayanad, who came from Abu Dhabi in UAE, tested positive for the affliction. He has been admitted in the isolation ward of KGMCH at Pariyaram.

She said both patients are undergoing treatment at KGMCH, and their route map will be published soon. The Health Minister also directed the officials to arrange for more isolation wards.

Minister Veena George said "Mpox should be treated very carefully". The disease is transmitted after symptoms appear and 21 days of isolation should be observed. She asked those coming from abroad to remain in isolation and report to the health department if they develop symptoms of Mpox. She also said awareness has been strengthened including at Airports in Kerala as part of precautionary measures to avoid further spread of the virus.

# India's solar equipment manufacturing capacity set to surge in next 2-3 years: Report

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, DEC 19

India's solar equipment manufacturing capacity is poised for robust growth over the next 2-3 years, with module and cell manufacturing capacity of around 80 GW and 50 GW respectively in the pipeline, according to a report.

This will entail a capex of nearly Rs 1 lakh crore with an estimated debt funding of nearly Rs 70,000 crore over the medium term, including investments in polysilicon and wafer capacities, it said.

India's module and cell capacity stood at around 70 GW and 8 GW respectively as of March 2024, although high-efficiency module capacity is only 50 GW. The capacity enlisted under the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers for Modules



(ALMM-I) reached 60 GW as of September 2024, although a large section is in the ramp-up phase, thus barely sufficing to meet the domestic module requirement.

The accelerated growth over the last 12 months has been an outcome of the growing ESG focus of corporates, buoyant investor interest, proactive policy support, and enhanced availability of financing avenues, the report said.

CareEdge Ratings says that capacity addition plans of around 80 GW by leading module manufacturers will entail a capex of nearly Rs 12,000 crore over the next 2-3 years.

Domestic cell capacity is expected to witness commensurate growth to reach 60 GW by FY27 with about Rs 30,000 crore worth of investments by major players over the next 2-3 years on the back of strong policy support

for progressive backward integration. The resultant capacity growth will make India a surplus market, given the annual module requirement of 40-50 GW, necessitating that the domestic players tap the export markets.

CareEdge Ratings believes that the solar segment will significantly help in India's renewable capacity growth.

India's RE capacity stood at 155 GW as of September 2024, with the solar segment being the largest contributor at 91 GW on the back of significant capacity additions over the past 7-8 years.

The rising share of RE capacity has been on account of strong policy focus, improving tariff competitiveness, and strong investor interest.

While India installed 18.5 GW of RE capacity in FY24, CareEdge Rat-

ings expects the annual RE installations to surpass 35 GW over the next two years primarily supported by a healthy pipeline of more than 100 GW.

The growth in solar capacity in the medium term will be driven by an annual tendering target of 50 GW RE capacity through renewable energy implementing agencies, the majority of which are expected from solar.

Sizeable capacity additions of about 20 GW will be contributed through rooftop solar, hybrid solar components, and off-grid solar over the next 2-3 years. Besides, solar open access capacities of 4-5 GW are likely to be added annually over the next 2-3 years, aided by ESG commitments of corporates and improving the economic viability of C&I projects, the report added.

## Fake call centre busted in Gurugram, 18 held

AGENCIES

GURUGRAM, DEC 19

A Cybercrime team of the Gurugram police busted an illegal call centre operating at Plot No 270 of Udyog Vihar, Phase-2 in Gurugram on Wednesday, the police said on Thursday.

The call centre mostly used to cheat US nationals on the pretext of providing technical support by creating a fake website of an accounting company, the police said.

According to the police, a team of the cyber crime police station led by ACP (cybercrime) Priyanshu Diwan raided the call centre following a tip-off. During the raid, the police arrested 18 people, including 8 women and the call centre operator and seized 17 CPUs along with other electronic gadgets.

The arrested accused have been identified as Gaurav Bakshi, Debashish Chatterjee, Anmol, Kanishk, Ajeesh Mathew, Kunal, Devender Devgn, Hitesh Malik, Rohit Singh,



Aryaman Thakur, Nidhi Sita, Muskan Rajput, Bhavana, Shivani, Lahinghat Haikip Sharon and Nag-mathingcho.

The police team registered a case against the accused under sections 318 (4), 319 of the BNS and the IT Act in Police Station Cyber Crime South, Gurugram and arrested the accused as per the rules.

During interrogation, it was found that the accused, Gaurav Bakshi, was the operator of this call centre, and he ran this along with his companions at the behest of his other partner.

Bakshi used to get a salary of about Rs 1.5 lakh and his other employees

used to get a salary of about Rs 30,000 per month.

"We received specific inputs that a fake call centre had cheated several US nationals on the pretext of technical support. The youths were employed at the call centre, which was being operated without a license issued by the Department of Telecommunications (DOT)," said Priyanshu Diwan, ACP (Cybercrime).

The accused was allegedly running this illegal call centre since February 2024. The accused were cheating foreign nationals in the name of providing customer care service of Software Support/Accounting Support.

## HM Shah should retract his statement on Babasaheb: Mayawati

AGENCIES

LUCKNOW, DEC 19

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Thursday demanded that Union Home Minister Amit Shah withdraw his controversial statement about Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

Addressing a press conference here, Mayawati said that followers of Babasaheb will never forgive Amit Shah and asserted that the BJP's attempts to manipulate Dalit sentiments will fail.

Mayawati also accused the Congress of hypocrisy, stating: "The Congress has consistently disrespected Babasaheb Ambedkar. Babasaheb himself advised Dalits to steer clear of the Congress."

She alleged that the Congress sought to erase Ambedkar's contributions from history, including his crucial role in drafting the Constitution. "It was (BSP founder) Kanshi Ram Ji who carried forward Babasaheb's unfinished



mission," she added.

The BSP leader also criticised the BJP for its alleged opportunism. "The BJP is no different. They exploit Dalit votes but do not genuinely honour Babasaheb. Both parties use deceptive tactics, and Dalits must remain vigilant against their machinations," she said.

Mayawati asserted that the Bahujan Samaj Party remains the only true advocate for Dalit rights, working tirelessly for their welfare. "Dalits will not be misled by the hollow politics of these parties", she declared, urging the community to stay united and cautious.

The Union Home Minister's remarks have sparked widespread protests, with opposition leaders stag-

ing demonstrations in response.

In the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, Samajwadi Party (SP) members on Thursday disrupted proceedings, holding photographs of Dr Ambedkar and raising slogans. Despite the uproar, the supplementary budget was passed before the house was adjourned indefinitely.

Before the adjournment, UP Finance Minister Suresh Khanna asserted that the BJP had shown the greatest respect for Babasaheb by establishing Panch Teerth (five sacred places) in his honour. "The Opposition, on the other hand, has disrespected Dr Ambedkar by altering the Preamble of the Constitution he drafted," he added.

The Assembly Speaker reiterated the need to respect Dr Ambedkar's contributions while urging the Opposition to focus on key issues like farmers' welfare. "Everyone respects Baba Saheb.

## CJI Sanjiv Khanna-led Bench to hear Cong leader's petition for verification of EVMs used in Haryana polls

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 19

The Supreme Court is set to hear on Friday a plea filed by Congress leaders seeking verification of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) used during the Haryana Assembly polls.

As per the causelist published on the website of the apex court, a bench headed by CJI Sanjiv Khanna and comprising Justice Sanjay Kumar will take up on December 20 the plea seeking directions to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to lay down a memorandum for the checking and verification of the original burnt memory/microcontroller of the EVM.

Last week, a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and P.B. Varale opined that the matter should be placed before the same Bench which had passed directions on EVMs in April this



year.

The Justice Nath-led Bench said that the fresh petition related to the interpretation and implementation of the previous judgment of the apex court and therefore, the registry should place the papers before the Chief Justice of India (CJI), who is the master of the roster, for passing appropriate orders as to whether the petition should be listed before the previous Bench.

In order to strengthen the integrity of the elec-

tion process in the country, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna (now CJI) and Dipankar Datta, in April this year, had passed a direction for checking and verification of the original burnt memory/microcontroller in 5 per cent of EVMs for any tampering or modification on a written request made by candidates securing second and third highest votes in an election.

The apex court said the checking and verification exercise was directed to be

undertaken by a team of engineers from the manufacturers of the EVMs, with the candidates and their representatives having the option to remain present at the time of such exercise.

The latest petition filed by Karan Singh Dalal, a former 5-time MLA, said that the ECI has not issued any procedure for checking and verification of the original burnt memory/microcontroller of the four components of the EVM (Control Unit, Ballot Unit, VVPAT and Symbol Loading Unit) in terms of SC judgment.

The plea sought directions to the poll body to lay down a memorandum for checking and verification of the original burnt memory/microcontroller of the four components of the EVM (Control Unit, Ballot Unit, VVPAT and Symbol Loading Unit). It further sought that the above exercise be undertaken within eight weeks

and be made applicable to the EVM checking and verification forms dated October 14 submitted to the ECI.

The petition, filed through advocate Neha Rathi, said that the issue raised in the petition requires to be authoritatively decided by the apex court owing to significant public importance and ramifications across the country.

"The matter affects the functioning of the democracy in the country and elections being held across the country in various states, and therefore needs to be urgently and authoritatively decided," it said.

The absence of any procedure for verification of burnt memory for tampering shows reluctance on the part of the ECI to subject the original burnt memory microcontroller from any scrutiny whatsoever, contended the petition.

## Ensure immediate medical assistance to fasting farmer leader, SC tells Punjab govt

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 19

The Supreme Court on Thursday told the Punjab government to ensure immediate medical assistance and checkup for farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on fast unto death.

The 70-year-old cancer patient Dallewal has been fasting at Khanauri, the border point between Punjab and Haryana, since November 26 in support of their long-pending demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) for crops, loan waiver and reforms to improve conditions in the agricultural sector.

A bench headed by Justice Surya Kant reiterated that Dallewal should be first given medical aid and his health condition inquired.

In response, Punjab's Advocate General said that a temporary hospital has been created near the protest site but Dallewal has refused to undergo medical examination.

The apex court told the state government to persuade Dallewal to take medical assistance for a week at least while others could continue with the protest.

The matter will be heard next on Friday, when the Advocate General of Punjab will furnish medical reports of Dallewal to

the top court.

On Wednesday, the Justice Kant-led Bench said that protesting farmers are free to put their grievances directly before the apex court after it was told that the farmer leaders did not attend the meeting with the court-appointed panel.

Remarking that the court's doors are always open, it said that farmers can put forth their demands directly before the top court or through their authorised representative.

The Bench, also comprising Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, expressed concern over the deteriorating health of Dallewal and stressed that the Punjab



government should take care of his health.

On Sunday, Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav, along with Union Ministry of Home Affairs Director, Mayank

Mishra met farmer leader Dallewal on the Supreme Court's directive.

This has been the first meeting between the Union government and a farm leader since talks

with farmers remained inconclusive in February. Last week, the top court refused to entertain a fresh plea seeking directions to immediately clear the blockage of national as well as state highways in Punjab, which "alleged farmers and farmer unions" have blocked permanently for an indefinite period.

"Why are you filing repeated petitions? We are already seized of the matter and have already taken some initiatives. There is no question of repeated petitions," Justice Kant-led Bench told the PIL litigant.

"In pending PIL, we never say 'no' to any counsel. You assist us on

the fixed date, we will see what orders could be passed on the opening of highways," the apex court said.

Saying that no fresh petition should be entertained on the same subject matter, it proceeded to dismiss the fresh plea but granted liberty to the petitioner's counsel to assist in the pending matter relating to the "larger public interest issue".

In September, the Supreme Court had ordered the formation of a committee to amicably resolve the grievances of the farmers protesting at the Punjab-Haryana border.

It had suggested the panel headed by Justice

Nawab Singh, a former judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court, to hold negotiations with the protesting farmers for the removal of their tractors, trolleys, etc from the national highway for ease of the general public.

Further, the apex court had granted liberty to farmers to shift their peaceful protests to an alternative site.

Apart from Justice Nawab Singh, the panel comprised former Haryana DGP B.S. Sandhu, agricultural analyst Devender Sharma, Prof Ranjit Singh Ghuman, agricultural economist Dr Sukhpal Singh, and Prof Baldev Raj Kamboj as a special invitee.

## Punjab will not allow farmers' interests to be affected, says Agriculture Minister Khudian

AGENCIES

CHANDIGARH, DEC 19

Punjab Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian on Thursday assured farmer leaders that the state government will not allow farmers' interests to be affected by the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing.

The minister was holding in-depth discussions

with farmer unions' leaders on the draft policy of the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing here.

"The state government is concerned as this policy could have serious implications for the state and its farmers, so we want to analyse and consult on each and every aspect of the draft policy shared by the government of India," the Minister said, adding

that agriculture experts and other stakeholders will also be consulted soon to analyse it thoroughly so that not a single point is left unconsidered.

Khudian, along with Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Anurag Verma, Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission Chairman Sukhpal Singh, and Punjab Mandi Board Secretary

Ramvir appealed to the farmers to send their suggestions and comments in this regard to the Agriculture Department. Farmer Unions' leaders Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Balbir Singh Rajewal, Darshan Pal, Ruldu Singh Mansa, Satnam Singh Ajnala, and others expressed deep concerns over potential privatisation, monopolistic practices in the disguise of the policy.

## CM Vijayan and daughter would have been in jail long before Kejriwal: Congress MLA

AGENCIES

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC 19

First-time Congress legislator Mathew Kuzhalsadan on Thursday said Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his daughter Veena Vijayan would have gone to jail in her IT firm case long before former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, as the Serious Fraud

Investigation Office (SFIO) informed the Delhi High Court that their probe has been completed in the business dealings and they are awaiting orders from authorities to go forward.

It was Kuzhalsadan who first raised the issue of the Kochi-based mining company Cochin Minerals and Rutile Ltd (CMRL) having paid Rs 1.72 crore to Exalogic Solutions, the

IT firm owned by Vijayan's daughter, in the name of software services without any service being rendered by it.

His revelation came after a media report, attributing the findings to an Income Tax Department statement, first surfaced and after this, he has been pursuing the case.

The Serious Fraud Investigation Office and

the Enforcement Directorate also took up this case.

The SFIO on Wednesday informed the Delhi High Court that their probe has been completed in the business dealings between CMRL and Exalogic and is waiting for orders from authorities to go forward. It said that Exalogic has received huge sums of money and it was to influence a top politician.

## Turkey not to halt military activity in Syria until Kurdish forces 'disarm'

AGENCIES  
ANKARA, DEC 19

Turkey will continue its military activity in northern Syria until Kurdish fighters fully "disarm," Turkish semi-official Anadolu Agency reported Thursday, citing a Defence Ministry source.

Highlighting ongoing threats from Kurdish forces within Syria to Turkey's southern border, the source said, "Our counter-terrorism measures and preparations will persist until terrorist groups lay down arms and their foreign fighters leave Syria."

The source made the remarks in response to allegations that the Turkish Armed Forces and the Syrian National Army, a



coalition of armed groups backed by Turkey, are preparing for operations against the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in the east of the Euphrates.

Turkey sees the YPG as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK),

which is designated as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States, and the European Union, and has rebelled against the Turkish government for more than three decades.

The Turkish military has launched several

operations since 2016 in northern Syria in order to create a YPG-free zone along its border with the neighbouring country.

Last week, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had said that Ankara will not allow Syria to become a conflict zone and be divided once again.

"Any attack on the stability of the new Syrian government or the integrity of ancient Syrian lands will face both the Syrian people and us," Erdogan said at a ruling party meeting, Xinhua news agency reported.

"We cannot accept any steps or provocations aimed at preventing the return of our Syrian brothers and sisters to their

homes," he noted.

Syrian militant groups, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), waged a major offensive from northern Syria starting November 27 and swept southwards through government-held areas, capturing the capital Damascus within 12 days.

Following the offensive, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad resigned and arrived in Russia for asylum.

Mohammed al-Bashir, an electrical engineer and head of the 'Syrian Salvation Government' in Idlib formed in 2017 by the HTS and other Syrian militant groups during the Syrian civil war, was tasked with heading a transitional government in Syria until early March 2025.

## 44 dead, 76 injured in Afghanistan road accidents

AGENCIES  
KABUL, DEC 19

At least 44 commuters have been confirmed dead and 76 others were injured in two separate road accidents in east Afghanistan's Ghazni province on Wednesday night, a local official reported Thursday.

The mishaps took place on the outskirts of Ghazni city and in the Andar district of the province, along the highway linking the capital Kabul with the southern Kandahar province, said Mullah Hamidullah Nesar, provincial director of information and culture.

According to Nesar, all the injured have been shifted to health centres for treatment, but most

of their conditions were reported as critical.

Road accidents due to reckless driving on congested roads and lack of traffic signs on dilapidated highways are leading causes of death in the war-ravaged country, Xinhua news agency reported.

On Monday, a vehicle carrying a family fell into a ravine in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province, claiming the lives of six, Xinhua news agency reported citing information received by the provincial department of information and culture.

The accident took place in the province's Babaji district after the vehicle lost control and fell into a steep and deep ravine, killing six people,

including women and children, on the spot, said the source.

Last week, six commuters had lost their lives and four others sustained injuries as a jeep plunged into a river in northern Badakhshan province.

Earlier this month, in an accident that took place in northern Jawzjan province on a highway linking the province with neighbouring Sari Pul province, one person was killed on the spot and 10 others were injured, Xinhua reported.

In another accident, a car veered off the road and overturned in Shahr-e-Safa district of southern Zabul province along a highway linking Kandahar with the national capital Kabul, killing two and injuring two others.

## Government policy making Australia unwelcoming for international students: universities

AGENCIES  
CANBERRA, DEC 19

Australia's elite universities have accused the government of making the country unwelcoming for international students following a new move to limit enrolments.

Federal Minister for Education Jason Clare on Thursday announced that the government will replace its failed proposal for an international student cap by slowing visa processing once applications reach a threshold for each university. The cap would have set new international student enrolments at universities and vocational education providers at a maximum of 270,000 in 2025 as part of the government's broader strategy to cut Australia's migrant intake. However, legislation for the cap was

blocked by parliament.

Instead, Clare on Thursday instituted a new ministerial direction that will treat student visa applications as high priority up until a threshold of 80 percent of the caps has been met. After that threshold, applications will receive standard priority processing, slowing them down.

The Group of Eight (Go8), a coalition of elite, research-intensive universities, said the new system would lead to greater confusion for international students.

"We run the risk of confusing the international student market with these constant changes to policy settings," Go8 Chief Executive Vicki Thomson said in a statement, Xinhua news agency reported.

"For too many potential students, it makes Australia

look too hard and too unwelcoming as a higher education destination."

Universities Australia, the peak body representing all universities in the country, said in August that the planned international student cap would cost the Australian economy billions of dollars and result in thousands of job losses in higher education.

The Australian National University (ANU) in October said it would have to cut operational costs by 250 million Australian dollars (155.9 million U.S. dollars) over the next 15 months, with the bulk to come from job losses and wage reductions.

The university blamed its financial situation on changes in government policy and the management of international student numbers.

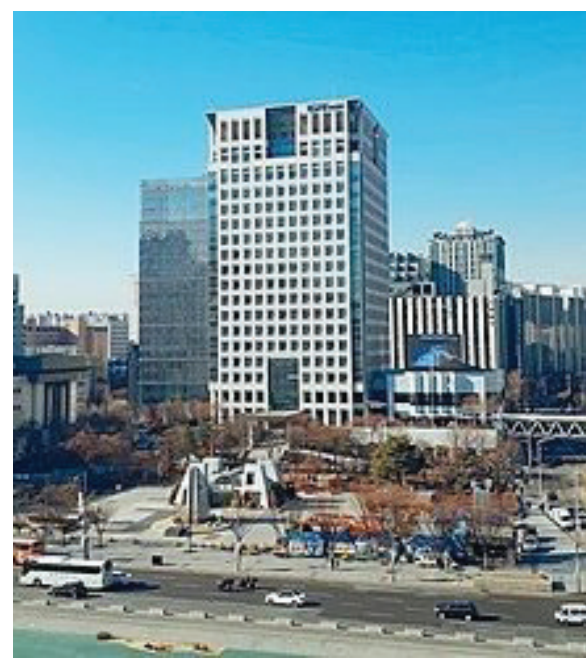
## South Korea voices regret over Russia blaming Seoul for destabilising Korean Peninsula

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, DEC 19

South Korea expressed regret Thursday that Russia has accused Seoul of "destabilising" the Korean Peninsula by using North Korea's provocations as a pretext for the short-lived martial law declaration.

Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in a briefing Wednesday (local time) that South Korea is constantly resorting to provocations to pin the blame on Pyongyang and that its government is responsible for destabilising the region, according to Russian media reports.

Her remarks came in response to a query regarding news reports



speculating that President Yoon Suk Yeol and his

allies attempted to instigate a conflict with the

North to justify the martial law, Yonhap news agency reported.

"It is inappropriate for a spokesperson of a foreign government to publicly make claims that not only misrepresent the facts but also undermine our consistent policies by using the domestic political situation as an excuse," a foreign ministry official in Seoul told reporters.

"It's clear who has been worsening the situation on the Korean Peninsula and in the region," the official said, urging Russia and the North to "stop shifting responsibility for their unjust and unlawful actions."

"We urge them to immediately cease their military cooperation that undermines peace and

stability in Northeast Asia and Europe," the official added.

Meanwhile, North Korea defended its military alignment with Russia as a legitimate act against threats from the US, but it made no mention of its troop deployment to Russia in support of Moscow's war in Ukraine or casualties of their soldiers during the war.

"The hostile act of the US and its vassal forces constitutes a serious threat undermining the foundation of international peace and security, which goes beyond a politically motivated provocation wantonly infringing upon the sovereignty of sovereign states," the North Korea's foreign ministry spokesperson said.

## CAMBODIA, UN AGENCY SIGN MOU TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION ON WATER SUPPLY

AGENCIES  
PHNOM PENH, DEC 19

Cambodia's Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation (MISTI) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to advance sustainable water access and climate-resilient infrastructure in Cambodia, said a MISTI's press release on Thursday.

The deal was inked in the capital Phnom Penh on Tuesday between MISTI's Minister Hem Vandy and UNOPS Country Manager Eda Kraja, the press release said.

"Access to clean water is not only a fundamental human right but also vital to public health, socio-economic growth, and environmental sustainability," Vandy said.



"This collaboration is a model for how targeted investments can drive transformative change, especially for vulnerable communities," he added.

Kraja said this initiative supported Sustainable Development Goal 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The partnership aims to implement innovative, scalable solutions to improve water access and strengthen infrastructure against the impact of climate change," she said.

The MoU formalized joint efforts to plan, design, and execute projects that enhance water supply systems while

ensuring long-term sustainability and inclusivity, according to the press release.

Earlier this month, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had approved two projects with \$173 million in loan and grant to accelerate climate-adaptive water resources management in Cambodia.

The first is an \$88 million Integrated Water Resources Management Project targeting river basins in Battambang and Pursat provinces in the Tonle Sap basin.

The second is \$85 million additional financing for the ongoing Irrigated Agriculture Improvement Project to help the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology enhance water delivery efficiency and climate resilience across four irrigation systems in Battambang, Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom and Takeo provinces.

Frequent floods during the wet season affect four million people, or nearly one-fourth of the population, with annual losses estimated at \$250 million, which is over one percent of the country's gross domestic product.

AGENCIES  
SYDNEY, DEC 19

Emergency flood warnings were issued for communities in the northeastern Australian state of Queensland on Thursday.

Authorities issued Watch and Act alerts for communities along the Jandowae Creek and in the South Burnett region, both approximately 180 km northwest of Brisbane, with residents in low-lying areas urged to leave.

"Warn neighbors, secure belongings and enact your emergency plan," the alert said.

Intense rainfall over several days in Queensland's populous southeast triggered flash flooding and power outages in the area.

Over 2,000 properties in the area were without

power on Wednesday night. As of Thursday morning, power had been restored to most of the affected properties.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) had 12 flood warnings in places across the state on Thursday, including a major warning for the Logan River south of Brisbane.

The State Emergency Service said it received 145 calls for assistance in the 24 hours to Thursday morning, mostly in the state's southeast and connected to the heavy rain, Xinhua news agency reported.

The region's biggest dam at Wivenhoe, west of Brisbane, on Tuesday began releasing water after reaching 90 percent capacity. It marked the first release of water from the dam since severe flooding in 2022.

The BoM said that conditions would ease in Queensland's southeast on Thursday, with storms set to hit the state's north and west.

Earlier this week, millions of people in southeast Australia were warned to prepare for severe heat and possible fires as temperatures across Victoria, Australia's second-most populous state, and in parts of South Australia were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius, prompting widespread emergency warnings.

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

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

## US grants combined \$958 million subsidy to chip maker SK hynix

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, DEC 19

The US Commerce Department said on Thursday it has decided to grant up to US\$458 million in direct funding to SK hynix's project to build a new plant in the state of Indiana.

The U.S. government will also provide up to \$500 million in loans, both under the CHIPS and

Science Act, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

In April, the company announced a plan to invest \$3.87 billion to build a memory packaging plant for artificial intelligence (AI) products, and an advanced packaging research and development facility in West Lafayette in the U.S. state to produce next-generation memory chips, reports Yonhap news agency.

"By investing in companies like SK hynix and communities like West Lafayette, the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act continues to supercharge America's global technology leadership," U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo said in a statement.

## Trump opposes bipartisan funding bill as govt shutdown deadline looms

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, DEC 19

US President-elect Donald Trump opposed a bipartisan funding bill, as lawmakers are struggling to pass the stopgap bill to avert a looming government shutdown.

Trump told Fox News he was "totally against" a proposed government funding bill, putting the stopgap measure, which would keep the government open until mid-March, in danger.

Congress has until Friday night to prevent a funding gap, as lawmakers passed a continuing resolution in September to extend government funding through December 20, Xinhua news agency reported. The new package, unveiled on Tuesday, mainly allows the government to maintain its current spending levels for the next three months, providing lawmakers with additional time to negotiate new spending bills.

It also includes 100 billion



USD in disaster relief for recovery from major hurricanes and the collapse of Baltimore's Key Bridge, a one-year extension of the farm bill with an extra \$10 billion in aid for farmers.

With some hardliners opposing the stopgap measure and a slim House

majority, Republicans will once again need Democrats' support to approve government funding.

"We should pass a streamlined spending bill that doesn't give the Democrats everything they want," Vice President-elect and Senator JD Vance said in a joint statement with Trump.

"The only way to do that is with a temporary funding bill without Democrat giveaways combined with an increase in the debt ceiling," said the statement,

pressuring the Democrats to cooperate on a debt ceiling increase now.

The latest statement drew criticism from Democrats, including House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries. "House Republicans have been ordered to shut down the government. And hurt the working-class Americans they claim to support. You break the bipartisan agreement, you own the consequences that follow," he said on social media platform X.

# India's energy storage capacity poised for 12-fold leap by 2032: SBI report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

India's energy storage capacity is expected to shoot up 12-fold to around 60 GW by 2031-32 which would play a key role in stabilising the power grid as the country transitions to renewable energy, according to an SBI Research report.

The country's energy storage landscape is evolving rapidly, with the proportion of renewable energy (RE) projects incorporating storage solutions recording a significant increase from 5 per cent in FY20 to 23 per cent in FY24, the report said.

This will surpass the growth anticipated for renewable energy sources themselves.

The share of variable renewable energy (VRE) in power generation is expected to triple by 2031-32 which could destabilise



the grid. The challenge lies in the inherent mismatch between the generation of VRE and peak power demand.

This mismatch often leads to grid instability, surplus energy during peak production hours,

and continued reliance on fossil fuels during non-solar periods.

The integration of Energy Storage Systems (ESS), is crucial in managing this transition and ensuring stability. ESS provides a solution by storing

excess renewable energy during high production times and releasing it when demand peaks.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Pumped Storage Projects (PSP) are expected to dominate the energy storage market, with BESS, in particular, emerging as the dominant technology due to its locational flexibility, rapid response time, and improvements in technology that are further reducing costs, the report points out.

While PSPs are facing challenges such as long development periods and the risk of stranded assets, their low operational costs and ability to generate reactive power make them an important tool for grid stability.

The funding potential for the BESS ecosystem is significant, with a projected 3.5 lakh crore opportunity until FY32, fuelled

by a combination of project-level investments and upstream manufacturing growth, the report said.

Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs), though facing a slower growth trajectory due to their long gestation periods, are still expected to contribute Rs. 1.2 lakh crore in investment by FY32, it added.

This will help India reduce its dependence on imports and strengthen its battery ecosystem. Major players are already investing heavily in battery manufacturing and component production, with approximately 120 GWh of cell capacities announced, though more investment will be required to meet projected demand, the SBI report highlighted.

Currently, around 80 per cent of BESS costs are attributed to battery cells and related components, with most of these sourced from China.

# PE investments in Indian real estate sector surge over 30 pc in 2024

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, DEC 19



Private equity (PE) investments in the Indian real estate sector reached \$4.2 billion in 2024, marking a 32 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth amid high demand in the warehousing segment, according to a report on Thursday.

Knight Frank India, an international property consultancy firm, said in a report that the warehousing sector is leading the sector, which accounts for 45 per cent of total investments, followed by the residential sector at 28 per cent and the office sector at 26 per cent.

"Private equity investments more than doubled in the residential sector which saw a remarkable 104 per cent increase in PE investments, amounting to \$1.2 billion in this year, demonstrating investor confidence in this segment which has been noting a consistent rise in end-user demand," the report men-

tioned.

Mumbai is the most favoured destination with 50 per cent of total PE investments in the city, driven by large volumes of investment in warehousing in the city, PE investment landscape in 2024, attracting \$2 billion in 2024.

The warehousing sector dominated with 74 per cent of the total PE investments in Mumbai, amounting to \$1.5 billion while the residential sector attracted \$406 million, making up 20 per cent of the total PE invest-

ment in the city.

"Bengaluru received total PE investment \$833 million in 2024. Around 52 per cent of these investments, amounting to \$430 million, was towards the office sector, while the remaining 48 per cent or \$403 million, was invested in the residential sector," the report added.

Shishir Bajjal, Chairman and Managing Director of Knight Frank India, said that India has seen a rise in investments, particularly over the past decade, driven by economic stability and consistent growth.

# India tech startups funding grows 6 pc to \$11.3 bn in 2024, 3rd globally

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, DEC 19



India's tech startup ecosystem garnered \$11.3 billion in funding in 2024, a 6 per cent increase from \$10.7 billion in 2023, according to a report on Thursday.

In the second half (H2) of 2024, the tech startups received \$5.32 billion across 540 funding rounds, a growth of 8 per cent from H2 2023 where \$4.92 billion was raised across 890 rounds, according to Tracxn data.

India ranked third in funding, behind only the US and the UK, and ahead of China and Germany.

"The report highlights a year of resilience and recalibration for the Indian startup ecosystem reflected in the modest increase in funding compared to 2023," said Neha Singh, Co-Founder of Tracxn.

While funding patterns have evolved towards fewer, larger rounds, the emergence of six unicorns, significant IPO activity, and sectoral growth in gig

economy, retail and enterprise applications demonstrate the ecosystem's ability to adapt and innovate amidst global challenges making India an international hub for entrepreneurial excellence and innovation, Singh added.

India's tech ecosystem witnessed the emergence of six unicorns in 2024, marking a 200 per cent increase compared to 2 unicorns in 2023.

2024 also saw strong backing from top investors, with Accel, Blume Ventures and Peak XV Partners being the top VCs in the India Tech ecosystem.

In the seed stage, Venture Catalysts, Z Nation Lab and Blume Ventures led the way as the top investors, while Accel, Peak XV Partners and Elevation Capital dominated the early stage and

SoftBank Vision Fund, Creagis and Avataar Ventures emerged as the most active in the late stage, the report mentioned.

In terms of city-wise funding, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Gurugram emerged as the top three funded cities. Bengaluru-based tech firms accounted for 30.28 per cent of all funding seen by tech companies across India. This was followed by Mumbai at a close second at 27.07 per cent.

Gig economy, retail and enterprise applications stood out as top-performing sectors. Quick commerce emerged as a high-growth sector, with 40 active companies, including Zepto (Unicorn), Dunzo (Soonicorn), and Swish and Farmako (Minicorns).

The healthtech sector demonstrated robust growth in 2024, with over 7,000 active companies collectively raising \$1 billion -- a remarkable 133 per cent increase from \$438.2 million in 2023, said the report.

# India tops list of recipient countries for remittances with \$129 bn inflow in 2024

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19



India tops the list of recipient countries for remittances in 2024 with an estimated inflow of \$129 billion, followed by Mexico (\$68 billion), China (\$48 billion), the Philippines (\$40 billion), and Pakistan (\$33 billion), according to the latest figures compiled by World Bank economists.

The growth rate of remittances this year is estimated to be 5.8 per cent, compared to 1.2 per cent registered in 2023, according to a World Bank blog post

"The recovery of the job markets in the high-income countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, has been the key driver of remittances.

This is especially true for the United States where the employment of foreign-born workers has

recovered steadily and is 11 percent higher than the pre-pandemic level seen in February 2020," the report said.

Officially recorded remittances to low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) are expected to reach \$685 billion in 2024, it further stated.

The blog post said

remittances have continued to outpace other types of external financial flows to low- and middle-income countries and will continue to increase because of enormous migration pressures driven by demographic trends, income gaps, and climate change.

It is notable that remit-

ances have continued to outpace other types of external financial flows to low- and middle-income countries.

Remittances have even surpassed FDI significantly.

The gap between remittances and FDI is expected to widen further in 2024, the report pointed out.

During the past decade, remittances increased by 57 percent, while FDI declined by 41 percent. Remittances will likely continue to increase because of enormous migration pressures driven by demographic trends, income gaps, and climate change, the World Bank report explained.

"Countries need to take note of the size and resilience of remittances and find ways to leverage these flows for poverty reduction, financing health and education, financial inclusion of households, and improving access to capital markets for state and non-state enterprises," the blog said.

Remittance flows to South Asia are expected to register the highest increase in 2024, at 11.8 per cent, driven by continued strong flows to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, the blog post by economists Dilip Ratha, Sonia Plazaeng and financial analyst Ju Kim said.

# 27,000 household biogas plants set up, India's dairy farmers earn 11,000 carbon credits

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19



More than 27,000 household biogas plants have been installed in 19 states across the country under various schemes in the dairy sector, according to an official statement issued on Thursday.

Further, the household biogas initiative has also helped in generating carbon credits for the dairy cooperative sector.

Under the first such initiative, a total of 11,000 carbon credits have been earned by 1,040 farmers, giving a boost to both farmer incomes and contributing to the aim of achieving a circular economy, the statement said.

The figures were highlighted in a presentation by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) on the Circular Economy made at a review meeting chaired by Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD) Secretary Alka Upadhyaya here on Wednesday.

In its presentation, the NDDB demonstrated three models of biogas generation, namely the Zakariyapura Model (the Household level biogas-based Manure Value Chain model), the Banasankantha Model (Dung-based large capacity biogas plant to produce

Bio CBG and Organic Fertiliser) and the Varanasi Model (Dung-based large capacity biogas plant to suffice steam and power needs of dairy plants).

These biogas plants are giving a boost to the circular economy by promoting sustainable green fuel energy and producing organic fertilisers.

Two large capacity dung-based CNG/Biogas plants with a total capacity of 140 MT/Day of dung are already operationalised and another 11 plants having a combined capacity of 675 MT/Day are under various stages of being taken up.

It was also informed that NDDB

has entered into an MOU with Suzuki R&D Centre India Pvt Ltd, an affiliate of Suzuki Motor Corporation. The major objective of the MOU is to jointly design, develop, implement and scale up innovative business models to efficiently utilise cow dung as a source of energy for fuelling transportation needs and as a rich source of organic fertiliser while achieving carbon neutrality.

The DAHD Secretary advised the dairy federations to work on a circular economy in the dairy sector and be proactively involved in getting the benefits in consultation with NDDB. She stated that during the Department's upcoming

conference on circularity in the dairy sector, every state should come up with at least one project on biogas to join the circularity movement.

This will help in reducing the carbon footprint of the dairy sector and at the same time, also help in enhancing the income of dairy farmers.

The discussion also included the use of water within the dairy value chain and approaches to ensure its efficient utilisation. It was pointed out that the integration of automation could lead to a considerable reduction in water consumption at processing plants, thereby aiding the efforts of the National Water Mission and the National Action Plan on Climate Change.

Upadhyaya concluded the meeting with remarks on the need for benchmarking in the dairy industry to bring efficiency and reduce the cost of production and the carbon footprint of the industry. The milk federations were also directed to speed up the formation of cooperative societies to enhance milk procurement and bring more milk into the organised sector in order to improve the social and economic status of milk producers in India, the statement added.

# December 19: Indian share market opens in red as US Fed warns less rate cuts this year

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, DEC 19

The Indian stock market opened in red on Thursday after the US Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 25 basis points, but warned that rate cuts may not come so easily in 2025 as anticipated earlier.

As Fed's focus moves towards maximum employment and price stability, the FOMC halved the number of rate cuts expected for 2025.

"Post US markets sharp negative reaction to the overall commentary, all Asian markets have opened negatively as well," said market experts.

At around 9:30 am, Sensex was trading at 79,158.53 after declining 1,023.67 points or 1.28 per cent, while the Nifty was trading at 23,892.4 after declining 306.45 points or 1.27 per cent.

The market trend remained negative. On the National Stock Exchange

(NSE), 223 stocks were trading in green, while 2,029 stocks were in red.

Nifty Bank was down 783 points or 1.50 per cent at 51,356.55 Nifty Midcap 100 index was trading at 57,779.40 after dropping 943.85 points or 1.61 per cent.

Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 18,885.65 after dropping 344.70 points or 1.79 per cent.

In the Sensex pack, Infosys, HCL Tech, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, Tata Motors, SBI, JSW Steel and Bajaj Finance were the top losers. Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the top gainers.

Contrary to expectations, the Fed's forecast for the upcoming rate trajectory has only two subsequent 25 basis point cuts for 2025. Earlier, four 25 basis point cuts were expected for next year.

"When valuations are high, the market needs only a trigger to correct

sharply. This trigger was provided by the Fed guidance of fewer rate cuts in 2025, which went against market expectations," said experts.

"Even though the rate cut of 25 bp was in tune with the market's expectation, the indication of only two cuts of 25 bp each in 2025 against market expectation of three or even four cuts spooked the market resulting in a sharp sell-off in Wall Street," they added.

The Dow Jones declined 2.58 per cent and closed at 42,326.87. The S&P 500 dropped 2.95 per cent to 5,872.20 and the Nasdaq declined 3.56 per cent to close at 19,392.69.

In the Asian markets, the markets of Jakarta, Bangkok, Seoul, Japan, China and Hong Kong were trading in red.

According to experts, sharp cuts in the market today will provide opportunities for investors to buy.

## BGT 2024-25: Bumrah is a right-hand version of Wasim Akram, says Justin Langer

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

Former Australia head coach Justin Langer heaped rich praise on Jasprit Bumrah, calling India's fast-bowling spearhead a right-handed equivalent of legendary Pakistan left-arm pacer Wasim Akram.

Bumrah has taken 21 wickets at an average of 10.90 to be the leading wicket-taker of the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, including a five-wicket haul in Perth and a six-fer in Brisbane. He has also dismissed Australia openers Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney four times each in the series so far.

"I would hate to face him. He is like Wasim Akram. For me, he is a right-hand version of Wasim Akram, and



every time I am asked the question 'Who is the best bowler you have ever faced', I say Wasim Akram."

"They have got good pace and the great bowlers just hit the same spot every time, and they have got a good bouncer, so it makes them a bloody nightmare. He has got the ability to swing the ball

both ways, his seam is literally picture perfect."

"If you present a perfect seam and it comes perfectly out of the fingers as it does with him, you get the double whammy, swing in the right conditions and if it hits the rope it can go either way. That's what Akram used to do and was a nightmare to face," he added.

"I would hate to face Bumrah. He's a great competitor, he bowls good pace and he's just awesome.

I said at the start of the series, if Bumrah stays fit, it is going to be a really tough summer for the Australian batters, if he doesn't, then I think Australia will win the series easily, and I still maintain that," said Langer to The Nightly on Thursday.

Langer also expressed surprise by the sudden retirement of veteran India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin after the third Test at Brisbane ended in a draw, citing that the visitors' could turn to him for at least one of the two remaining Tests in Melbourne and Sydney.

Ashwin's last international game was the day-night Test against Australia in Adelaide, where he

took 1-53 in his 18 overs and made 29 runs with the bat, as India lost by ten wickets.

"I was surprised Ashwin retired because I thought they would use him and (Ravindra) Jadeja - go to their big guns for maybe Melbourne and definitely Sydney. I think Melbourne and Sydney are as likely to suit India as the other two venues," he added.

Langer signed off by believing Australia will not make any changes in terms of its batting make-up, despite its top-order misfiring, for the crunch Test in Melbourne, starting from next Thursday.

"I can't see them making any changes now at 1-1 in the series. There will be some discussions about a few players, but my gut feeling is they will keep it the same," said Langer.

## Novice Cup stars gear up for final showdown in Coimbatore

AGENCIES  
COIMBATORE, DEC 19

Motorsport fans are in for a thrilling spectacle from Friday as some of the young and passionate racing stars from across the country will battle it out for a place on the podium in the Novice Cup at the Kari Motor Speedway circuit at Chettipalayam here.

Part of the 27th JK Tyre-FMSCI National Racing Championship, the much-hyped two-day event is expected to bring the best out of these young guns, who wish to finish 2024 on a high. The drivers, for sure, will press the pedal to the metal like never before as they know, by doing so, they can be crowned the overall champion of the season.

The Novice Cup has attracted 22 participants from seven teams, Zion



Racing, MSport, DTS Racing, Momentum Motorsport, Delta Speed, Ahura Racing, and Avalanche Racing, who will be vying for the prime spot on the podium. There will be five races over Friday and Saturday and the best pick of them all will wear the crown of being the overall champion of 2024.

The Novice Cup is the most-awaited feeder series that was introduced in the National Racing Championship in Formula LGB4 Tiji Rao, also from Bengaluru, current reigning champion of the National Racing Championship in Formula LGB4 Tiji Rao, also from Bengaluru, Amir Sayed (Kottayam), Vishwas Vijayraj, Arjun Nair and Naethan are some of them.

comers who wish to take the bold step into formula racing after graduating from karting.

The ones who did so quite successfully in this championship have graduated to higher levels of racing. National racing champion Ruhaan Alva from Bengaluru, current reigning champion of the National Racing Championship in Formula LGB4 Tiji Rao, also from Bengaluru, Amir Sayed (Kottayam), Vishwas Vijayraj, Arjun Nair and Naethan are some of them.

## Hockey rankings: Indian men's team ends year placed fifth, women in top 10

AGENCIES  
LAUSANNE, DEC 19

The Indian men's hockey team will end the riveting year in fifth place in the FIH world rankings, while the women's team is placed ninth in the latest update released by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) on Thursday. The Indian men's hockey team made history at the 2024 Paris Olympics by winning back-to-back medals at the Games for the first time since the 1972 Olympics in Munich.

Olympic champions the Netherlands (3267 points) stand at the top of the rankings. The Netherlands started the year in the top spot following a great run in the FIH Hockey Men's World Cup, and gold medals at the FIH Hockey Pro League and the Euro-Hockey Championship in 2023.

A fast start to the 2024-25 season of the FIH Hockey Pro League has propelled England (3139) into second place in the world with Belgium (3124) following closely behind in third, having made a good start to the new Pro League season them-



selves.

Reigning World Champion Germany (3066) had climbed up to second place following their silver medal at Paris 2024, but a rough start to the Pro League saw them dropping two places, down to fourth in the world.

Eight-time Olympic gold medallist India (2955) and the 2004 winners Australia (2814) are placed fifth and sixth in the world, with both teams set to start their Pro League seasons at home in February 2025 - the Kookaburras playing in Sydney from February 4, while the Men in Blue will start their campaign on February 15 in Bhubaneswar.

Argentina (2722), Spain (2570), France (2116) and Ireland (2112) round out the top-10 to end 2024, with South Africa (2082),

New Zealand (2058), Malaysia (1970), Korea (1945) and Pakistan (1942) giving chase as teams ranked from 11 to 15.

In the women's world rankings, the Netherlands (3689) had another perfect year winning the gold medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics, along with the EuroHockey Championships gold and another FIH Hockey Pro League title.

Argentina (3203) continue to remain in a distant second place, following their bronze medal performance at Paris 2024. They did manage to close the gap between themselves and the Netherlands earlier this month, after getting their first win in nearly three years, over the Dutch side in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25.

## ISL 2024-25: Both teams hope to build on current form as Mohun Bagan SG meet FC Goa

AGENCIES  
FATORDA (GOA), DEC 19

FC Goa take on defending champions Mohun Bagan Super Giant in an Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Friday with both teams hoping to build their current form and maintain the momentum.

FC Goa will aim to improve their record against the Mariners, having lost five of their eight meetings (W2 D1) in the ISL, including a narrow 0-1 defeat in their most recent encounter on February 14, 2024.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant's unbeaten run has seen them win seven and draw one of their last eight ISL games, and a win in this fixture would equal their record for the longest winning streak (5) in the competition's history, achieved twice before (2021 and 2023). For FC Goa, who have scored in each of their last 11 home games, this match presents an opportunity to set a new record for their longest home goal-scoring streak.

The Mariners top the league standings with 26 points from 11 matches, winning eight and drawing twice, whereas the Gaurs



are placed fourth with 19 points from the same number of games. Both these teams have been in equally efficient forms upfront, with the Kolkata-based team netting 22 times in the competition thus far, as compared to the 21 of the Manolo Marquez-coached side.

However, the visitors have been comparatively

better organised at the back, conceding 10 goals as opposed to the 15 of FC Goa. Mohun Bagan Super Giant have kept the most clean sheets (6) in the league, and the Gaurs rank fourth in this regard (3).

FC Goa on the other hand have a dynamic frontline with versatility in attack. The Gaurs have seen nine different goal-

scorers this season, a tally only bettered by Mohun Bagan Super Giant's 10. This collective effort will be important as they face one of the strongest defences in the league.

The clash will also be a challenge for FC Goa head coach Manolo Marquez, who has an uninspiring record against Mohun Bagan Super Giant, winning just three of his 12 meetings with the Mariners (D5 L4). His win rate of 25% against them is his second-lowest against teams he has faced multiple times (18.2% vs Mumbai City FC).

Marquez admitted that the Mariners have a nice mix of international and domestic stars that make them a strong opponent. "I feel that we are playing one of the strongest teams in the competition. Mohun Bagan have most of the top national team players, and they've spent a lot on getting good foreigners too," Marquez said.

Should Mohun Bagan Super Giant score two goals in this game, they will equal their highest goal tally after 12 games in an ISL season (24 goals in 2021-22). Jamie Maclaren tops the charts for them with four strikes, whereas the trio of Jason Cummings, Subhasish Bose,

and Manvir Singh follow with three goals each to their name.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant are tenacious tacklers and have been vigilant in breaking the opposition's offenses, as they are the team with the second-most successful tackles (136) in ISL 2024-25, only behind the 158 of Kerala Blasters FC. Lalengmawia Ralte leads the charge in this front for the Mariners, with 26 successful tackles - followed by Bose (21), Asish Rai (17), and Liston Colaco (13).

Mohun Bagan Super Giant head coach Jose Molina expressed that his team never gives up the fight irrespective of if the game is going against them. "The mentality of Mohun Bagan Super Giant is to fight every game till the end. We have to attack and defend well, communicate properly, but most importantly we need to keep fighting to get the win," Molina said.

In the head-to-head series, FC Goa have won twice, whereas Mohun Bagan Super Giant have emerged victorious five times in the eight times these two teams have faced each other in the ISL. An average of 2.5 goals has been scored per match in this fixture.

## MCA UNVEILS GRAND CELEBRATIONS TO MARK 50 YEARS OF ICONIC WANKHEDE STADIUM

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, DEC 19

A special lunch for the unsung heroes of Mumbai cricket, the groundsman managing the various cricket fields, a felicitation of all past and present cricketers from the city and a glitzy and grand Bollywood-style musical night - these are some of the major events planned by the Mumbai Cricket Association to mark the completion of 50 years of the iconic Wankhede Stadium in January 2025.

With the Wankhede set to complete a half-century of its existence, the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) is set to host grand celebrations to mark the occasion.

MCA president Ajinkya Naik announced on Thursday that the festivities will get underway on January 12 and culminate



in a grand spectacle on January 19 at the historic stadium. The grand show on January 19 will witness an unparalleled gathering of Mumbai's domestic and international cricket legends - past and present. The event will also feature mesmerising performances by renowned artists Avadhoot Gupte and Ajay-Atul, capped by a breathtaking laser show.

At a press conference attended by MCA office-bearers and Apex Council Members, a special 50th-anniversary logo was unveiled to mark the occasion. MCA chief Naik

further revealed plans to release a commemorative postal stamp and coffee table book on January 19 honouring Wankhede Stadium's rich legacy, which has been graced by cricketing legends such as Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar, and other decorated stalwarts.

The MCA will also felicitate the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnis, and Ashish Shelar, the former MCA President, along with the newly appointed cabinet minister in the Maharashtra government, on January 19.

Speaking on the occasion, Naik said, "The Wankhede Stadium is a national pride, and its 50th anniversary is a historic milestone for us. This stadium has been the backdrop to countless unforgettable moments for players and fans alike. Through a week-long celebration and a mega evening event, we aim to honour its rich cricketing history and glorious journey. At MCA, we take immense pride in celebrating cricket's legacy and look forward to bringing the entire cricketing community together for this landmark event."

Built in 1974, Wankhede Stadium stands as one of the world's most iconic cricketing venues, having witnessed monumental moments in cricket history. From Sachin Tendulkar's final international match in 2013 to India's

historic 2011 ODI World Cup triumph, the stadium has been home to countless memories.

Speaking at the press conference, MCA secretary Abhay Hadap added, "Wankhede Stadium holds a special place in the hearts of cricket fans. The 50th-anniversary celebrations are a momentous occasion for MCA as well as the entire cricketing fraternity, and I warmly invite all Mumbaiers to join in the celebrations."

As part of the celebration week, MCA will conduct a cricket match between MCA officials and Consuls General, bureaucrats, on January 12. They will also organise a special lunch for the groundsman of MCA's clubs and grounds on January 15, celebrating the contributions and commitment of Mumbai cricket's unsung heroes.

## Zimbabwe include seven uncapped players in squad for Test series against Afghanistan

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, DEC 19

Zimbabwe have included seven uncapped players in their squad for the upcoming two-match Test series against Afghanistan. Both Test matches will be played at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo.

Batter Ben Curran, who recently made his Zimbabwe debut, and Johnathan Campbell, wicketkeeper-batters Tadiwanashe Marumani and Nyasha Mayayo as well as pace bowlers Trevor Gwandu, Takudzwa Chataira and Newman Nyamhuri are the uncapped players in Zimbabwe's Test squad.

The series against Afghanistan marks a momentous occasion for Zimbabwe cricket as it will be hosting its first Boxing Day Test at home in 28 years. The last time Zimbabwe played a home Boxing Day Test, was in 1996, which ended in a



rain-affected drawn match against England at Harare Sports Club.

Since then, Zimbabwe have only played Boxing Day Tests abroad against New Zealand in 2000 and South Africa in 2017, the latter being a pink-ball day-night fixture in Port Elizabeth.

After the first Test against Afghanistan takes place from December 26-30, Zimbabwe will be hosting their first New Year's Test, scheduled for January 2-6, 2025.

This will be Zimbabwe's second Test of 2024 after

playing in a one-off match against Ireland in Belfast in July, where they lost by four wickets. Craig Ervine will captain the side, with the experienced Sean Williams, Sikandar Raza, Blessing Muzarabani and Richard Ngarava too included in the Test team.

Zimbabwe lost the T20I leg of their series against Afghanistan 2-1, and are currently playing against them in the second ODI at Harare, before action shifts to Bulawayo for the third ODI and two Tests.

Zimbabwe Test squad: Craig Ervine (c), Ben Curran, Brian Bennett, Johnathan Campbell, Takudzwa Chataira, Joylord Gumbie, Trevor Gwandu, Takudzwanashe Kaitano, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Brandon Mavuta, Nyasha Mayayo, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Richard Ngarava, Newman Nyamhuri, Sikandar Raza, Sean Williams.

## Good Governance Week-2024: Srinagar Admin gears up for 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign

JI NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 19

In connection with Nationwide Campaign 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' as part of Good Governance Week-2024, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex to gear up the line Departments for successful conduct of programmes under the initiative.

At the outset, the DC highlighted the objectives of the 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign scheduled to be held from December 19 to 24, 2024. He said that the initiative is aimed to bring Administration at the doorsteps of the rural population and address their grievances in a time bound and qualitative manner.

He added that the pur-

pose of the campaign is to reinforce the principles of good governance and improve service delivery at the grassroots level.

Dr Bilal asked the Officers to hold mass awareness camps in all Panchayat Blocks of the District and provide Government services directly at their doorstep. He directed the Departments of Labour, Employment, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry, Fisheries, FCS&CA, Health, Social Welfare, ICDS, Rural Development, R&B, KPDCCL, PHE, Health, Education, NRLM, Revenue, Forest Cooperatives and other line Departments to reach out to the people by conducting joint programmes during the Good Governance Week-2024.

The DC also asked the Officers to ensure active participation of public representatives and youth



in the awareness camps at panchayat level and take all required measures in coordinated manner for the successful execution of the programme. He emphasized the Officers to focus on spot redressal of public issues and grievances.

The DC directed Officers to highlight achievements, success stories and best practices through video presentations in sectors like Rural Development (RDD), Health, Jal Jeevan

Mission (JJM), Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Self-Employment and other Government sponsored welfare schemes.

Dr Bilal further asked the Officers to ensure timely sharing of details about applications disposed under Service Delivery, Grievances redressed in Grievance Portal, Best Good Governance Practices and Success Stories during the weeklong campaign.

During the meeting, DC stressed on utmost coordination among the line Departments and instructed to set up a Control Room at DC Office for effective monitoring of the activities being conducted during the week-long campaign of 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' in the District.

Besides, Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Syed Ahmad Kataria, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Joint Director Employment, Zeenat Ara, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Lead District Manager, Block Development Officers of Harwan, Khomoh, Srinagar & Qamarwari, Deputy Registrar Cooperatives, the meeting was attended by the Officers of R&B, KPDCCL, PHE, Health, Education, NRLM and other Departments.

## DC Rajouri inspects TB Hospital, Medical Supplies Store, Jay Shree Library

JI NEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma today conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Tuberculosis (TB) Hospital to review its functioning and assess the progress under the Nikshay Mitra initiative. The initiative, aimed at eradicating tuberculosis, was evaluated for its impact on patient support and treatment outcomes.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with the hospital staff and patients to understand the challenges faced in providing quality healthcare services. He emphasized the importance of community participation in the Nikshay Mitra program and directed the health officials to ensure timely assistance and proper follow-up of TB patients.

The Deputy Commissioner also inspected the



Medical Supplies Store to evaluate the availability and quality of essential medicines and equipment. He instructed the concerned officials to maintain an adequate inventory of medical supplies to meet the needs of patients effectively.

Later, the DC visited the Jay Shree Library located in the District Information Office and interacted with students who were utilizing the library facilities. He encouraged the students

to make the best use of the library for their academic growth and assured them of continued support in enhancing educational resources.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner reiterated the administration's commitment to strengthening healthcare and educational infrastructure in the district, ensuring that both sectors remain accessible and efficient for the benefit of the public.

## Kathua admin finalises arrangements for smooth conduct of JKSSB Constable Recruitment Exam

JI NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, DECEMBER 19

Additional Deputy Commissioner Kathua Ranjit Singh today finalized the preparations for the upcoming JKSSB examination here at a meeting held in the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex.

Among others present were ASP, ARTO, CEO and other officers, including Designated Superintendents and Observers.

The JKSSB written examination for the post of Constable (Photographers) is scheduled on December 22, 2024, from 12 Noon to 2:00 PM.

It was informed that 23 examination centers will be established across the district to accommodate all aspirants.

The meeting covered essential aspects such as



drinking water facilities, power supply, seating arrangements, security protocols, and videography procedures.

The ADC explained the role and responsibilities of deployed functionaries to ensure the efficient

execution of the JKSSB examination throughout the district.

Earlier the Resource Person from JKSSB Pankaj Kumar briefed the meeting about the procedures to be followed during pre exam and exam day time.

## Ensure effective implementation of FRA in JK: Javed Rana

JI NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana, today impressed upon the officers to ensure effective implementation of Forest Rights Act in Jammu and Kashmir.

He was speaking during a meeting held at Civil Secretariat here to discuss issues related to welfare of tribals in Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Deputy Commissioner, Jammu, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation, Vice Chairman, Jammu Development Authority, Director, Tribal Affairs and other officers.

While addressing the meeting, Javed Rana said



that the forests and tribals have co-existed for generations and we should not ignore the importance of tribals. "We are committed for empowerment of tribals and implementation of Forest Rights Act is a step towards that direction," he maintained.

Rana said that we have to safeguard the rights of tribals and work in a mission mode for their development and betterment. He assured that Tribal rights in land and forests shall be respected.

Javed Rana also instructed the concerned divisional officers in Jammu to resolve public issues and grievances with empathy and ensure rights of tribals

over land and their livelihood are protected at all costs. He also directed the officers to expedite the construction of Tribal Bhawan ensuring project's timely completion.

During the meeting, the Minister was informed about various schemes, physical and financial position of the department, digital interventions besides challenges and subsequent strategies to overcome those challenges.

Other matters that came up for discussion during the meeting included status of water supply, green spaces and water bodies under the AMRUT-2 scheme.

## DC Doda inspects civic amenities, market regulation measures in Bhalla Tehsil

JI NEWS SERVICE  
DODA, DECEMBER 19

The Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh conducted an extensive visit to Bhalla and Pranoo areas to inspect local markets, review public grievances, and assess the ongoing infrastructure projects.

During his visit, the DC inspected the local market to assess compliance with essential regulations such as: Quality control of goods; Price monitoring to prevent overcharging and Sanitation standards to maintain hygiene and cleanliness in public spaces.

The DC also inspected the land identified for the Tehsil Office at Bhalla, evaluating its suitability for construction. He directed officials to expedite the administrative and logistical processes for its operationalization.

At Pranoo market, the DC interacted with shopkeepers, addressing their grievances related to market infrastructure, road connectivity, and the availability of basic amenities. He assured them of immediate steps to resolve key concerns and improve the market's overall functionality.

## Transport Commissioner inspects Lakhapur Post, RTO office Kathua

JI NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, DECEMBER 19

Transport Commissioner J&K, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, RTO Jammu, Pankaj Bagothra today paid a surprise visit to MVD Tax collection post at Lakhapur to review its functioning.

The Transport Commissioner directed enforcement officials not to allow unfit vehicles or any vehicle without proper documents to enter J&K. Incharge MVD Tax collection post Lakhapur and ARTO Kathua were directed to ensure that no manual transaction of cash is entertained. He exhorted on all the officers/officials posted at the check post to keep a constant vigil on all the incoming vehicles.

An enforcement naka was laid at Basolimorh by Transport Commissioner J&K along with RTO Jammu and staff of MVD Kathua. The main focus of checking was on offences like rash driving, overloading, use of mobile phone while driving and vehicles without valid documents. 25 vehicles were challaned for different traffic violations.

Later, the Transport Commissioner visited RTO Office Kathua and also supervised the ongoing

trial for driving licences at trail ground. He interacted with the applicants and took a detailed review of the working of the MVD Kathua. He directed the staff to ensure timely delivery of the services to the general public. ARTO Kathua was directed to increase the enforcement activities in the district to curb traffic violations for minimizing road accidents and saving precious human lives.

Later, the Transport Commissioner along with RTO Jammu met Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rakesh Minhas and discussed Transport related issues and implementation of directions issued by Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety and State Road Safety Committee for minimizing the road accidents in the district.

At a media interaction, the Transport Commissioner said that regular checking will be conducted in the UT to curb traffic violations. "Strict action amounting to suspension of Driving Licences, Route Permits and Registration Certificates of repeated traffic violators will be initiated to minimize road accidents and save precious human lives" he added.

## Chief Justice chairs interactive session on role of law students in justice delivery, social transformation

JI NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, DECEMBER 19

Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority, Tashi Rabstan, today chaired an interactive session organised by the J&K Legal Services Authority in collaboration with DLSA Samba and Dogra Law College, Bari Brahmana.

The event was aimed at educating and empowering law students about their critical role in fostering justice, promoting awareness and addressing pressing societal challenges.

The Chief Justice was accompanied by M. K. Sharma, Principal Secretary and Amit Kumar Gupta, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority. R. N. Wattal, Principal District & Sessions Judge (Chairman DLSA) Samba, Rajesh Sharma, Deputy Commissioner, Samba, Th Gulchain Singh Charak, Chairman, Dogra Education Trust, Sandeep Singh Sen, Secretary, DLSA Samba, Principal, Dogra

Law College, Dean, Dogra Group of Colleges, besides other faculty members of the school were present on the occasion.

In her welcome address, Shuchi Sharma highlighted the importance of such interactive sessions in bridging gap between legal education and its practical application. She emphasised the need of nurturing socially conscious and professionally competent lawyers. He underlined that programs like this are crucial for instilling in students a deeper understanding of their responsibilities as future custodians of justice.

The Chief Justice, in his keynote address, appreciated the role of students and acknowledged their talent displayed through the skit. "Such initiatives particularly of the law students can prove a milestone in spreading awareness among the masses especially in rural areas, if they associate with the Legal Services Authority and reach to the last man standing in the queue" said Justice Tashi. He



urged the student community to take proactive role in bringing the change in the society.

The Chief Justice directed the Legal Services Institutions to rope in the law students in their calendar of activities including Lok Adalats so that the future law practitioners understand their role in amicable resolution of issues besides creating informed citizenry. He urged the students to use their legal education to foster equal-

ity, uphold constitutional values and ensure justice reaches the most vulnerable sections of the society.

The Chief Justice also planted a sapling in the campus of Dogra Law College, symbolizing growth, sustainability and a commitment towards a greener future.

While tracing the history of legislation regarding acid attack, Advocate Rohit Verma, Panel Lawyer, HCLSC Jammu in his impactful presentation said that it was on the

directions of Apex Court that IPC was amended and Section 326 A & B were incorporated therein to ensure that the perpetrators of acid attack are not only booked but are also punished with stringent punishment as per the law. He further informed the audience that similar provision has been incorporated U/S 124 (1) & (2) of Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023.

Advocate Verma also highlighted the broader social and emotional impact of acid attacks emphasising that these heinous crimes are not just physical assaults but are attacks on a person's dignity and identity. He pointed out the significant role of laws like Section 357C of the CrPC, which mandates free medical treatment for victims and the Victim Compensation Scheme, which ensures financial relief. He urged the law students to become advocates of change and spread awareness to prevent such crimes in the future.

A poignant skit was also performed by the students

of Dogra Law College portraying the social evils like dowry demands, domestic violence, Pre-natal sex determination of child, unlawful termination of pregnancy, eve-teasing and the dastardly act of acid attacks. The scintillating performances rendered by the students in the skit left the audience spellbound.

On the occasion, NALSA theme song was also played which eloquently displayed the mission, motto and objective of Legal Services.

Th. Gulchain Singh Charak, Chairman, Dogra Education Trust, felicitated the Chief Justice, expressing gratitude for his inspiring address and guidance to the students.

This interactive session stands as a testament to the commitment of Dogra Law College and the J&K Legal Services Authority in nurturing the next generation of legal professionals and empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the justice delivery system.