

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:

- Severe and continuous abdominal pain
- Disorientation
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Severe pain joints or muscles, breast, area or test
- Redness

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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Persecution in the name of dharma took place due to lack of its understanding: Bhagwat



AGENCIES AMRAVATI, DEC 22

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said all the persecution and atrocities that took place in the name of "Dharma" (religion) happened due to misunderstanding and lack of understanding of "Dharma".

Speaking at the centenary function of 'Maharashtravak Ashram' in Maharashtra's Amravati, he said Dharma was important and must be taught properly.

"Because improper
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Omar underlines importance of using South Indian Cinema to promote J&K's natural beauty



AGENCIES NEW DELHI, DEC 22

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has stressed the importance of using south Indian cinema to promote the natural beauty of Jammu and Kashmir as part of a broader strategy to boost tourism in the

region. The chief minister also expressed a desire to engage more with filmmakers from the south Indian industry, which he believes has been overlooked so far.

"The places we should be focusing on where the
CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

CM cancels programmes in Jammu amid severe cold wave in Kashmir valley

JNEWS SERVICE SRINAGAR, DEC 22

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday said he has cancelled all his forthcoming programmes in Jammu and would station himself in Srinagar to personally oversee the functioning of the power department and other essential services in view of the severe cold wave in the valley.

Kashmir valley is reeling under intense cold wave conditions as the minimum on Saturday dipped to minus 8.5 degrees Celsius. It was the lowest night temperature in more than three decades.

The situation has been compounded by frequent electricity cuts in the valley "In light of the severe cold spell in the Kashmir valley & the resultant difficulties with water & electricity

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India, Kuwait elevate ties to strategic partnership, PM Modi conferred with top Kuwait award

AGENCIES KUWAIT CITY/NEW DELHI, DEC 22

India and Kuwait on Sunday elevated their ties to Strategic Partnership, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with the top Kuwaiti leadership, including the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, even as the two sides inked agreements in the field of defence, sports and cultural exchanges. PM Modi was also conferred with Kuwait's top award in a sign of the growing of bilateral ties.

The MEA spokesperson in a post on X said:

"A significant step forward: India-Kuwait relations elevated to a 'Strategic Partnership'!"

"PM @narendramodimet HH Sheikh Meshal Al-



Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait at the Bayan Palace, Kuwait.

"Discussions focused on exploring ways to take bilateral ties to new heights. PM expressed his gratitude to HH the Amir for the welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait."

PM Modi said in a post on X: "Excellent meeting with His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. "We discussed cooperation in key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, IT, fintech, infrastructure and security."

"In line with the close relations between our two countries, we have elevated our partnership to a strategic level and I am optimistic that our friendship will flourish further in the future."

The PM also held
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India can never permit others to have veto on its choices: EAM Jaishankar

AGENCIES MUMBAI, DEC 22

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said India can never permit others to have a veto on its choices and will do whatever is right in the national interest and for the global good without being intimidated to "conform".

In a video message for a function, he said when India is etched more deeply in global consciousness, its repercussions are truly profound.

In a world grappling with unhealthy habits, stressed lifestyles or recurring climate events, there is much learning to be gained from India's heritage. But the world will only know when the countrymen take pride in it, he said.

In an age of globalisation, technology and tradition must march together, said Jaishankar.

"Bharat will inevitably



Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswati.

The foreign minister did not attend the event but sent his video message.

"Independence should never be confused with neutrality. We will do whatever is right in our national interest and for global good without being intimidated to conform. Bharat can never permit others to have a veto on its choices," he said.

"For too long we were schooled to visualise progress and modernity as a rejection of our heritage and traditions," Jaishankar said.

Perhaps, this came from an affinity for imported models, or perhaps it was a discomfort with its own practices. But now as the deepening of democracy has thrown up more authentic voices, the country is rediscovering itself and finding

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Suspected member of Kashmir militant outfit arrested in Bengal

AGENCIES KOLKATA, DEC 22

A suspected member of a militant outfit in Kashmir Valley was arrested in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Sunday, a senior police officer said.

Javed Munshi, suspected to be a member of the outlawed 'Tehreek e Mujahideen' outfit in Kashmir Valley, was picked up from near Canning Hospital by a joint team of Jammu and Kashmir Police and West Bengal Police's Special Task Force, the officer said.

Javed, who claimed he was visiting the residence of a relative in Canning town for personal reasons, had been allegedly involved in subversive activities in the valley and was wanted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police for a long time, he said.

The 'Tehreek e Mujahideen' is controlled from Pakistan and has contacts with other militant outfits in the valley, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the officer said.

He said 'Jihadi literature' was found in the possession of Javed who had been tasked with indoctrinating locals into the ideology of outfits such as 'Tehreek e Mujahideen' and recruiting Muslim youths into the outfit.

"We are investigating with J-K Police whether he was building a sleeper cell network in South 24 Parganas district. We are also verifying if he is an IED expert and who his local contacts were," he said.

Javed had recently travelled to Nepal and was planning to cross over to Bangladesh en route to Pakistan, the officer said.

The owners of the

Gulshan House building, where Javed was staying, claimed they knew the arrested person was involved in the sale of shawls and was a resident of Srinagar but were not aware of his links with any terror outfit or other activities.

The arrested man was remained on transit till December 31 after being produced at Alipore court.

The arrest followed the recent clampdown on eight suspected members of a terrorist outfit Ansar-al-Islam Bangladesh, who were planning to target the 'chicken's neck corridor' connecting West Bengal's Siliguri with the northeastern states.

Two of the eight arrested were from Murshidabad district and part of a group of eight people apprehended by West Bengal, Kerala and Assam Police.

Security forces apprehend three individuals with arms in North Kashmir



JNEWS SERVICE SRINAGAR, DEC 22

Security forces apprehended three suspect individuals in separate operations and recovered arms and ammunition from them in the Kashmir Valley, officials said.

The army said on December 21, based on specific intelligence input, a Joint Mobile Vehicle Check Post (MVCP) was established by the army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and Cen-

tral Reserve Police Force (CRPF) at Chanpura in north Kashmir's Bandipora district.

One suspected individual has been apprehended along with the recovery of one pistol, one hand grenade, and other warlike stores.

In another similar operation at Yarbug in north Kashmir's Baramulla district conducted on Saturday, the army aided in the apprehension of two more suspected

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Will stage a protest outside CM house in Srinagar against rational reservation policy: Ruhulla

JNEWS SERVICE SRINAGAR, DEC 22

National Conference Member Parliament (MP) Aga Ruhullah Mehdi will hold a sit-on dharna on Monday outside the residence of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah against the reservation policy.

He has also invited everyone affected and everyone else in support of the affected.

MP Srinagar announced the protest plan on X.

"Today marks the date I had committed to stand with those whose voices demand rationality in the reservation policy", Mehdi posted on X on Sunday.

"In my response to a post on X by a concerned citizen, I urged everyone to wait until 22nd December to give

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Dr. Jitendra Singh calls for Dogra Youth to Contribute to India's Global Growth Journey

JNEWS SERVICE JAMMU, DEC 22

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, MoS, PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr Jitendra Singh said, drawing strength from the rich Dogra legacy, it is time now to make a mark in the global world of which India has already become an essential part after 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over.

Addressing a programme organised to observe "Dogra Diwas" commemorating the inclusion of Dogri language in the Indian Constitution and the "International Dogra Legacy Excellence Awards 2024", Dr. Jitendra Singh said, there was a rich Dogra legacy from



the earlier times which has even, after partition, produced some internationally acclaimed icons like the famous Space Scientist and Founder ISRO Prof Satish Dhawan and renowned singer of the Indian subcontinent Malika Pokhraj or musicians like Shiv Kumar Sharma and Ustad Allah Rakha, though this may not be a very widely known fact in some sections. He said, while celebrating the legacy gives us inspiration and confidence, nevertheless to keep the legacy alive for prosperity, it is equally

important to carry it forward to the next destination which, in today's context, would imply Dogra contribution in the making of Viksit Bharat of 2047.

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Income Tax dept serves notice to PDP's J&K MLA para, seeks books of accounts

JNEWS SERVICE SRINAGAR, DEC 22

The Income Tax department has served a notice to senior PDP leader and Jammu and Kashmir MLA Waheed Para to submit his books of accounts, officials said on Sunday.

Though, according to the notice, Para was scheduled to appear before the Income Tax authorities on December 20, he received the intimation on the same day.

While the People's Democratic Party (PDP) leader - the MLA from Pulwama in south Kashmir - was not available for comment, his close aides said his representative would appear at the Income Tax office on Monday.

Para was served a notice under Section 131(1A) of the Income-Tax Act that empowers a tax officer to seek information from taxpayers, even when no formal proceedings are



pending.

The provision also allows the tax authorities to seek books of accounts and financial documents to be brought by the noticee or be sent through their authorised representative, as the case may be.

According to data submitted to the Election Commission after the assembly elections, Para said he had spent a little

over Rs 14 lakh on electioneering.

Of this, Rs 12 lakh was received from individuals, companies, firms or associations as loans, gifts and donations.

In his election affidavit, Para had informed that the total value of his moveable and immovable assets was more than Rs 2.5 crore, including inherited agriculture land of Rs 2 crore.

Para is out on bail after spending two years in jail.

He was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on November 25, 2020, a day after he filed his nomination for the District Development Council elections from Pulwama.

He was granted bail by an NIA court in January 2021. As he was stepping out of jail, the Counter Intelligence (Kashmir) wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Police arrested him on the same charges.

NC rules out joining BJP-led NDA

JNEWS SERVICE SRINAGAR, DEC 22

The National Conference on Sunday ruled out joining the BJP-led NDA and dismissed as baseless a media report in this regard.

This news being peddled by certain so-called journalists is nothing but a blatant lie, driven by malicious intent to mislead the people of Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference chief spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq said.

He was reacting to a report published in a newspaper that claimed Jammu and Kashmir's ruling party might be preparing grounds for a return to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in exchange for the Union Territory's statehood.

"It is disgraceful and irresponsible for anyone to spread such baseless rumours... Let me challenge the

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

MLA Billawar meets Defence Minister, MoS PMO, Seeks Developmental Projects for Constituency

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

In a significant development, MLA Billawar, Satish Kumar Sharma, met with the Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, and the Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office, Jitendra Singh, in Delhi. During the meeting, Sharma submitted a memorandum highlighting key developmental projects for his constituency.

Widening of Dhar-Udhampur Road: Satish Sharma emphasized the strategic importance and growing traffic on this 133 km stretch, seeking its widening to facilitate smooth connectivity.

Upgradation of Sub-District Hospital Billawar: He demanded better healthcare facilities for his constituents, seeking upgradation of the exist-

ing hospital.

Establishment of Primary Health Centre at Katli: A new primary health centre was sought to cater to the medical needs of the local population.

Trauma Centre at Ramkot: Sharma requested the establishment of a trauma centre to provide timely medical assistance in emergency situations.

Sports Stadiums at Phinter and Ramkot: Two sports stadiums were sought to promote sports and youth development in the region.

Both the Defence Minister and the MoS PMO gave a patient hearing to Sharma's demands and assured that all matters have been forwarded to the concerned authorities for appropriate action. This development is expected to bring significant benefits to the people of Billawar constituency.

Modi govt builds on Vajpayee's legacy, strengthening India's global position: Rohiin Chandan

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) District Secretary and Media Prabhari Jammu South Rohiin Chandan has been praising the legacy of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the current leadership of PM Narendra Modi. According to Chandan, Vajpayee had a profound impact on India during his tenure as Prime Minister, and Modi has brought a fresh perspective to the country's development. Rohiin believes that Modi's working style has been instrumental in demonstrating to the people of India how development can be achieved. In 2015, Vajpayee ji was honored with India's highest civilian honor—the Bharat Ratna—by the then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee.

Rohiin highlights the significance of Jammu and Kashmir in the Modi-led government's agenda, a

legacy that was initiated by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. From 2014 to 2024, J&K has remained a top priority, with the government working tirelessly to promote development and progress. Chandan emphasized that the people of the country have faith in the ideology of the Modi government, which has been instrumental in launching numerous schemes and projects to benefit the public.

He expressed that the Modi-led government has been building on the foundation laid by Mr. Vajpay-

ee, who changed the narrative on the Kashmir issue and made terrorism a key concern globally. He said Vajpayee's far-sightedness helped other countries realize that India was not the sponsor of terrorism but rather a victim of it. His legacy continues to inspire the Modi government, which has been working to strengthen India's position on the world stage.

PM Modi has often spoken about the importance of Vajpayee's contributions to India's development, including making the country a nuclear power. The Modi government has been following in Vajpayee's footsteps, with a focus on promoting development and progress in Jammu and Kashmir. The region has seen significant investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, with the government launching various schemes to benefit the local population, Chandan said.

He added that the people of J&K have been benefiting from the various schemes launched by the government, including initiatives to promote entrepreneurship, education, and healthcare. The government has also been working to improve the region's infrastructure, with a focus on building better roads, bridges, and other critical facilities. Several projects are in the pipeline, including initiatives to promote tourism and create jobs for the local youth.

Chandan's statement highlights the BJP's commitment to following in the footsteps of its iconic leaders. The party has been working tirelessly to implement the vision of Vajpayee and Modi, with a focus on progress and development. The Modi government has been implementing various initiatives and policies aimed at transforming India into a major economic power.

Natrang Stages Powerful Hindi Play 'Teen Apaahij'



Natrang presented a scintillating performance of the play 'Teen Apaahij' in Hindi, written by Vipin Kumar Aggarwal under the direction of Neeraj Kant. Speaking on the occasion Director Natrang Padmashree Balwant Thakur said that such intellectual plays written by the top writers of the country carry immense value both for the performers as well as the spectators. Its performance and viewing should be encouraged by all means to create a healthy literary and cultural environment in the city.

The play 'Teen Apaahij' set at a crossroad, three characters Kallu, Khallu and Gallu are shown sitting under a lamp post doing nothing and just passing comments on everything. In a highly symbolic manner, the playwright has tried to expose the directionless system be it political, social or spiritual. This sickening system has rendered the youth of this country not only helpless but also has turned them handicapped. The infection of sadistic corruption has entered into our thoughts and this poison will never allow any new thought, revolution and initiative to occur in our minds. The three charac-

ters in the play communicate with each other in an incoherent manner and nothing matters to the audience. Yet, they constantly have the feeling that there is something to what is happening around us. The meaning of freedom, the useless speeches of the leaders, Indianness, our country, language, class, all are debated and it seems to be aimless even though everything is necessary. Passivity, meaninglessness, confusion, fatigue etc. of a large section of the society are pushing this society and the country towards collective disability. In fact, the author wants to show that in the process of becoming modern, the society today is forgetting its human nature and has reached the era of disability.

Natrang experimented this production with a new generation of actors being fresher's, three characters were excellently played by Aryan Sharma, Krishay Bhatia and Kartik Kumar. They were supported by Adaksh Bagal as Drum-beater and Raghuvansh as Cyclewala. The lights of the play were designed and executed by Neeraj Kant whereas the sound was scored by Manvi Devi. The show was coordinated by Mohd. Yaseen.

Bridging Perspectives: Science, Faith, and the Challenges in Treating Substance Abuse and Cardiac Diseases: Dr Sushil

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Continue with relentless drive for spreading awareness and lending a helping hand to needy ones Head Department of Cardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma held a day long cardiac awareness cum health check up camp at Udas Marg Sanstha , R S Pura Jammu with main emphasis on fostering a healthy and cardiac friendly , substance abuse free lifestyle so as to reduce morbidity and socioeconomic burden .

While interacting with the people Dr Sushil Stated that Science and religion, two domains often perceived as opposites, offer unique perspectives on understanding and addressing substance abuse and its treatment. Substance abuse is a complex issue influenced by biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors. The integration of science and religion can provide a comprehensive approach to tackling this challenge. Science, grounded in empirical

evidence and research, views substance abuse as a medical condition. Many faith traditions see addiction as a manifestation of spiritual disconnection or moral failing, emphasizing repentance, forgiveness, and reconnection with a higher power. Religious communities offer support networks that foster a sense of belonging and purpose. Programs like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), with its foundation in spirituality and the Twelve Steps, highlight the transformative power of surrendering to a higher power and seeking communal support. Despite the contributions of both science and religion, several challenges arise in their integration for substance abuse treatment. One significant challenge is the stigma associated with addiction. Scientific perspectives advocate for viewing addiction as a disease rather than a moral failing, yet societal and religious attitudes often perpetuate shame and guilt. Healthcare providers and religious leaders must



work together to bridge gaps in understanding and create holistic care models. Training programs that educate religious leaders on the scientific basis of addiction and healthcare providers on the spiritual needs of patients can foster this collaboration.

He elaborated that Science and religion both play vital roles in addressing human suffering. By fostering collaboration across disciplines, society can better address complex issues like substance abuse and cardiac diseases. Science and religion often offer distinct yet complementary perspectives in addressing

challenges such as substance abuse treatment. Science focuses on evidence-based approaches, such as pharmacological interventions, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and lifestyle modifications, to help individuals recover from addiction. Religion, on the other hand, may provide spiritual guidance, emotional support, and a sense of community that reinforces resilience and purpose. Together, these perspectives can create a holistic approach to treatment, addressing not just the physical and psychological dimensions of addiction but also the moral and spiritual dilemmas faced by individu-

als. However, integrating these approaches requires careful consideration of individual beliefs and cultural contexts to ensure that treatment is both effective and respectful.

He added that Substance abuse significantly increases the risk of cardiac ailments, including arrhythmias, hypertension, and heart failure, due to the toxic effects of substances like alcohol, opioids, and stimulants. The strain on the cardiovascular system from chronic drug use is often exacerbated by neglect of overall health and poor lifestyle choices. Treating addiction effectively can mitigate these risks,

but the process is complicated by the physiological damage already incurred. Combining science-based medical treatments to address physical health with the emotional and spiritual support often rooted in religious practices can improve long-term outcomes for individuals battling both addiction and related cardiac conditions, he Said Management Committee of Udas Marg Sanstha Sh Bhagwan Dass Ji, Guru Mata Bimla Devi, Daya Ram, H R Dogra, Tarsem Raj, Rajkumar and Ashok Skolia appreciated the efforts of Dr Sushil and his team for conducting cardiac awareness cum health checkup camp in their premises and shows their heartfelt gratitude. Others who were part of this camp includes Dr Venkatesh Yellupu and Dr Dhaneshwer Kapoor. Paramedics and Volunteers includes Kamal Sharma, Raj kumar, Shubham Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Rohit Nayyar, Rahul Vaid, Makhan Sharma, Rajinder Singh, Vikas kumar and Nirvair Singh Bali.

Congress to connect with roots, observe anniversaries of all top leaders , honour party veterans

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Congress will observe the days of all veteran leaders who have played important role in their life in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir & remained loyal to the party . JKPC Chief Shri Tariq Hameed Karra has asked the PCC HQs and all District Presidents to shortlist the names of all such prominent leaders in respective districts ,to be remembered on their birth or death anniversary ,in respective district or constituency headquarters. Acting on the recommendation of the Fact Finding Committee headed by Ravinder Sharma , Shri Karra has asked the top party leaders to identify all such leaders of stature ,whose remembrance shall be observed every year in order to reconnect with the roots of party. The committee has recommended that the party should reconnect with the roots by remembering the past leaders of great contributions, at different levels right from PCC to block levels and also honouring the veteran leaders who have retired from active politics.This will reconnect party with the roots and give the families of original congressmen ,a sense of belongingness with the party.. Accepting the recommendations of the committee,in this regard,JKPC Chief has already issued instructions.Earlier only few leaders of J&K,on pick & choose basis,are remembered.

Poonch clinches the championship trophy at the brigadier usman sppr inter district/tehsil cricket tournament 2024

J I NEWS SERVICE
NAUSHERA : 22 DEC 2024

The Brigadier Usman SPPR Inter District/Tehsil Cricket Tournament 2024 organised under the aegis of White Knight Corps concluded with a grand closing ceremony at the Brigadier Usman Cricket Stadium, Naushera. The event was presided over by the GOC, Ace of Spade Division, as the Chief Guest, alongside esteemed dignitaries including Commander Tithwal Brigade, Commander Naushera Brigade, DC Rajouri and other prominent local leaders. The ceremony celebrated the tournament's success in fostering sportsmanship and unity while showcasing the immense cricketing talent of the region.

The electrifying finale between Sunderbani and Poonch was a spectacle of skill and determination. Poonch emerged victorious, clinching the championship trophy and a cash prize of Rs 4 Lakhs. The runners-up, Sunder-



bani, were awarded Rs 2 Lakhs. Mehboob Sheikh of Sunderbani was declared Man of the Match for his exceptional all-round performance.

Match Highlights: Sunderbani won the toss and opted to bat, posting an impressive total of 138 runs in 20 overs. Poonch, despite the competitive total chased down the total in 16.3 overs at the loss of 7 wickets. Mehrah Mir shone as the top scorer for Sunderbani with 92 runs, while Mehboob Sheikh of Poonch showcased remarkable effort taking 2 wickets and scoring 35 crucial runs for Poonch enabling them to

win the championship. Awards and Recognition:

The tournament honored outstanding individual performances with the following awards:

Player of the Series: Bilal Ahmed, awarded a Motorcycle.

Best Batsman: Bilal Ahmed, awarded Rs 25,000.

Best Bowler: Md Arif, awarded Rs 25,000.

Man of the Match: Mehboob Sheikh, awarded Rs 15,000.

Tournament Overview: This inaugural edition of the Brigadier Usman SPPR Inter District/Tehsil Cricket Tournament was

a landmark event, bringing together eight district/tehsil teams—Udhampur, Akhnoor, Sunderbani, Reasi, Naushera, Rajouri, Poonch, and Doda. Conducted on a league-cum-knockout basis, the tournament boasted the largest prize pool in the region, totaling Rs 20 Lakhs.

The tournament achieved remarkable success, with live-streamed matches reaching over 50 Lakh viewers across various electronic platforms like Facebook and YouTube. Print media coverage extended to 2 Lakh readers through 15 regional and national newspapers.

The Brigadier Usman SPPR Cricket Tournament underscored the Indian Army's commitment to uplifting remote border areas by promoting local talent, fostering unity and encouraging a vibrant sporting culture. The tournament's success has set the stage for its establishment as an annual sporting tradition.

Buds School Channi Himmat Celebrates Christmas Carnival



J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Buds School, Channi Himmat, hosted a grand Christmas Carnival, graced by Advocate Ishant Gupta, State IT Head of BJP Jammu & Kashmir, as the Chief Guest. His esteemed presence elevated the festive spirit of the event.

The Principal, Mrs. Mridula Mangotra, along with Sh. Sanjay Singh and the students, welcomed the Chief Guest with a bouquet of flowers.

The carnival featured a variety of exciting games and activities organized by the teachers for students and their parents which includes Spin the Wheel, Throw the Ring, Selfie Points, Search Gifts in Sand, and Blindfold Object Placement. These

engaging activities provided wholesome entertainment and fostered stronger bonds between children and their families. Advocate Gupta expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Principal and the management for organizing such a vibrant and joyful event. He praised the school's commitment to fostering creativity, unity, and festive cheer within the community.

Gupta commended the school for its dedication to holistic development and the meticulous planning of events that inspire positivity and togetherness. He encouraged the school to continue organizing such programs that blend happiness and learning, further enriching the lives of students and their families.

CB produced challans against 18 accused for different frauds

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Crime Branch (CB) has produced challans against eighteen accused for different frauds in nine different cases in which investigations had been completed and offences established . Among the accused against whom charge-sheets have been submitted to the courts of law included one former journalist, three property dealers, two former contractors and four government employees . The charge-sheets have been filed in different courts in Jammu, Samba and Udhampur for further judicial proceedings . The nine cases in which CB has completed investigation were registered between 2014 & 2024 and in-depth investigations had been conducted in each case by the seasoned, experienced and professional investigating officers (IOs) taking into consideration all aspects & facts of the cases and applying scientific aid to investigations. Senior Superintendent of Police Crime Jammu Benam Tosh confirmed that challans of cases FIR No.40/2020, FIR No. 23/2014, FIR No.48/2015, FIR No.33/2019, FIR No.40/2016, FIR No.21/2022, FIR No.35/2018, FIR No.69/2022 and FIR No.57/2015 have been produced in the courts of Law for judicial determination.

Sham Lal Sharma Felicitates ISPL Players, Inspects Stadium Projects, and Promotes Youth Empowerment Through Sports

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

In a significant event at the Bhalwal playground, MLA Jammu North and Former Minister Mr. Sham Lal Sharma honored Ishant Sharma and Varun Kumar, two young players selected for the prestigious Indian Street Premier League (ISPL). The program was chaired by former Sarpanch Shri Rajdev Singh Ji and witnessed the presence of Divisional Sports Officer Shri Baljinder Singh, SDPO Domana Shri Mudassar Choudhary, XEN Sports Council Sanjeev Sharma, former President of Yuva Rajput Sabha Rajan Singh Happy, Mandal President Shri Rakesh Singh, Shri Narendra Singh, Kuldeep Singh, and other dignitaries.

Following the felicitation ceremony, Mr. Sharma inspected the ongoing construction of two outdoor stadiums aimed at bolstering sports infrastructure in Jammu North. The Bhalwal Outdoor Stadium is being



developed with a budget of Rs 3 crores, and the Mishriwala Outdoor Stadium is being built with a budget of Rs 2 crores.

He directed the concerned officers to expedite the work and ensure it meets high-quality standards while emphasizing the importance of timely delivery to provide the youth with opportunities to engage in sports. Mr. Sharma expressed his commitment to completing these projects on time, stating that they would play a pivotal role in nurturing local talent and encouraging youth participation in sports.

Sharma also interact-

ed with local youth and sports enthusiasts during his visit, urging them to take full advantage of the upcoming facilities. He encouraged the youth to engage actively in sports and assured them that the administration is committed to providing the best infrastructure and opportunities. He emphasized that initiatives like these would not only enhance the region's reputation in sports but also help in identifying and promoting talented individuals at state and national levels. He reiterated that empowering youth through sports is a vital step toward building a progressive and drug-

free society.

Additionally, Mr. Sharma highlighted the need for community involvement in maintaining and supporting sports infrastructure. He called on local organizations, schools, and residents to join hands with the administration in fostering a culture of sportsmanship and teamwork. By ensuring the active participation of all stakeholders, he stated, the youth of Jammu North can lead by example and bring laurels to the region. The event concluded with a pledge to prioritize youth empowerment and establish Jammu North as a hub for sports excellence.

Mahotsav 2024 concludes with indigenous spirit of culture and self-reliance

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

The second day of Mahotsav 2024, organized by LEAD (Ladakh Jammu Kashmir Economic Growth and Development Dialogue) at GGM Science College, Jammu, was a grand celebration of Sanskriti, Swavlamban, and Swadeshi. The event saw an impressive lineup of activities and cultural displays that highlighted the rich heritage and traditions of the region. The day began with the enchanting Shiv Vivaah Katha by Jangam sages, which captivated the audience with its spiritual and cultural depth. A colorful Lohri-themed celebration under the Chajja Festival added a festive vibe, with vibrant performances by school children. The retelling of the legendary tale of Bawa Jitto, a devout farmer and devotee of Mata Vaishno Devi, drew widespread admiration for its poignant storytelling.

The Chief Guest, Shri. Vikramjit Singh, IPS, Commissioner/Secretary to Industries and Commerce Department, lauded LEAD's efforts in driving investment and preserving the cultural legacy of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. He was accom-



panied by Mr. Khalid Jehangir, MD, Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO). Sports enthusiasts were treated to an exciting segment called Khel Darshan, featuring traditional games like Kabaddi and Tug of War. A stunning demonstration of Kalaripayattu, an ancient Indian martial art, showcased the region's traditional prowess and left the audience in awe. Ms. Nuzhat Gul, Secretary of J&K Sports Council, graced the occasion and applauded the participants for their exceptional enthusiasm and talent. She expressed her admiration for LEAD's efforts and announced her intent to collaborate with LEAD in the future to organize a Sports Conclave as part of the Mahotsav.

Children at Mahotsav enthusiastically participat-

ed in a variety of adventurous activities and rides, adding energy and excitement to the event. The Dome Planetarium experience further captivated their imagination, offering a unique blend of education and entertainment. The spiritual highlight of the day was Maha Aarti organized by the Shri Raghunath Ji Corridor Vikas Council. Inspired by the ghats of Kashi and Varanasi, the aarti drew large family audiences and created a serene, devotional atmosphere. The event was attended by Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar. The evening also featured musical performances by the Padam Shri Romalo Ram, Slatia Brothers, Saras Bharti, and other renowned artists from Jammu and Kashmir, evoking a sense of pride and

unity among attendees. The event was also graced by DIG Jammu Shiv Kumar and other senior police officials, adding to its prominence. LEAD Director Manish Ahluwalia, along with Board Members Harinder Gupta, CA Rajeev Gupta, Rajesh Gupta, Surinder Mohan Gupta, Sanjeev Sharma, Raman Suri, and Vikram Gujral, reiterated their commitment to fostering the region's growth and prosperity through their presence.

Families attended the Mahotsav in large numbers, appreciating the efforts of LEAD to celebrate cultural heritage and promote regional development. Like previous years, Mahotsav 2024 left an indelible mark, blending tradition and innovation while promoting unity and community spirit.

Monthly Literary Meeting organized by PSS R S Pura

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Punjabi Sahitak Sabha (PSS), R S Pura organized a Punjabi literary meeting today at Lexicon International Play Way School, Tahli More, Meeran Sahib, Jammu. Well known Punjabi writers and poets of Jammu and Kashmir attended the meeting. President, Punjabi Lekhak Sabha & well known writer, producer and director Dr. Baljit Singh Raina presided over the meeting whereas S. Sukhbir Singh, an officer at Agriculture Deptt. was the chief guest on this occasion. S. Harjit Singh Uppal, President PSS R S Pura also shared the dais.

While expressing his views on the presentation and conduct of the literary and meeting of PSS, Dr. Baljeet Singh Raina gave his impressions on the poems recited by the poets in the



meeting. In his address, he appreciated that the quality poetry and in Punjabi was presented by all the participants. He said that the participation of young generation in the upliftment of the Punjabi literary pursuits is encouraging and should be welcome by heart. Expressing his views on this occasion, S. Sukhbir Singh said that there is a need to connect masses with the literary activities and for that we will have to mobilize the public.

Earlier S. Harjit Singh Uppal welcomed the guests and participants of

the programme. Expressing his views on the presentation of literary creation by the writers and the poets, he said that the creations presented in the programme deserve appreciation. Heated that there is a progress in the hosting of Punjabi literary activities, which is encouraging.

The poets who presented their articles, short stories and poems in the meeting, included Dr. Monojit, Harjit Singh Uppal, Dr. Baljeet Singh Raina, Jang S. Verman, Balkar Singh, JPS Azad,

Balwinder Singh Deep, Renu Bala, Suraj Ratan Bakshi, Bachan Bharti, Suraj Singh Suraj, Advocate Jasmeet Singh and Dr. kulbir Singh Badal presented their Punjabi short stories, articles and poetry of different genres, on different topics & themes reflecting on martyrdom of four Sahibzadas, socio-political and other contemporary issues. The proceedings of the programme were conducted by Dr. Rajvir Singh, General Secretary, PSS and the proceedings were recorded by Advo. Jasmeet Singh.

Rajya Puraskar Testing camp 2024 and Tiritiya Sopan Camp was held at Mayur Public school, Jirhi Jammu from 20th to 22nd December, 2024

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

J&K Bharat Scouts and Guides conducted Rajya Puraskar Testing camp 2024 and Tiritiya Sopan Camp at Mayur Public school Jammu from 20th to 22nd December, 2024. In the camp 185 Scouts, Guides, Rovers and Rangers for Rajya Puraskar Testing camp and 170 Scouts and Guides for Tiritiya

Sopan camp took part. The camp was inaugurated by the Principal of the Mayur Public school. He was highly impressed with the dedication of young Scouts and Guides for coming to take part in the camp. Testing camp was based on both written as well as Practical. In the Tiritiya sopan camp Scouts and Guides learn various skills and take part in all the activities as per the syllabus.

On the closing ceremony Wg. Comdr. M M Joshi (National Commissioner Hqs for Special Program as well as State Commissioner AR(s) J&K Bharat Scouts and Guides and Mr. Nasreen Khan (Dy. National Commissioner (Guides) as well as State Secretary cum Administrative Officer J&K Bharat Scouts and Guides graced the occasion and gave their blessing to all the participants of the camp.

The camp was conducted under the Leadership of Shri. R P Kotwal (STC) Smt. Manjeet Kour (JSTC), Shri. K L Sharma (HQ Commissioner), Smt. Ranjana Gandhora (District Secretary), Smt

Neelam Gupta LT (G), Ms. Neeru Talwar ALT, Shri. Imran Ahmed HWB, Smt. Uma Jamwal ALT and other invited Staff members from various units of District Jammu and Samba.

Festivals foster communal harmony & strengthen societal bonds: Arvind Gupta

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Arvind Gupta, senior BJP leader and MLA West Constituency, today participated in a vibrant program organized by the Christian community to mark the joyous occasion of Christmas.

Addressing the gathering, Arvind Gupta extended warm greetings to the Christian community and highlighted the importance of festivals in fostering communal harmony and strengthening societal bonds. "Christmas is not just a festival; it is a reminder of the values of love, compassion, and selfless service that Jesus Christ preached. Let us all imbibe these values and work towards building a society rooted in peace and mutual respect," he said.

The senior BJP leader also highlighted the symbolic significance of Santa Claus, drawing an inspiring analogy. He urged the gathering to see their parents as the real-life Santas who fulfilled all their wishes and needs during



childhood. "Santa Claus brings joy and gifts during Christmas, but our parents are the true Santas in our lives, tirelessly working to ensure our happiness and fulfilling our dreams when we were young. Now, it is our responsibility to care for them, respect them, and make their lives comfortable," he said, striking an emotional chord with the audience.

Arvind also reiterated the Central Government's initiatives under the leadership of Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi to promote inclusivity and ensure that all communities feel an integral part of India's growth story. "The BJP stands firmly with all communities and is dedicated to ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to celebrate their traditions freely and joyfully," he added.

The event concluded with the exchange of greetings and distribution of gifts among the children, bringing smiles to many faces.

Indian Army Organised Medical Camp for Locals Youth at Parankote, Reasi

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI: 22 DEC 2024

The Indian Army organized a medical camp for locals at Parankote in Reasi district, aiming to provide essential healthcare services to underserved communities. The camp saw a significant turnout, with numerous villagers from Parankote and surrounding areas seeking consultations and treatment. The locals were offered check-ups, provided with free medicines, and given guidance on preventive health measures. The initiative was well-received, with beneficiaries expressing gratitude for the Indian Army's support in ensuring access to healthcare. This effort reflects the Indian Army's commitment to community welfare and enhancing local well-being.

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

In a significant step towards promoting self-reliance and entrepreneurship in Jammu and Kashmir, Vikram Randhawa, senior BJP leader and MLA Bahu Constituency, today inaugurated the TTAPIO Café in Channi today. The event witnessed the presence of prominent residents and community leaders of the area, celebrating the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Speaking at the inauguration, MLA Randhawa lauded the entrepreneurial spirit of Mehak Sharma, the café's owner, and her younger brother, who have taken a bold step in bringing innovation and quality service to the region. "This initiative resonates with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, encouraging individuals to become self-reliant and contribute to the nation's economic growth," he said.

Applauding the venture as a step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat, Randhawa emphasized the importance of self-reliance and highlighted several schemes initiated by the Modi Government to empower the youth, including Start-Up India, Skill India, and Mudra



Yojana, which provide financial support, training, and opportunities for innovation. He commended the café as a symbol of determination and hard work, inspiring local youth to explore entrepreneurial avenues while contributing to the region's economic growth.

The TTAPIO Café, with its modern ambiance and diverse menu, is poised to become a hotspot for locals, offering a unique blend of flavors and a comfortable space for social interaction. Randhawa highlighted that such ventures not only provide employment opportunities but also inspire the youth to explore entrepreneurial avenues. Congratulating Mehak

Sharma and her family, the senior BJP leader said, "This café is not just a business venture; it is a symbol of hard work, determination, and the belief in one's dreams. I am confident that TTAPIO Café will set new standards and encourage more young minds to take similar initiatives."

Vikram Randhawa assured the people of Channi of his continued support for such endeavors that empower individuals and strengthen the local economy. "TTAPIO Café stands as a testament to the transformative power of self-reliance, embodying the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat and showcasing how small businesses can make a big difference," he added.

Indian Army Organised Awareness Talk on Health at Kalaban, Rajouri

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI: 22 DEC 2024

To promote health awareness and education, the Indian Army organized an awareness talk on health at Govt. Higher Secondary School Kalaban on 22 Dec 2024. The event aimed to educate students, faculty, and local community members about the importance of health and wellness. A total of 143 participants, including 72 boys, 47 girls, and 24 teachers, attended the event. The lecture, attended by 143 participants, highlighted the significance of maintaining good health and the Indian Army's commitment to promoting health awareness. It provided valuable insights on various health-related topics, including nutrition, fitness, and disease prevention. The event served as a platform to reaffirm the Indian Army's commitment to promoting health awareness and education, particularly among the youth. The Indian Army's efforts to promote health awareness are a testament to its dedication to upholding the values of wellness, fitness, and overall well-being. The event was highly appreciated by the participants, who praised the Indian Army's initiative to promote health awareness.

JK has most productive Forests of India; reports ISFR 2023



JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 22

With the release of 'India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023)' on 21st December, 2024 by the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupinder Yadav, three positive outcomes have been reported for the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

The J&K has the highest growing stock among all the States/UTs at 296.22 Cum/ha followed by Himachal Pradesh at 2nd position which has 219.46Cum/Ha. J&K has also maximum Carbon Stock /ha at 174.10 ton/ha among UTs besides having increased forest cover by 34.78 Sq Km.

In order to celebrate the achievements of J&K Forest

Department reported in the latest release of ISFR 2023, all the HoDs/ senior officers of the J&K Forest Department led by the PCCF and HoFF, B K Singh, participated in a plantation drive held at the FRMC Complex, Narwal, Jammu today. Two former PCCFs of J&K Forest Department also participated in the plantation drive.

It was informed that the left over portion of the FRMC complex has been selected for Plantation drive where variety of indigenous plant saplings were planted. It was stated by the PCCF & HoFF that all the left over portions of the FRMC complex shall be covered with plantation so as to erect a green barrier around the main office building.

JKSSB Exam conducted smoothly across 4 centres in District Ramban



JJ NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, DEC 22

The District Administration Ramban has successfully conducted all three phases of the OMR-based examinations for various posts under the Home Department, organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board

(JKSSB). The exams were held on December 1, 8, and 22, 2024, at five designated centers across the district.

The final phase of the Exam was held today for filling posts of Constable (Photographer). Out of 1000 registered candidates only 66 aspirants appeared at centers five

centres established at Government Model Higher Secondary School (GMHSS) Ramban, Government Degree College (GDC) Ramban, Kamal Academy Chanderkote, Government High School (GHS) Chanderkote, and Government Polytechnic College Chanderkote.

The examinations were conducted under the overall guidance of Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, and direct supervision of Additional Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Varunjeet Singh Charak, ensuring seamless execution through meticulous planning and on-ground monitoring.

JKSSB's OMR-Based Exam conducted smoothly in Rajouri

JJ NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 22

The JKSSB OMR-based examination for the recruitment of Constables (Photographer) was conducted in 16 designated centers across district Rajouri under the direct supervision of the Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma.

Out of the total 9,783 registered candidates, only 1,022 appeared in the exam.

To ensure a seamless and fair conduct of the examination, the DC conducted random visits to various examination centers. He reviewed the arrangements and interacted with officials to ensure strict adherence to the guidelines issued by the JKSSB.

A double layer of frisking teams was deployed

at all examination centers to prevent any malpractice and ensure the integrity of the examination process. Proper signages were installed near examination centers to guide candidates and maintain a smooth flow of entry and exit. Additionally, robust security arrangements were in place to prevent any untoward incidents.

Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa and Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Mohamad Jahangir Khan, also inspected several examination centers as part of flying squad teams. They were accompanied by other officials to oversee the implementation of administrative and security protocols.

The flying squad teams were deployed

to ensure the examination was conducted in a fair and transparent manner. These teams inspected the centers to monitor compliance with rules and address any issues arising during the examination process.

The DC expressed satisfaction over the arrangements and commended the efforts of the district administration, JKSSB officials, and examination staff for the smooth conduct of the examination. He emphasized that ensuring a transparent and impartial recruitment process remains a top priority for the administration. The aspirants appreciated the well-organized arrangements and expressed their satisfaction with the hassle-free conduct of the examination.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Persecution in the...

and incomplete knowledge of Dharma leads to Adharma. All the persecution and atrocities that took place across the world in the name of Dharma actually took place because of misunderstanding and lack of understanding of Dharma," he emphasised.

Asserting that Dharma has always existed and everything works according to it and that is why it is called "sanatan", the RSS chief said "the conduct of Dharma is protection of Dharma".

Omar underlines...

money is there, the budgets are big are actually the south Indian film industry. That, for reasons of arrogance or ignorance, we have consciously ignored until now. So they are the ones with movie budgets of Rs 300-400 crore," Abdullah told PTI during a recent interview.

The chief minister observed the tourism sector would benefit greatly if films depicted the scenic beauty of Jammu and Kashmir, as he highlighted the historical connection with Bollywood that, he said, had played an important role in establishing the valley as a favourite honeymoon destination for generations of Indians.

This strategy, according to Abdullah, would serve a dual purpose – it would not only display the scenic beauty of the region in south Indian films but also promote Kashmir as an attractive travel destination among tourists from south India who had not traditionally viewed the valley as a vacation spot.

While there is no precise estimate of the south Indian film industry's size, a 2022 report by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) valued it at approximately Rs 74,900 crore.

The report, titled "Regional is the New National Way Forward for the South India Media and Entertainment Industry", showed that the south Indian film industry accounted for 35 per cent of the total media and entertainment market share, maintaining its relevance despite rapid technological advancements.

According to media consultancy firm Ormax Media, Tollywood – the Telugu-language film industry – brought in around USD 212 million last year, surpassing Bollywood's earnings of USD 197 million.

Abdullah mentioned the possibilities of marketing Jammu and Kashmir as a prime filming location for films and video albums. These have more time for shoot preparation but can easily boast high budgets.

He also highlighted the destination wedding market, a major commercial business opportunity now.

By targeting these avenues, Abdullah aims to give a boost to the tourism industry and showcase the unparalleled beauty of Jammu and Kashmir to a wider audience.

The chief minister said a proposal had been made for opening some new destinations in Kashmir. "We have actually put together a proposal and are trying to see if we can get multilateral agency funding.

CM cancels programmes...

supply, I have decided to cancel my forthcoming programmes in Jammu & station myself in Srinagar for the next week to personally monitor the functioning of the Power department & other important departments," the chief minister posted on his X handle.

Abdullah said he was on his way back from Jaisalmer in Rajasthan where he had gone to attend the GST council meeting.

"I'm on my way back from Jaisalmer as I type and will be back in Srinagar tomorrow morning," he said.

Abdullah said his decision to cancel his programmes in Jammu will cause some inconvenience to the organisers and promised to make it up to them later.

"I do appreciate that cancelling my programmes in Jammu will cause some inconvenience to the organisers & I regret the same. However under the circumstances this is the right thing to do & I will make it up to the people/organisations whose programmes have been affected," he added.

India, Kuwait elevate...

talks with the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and with the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah.

The MEA spokesperson said in a post on X:

"A partnership built on shared values and vision. PM @narendramodi and HH Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, PM of Kuwait held productive meeting today at the Bayan Palace, Kuwait.

"Both sides exchanged views on a range of bilateral topics with a focus on strengthening economic cooperation."

On his meeting with the Kuwaiti Crown Prince, the PM posted:

"Had a very good meeting with His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince of Kuwait. The discussions covered ways to deepen economic and cultural linkages between our nations.

"We are extremely optimistic about the India-Kuwait Strategic Partnership scaling new heights of success in the times to come."

The MEA spokesperson in a post said: "India-Kuwait ties strengthened further!

"PM @narendramodi met HH Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait at the Bayan Palace in Kuwait.

"Both leaders welcomed the elevation of relations to 'Strategic Partnership' & discussed various facets of bilateral ties."

Prime Minister Modi was also decorated with Kuwait's top honour of Mubarak Al-Kabeer medal in appreciation for his role in boosting the good ties between Kuwait and India.

The honour was bestowed on PM Modi by the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in a ceremony held at Bayan Palace

The bilateral agreements reached included:

MoU between India and Kuwait on Cooperation in the field of Defence.

This MoU will institutionalize bilateral cooperation in the area of defence. Key areas of cooperation include training, exchange of personnel and experts, joint exercises, cooperation in defence industry, supply of defence equipment, and collaboration in research and development, among others.

Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between India and Kuwait for the years 2025-2029.

The CEP will facilitate greater cultural exchanges in art, music, dance, literature and theatre, cooperation in preservation of cultural heritage, research and development in the area of culture and organizing of festivals.

Executive Programme (EP) for Cooperation in the Field of Sports (2025-2028)

The Executive Programme will strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of sports between India and Kuwait by promoting exchange of visits of sports leaders for experience sharing, participation in programs and projects in the field of sports, exchange of expertise in sports medicine, sports management, sports media, sports science, among others.

Kuwait's membership of International Solar Alliance (ISA).

The International Solar Alliance collectively covers the deployment of solar energy and addresses key common challenges to the scaling up of use of solar energy to help member countries develop low-carbon growth trajectories.

India can never permit...

again its own persona, he said. Jaishankar said India is an exceptional nation because it is a civilisation state. Such a country will only exercise influence when it fully leverages its cultural strengths in the global arena, he said.

"To that it is essential that we ourselves, the younger generation, are fully aware of the value and significance of our heritage. This can be articulated at various levels, but most importantly it should have an impact at the societal level," he said.

Jaishankar said India is poised today at a crucial juncture. On the one hand, the last decade has demonstrated that it has the capabilities, confidence and, most importantly, the commitment to advance development across broad fronts.

It has shown that the age-old problems of poverty, discrimination and lack of opportunities can be indeed addressed. On the global stage, it has established itself as an independent power but one committed to global good, especially the well-being of the global south, he said.

"At the same time, however, the constraints and

limitations that have long been our bane still remain in place. There are viewpoints and ideologies which are more pessimistic and even denigrating of ourselves," added Jaishankar.

Security forces apprehend...

individuals along with one pistol, two hand grenades, and other warlike stores.

Further investigation by police is in progress, they said.

Will stage a protest...

the elected government time to address this issue", he stated and said "I also said that if the matter was not resolved by then, I would join you in protest outside the HCM's residence or office".

"...*22nd December ends tonight*", Mehdi remarked and said, "Over the past month, I've observed a range of reactions to the formation of the sub-committee".

"To those who believe that the issue remains undressed in a satisfactory manner: I stand by my commitment", he said.

"Tomorrow, I will join the people in a peaceful and dignified attempt to demand answers on their issues from the government," Mehdi said and added "I request all those voluntarily coming to maintain civility and focus on raising genuine demands for a rational reservation policy".

He said, "To those who seek to exploit this issue for political gains: I welcome you to step out tomorrow and step away from rhetoric. Show your sincerity where it matters—the streets".

Dr. Jitendra Singh calls...

Jammu & Kashmir and inclusion of Dogri as an official language. He recalled that in his parliamentary constituency also, at the entry point of Jammu & Kashmir, Lakhampur, for the first time a majestic statue of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of Jammu & Kashmir State, was established in recent years.

Exhorting the Dogra community, particularly the youth, to be part of the mainstream growth story of India, Dr. Jitendra Singh said, India of today is no longer what it was about two decades ago. He said, unlike in the past, we do not wait to adopt the successful practices from other countries but today we are developing our own best practices including technologies for other countries to follow. The success stories of Chandrayaan

3 and COVID Vaccine are the most illustrious examples of this, he added.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said, at a time when we have risen to global rank 3 in the world StartUp ecosystem and when we are ahead of many others in Quantum Technology and Biotechnology, would we be doing justice to our Dogra legacy if we keep ourselves isolated and not be a part of the global journey of India as is seen in several other States. He said, there is no dearth of talent or potential in Dogra youth but what is required is the change of mindset and liberation from the obsession for "Sarkari Naukri". He said, he sometimes feels pained to see youth on indefinite protest for a Rs.6,000 "Sarkari Naukri" when the Modi government has rolled out a series of attractive schemes, which promises a more lucrative source of livelihood. One of the examples is the Purple Revolution or the Lavender Entrepreneurship right in our immediate neighbourhood.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said that as India today stands among the league of frontline nations in the world, it offers an opportunity to the Dogra youth to draw strength from their rich legacy and seek recognition for themselves across the country and beyond. He said taking inspiration from the Dogra legacy, it is time for them to leave their own mark on the world. He said, this legacy should lay the foundation of giving further impetus to the journey for perfection, and enable the youth to play a visibly meaningful role in the making of a Viksit Bharat.

NC rules out joining...

individual behind this fabrication: name the so-called 'top BJP leadership' that Omar Abdullah alleged to have met, or immediately retract your claim and issue a public apology," he said in a post on X.

Sadiq also said Abdullah's meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi was held in full public view.

"For the record, his meeting with the home minister in North Block was in full view of the media. If this so-called journalist claims otherwise, let him substantiate his allegations with evidence or admit to his lies. We will not allow such deceitful tactics to go unchallenged," he said. Sadiq also threatened legal action against the publication if the report was not withdrawn.

"If this fabricated story is not retracted immediately, accompanied by a public apology, we reserve the right to take legal action against those responsible for tarnishing our image and misleading the public. Let this be a warning: such dishonest journalism will not be tolerated," the National Conference spokesperson added.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION KISHTWAR

Sh. Chander Mohan Gupta,
S/o Sh. Tej Ram Gupta
R/o Kishtwar

No: EE/R&B/K/3837-42
Dated: 20-12-2024

FINAL NOTICE

Subject: Construction / up gradation of existing Main Bus Stand by way of const. pucca drain length =250 mtr const. of entry gate, construction of passenger shed, & demolishing of existing toilet block including court of passenger shed.

Ref: This office Notice No.EE/R&B/K/3457-62 Dated.02-12-2024 & EE/R&B/K/3600-05 Dated.09-12-2024.

Whereas the above-mentioned work was allotted to you vide this office allotment No. EE/R&B/K/Alt/348-50 Dated: 22-11-2021 with a completion date of 26-12-2022, which has since expired. However, you have left the work incomplete, for reasons best known to you. The District Administration has taken serious note of the non-completion of the said work.

As per the above-referred notices, you were directed to resume the said work and complete it in all respects. However, you neither responded to the notice nor resumed the work, which is a matter of serious concern.

Now, through the medium of this notice, you are finally directed to resume the work within 2 days from the issuance of this notice. Otherwise, the undersigned has no other option but to forfeit your CDR, cancel/terminate your contract, and put the balance work to fresh tenders at your own risk and cost. You will be wholly and solely responsible for that.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
PWD (R&B) Division
Kishtwar
DIP/J-8474/24
Date: 21-12-24

PMO Dr Jatinder Singh attend Gau Gopal Yagya In The presence of Shri Ganga Dhar Maharaj ji at Sohanjana village

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

On the 5th day of the 9-day long Gau Gopal Maha yagya in the presence of Shri Ganga dhar Maharaj ji at Sohanjana village, which is being organised on the occasion of the 64th birth anniversary of Sant Shiromani Shri Dwarika Nath Shastri and as symbol of religious, spiritual, social harmony and human character building, this Mahayagna was transformed into a pilgrimage center. Till now, not ten or fifty thousand but more than four lakh devotees, along with taking food prasad, visited the holy Samadhi and Dev Poojan Mahayagna, circumambulated the huge Yagyashala and listened to sermons of the Satsang.

In the huge pandal of Gya yagy Roopi Satsang, in front of lakhs of devotees, the students of Shastri Memorial School performed the drama of Draupadi Cheerharan, the children of Ranveer Memorial School, village Kripal pur, performed on Rani Jhansi and Kargil martyrs, and Sarvapalli Radhakrishna School Bishnah performed on the Pulwama terrorist attack.

Coincidentally, Lok Sabha member and Minister Udhampur and Minister in charge of PMO office



of Government of India, Hon'ble Dr Jitendra Singh ji also came and was overwhelmed after watching the dramas full of patriotism. Honorable Dr. Sahab expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Sutradhar of the Yagya, revered Shri Gangadhar ji, for this Maha Yagya organized on the occasion of the birth day of Sant Shiromani Shri Dwarika Nath Shastri for religious, spiritual, social harmony and human character building. In the

presence of the Minister of the Central Government, revered Shri Gangadhar ji, along with innumerable listeners, took a pledge to make the collective call and voice of the Honorable Minister reach the Parliament House, Lok Sabha, to impose a complete ban on cow slaughter and declare it as the mother of the nation.

In response to this, the Honorable Minister assured to make the voice of this moral and appropriate

demand of millions of lovers of Indian culture on this national issue reach the Parliament House.

Today, 1008 Swami Aksharanandji, who came to transformed religious city, showered nectar words that instilled patriotism and moral values in the entire society, especially in the hearts of children and youth. Devotee Virendra ji, who came from Ghagwal, led the listeners towards the love of God through bhajans. Hoisting the national flag is a special part of this religious sacrifice, and on the other hand, in the 108 Kundi Yagna shala, all the Yajmans duly worshipped Mother Cow while worshipping all the Peethas, Shri Gopal Sahasranama, Gita, Yogini peeth Hawan and praying for world peace. The police personnel efficiently managed such a large number of devotees and provided relief and security to all. The traffic police personnel were also seen standing firm in public service with a sense of duty. Even in these five days, dutyful Shri Ajay Sharma, SP South Jammu, despite being busy with his other official work, showed his commendable sense of duty to ensure the safety and fearlessness of the huge congregation of people.

Prof. Umesh Rai Congratulated on Reappointment as Vice Chancellor of the University of Jammu

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 23

In a commendable gesture of appreciation, a delegation led by Shri Avinash Choudhary, Chairman of the Border Welfare Organization and a resident of the Boys Hostel, met with Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor of the University of Jammu, to extend their congratulations on his reappointment. The occasion not only celebrated Prof. Rai's continued leadership but also underscored his notable contributions to student welfare and inclusivity at the University.

The delegation took the opportunity to discuss their vision for the Boys Hostel, lauding the Vice Chancellor for his steadfast commitment to improving its infrastructure and ensuring a supportive living environment for its residents. A particular highlight of their



discussion was the recent steps taken to enhance accessibility for specially-abled students. Prof. Rai's approval of modifications to the hostel prem-

ises to enable smooth and unrestricted mobility for these students reflects the University's progressive stance on inclusivity and equal opportunities.

Expressing his gratitude, Prof. Rai reassured the delegation of the University's dedication to fostering an environment conducive to academic and personal growth. He reiterated his resolve to prioritize student welfare and infrastructural development, aligning with the broader goals of the institution.

This interaction serves as a testament to the collaborative spirit between the University administration and its stakeholders. By addressing the needs and aspirations of its students, the University of Jammu continues to set benchmarks in creating a holistic, inclusive, and nurturing educational ecosystem. Prof. Rai's reappointment heralds a continuation of these efforts, further bolstering the University's reputation as a forward-thinking institution committed to excellence.

Sant Hare Ram Das School Shines at Cultural Mahotsav 2024



JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Sant Hare Ram Das School made a remarkable presence at the vibrant Cultural Mahotsav 2024 held at Canal Road yesterday. Organized by LEAD, the event showcased the rich cultural heritage of the region, with students, teachers, and esteemed guests in attendance.

The school's talented students stole the show with a captivating Dogri cultural dance performance, reflecting their institution's com-

mitment to preserving and promoting regional cultural traditions. The energetic and colorful display left the audience mesmerized.

The event was decorated with a soulful recitation of the Hanuman Chalisa, emphasizing the school's emphasis on spiritual and cultural values. This poignant moment left a lasting impression on all present.

The event was a resounding success, and Sant Hare Ram Das School looks forward to organizing more such cultural programs in the future.

BSP will protest at district level on 24 December regarding the statement of Union Home Minister

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

Bahujan Samaj Party will protest peacefully at district level in Jammu and Kashmir on 24 December regarding the statement made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Parliament about Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and a memorandum will be submitted to the President through the District Deputy Commissioner and BSP will demand that Union Home Minister Amit Shah should withdraw his statements and apologize. Following the instructions given by party supreme Mayawati, the party will protest at Ambedkar Chowk in District Jammu and after that,

a memorandum of their demands will be submitted by reaching the District Deputy Office in the form of a rally. Along with this, BSP workers will protest against Union Home Minister Amit Shah in other districts including Kathua, Samba, Udhampur, Rajouri, Poonch and will demand that he apologize for his statements. Let us tell you that like other opposition parties, Bahujan Samaj Party is also strongly opposing the statement of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and due to this, the party has decided to hold nationwide protests on December 24 and in Jammu and Kashmir too, protests will be held at the district level by BSP.

Unscheduled power cuts make winter unbearable for people: Kesri

JINNEWS SERVICE
ARNIA, DEC 22

Shiv Sena Hindustan J&K President Pt Rajesh Kesri on Sunday claimed that with the onset of winter, the unscheduled power cuts increased woes of several villages in border areas during a press conference in Arnia today. Addressing media persons, he alleged that unscheduled power cuts have increased their problems and the Power Development Department (PDD) is not taking effective steps to improve the electricity supply as a result of which, there is outrage among the people towards the department. He said that it gets dark in these areas as soon as sunlight fades away in the evening. The days are short in winters and it gets difficult to perform daily chores. Also people rely heavily on electric heaters and warm blowers to heat up their household. Absence of electric power also hampers their functioning which results in locals being exposed to severe cold weather which sometimes drops considerably during night time. The students of this border belt are the worst sufferers as lack of electricity disrupts their study



routine. He alleged that hundreds of rupees are paid as an electricity bill every month by the poor people of this border belt, despite this PDD has failed to provide people with this basic right of uninterrupted power. He urged District Administration and senior officials of the concerned department to take immediate steps to improve the power supply in this area as soon as possible.

Kesri observed that Jammu and Kashmir is facing significant challenges with electricity supply as winter sets in, leading to widespread dissatisfaction among residents. Residents across various locales, especially border areas, have expressed their frustration over what they describe as relentless power cuts. Many have accused the power department of failing to adhere to the published curtailment schedules, which

were meant to mitigate the impact on daily life. "It seems like there's no consistency; power is out for hours, often without notice," stated Kesri, highlighting the unpredictability of the situation. The impact of these outages is especially severe during winter, when cold temperatures become unbearable without heating. The challenge is not just limited to border areas; multiple regions across Jammu and Kashmir are experiencing similar issues. Locals have complained about the power department's lack of accountability, with some claim it feels like decisions are made on the fly, without proper communication or structure.

Kesri said that residents are puzzled by the fact they have been equipped with smart meters and upgraded infrastructure, yet the outages persist. Community members,

particularly business owners, are feeling the heat from these outages, finding it increasingly difficult to maintain client relationships without consistent power supply. The customers aren't just inconvenienced; economic impacts are very real as sales dip and operations become less reliable. While the government works to combat these challenges, such as holding meetings to improve efficiency and revenue realization within the power sector, skepticism remains among locals who have witnessed repeated power shortages and inconsistent updates. "There's little faith left in the officials to provide real solutions," said another resident, already resigned to the power cuts. While metered areas are witnessing unscheduled power cuts, the unmetered areas, particularly villages, are witnessing power outage for longer hours. Prominent among those present on the occasion include Balveer Kumar, Balwant Saini, Rajkumar Baba, Sanjeev Sharma, Rajesh Kumar, Suresh Kumar, Om Prakash, Satpal Fauji, Devty Kumar, Darshana Bunti, Vijay Devi, Rajni Devi, Neeru Devi, Geet Devi, Pooja Devi besides others.

Kalash Pati Sharma Along with Maharaj Rajesh Bittu ji to Shivlok Prasthan Divas will be celebrated on 25 December dablhar



JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 22 DECEMBER

Kalash pati sharma Along with Mahant Rajesh Bittu ji and Rajeev Sharma Addressing The Press Conference Today Mahatma Shyam Giri Maharaj who departed for Kailash Dham on 25 December 2023. In his memory, Shivlok Prasthan Divas will be celebrated on 25 December this year at the Panchvati temple in village dablhar Tehsil RS Pura. While talking to the media, the members said that Mahant Shyam Giri Maharaj ji was a retired teacher, he has been honored with the Governor Award as well as the President Award. He told that Mahant Shyam Giri Maharaj ji has built about eight temples along with his household, one of

which is Panchvati temple which is in RS Pura. This Shiv bati temple was very close to the heart of Mahant Giri ji Maharaj, that is why we are organizing this occasion in this temple itself. On this day, a Bhandara will be organized here, there will be a Sant Sangam Samagam and thousands of devotees will participate in it. He told that some social work will also be done on this day like medical camp and other schemes will be started. He informed the devotees that a 150-year-old Shivling is also installed there, go and see it and make your life blessed. He invited all the devotees on this occasion and appealed to them to participate in the Havan, Langer Prasad and Sant Sammelan.

IDPS celebrates Annual Day "Wings of Change"



JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 22

International Delhi Public School, Jammu celebrates its Annual Day woven around the theme "Wings of Change; Small steps, Big Impact" with vibrancy and life being propelled into magnificent and reverberating celebrations. The Annual day was presided by the Chief Guest Sh Anand Jain, ADGP and Guest of Honour Sh Balwant Thakur and our proud parents. Entailing the formal welcome, the progressive annual report was presented by the Principal. This was followed by the Prize distribution ceremony to the students who excelled in Academics, Sports and Extracurricular activities. The programme was an amalgamation of various hues benefiting the theme wondrously. The thematic show of talent, imagination, and organization was the essence of the evening. Our students danced to the tune of songs with colourful props. The audience was enthralled by a colourful and very well directed dance drama. The theme-based dances capti-

vated the guests. The props and costumes added colour to the festive occasion with the synchronized dance movement to the foot-tapping music. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Guest Sh Anand Jain stated that the students have smartly carved a niche for themselves. He added that students should not only be imparted excellent education but also be given great scruple and values so they can effectively serve their nation. The event was also attended by Chairperson Ms #Manisha #Choudhary & the Management Dr #Suminder #Singh and Mr #Swarn #Choudhary, Ms #Randeep #Wazir - Principal of the school, our eminent guests, distinguished Principals of the schools and the most important and special guest of the day our dear parents who always bestow upon us their unflinching support and cooperation. IDPS Management extends sincerest appreciation to the resolute team of leaders and grateful to the dedicated faculty and staff members to make this event splendid and a grand success.

Indian Army Organised Mobile Medical Patrol at Bariyanala, Rajouri

JINNEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, 22 DEC 2024

The Indian Army extended healthcare services to the remote parts of Rajouri district through a mobile medical patrol in the village of Bariyanala to address the medical needs of the locals, as well as the Gujjar and Bakkarwals in the area. The inhabitants of the region are often cut off from mainstream healthcare facilities due to their isolated geographic

location and challenging terrain. They benefitted immensely from this initiative, which contributed to the overall well-being of the locals who often suffer from disparities in healthcare, leading to higher morbidity and mortality rates. The mobile medical patrol, equipped with essential medical supplies and services, reached these areas to provide healthcare with compassion to local villagers, as well as Gujjar and Bakkarwals. The primary

objective was to provide on-the-spot medical care and check-ups, which included basic health assessments, treatment of common ailments, and distribution of necessary medicines. The team emphasized preventive healthcare by offering immunizations and disseminating information about hygiene, nutrition, and disease prevention. The response from the local population has been overwhelmingly positive. The locals expressed deep

gratitude for the Army's initiative, which brings much-needed medical services directly to their doorsteps, with special focus on women's healthcare. Beyond the immediate medical benefits, the mobile medical patrol played a crucial role in building and strengthening the relationship between the Indian Army and the local communities. A total of 43 villagers (22 males, 15 females, and 6 children) benefitted from the mobile medical patrol.

EDITORIAL

Kisan Diwas: Honoring the Backbone of Our Nation

India celebrates Kisan Diwas, or National Farmers' Day, every year on December 23 to honor the contributions of farmers to the nation's development. The date commemorates the birth anniversary of Chaudhary Charan Singh, India's fifth Prime Minister, whose vision and policies emphasized the empowerment and welfare of the agricultural community. This day is not merely a tribute but a reminder of the critical role farmers play in sustaining the nation's economy and ensuring food security.

Agriculture has been the cornerstone of India's economy for centuries, employing nearly half of the population and contributing significantly to GDP. Farmers are not just cultivators of crops but custodians of the nation's heritage and biodiversity. Despite their indispensable role, many farmers face challenges such as unpredictable weather, inadequate irrigation facilities, rising input costs, and market volatility. Kisan Diwas urges us to reflect on these issues and find solutions to uplift this vital community.

Chaudhary Charan Singh was a staunch advocate for rural development and agrarian reform. His policies focused on reducing the disparities between urban and rural India, ensuring fair land distribution, and providing farmers with access to credit and technology. His leadership underscored the need for an equitable system where the backbone of India—its farmers—could thrive. Kisan Diwas pays homage to his relentless efforts to improve the lives of those who toil to feed the nation.

In recent years, Indian agriculture has faced multiple challenges, including climate change, depleting groundwater, and fragmented landholdings. These issues have led to declining productivity and increased farmer distress. However, opportunities abound through technological advancements, such as precision farming, drone-based crop monitoring, and sustainable practices like organic farming. Initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) and digital marketplaces have also provided farmers with financial support and better market access.

Kisan Diwas serves as a call to action for policymakers, corporations, and citizens alike. Policies must prioritize agricultural research, climate-resilient practices, and affordable credit. Corporations can contribute by investing in rural infrastructure and developing farmer-friendly technologies. Citizens can support by purchasing locally produced goods and reducing food waste. Together, these efforts can ensure a dignified life for farmers and secure India's agricultural future.

As we celebrate Kisan Diwas, let us pledge to transform our gratitude into tangible actions that empower farmers and elevate Indian agriculture. Chaudhary Charan Singh's vision reminds us that a nation's true strength lies in the prosperity of its farmers. By addressing their challenges and creating a conducive environment for growth, we honor not just their contributions but also the promise of a self-reliant and thriving India.

Philippines: The broken promise of democracy

NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

The 1987 Philippine Constitution, crafted in the aftermath of the 1986 People Power Revolution, was supposed to mark the dawn of a new democratic era. The ousting of Ferdinand Marcos Sr., after decades of corruption, repression, and dynastic rule, was a victory for the Filipino people, or so they were told. Yet, the Constitution, supposedly a tool for dismantling the oppressive old order, contains a glaring, unimplemented clause: Article II, Section 26, which bans political dynasties. Nearly four decades later, this promise remains a cruel joke, the prohibition nothing more than a symbol of a nation shackled by its feudal past. Political dynasties thrive unabated, and the Philippines remains trapped in a cycle of oligarchy, where power is passed down like a family heirloom, not earned through democratic means. The rise of Corazon Aquino, the "hero" of People Power, has proven to be a double-edged sword.

While she restored democracy in name, she failed to eradicate the dynastic forces that had long plagued the country. Instead of dismantling the Marcos empire and the dynasties that thrived in its wake, Aquino's presidency paved the way for a new set of ruling families to stake their claim on the throne. The irony is staggering: Aquino, the symbol of resistance to Marcos, was unable to disarm the very forces that helped prop up the dictatorship. Her administration's fail-

ure to enact meaningful reform paved the way for the Marcos family's return to power, with Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s rise in 2022 exposing the unyielding grip of dynastic politics, illuminating the eternal truth behind the words of José Rizal, a true revolutionary executed by the Spanish Government. He is a slave of his own people. The Marcoses, who plundered billions from the nation's coffers, are not the only ones to have manipulated the system to their advantage.

Under Cory Aquino, the promise of land reform was shattered, epitomised by the Mendiola Massacre of 1987, where farmers demanding land reform were gunned down. The Aquino family, despite their image as the champions of democracy, have blood on their hands, betraying the very people they claim to defend. The hypocrisy of the political elite is staggering, with families like the Marcoses and the Aquinos using their histories of violence and corruption as stepping stones to further entrench their power. But the Aquino-Marcos rivalry is only the tip of the iceberg. In Mindanao, the Duterte family's hold on power predated Rodrigo Duterte's presidency, with a history of death squad killings and iron-fisted rule. As mayor of Davao City, Duterte ruled with an iron fist, silencing dissent and using extrajudicial executions to rid the streets of perceived enemies.

His presidency, marked



by a brutal war on drugs that left thousands dead, further entrenched the dynastic system, where political power is synonymous with violence and impunity. Duterte's rise to the highest office in the land was not a victory for the people, but for a political family that used populist rhetoric to cloak its real agenda: maintaining a stranglehold on power.

The Macapagal-Arroyo family, meanwhile, turned corruption into an art form. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency was marred by scandal after scandal—from the "Hello Garci" election fraud to the NBN-ZTE broadband deal, which saw billions in kickbacks siphoned off to the ruling elite. Despite the overwhelming evidence of corruption, she escaped any lasting accountability, a reflection of the Philippines' toxic political culture where the powerful are above the law.

Like so many others, she found ways to use the machinery of the state to protect her interests. The brutality of the Philippines' political system is not just figurative. The

2009 Maguindanao Massacre, orchestrated by the Ampatuan clan, remains the deadliest attack on journalists in history. Fifty-eight people, including 32 journalists, were slaughtered in cold blood in a bid to eliminate electoral competition.

And yet, despite the horrific nature of the crime, justice has been slow and incomplete, as political dynasties use their influence to shield themselves from the consequences of their actions. In regions like Cebu and Ilocos Norte, political dynasties such as the Osmeñas, Garcias, and Fariñas manipulate elections and use their wealth to maintain control, treating public office as their domain. This cycle of violence and impunity, where the ruling class prioritises their interests, extends to the economic realm, with families like the villagers growing their wealth through political power. The system persists due to cultural deference to family authority, weak institutions, and pervasive poverty, with voters often coerced into supporting the very dynasties that

sustain their suffering. Foreign powers, particularly the United States, have long been complicit in this system. During the Marcos era, the US provided crucial support to a regime known for its human rights abuses, all in the name of anti-communism. This foreign patronage emboldened the Marcoses and set a dangerous precedent for other dynasties, who continued to seek validation and support from foreign powers. The interplay between domestic power struggles and international interests further deepens the fractures within the Philippines, exacerbating the country's internal divisions.

The Philippines' educational system, which fails to foster critical thinking or civic engagement, ensures that the cycle of dynastic rule will continue. Schools produce citizens ill-equipped to challenge the status quo, while the media, often co-opted by powerful families, serves to protect the interests of the elite. Social media, too, has become a tool for dynasties to spread propaganda, rehabilitate their tarnished images, and silence critics.

The current political spectacle centred around Vice President Sara Duterte's public threats against President Marcos, is a stark reminder of how fragile the Philippines' democracy truly is. The alliance between the Marcoses and the Dutertes, forged during the 2022 election, is now on the brink of collapse. What once seemed like a part-

nership between the North and south's ruling classes has devolved into a bitter feud, exposing the cracks in a political system built on corruption, nepotism, and violence.

This is not a battle for the people's interests, but a struggle for control between two families, each vying for supremacy in a system that has failed its citizens. This feud is not just political—it has geopolitical ramifications. Marcos' pivot towards the US and his opposition to China's claims in the South China Sea have reignited regional tensions, while Duterte's pro-China stance during his presidency deepened divides within the Filipino elite.

This divergence in foreign policy has intensified the rift between the Marcos and Duterte families, as they seek to align themselves with opposing global powers.

The Philippines, caught between these imperial rivalries, faces not only internal political decay but external pressures that threaten to destabilise the nation further. As the midterm elections approach, this dynastic battle threatens to unravel whatever semblance of governance remains. Marcos seeks to consolidate power, while Sara Duterte faces the looming threat of impeachment. Yet, the Duterte family's influence, particularly in Mindanao, ensures that this battle will not stay within the confines of parliament. The streets could erupt, worsening societal divides.

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

Unlocking Life's True Potential

AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I am well and truly surprised that good people don't turn to God more actively than doing some rituals, going to a religious place participating in some festivals, etc. They probably are not realising what they are missing. God is ever so keen to take us in His team. He needs lots of us either to act as His 'nimita' (instrument) as Arjuna was for a specific purpose or just be active mediums. Good people are best placed to be mediums for God's bounties to be given to other good people. They form the bulk of people, who support the working

of the Creation. And they are amply rewarded for their 'karmas' (acts). For example, farmers are crucial for keeping humanity well-fed. Teachers are crucial for educating the masses.

Parents keep the Creation going by giving birth to children and then rearing them till they can be useful citizens. Doctors look after the health of people. Workers take the load of manual requirements of humanity. Good officers fulfil the administrative requirements of our societies. Priests enable us to be in contact with God. I can go on with policemen, shopkeepers, bankers, etc. They all ben-

efit by doing so. Why aren't these actively pursuing a good connection with God? They can gain much more.

The first reason has to be a lack of faith due to widespread ignorance. The common man, even the educated class, is hopelessly unaware of all the benefits one can gain by taking shelter from God, who owns everything. We get attracted to the richest, the most powerful, the very famous, etc., but ignore the real owner of all, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God. To top it all, God controls everything. The richest normally try to accumulate more, and

many have some money to give to charity, but God has everything to give; you just have to become deserving.

The second reason has to be the overinflated ego of practically everyone. It is hard to accept that God is too big to comprehend and we are too small to accept. But that is reality. By closing our eyes like a duck we don't do ourselves any favour. And we remain sitting ducks against 'karmaphalas', which surely manifest and cause havoc in the lives of all, barring a few, who have taken shelter in God. The third reason is keeping poor company.

Who do we like to

spend time with? Those who criticise one and all and who can tell jokes of the kind you know. Public image is another handicap. Only the losers turn to God. We don't have to; we will manage. Surely, this management ends in painful death only. Devotees of God and their lives on a high and are assured of better birth also. Then spiritual activities do not enthrall; they appear so childish. We would rather be grown-ups and be subservient to fellow beings, who are likely to exploit us as much as possible. So we don't get started and lose out.

This article is an open invitation to fence sitters

if they chance to read it. I will cite a few amazing benefits if one does that. There will be great cleaning of the self both internally and externally. Such are the powers of spiritual activities. One will become dutiful and most likely begin to live by dharma. One will not limit oneself just to knowing spiritual truths but will also implement them in life. If a painter knows how to paint and does not paint, what is he or she likely to gain? The Creation has been designed to smoothen the lives of devotees.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Patent risks: Key strategies for businesses amid rising litigation costs

AMIT SINGH

In November 2024, a US jury ruled in favour of Netlist, a company specialising in computer memory and storage solutions, ordering Samsung to pay \$118 million in damages for willfully infringing Netlist's patented technology. This follows an earlier verdict in April 2024, where another jury found Samsung guilty of similar patent infringements, awarding \$303 million to Netlist. Together, these penalties amount to \$421 million—an extraordinary sum that could destabilise even the most established organisations.

In India, the Delhi High Court recently delivered a landmark judgment favoring the plaintiff, Antenna Inc., in a patent infringement case against Mobi Antenna Technologies. The court issued a permanent injunction against the defendant and ordered them to pay damages of USD 26.04 million (INR 216 crores) to compensate for the plaintiff's loss of profits due to the

infringement.

Protecting Intellectual Property: A recent American survey highlights the substantial financial commitment of research-based organisations in the pharmaceutical sector. The annual R&D budget in this industry often runs into hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars. The cost of developing a new drug ranges from \$314 million to \$4.46 billion, depending on the therapeutic area and assumptions used in data modeling. These figures emphasise the immense investments required in R&D, making intellectual property (IP) protection and preemptive strategies essential. In contrast, R&D expenditures in non-pharmaceutical sectors are generally lower. However, extensive patenting is increasingly common, posing risks for companies introducing new processes or products without adequate precautions. A company might unknowingly infringe on a competitor's patent, leading to unforeseen and costly litigation. Patent dis-

putes can result in significant delays, financial losses, and reputational damage, even when unintentional. Escalating Costs of Patent Litigation: The median cost of litigating a patent lawsuit through trial ranges from \$600,000 for cases with less than \$1 million at stake to \$3.625 million for cases involving over \$25 million. Similar trends are observed in India, where litigation and settlement costs are substantial. Sometimes, defendants

find themselves embroiled in patent litigation due to unintentional or inadvertent infringement. In such cases, the defendants are essentially victims, underscoring the need for safeguards to prevent unnecessary legal disputes. Tools to Mitigate Patent Infringement Risks: Patent Liability Insurance

One effective safeguard against the financial risks of unintended patent infringement is patent liability insurance. This insurance, provid-

ed by specialised firms, helps cover legal expenses and damages arising from unintentional infringement. While popular in several countries, its adoption is steadily growing in India.

Freedom-to-Operate (FTO) Another cost-effective tool to minimise patent infringement risks is a Freedom-to-Operate (FTO) search. This process evaluates whether a new product or process infringes on existing patents, enabling informed business

decisions and reducing the likelihood of legal disputes. Many companies conduct FTO searches before initiating new R&D projects to mitigate financial and reputational risks.

An FTO search involves analyzing granted and pending patents to form a technological opinion on whether a product, process, or service infringes existing IP rights. These searches can be conducted using free databases provided by intellectual property offices, with directories available on the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) website.

When Patents Block Freedom to Operate

If an FTO search reveals conflicting patents, companies have several options:

1. Licensing Agreements: Companies can negotiate in-licensing or purchase patent rights to gain access to the necessary technology.
2. Patent Pools: Collaborative agreements among companies in the same technological field allow shared access to

patents, resolving disputes and controlling costs, especially for essential products like medicines.

3. Designing Around: Companies can modify existing processes or products to avoid infringement.

Steps to Minimise Litigation Risks: Regardless of the strategy chosen, it is crucial for companies to address patent infringement risks early in the research and commercialization process. Proactive measures such as in-licensing, cross-licensing, patent pooling, and designing around can help avoid future disputes.

A systematic FTO search before launching a new product is indispensable for minimizing infringement risks. While an FTO search cannot completely eliminate the possibility of litigation due to limitations in patent databases and search expertise, it significantly reduces potential threats.

(The writer is deputy controller of patents and designs, Kolkata.; views are personal)



55th GST Council meet: All eyes on health insurance premiums, ATF, 'Sin Tax'

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 22

As the 55th meeting of the GST Council was set to begin in Jaisalmer on Saturday, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the proposed rate cut on health insurance premiums and the inclusion of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) under the GST ambit would be among the key focus areas.

The GST Council is also set to deliberate on revising the rates of nearly 150 items during the meeting which is likely to help the Centre generate additional revenue of nearly Rs 22,000 crore.

A significant agenda for the GST Council is



the proposed rate cut on term health and life insurance premiums. The GST exemption/reduction on life and health insurance is a long-pending demand of the industry, as the move would alleviate the tax

burden on both insurers and policyholders.

While most of the panel members of the Group of Ministers (GoM), led by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, pitched for "full exemp-

tion" on health and life policy premiums, a few panel members suggested reducing the rate to 5 per cent from the current 18 per cent.

Additionally, insurance policies offering coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh may also receive GST relief.

Another key agenda is to decide whether the 5 per cent GST on delivery charges by food delivery platforms will be applied retrospectively from 2022. Currently, food delivery companies do not pay GST on delivery charges.

Also, the GST Council is likely to take up the issue of bringing aviation turbine fuel under the GST ambit.

At present, the central excise duty of 11 per cent

is levied on ATF. It also has a concession of 2 per cent under the Regional Connectivity Scheme.

Moreover, there is a recent proposal from the GoM to introduce a 'Sin Tax' on demerit goods such as tobacco and aerated drinks. Currently, there is no specific 'sin goods' category under the GST structure.

The creation of such a category would send a strong message that India prioritises the well-being of its people over the profits of industries that thrive on unhealthy habits, according to industry experts.

Additionally, a new slab of 35 per cent is likely to be introduced targeting sin goods.

South Korea reports new avian influenza case at regional farm

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 22

South Korea has confirmed its 14th case of highly pathogenic avian influenza for the season at a farm near the capital city of Seoul, authorities said on Sunday.

The latest case was detected at a poultry farm in Hwaseong, just south of Seoul, which is raising 202 chickens and 67 wild geese, according to the agriculture ministry, reports Yonhap news agency.

To prevent further the spread, officials have taken measures to control access to the farm to carry out investigations, and culled the affected chickens and wild geese. The Gyeonggi provin-

cial government plans to conduct inspections on 18 poultry farms in Gimpo, 38 kms west of Seoul, by Tuesday.

Last week, the country confirmed another case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (AI) for the season at a duck farm in the southwestern region. The latest case was detected at a duck farm in the county of Buan in North Jeolla Province, some 190 kilometers south of Seoul, according to the authorities.

Meanwhile, California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in response to the outbreak of Avian influenza A (H5N1), commonly known as bird flu, which has infected 34 people in

the Golden State.

According to the governor's office, this action came as cases were detected in dairy cows on farms in Southern California, "signaling the need to further expand monitoring and build on the coordinated state-wide approach to contain and mitigate the spread of the virus."

To date, no person-to-person spread of bird flu has been detected in California and nearly all infected individuals had exposure to infected cattle.

Bird flu was first detected in the US in the wild bird population in South Carolina in January 2022, and in the wild bird population in California in July 2022.

Heart muscle can regenerate after failure in some people with artificial hearts: Study

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, DEC 22

Heart muscle can regenerate after failure in some people with artificial hearts, an international research team has found.

The team co-led by a physician-scientist at the University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson's Sarver Heart Center in the US found that a subset of artificial heart patients can regenerate heart muscle, which may open the door to new ways to treat and perhaps someday cure heart failure.

There is no cure for heart failure, though medications can slow its progression. The only treatment for advanced heart failure, other than a transplant, is pump replacement through an artificial heart, called a left ventricular assist device, which can help the heart



pump blood. "Skeletal muscle has a significant ability to regenerate after injury. If you're playing soccer and you tear a muscle, you need to rest it, and it heals," said Hesham Sadek, chief of the Division of Cardiology at the University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson's Department of Medicine.

"When a heart muscle is injured, it doesn't grow back. We have nothing to

reverse heart muscle loss," Sadek said in a paper published in the journal *Circulation*.

Sadek led a collaboration between international experts to investigate whether heart muscles can regenerate.

The project began with tissue from artificial heart patients provided by colleagues at the University of Utah Health and School of Medicine led by Stavros Drakos, a pioneer in left

ventricular assist device-mediated recovery.

The investigators found that patients with artificial hearts regenerated muscle cells at more than six times the rate of healthy hearts.

"This is the strongest evidence we have, so far, that human heart muscle cells can actually regenerate, which really is exciting, because it solidifies the notion that there is an intrinsic capacity of the human heart to regenerate," Sadek said.

It also strongly supports the hypothesis that the inability of the heart muscle to 'rest' is a major driver of the heart's lost ability to regenerate shortly after birth. It may be possible to target the molecular pathways involved in cell division to enhance the heart's ability to regenerate, said the study authors.

How Ayushman Bharat scheme helped Ahmedabad resident receive free cancer treatment

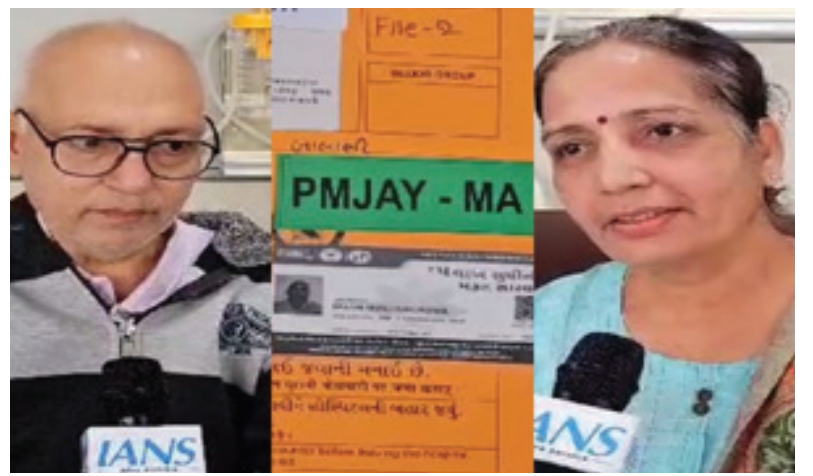
AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD, DEC 22

The 'Ayushman Bharat PM-Jan Arogya Yojana' has become a boon for the poor in the country. A large number of people are undergoing treatment free of cost under this scheme.

People are receiving treatment worth up to Rs 5 lakh annually. A key benefit is that patients can receive treatment at any registered hospital across the country. Whether the illness is serious or not, all treatments are provided free of cost under this scheme.

Murlidhar, a resident of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, who was battling a life-threatening illness like cancer, received treatment under this scheme and his health is now much improved. He is happy that he was treated successfully, and it did not put any financial burden on him, thanks to the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

Murlidhar was diagnosed with stage I cancer in 2023 and also had kidney issues. He could not afford treatment at a private hospital. However, under the Ayushman Bharat



scheme, he was able to get cancer treatment at the hospital.

Murlidhar told IANS: "In 2023, I learned about my cancer diagnosis. I also had kidney problems. After starting my treatment at the hospital under the Ayushman Card, I faced no issues. All tests, including CT scans, ultrasounds, and blood reports, were fine, and I received excellent services. This scheme by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a boon for the poor and middle class. I am grateful to PM Modi. I am happy

with the 24-hour treatment available at the registered hospital. I hope to be running again very soon."

Murlidhar's wife, Rekha, said: "When I found out about my husband's illness, I was worried, but I gathered strength and decided to face the challenges. Now, my husband is fighting the disease with determination and is slowly recovering. I am very happy. I consider PM Modi as my brother and pray for his long life. His Ayushman Yojana is benefiting many people."

Diabetes, inflammation can make your brain age faster, up dementia risk: Study

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 22

Brains of people with high glucose levels and inflammation can age faster, increasing their risk of developing dementia, according to a study.

Researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden used an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to analyse brain images from 739 cognitively healthy people aged 70-years to explore the brain's biological age.

They found various risk and health factors that determine the speed at which the brain ages.

The study, presented



in the journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*, showed that diabetes, stroke, cerebral small vessel disease, and inflammation were linked to brains with an older

appearance. On the other hand, healthy lifestyles involving regular exercise were linked to brains with a younger appearance, the study added.

The team conducted

MRI scans of the participant's brains and then estimated the age of the resulting brain images using their AI-based algorithm. Further, blood samples were taken for measuring lipids, glucose, and inflammation; and their cognitive abilities were also tested.

The AI tool estimated the brain age for both sexes to be on average 71 years. The researchers then looked at the "brain age gap" by subtracting the participants' estimated biological brain age from their chronological age.

"A take-home from the study is that factors that

adversely affect the blood vessels can also be related to older-looking brains," said lead author Anna Marseglia, a researcher at the Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society, Karolinska Institutet.

This "shows how important it is to keep your blood vessels healthy, to protect your brain, by making sure, for instance, that your blood glucose level is kept stable," Marseglia added.

The team next aims to launch a study to understand how women and men may differ in how they build resilience,

Experts highlight preventable infections as third leading cause of maternal deaths

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, DEC 22

Infections during and after delivery have been identified as the third leading cause of maternal deaths in India, according to experts at a panel discussion titled Enhancing Maternal Outcomes.

The discussion was held on Saturday night at the newly opened Green Health Woman & Child Hospital, a 50-bed GVK Enterprise in Devaryamjal, Kompally, Hyderabad.

The event, organized on the eve of the hospital's inauguration, was part of a Continuous Medical Education (CME) program. The

hospital's mission is to provide affordable healthcare to mothers and children.

The panel discussion was moderated by Dr Sunil T. Pandya, Chief of Anaesthesia at AIG Hospitals, and Dr. Raja Narsing Rao, Consultant-EMLC at GVK. The session focused on reducing pregnancy-related deaths and complications to improve maternal outcomes.

Panelists emphasized the importance of preventing, diagnosing, and managing peri-delivery complications to safeguard mothers during delivery. They highlighted that infections such as dengue, hepatitis, and viral pneumonia (includ-

ing COVID-19 and swine flu) pose significant risks but can often be prevented through early recognition and proper management.

"Pregnancy in elderly women, IVF-conceived pregnancies, and diabetic mothers present additional challenges. Delivery is not just about giving life to a baby but also ensuring a safe new life for the mother," said Dr Raja Narsing Rao.

The discussion brought together senior anaesthesiologists and obstetricians from various hospitals to exchange knowledge, support research, and address preventable causes of maternal deaths.

GOVT INITIATES STEPS TO PREVENT HIV/ AIDS: BIHAR MINISTER

AGENCIES
PATNA, DEC 22

Bihar Health Minister Mangal Pandey on Saturday said that the government has initiated effective steps to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Pandey said here that the state government is spending an amount of Rs 130 crore every year to support the families of AIDS victims, so that they

can get a proper lifestyle. He said that 17.50 lakh AIDS patients were being treated in the country. The Minister said that there are 31 A.R.T.s in Bihar through which about 88,000 HIV patients of the state were getting free treatment.

Pandey said that about 63,000 HIV infected people were getting an assistance of Rs 1500 per month under Bihar Shatabdi AIDS Victim Wel-

fare Scheme. In addition to this, under Parvarish Yojana, an assistance of Rs 1000 per month is being provided to the 15,000 HIV infected and affected children for which the government was spending Rs 130 crore every year.

The Minister said that the HIV infected youth of Bihar were also getting skill training by Bihar Skill Development Mission and Labour Department.

Health warning issued over flesh-eating ulcer in Australia

AGENCIES
SYDNEY, DEC 22

Health authorities in Australia's second-most populous state have issued a warning over the spread of a flesh-eating ulcer.

The Department of Health in Victoria on Friday said that cases of Buruli ulcer are spreading across the state, including in inner Melbourne, Xinhua news agency reported.

Buruli ulcer is a bacterial infection that researchers believe is spread from possums to humans by mosquitoes. Cases initially present as a painless lump



or wound that can slowly develop into a destructive ulcer.

If left untreated, the flesh-eating ulcer can lead

to permanent disfigurement and long-term disability.

The Department of Health's warning said that

the highest risk of infection occurs during warmer months but that it can take four to five months for an ulcer to develop.

As of December 17, there had been 344 confirmed Buruli ulcer infections in Victoria in 2024, the department said, compared to 362 at the same time in 2023, 338 in 2022, 286 in 2021 and 217 in 2020.

"Everyone is susceptible to infection. The disease can occur at any age, but Buruli ulcer notifications are highest in people aged 60 years and above in Victoria," the health alert said.

Infection is not transmissible from person to person, but household members of a confirmed case in Victoria have been advised to monitor for symptoms as they may have been exposed to the same environmental source.

When recognised early, diagnostic testing is straightforward and treatment can significantly reduce skin loss and tissue damage, the Department of Health said.

Victoria's 6.9 million people have been advised to take preventative measures by avoiding mosquito bites.

Rozgar Mela: PM Modi to distribute 71,000 appointment letters on Monday

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 22

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute more than 71,000 appointment letters to newly appointed recruits on Monday (December 23).

The event will be held at around 10.30 a.m. through video conferencing. He will also address the gathering on the occasion.

The Rozgar Mela will be held at 45 locations across the country. The recruitments will take place for various Ministries and Departments of the Central government.

The recruits, selected from across the country will be joining various Ministries/Departments, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Posts, Department of Higher Education, Minis-



try of Health and Family Welfare, and Department of Financial Services, among others.

According to a government media release, the Rozgar Mela is a step towards the fulfilment of the commitment of the Prime Minister to accord the highest priority to employment generation. It will provide meaningful opportunities to the youth

for their participation in nation-building and self-empowerment.

On October 29, PM Modi addressed the Rozgar Mela and distributed more than 51,000 appointment letters to newly appointed youths in government departments and organisations via videoconferencing. Rozgar Mela highlights the Prime Minister's commitment to prioritising

employment generation. It will empower the youth by providing them with meaningful opportunities to contribute to nation-building, said the official release.

Addressing the occasion, the Prime Minister said 51,000 youth were being handed out recruitment letters for government jobs. He reiterated the government's commitment that the youth of the country should get maximum employment.

Noting that the policies and decisions of the government have a direct impact on job creation, PM Modi highlighted the development of expressways, highways, roads, rail, ports, airports, laying of fiber cables, setting up of mobile towers and expansion of new industries in all parts of the

country. Referring to the laying of water and gas pipelines, establishing new schools, colleges and universities and reducing logistics costs by spending on infrastructure, PM Modi said that it is not only benefitting the citizens but also creating new job opportunities.

PM Modi launched the first phase of Rozgar Mela in October 2022. Appointment letters were handed over to more than 75,000 newly appointed recruits during the first function.

The recruitments are done by Central Ministries and Departments themselves and through recruitment agencies like UPSC, SSC, and the Railway Recruitment Board. The selection process is simplified and technically efficient for faster recruitment.

Completely disagree: Swami Rambhadracharya on Mohan Bhagwat's 'Hindu leaders' remarks

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 22



Jagadguru Swami Rambhadracharya on Sunday expressed strong reservations with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent remarks on some wannabe politicians trying to be 'leader of Hindus'.

Speaking to IANS, Swami Rambhadracharya said, "I completely disagree with Mohan Bhagwat's statement. Let me make it clear, Mohan Bhagwat is not our disciplinarian, but we are."

Mohan Bhagwat, earlier on Thursday expressed concern over the resurgence of temple-mosque disputes and advised people against raking up such issues. He said no one will become a "leader of Hindus" by raking up temple-mosque disputes and spreading communal divide.

The spiritual leader also commented on the prevailing tension in Sambhal and described the situation as deeply concerning.

"What is happening in Sambhal right now is very bad. However, the positive aspect is that things are being uncovered in favour of Hindus. We will secure this, through the courts, through the ballot, and with public support," he said.

Expressing strong concern over atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh, Swami Rambhadracharya condemned the violence.

"What is happening there is very bad. We have raised this issue with the government. The interim

government in Bangladesh is extremely cruel. But wait and watch, everyone responsible for these acts against Hindus will face consequences," he asserted.

Looking ahead to the Mahakumbh scheduled to take place in Prayagraj, Swami Rambhadracharya urged people to participate wholeheartedly.

"Everyone should come. Everyone will have the opportunity to take a holy dip. Pray to the Almighty for the integrity and unity of Bharat," he said, extending his invitation to devotees across the nation.

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is set to begin on January 13 with the Paush Purnima Snan and will end on February 26 with Maha Shivratri. Regarded as one of the biggest festivals in Hinduism or Sanatan faith, Maha Kumbh takes place once in 12 years.

Peace and development in Tripura, says HM Shah after meeting Reang tribals

AGENCIES

AGARTALA, DEC 22

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi peace has been established in Tripura, various development works have been stepped up and also the 23-year-old imbroglio of Reang tribals has been resolved.

After visiting the Reang tribal settlement camps and virtually inaugurating and laying foundation stones of 13 development projects worth Rs 668.39 crore, the Home Minister while addressing a gathering at Kulai RF Village Ground in Dhalai District, said that the previous Left Front government did nothing for the Reang tribals and other people.

He said that for the settlement of around 40,000 Reang tribals in 12 locations in Tripura around Rs 900 crore was being spent.

"With the settlement of the Reang tribals, thousands of the hapless people got a new lease of



life. Their children would now get education and other basic facilities," HM Shah said, adding that all basic facilities, including water supply, electricity, health, education, and road connectivity have been provided in the 12 locations across the state.

These projects inaugurated and laid foundation of the Home Minister include, Sewage Treatment Plants (Rs 25.86 crore) under the Agartala Smart City scheme, a Central detective training institute (Rs 120 crore) under the Bureau of Police Research

& Development (Ministry of Home Affairs), upgradation of major roads in Agartala along with underground utilities (Rs 318 crore), new Sub Divisional magistrate office, Ambassa (Rs 12.50 crore) and various health centres.

Earlier, accompanied by Chief Minister Manik Saha, former Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, Lok Sabha Member Kirti Devi Debbarman, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Deka visited the Reang tribal settlement camp at Haduklaupara

village in Dhalai district.

Over 37,135 displaced Reang tribals in different phases migrated from Mizoram in 1997 after ethnic troubles there and following an agreement settled in 12 locations in four districts of Tripura - North Tripura, Dhalai, Gomati, and South Tripura.

After several years of tussles and agitations, a quadripartite agreement was signed in January 2020 between the Centre, Tripura, and Mizoram governments and the Reang tribal leaders to resettle the 37,136 tribal immigrants comprising 6,302 families in 12 locations in four of Tripura's eight districts.

The Home Minister on Saturday addressed the 72nd plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC), North East Bankers' Conclave and 12th meeting of the North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC) Society.

Later on Sunday, HM Shah would address the National Cooperative Conference in Agartala.

New Maha cabinet: Fadnavis keeps Home, Shinde gets Urban Development, Ajit Pawar in charge of Finance

AGENCIES

NAGPUR, DEC 21

Finally, the wait is over. Governor CP Radhakrishnan on Saturday approved the portfolio allocation to the ministers as recommended by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The list was released after the conclusion of a weeklong winter session.

Fadnavis will hold home, energy excluding renewable energy, law and judiciary, general administration, information and publicity and departments/subjects not allowed to any other minister. Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will hold urban development, housing and public works (public enterprises) while Deputy CM Ajit Pawar will be in charge of planning and finance and excise.

Chandrashekhar Bawankule will hold the revenue department while Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil will be in charge of the water resources department including Godavari and Krishna Valley Development Corporation. Hasan



Mushrif will hold medical education, Chandrakant Patil higher and technical education and parliamentary affairs, Girish Mahajan water resources including Vidarbha, Tapi, Konkan Development Corporation and disaster management.

Ganesh Naik will hold forest, Gulabrao Patil water supply and sanitation, Dadaji Bhuse school education, Dhananjay Munde food and civil supplies and consumer protection, Mangallrabhat Lodha skill development, entrepreneurship and innovation, Uday Samant industries and Marathi Language, Jaykumar Rawal marketing and protocol, Pankaja

Munde environment and climate change and animal husbandry and Ashok Uike tribal development.

Atul Save will hold OBC welfare, dairy development and renewable energy, Shabhuraj Desai tourism, mining and ex-servicemen welfare, Ashish Shelar information technology and cultural affairs, Dattatray Bhanne sports, youths welfare, minorities development and Aukaf, Aditi Tatkare women and child development and Shivendra-raj Bhosale public works excluding public enterprises.

Manikrao Kokate will be in charge of agriculture, Jaykumar Gore rural development and panchayat

raj, Narhari Zirwal food and drug administration and special assistance, Sanjay Savkare textiles, Sanjay Shirsat social justice, Pratap Sarnaik transport and Bharatsheth Gogawale employment guarantee, horticulture, salt pan land development, Makrand Jadhav Patil relief and rehabilitation, Nitesh Rane fisheries and ports, Akash Fundkar labour, Babasaheb Patil cooperation and Prakash Abitkar public health and family welfare.

The minister of state Ashish Jaiswal will hold finance and planning, agriculture, relief and rehabilitation, law and judiciary and labour while the minister of state Madhuri Misal urban development, transport, social justice, medical education, minorities development and Aukaf. Minister of State Pankaj Bhoiyar will hold home (rural), housing, school education, cooperation and mining while Meghna Sakore Bordikar will get public health, family welfare, water supply and sanitation, energy, women and child development.

'Exceptional case..': Delhi HC orders revision of CLAT-2025 results

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 22

The Delhi High Court has ordered the Consortium of National Law Universities to revise the results of the CLAT (Common Law Admission Test)-2025 examination.

"The errors in Question Nos 14 and 100 are demonstrably clear and shutting a blind eye to the same would be injustice to the petitioner albeit this court is conscious of the fact that it may impact the result of other candidates," a bench of Justice Jyoti Singh said as it ordered the revision of merit list.

The bench also ordered that since option 'C' of Question 14 has been held to be the correct answer, the benefit will extend to all other candidates who have opted for option 'C', adding that Question No.100 will be excluded as advised by the expert committee.

Question No. 100 deserves to be excluded in light of the fact that the question setter has not even provided the correct answer as one of the options, the high court said.

The petitioner, Aditya Singh, a minor, challenged the answer key declared for CLAT-2025 for admission to five-year law courses conducted by the National Law Universities (NLUs) in the academic session 2025-26.

With a score of 87 marks, the petitioner contended that he would get admission in one of the NLUs with his present ranking, but he aspired to better his rank so as to get admission in the top 3 NLUs of the country.

The petitioner added that he is likely to achieve a higher score of 93.25, which will improve his existing rank if the alleged errors are rectified.

On the other hand, the Consortium of NLUs urged the court to not interfere in the examination process, as a robust internal check mechanism was in place and the final result had been published with all due care and deliberation and on the recommendation of two Expert Committees comprising of experts and luminaries in the field.

In its judgment, the Delhi HC said that there is no absolute proscription against a court examining a

challenge to the answer key in an examination process, even if there is an expert opinion before the court.

"Most certainly, courts must exercise restraint in interfering in academic matters, including those pertaining to examination. (T)he law does not commend a total 'hands-off' approach and in exceptional cases where questions are found to be demonstrably wrong, the resultant injustice to a candidate must be redressed and undone," it added.

In relation to a question, the high court opined that while attempting a comprehension passage in a language test, a candidate is not required to examine the terms or expressions used in the sentences on the touchstone of legal reasoning, applying statutory provisions or articles of Constitution of India or judicial precedents.

Partly allowing the petitioner's plea, it ordered the Consortium of National Law Universities to award marks to him for Question No.14 in accordance with the scheme of marking and upheld the decision to exclude Question No. 100.

'UDAAN YATRI CAFE' AT AIRPORTS SOON, RAGHAV CHADHA RAISED ISSUE OF INFLATED FOOD AND WATER PRICES IN PARLIAMENT

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 22

In a major relief for fliers and air passengers, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has announced the launch of "Udaan Yatri Cafe", an eatery outlet at the airport for providing basic essentials like food and water at affordable and reasonable rates.

The one-of-its kind initiative is being launched at Kolkata airport on a pilot basis and if it turns successful, it will be replicated at other airports across the country, managed by the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

Interestingly, the move close on the heels of AAP MP Raghav Chadha flagging the issue of overpriced food and beverages at the airports, in the Parliament and seeking 'corrective steps' for making air travel affordable.

With the launch of first "Udaan Yatri Cafe" at Kolkata's Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Air-



port, air passengers will have access to essential items like water bottles, tea, coffee, and snacks at reasonable prices.

The Rajya Sabha MP has welcomed the move and also expressed hope that such facility would be extended to other airports of the country.

"Finally, the government has heard the voice of the common man. While the initiative begins with Kolkata Airport, I hope it is extended to all

airports nationwide. This will ensure that air travelers don't have to pay Rs 100-250 for basic items like water, tea, or coffee," Chadha said.

He emphasized that affordable amenities at airports are crucial for the convenience of the general public.

It was during the Winter session of Parliament, Raghav Chadha raised the issue in Parliament and brought to the attention of members, the

issue of exorbitant prices of water, tea, and snacks at airports and its adverse impact on common man.

In his speech, the RS MP highlighted the plight of passengers and explained how they were forced to pay inflated prices for food and beverages at airports.

"A water bottle costs Rs 100, and tea is priced at Rs 200-250. Can't the government establish affordable canteens at airports?" he had questioned. He

had also criticized the poor management of airports, which he likened to bus stands due to long queues, overcrowding, and disorganization.

His concerns on exorbitant prices at airports also found strong resonance and support on the social media, with many hailing it as a 'voice for the common man'.

He also raised concerns over sharp rise in airfares in recent times and said it was in stark contrast with government's own pledge of making 'air travel affordable for slipper wearing citizens'.

"The government promised that people in slippers would fly, but now even those wearing Bata shoes can't afford air travel," he told the House.

"A ticket to Maldives costs Rs 17,000, but a ticket to Lakshadweep, which the government is promoting as a tourist destination, costs Rs 25,000," he pointed out.

In special gesture, Kuwait's Prime Minister sees-off PM Modi at airport after conclusion of historic visit

AGENCIES
KUWAIT CITY, DEC. 22

In a special gesture, Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah came to see off PM Modi at the airport Sunday evening as he wrapped up his historic two-day visit to the West Asian country and left for India.

"Thank you Kuwait! This visit was historic and will greatly enhance our bilateral relations. I thank the Government and people of Kuwait for their warmth. I also thank the PM of Kuwait for the special gesture of coming to the airport for the see-off," PM Modi posted on X just before his departure.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi held back-to-back meetings with the country's Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah besides holding bilateral discussions with the country's PM Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

"Held fruitful discussions with HH Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister of Kuwait. Our talks covered the full range of India-Kuwait relations, including trade, commerce, people-to-people ties and more. Key MoUs and Agreements were also exchanged, which will add strength to bilateral relations," said PM Modi.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, the two leaders discussed a roadmap to strengthen the strategic partnership in areas including political, trade, investment, energy, defence, security, health, education, technology,



cultural, and people-to-people ties.

"They emphasised on deepening economic cooperation between the two countries. The Prime Minister invited a delegation comprising the Kuwaiti Investment Authority and other stakeholders to visit India to look at new opportunities in the fields of energy, defence, medical devices, pharma, food parks, among others. The leaders also discussed

cooperation in traditional medicine and agricultural research," read a statement issued by the PMO after the meeting.

"They welcomed the recent signing of the Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) under which new Joint Working Groups in the areas of trade, investment, education, technology, agriculture, security and culture have been set up in addition to the existing JWG on Health, Manpower and

Hydrocarbons," it added.

Both leaders also witnessed the signing and exchange of bilateral agreements and MoUs after the talks. It included an MoU on defence cooperation, cultural exchange programme, an executive programme on cooperation in the field of sports and the framework agreement on Kuwait joining the International Solar Alliance.

In what was the first meeting between the two leaders, Prime Minister Modi met and the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held discussions at the Bayan Palace and reaffirmed their full commitment to further expand and deepen bilateral cooperation while agreeing to elevate the bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership.

The leaders recalled

the strong historical and friendly ties between the two countries with PM Modi thanking the Amir for ensuring the well-being of over one million strong Indian community in Kuwait. The Amir also expressed appreciation for the contribution of the large and vibrant Indian community in Kuwait's development.

"Excellent meeting with His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. We discussed cooperation in key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, IT, fintech, infrastructure and security. In line with the close relations between our two countries, we have elevated our partnership to a strategic level and I am optimistic that our friendship will flourish further in the future," the Prime Minister said.

North Korean leader attends ceremony for rebuilt houses in flood-hit area

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC. 22

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has attended a ceremony marking the completion of houses rebuilt after July's floods, emphasising enhanced disaster response and self-rehabilitation, the country's state media reported Sunday.

Recovery efforts have been under way in North Korea since late July when severe floods inundated large areas along the Amnok River near its northern border, reportedly leaving many dead or missing, Yonhap news agency reported.

Kim has inspected those flood-hit areas several times, while more than 15,000 victims have been relocated to Pyongyang for shelter. The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported Sunday that the North Korean leader

attended a "magnificent" completion ceremony for rebuilt houses in North Phyongyan Province the previous day. In his speech at the ceremony, Kim apologised for repeated delays in the reconstruction of the houses due to the cold weather at year's end.

He described the flood damage as a "man-made disaster," attributing it to the country's lax disaster prevention agencies and the irresponsibility of workers, and called for self-reflection. The North Korean leader also emphasised self-reliance in rehabilitation, stating that "several countries and international organisations offered to provide assistance."

However, confidence in their own abilities and the spirit of self-reliance were more important than anything, he explained as reasons for refusing outside help.

US-British navy launch airstrike on Houthi site in Yemen; shoot down own aircraft in 'friendly fire'

AGENCIES
SANAA, DEC. 22

The US-British navy coalition launched a new airstrike on a Houthi site in Yemen's Red Sea port city of Hodeidah on Sunday before dawn, the local media reported.

The strike targeted the site in Hodeidah's Al-Luhayyah area, according to media reports, which did not provide further details or report any casualties.

The coalition has not commented on the alleged strike yet, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting Houthi-run al-Masirah TV.

The US Central Command said in a statement on X that its forces on Saturday night conducted precision airstrikes against a missile storage facility and a command-and-control



facility operated by Houthis in the capital city, Sanaa.

Command forces also shot down multiple Houthi one-way attack drones and an anti-ship cruise missile over the Red Sea, said the statement.

The airstrikes came hours after the Houthis claimed responsibility for a ballistic missile attack on central Israel, which injured at least 20 Israelis in Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, the US military informed that a US F/A-18 fighter jet was accidentally shot down by "friendly fire" over the Red Sea while the navy

was conducting the airstrikes in Yemen. During the incident, two US Navy pilots were shot down; however, they were recovered alive, with one pilot sustaining minor injuries. Since November 2023, the Houthis have been carrying out rocket and drone attacks on Israeli cities and disrupted "Israeli-linked" shipping in the Red Sea.

In response, the US-led navy coalition stationed in the area has been conducting regular air raids on Houthi targets since January in a bid to deter the armed group. Last week, the Houthi military authorities announced that the US and British aircraft have conducted "a new aggression" against targets in Hodeida, a strategic province in western Yemen along the Red Sea coast.

South Korea: Main opposition urges acting president to sign special counsel bills or face consequences

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC. 22

South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party (DP) on Sunday urged acting President Han Duck-soo to quickly promulgate special counsel bills against President Yoon Suk Yeol and First Lady Kim Keon Hee, vowing to hold him accountable if he fails to do so.

DP floor leader Rep. Park Chan-dae made the call as Han faces a decision on whether to veto the opposition-led bills, mandating special probes into Yoon's short-lived martial law declaration on December 3 and allegations against first lady Kim Keon Hee, Yonhap news agency reported.



"If acting President Han does not promulgate the special counsel bills by Tuesday, (we) will immediately hold him responsible," he said in a news conference at the National Assembly in western Seoul, apparently indicating the DP would push for his impeachment.

Park said a special counsel investigating insurrection charges against Yoon would be "most rational,"

also adding there was no reason to delay an investigation into allegations against First Lady Kim over stock manipulation and interference in election nominations.

The National Assembly passed the two bills earlier this month in the aftermath of Yoon's short-lived martial law imposition.

The ruling People Power Party (PPP) slammed the DP's call, describing the

bills as being intended to paralyse state affairs.

"(The bills) were designed by the DP with the ulterior motive of paralysing state affairs and the ruling party," PPP floor leader Kweon Seong-dong said.

On Thursday, Han vetoed six other contentious bills passed by the National Assembly, marking his first use of the presidential power since assuming interim leadership after the National Assembly voted to impeach Yoon on December 14.

Meanwhile, earlier in the day, South Korean police said they had questioned acting President Han Duck-soo over his role in President Yoon Suk

Yeol's botched imposition of martial law early this month.

Han was one of nine people the police said they questioned over their attendance at a Cabinet meeting Yoon held shortly before he declared martial law.

This marks the first time Han has been known to have undergone questioning as a suspect in the probe. "Of the 12 people who attended the Cabinet meeting, we questioned nine people, excluding President Yoon Suk Yeol, former Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun and Unification Minister Kim Yung-ho," a police official said.

"(Han) engaged fully and faithfully in the investigation," the official said.

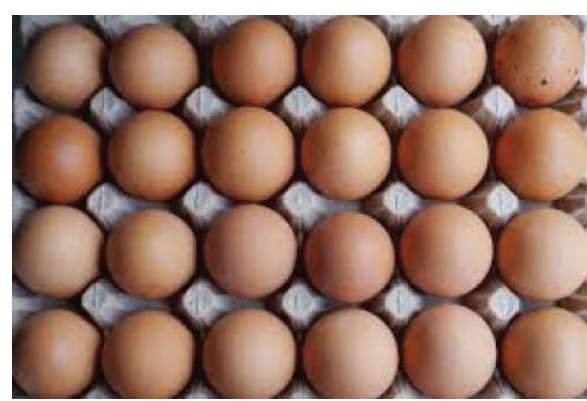
US egg prices soar to yearly high amid bird flu, holiday demand

AGENCIES
SACRAMENTO, DEC. 22

Egg prices across the United States have surged to their highest levels of the year, driven by widespread bird flu outbreaks and increased demand during the holiday season.

National wholesale prices for large eggs reached 4.07 US dollars per dozen on Friday, marking a dramatic increase from 1.1 dollars early this year, according to data from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The price surge, driven by the impact of highly pathogenic avian influenza on commercial egg layer flocks, has been particularly severe in coastal markets, with California and New York experienc-



ing the most significant increases.

The industry has seen devastating losses in laying hens, with 36.8 million table egg layers lost across 12 states in 2024 alone due to bird flu and facility fires, according to the USDA, Xinhua news agency reported.

The timing of these losses has also been par-

ticularly concerning, with 38 per cent of total losses occurring since November 1, and 28 per cent in December, coinciding with the peak annual demand period for eggs.

Egg demand traditionally peaks during the holiday season when baking and cooking activities increase. The USDA noted that demand had strength-

ened as consumers finalised their holiday preparations, putting additional pressure on an already strained supply chain.

Earlier this week, California Governor Gavin Newsom had declared a state of emergency in response to the outbreak of Avian influenza A (H5N1), commonly known as bird flu, which has infected 34 people in the Golden State.

According to the governor's office, this action came on Wednesday as cases were detected in dairy cows on farms in Southern California, "signaling the need to further expand monitoring and build on the coordinated statewide approach to contain and mitigate the spread of the virus."

To date, no person-

to-person spread of bird flu has been detected in California and nearly all infected individuals had exposure to infected cattle, a press release from the office said, adding the state had already established the largest testing and monitoring system in the country to respond to the outbreak.

As of Wednesday, the H5N1 virus had spread in 16 states among dairy cattle, following its first confirmed detection in Texas and Kansas in March 2024, data from the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) showed.

Bird flu was first detected in the US in the wild bird population in South Carolina in January 2022, and in the wild bird population in California in July 2022.

Iraqi PM calls for concerted efforts to assist Syria without interference

AGENCIES
BAGHDAD, DEC. 22

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani stressed the importance of concerted efforts to assist Syria in managing its affairs without interference that compromises its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

According to a statement from al-Sudani's media office, Al-Sudani made the remarks on Saturday when meeting with Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto in Baghdad, where they discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations in various fields, particularly in security cooperation, Xinhua news agency reported.

Al-Sudani praised Italy's role in supporting Iraq

through the international coalition's mission and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization mission and expressed Iraq's readiness to cooperate with friendly countries to stabilise the region, said the statement.

The prime minister noted that the Iraqi government is evaluating developments in Syria to make informed decisions regarding its evolving situation, it added. For his part, Crosetto affirmed Italy's readiness to expand relations with Iraq and support the stability in the Middle East.

Earlier on Thursday Syria's interim authorities said that the previous government's soldiers and officers fleeing to Iraq are now welcome to return home without fear of reprisal.

In a statement, the interim authorities pledged on Wednesday that military personnel who fled to neighbouring Iraq during the final stages of the previous government's downfall would not face harassment or punishment upon their return. It added that these returnees could use any border crossing and that the interim authorities would work directly with the Iraqi government to streamline procedures to facilitate their homecoming. More than 1,000 Syrian army personnel entered Iraq through the Qaim border crossing on December 7, a day before the overthrow of the former Syrian government by militant groups, Iraq's official news agency INA reported.

RUSSIA'S MISSING AN-2 PLANE FOUND, ALL ABOARD ALIVE

AGENCIES
VLADIVOSTOK, DEC. 22

The missing An-2 light aircraft, which disappeared in Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula has been found with all three people aboard alive, local authorities said on Sunday.

All three individuals on board, including two crew members and one passenger, have been evacuated by a Mi-8 helicopter from Kamchatka rescue teams and are being transported to Milkovskaya District Hospital, where their

health conditions will be assessed, said the regional office of the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations.

According to the Russian Federal Air Transport Agency, the missing plane and people were found near Mount Tundrovaya on early Sunday.

The plane, which was en route from Milkovo to Ossora, failed to arrive at its destination on Thursday, prompting an intensive search and rescue operation.

Earlier December 19,



an An-2 aircraft operated by Fair Avia went missing over Russia's Kamchatka

Peninsula, local authorities said.

"At 4:45 a.m. Moscow time (0145 GMT), a distress signal was detected from the An-2 aircraft, tail number 33555, at an altitude of 700 metres.

The plane was en route from Milkovo to Ossora," Sergei Lebedev, regional emergency minister, said on social media.

The plane with three crew members aboard presumably disappeared approximately 80 km south-southeast of the

Klyuchi village.

Emergency response efforts are underway.

An-2 is a single-engine plane widely used in Russia's remote areas.

Earlier on July 16, 2021, all 19 people on board a Russian Antonov An-28 passenger plane that vanished from radars in Siberia survived after the aircraft made a hard landing, the emergencies ministry said.

The aircraft -- operated by SiLA, a small airline offering regional flights in Siberia -- went missing

while flying from the town of Kedrovoy to the city of Tomsk.

But the aircraft was located after helicopters were dispatched to search for it.

The ministry said that all 19 people on board had survived and were now being evacuated from the site.

Russian aviation safety standards have improved in recent years but accidents, especially involving ageing planes in far-flung regions, are not uncommon.

SEBI takes strict action in front running case, bars 9 entities, seizes over Rs 21 crore

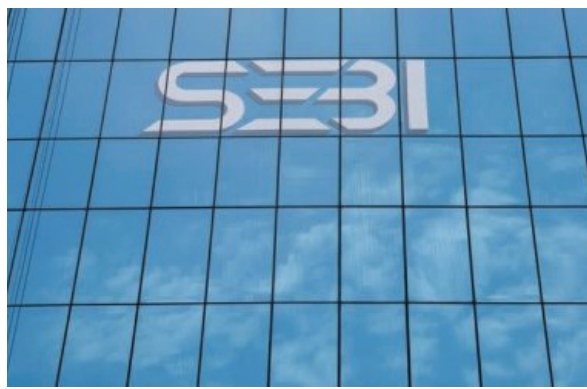
AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC 22

Market regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has taken strict action in a front-running case, banning PNB MetLife Insurance Company's equity dealer Sachin Bakul Dagli and eight other entities from the stock market.

According to the SEBI, front running was being done by Dagli and eight entities for more than three years and during this period, all of them collectively earned illegal profits of Rs 21.16 crore.

The market regulator banned Dagli and the eight entities from the stock market and seized the unlawful gains.

The SEBI had investigated some suspicious front-running trades related to PNB MetLife India



Insurance before this action.

The focus of this investigation was to find out whether the suspicious entities were doing front running in the trade of PNB MetLife India Insurance with the help of other people, including dealers and fund managers. It also sought to find whether SEBI rules have been violated or not.

The investigation, which

was conducted from January 1, 2021, to July 19, 2024, revealed that most of the trading decisions at PNB MetLife were assigned to Dagli for execution.

The investigation found that Dagli, the equity dealer of PNB MetLife, and his brother Tejas Dagli, an equity sales trader at Investec, obtained confidential, non-public information about the upcoming trading decisions of

PNB MetLife and Investec.

This information was further used to make trading decisions and shared with Sandeep Shambharkar, who executed front-running trades through the accounts of Dhanmata Realty Private Ltd (DRPL), Worthy Distributors Private Ltd (WDPL), and Pragmesh Sanghvi.

DRPL and WDPL Directors Arpan Kirtikumar Shah, Kabita Saha, and Jignesh Nikulbhai Dabhi were also involved in carrying out this task.

The SEBI said that 6,766 front-running trades have been executed. A profit of Rs 21,15,78,005 was earned from this.

PNB MetLife, in its statement given to IANS, said: "Company has fully cooperated with the authorities in this matter and wants to thank SEBI for the conclu-

sion of its findings of fraud by the named individual against PNB MetLife. In line with our internal processes, we have taken disciplinary action."

"PNB MetLife is committed to upholding the highest standards of corporate governance, transparency, and integrity," the company added.

Front-running is an illegal practice, entailing a trader or broker receiving confidential information about a large company or institution making a bulk order in a particular stock and creating a position in that particular stock before the big order is executed.

In such a situation, when the order is executed by a big company or institution, the trader or broker gets the benefit of the sudden rise in that stock.

Founders of 28 Indian new-age startups took home Rs 284 crore as salary in FY24

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 22

A total of 51 founders of 28 Indian new-age startup companies in the country took home Rs 283.5 crore as an annual salary in FY24.

According to the Inc42 report, "The average salary of startup founders in India declined by 26.9 per cent on year-on-year (YoY) basis to Rs 5.55 crore in FY 24 from Rs 7.6 crore in FY23."

These new-age startups are from across all sectors. Among all these startups, Supam Maheshwari, founder of e-commerce startup FirstCry, took home the highest salary of Rs 103.8 crore in FY24. However, this is about 50 per cent less than the salary of Rs 200.7 crore taken in FY23.

FirstCry's operating income in FY24 was Rs 6,480 crore and the company suffered a loss of Rs



321.5 crore during this period.

Zerodha founders Nikhil and Nithin Kamath were second on this list in FY24. Each of the two brothers took an annual salary of Rs 33.8 crore in the last financial year. In FY23, each took a salary of Rs 48 crore.

Zerodha's operating income in FY24 was Rs 9,372.1 crore and the company made a profit of Rs 5,496.3 crore during this period.

Capillary Technologies founder Aneesh Reddy was third on this list. He took a salary of Rs 13.3 crore in FY24. This is 1,480 per cent more than the salary of Rs 84 lakh in FY23.

Hotel software company RateGain founder Bhanu Chopra received a salary of Rs 5.8 crore in FY24 from Rs 6.1 crore in FY23.

RateGain's operating income grew 69 per cent to Rs 957 crore in FY24 and the company posted a profit of Rs 146.3 crore during this period.

Paytm, MD and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma were fifth on the list. He took an annual salary of Rs 4.4 crore in FY24, up 10 per cent from the annual salary of Rs 4 crore taken in FY23.

Mamaearth CEO Varun Alagh's annual salary in FY24 was Rs 3.97 crore, up 166.9 per cent from the annual salary of Rs 1.49 crore in FY23.

At the same time, his wife and co-founder of the startup received a salary of Rs 1.79 crore in FY24, which is 80.8 per cent more than Rs 99 lakh in FY23.

Earnings forecasts of Samsung, SK hynix for Q4 downgraded

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 22

Earnings forecasts for South Korea's two largest chipmakers, Samsung Electronics and SK hynix, for the fourth quarter have been revised down largely due to a downturn in industry demand, an industry survey showed on Sunday.

According to the latest survey conducted by Yonhap Infomax, the financial arm of Yonhap News Agency, which polled 20 Korean brokerage houses, Samsung Electronics' operating profit for the October-December period is estimated at 8.58 trillion won (US\$5.92 billion).

While the latest forecast is sharply higher than the 2.82 trillion won recorded in the fourth quarter of last year, it represents a drop of over 1 trillion won compared with the previous estimate of 9.77 trillion won made in October and November.

Market observers say



the deepening slump in demand for traditional IT products, including smartphones and PCs, has contributed to prolonged weak profitability in Samsung's core memory business.

SK hynix, with its strength in next-generation AI high-bandwidth memory (HBM), is expected to post its highest on-quarter results for the fourth quarter.

According to the latest Yonhap Infomax forecasts, SK hynix's estimated operating profit for the cited period is 7.77 trillion won, a 10.59 percent increase compared with the previous quarter.

However, the estimate is a 4.16 per cent drop

compared with the 8.11 trillion-won consensus estimate made in October and November.

The observers say SK hynix has been defending its profitability with its high-value HBM products but has failed to avoid the impact of falling prices of general purpose memory.

Meanwhile, the US Commerce Department has awarded Samsung Electronics up to \$4.745 billion in direct funding to support the South Korean tech giant's chip-making investment in central Texas, as it strives to strengthen domestic semiconductor production.

The announcement came after the department announced a preliminary deal with Samsung in April to provide up to \$6.4 billion in grants under the CHIPS and Science Act.

It also announced a final decision to give up to \$458 million in direct funding and up to \$500 million in loans to another Korean firm, SK hynix, for its investment in Indiana.

Woman flyer says Air India left passengers in the lurch in Milan

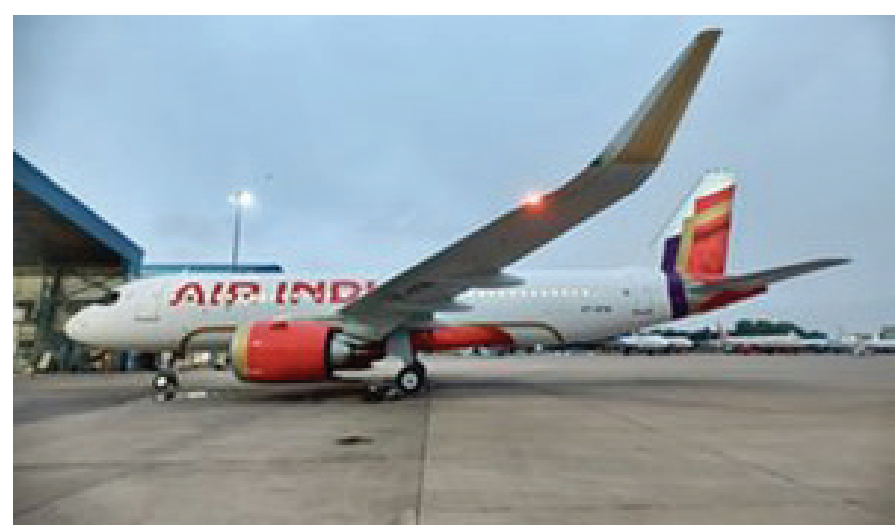
AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 22

A woman passenger, who paid Rs 50,000 for a business class Air India ticket from Milan to Delhi, was left stranded in the Italian city overnight due to an 18-hour delay in the flight and ended up missing an important ceremony that was part of her sister's wedding.

Shivani Bazaz, the hapless passenger took to X to share her experience which has left her "shocked and deeply disappointed with Air India".

She said that after the harrowing experience in Milan, her ordeal did not end as she had to run from pillar to post to get back her luggage that was checked into the Air India flight, and she still has not got a refund.

"What happened on Nov 5 while travelling from Milan to Delhi was nothing short of a nightmare, and I believe it's important to put it out there. It is important because if someone like me who has access to people inside Air India has to go through this, I



can't even imagine what regular passengers have to deal with on a daily basis," Bazaz wrote on X.

"I was scheduled to fly from Milan to Delhi on Air India paid Rs 50,000 for a business class upgrade because my sister's wedding began the next day (Nov 6), and I couldn't afford any delays. I even chose Air India over Lufthansa for the direct connection. To my absolute shock, the flight scheduled to depart at 8 PM was delayed by 18 hours," she said.

Bazaz further stated that she was stranded at the airport overnight with no lounge access, no proper communication, and no accommodation or food provided.

"It was a cold night and there were children and old people suffering in a deserted airport.

This is a clear violation of passenger rights," she contended.

Lufthansa, missing my sister's mehendi—a moment I will never get back," she lamented.

"Then started the fight to get my luggage that was already checked into the Air India flight. I have cried every 15 minutes that night and the following morning."

"The only reassuring person during this ordeal was Air India's manager in Milan, Preeti Singh, who promised my luggage would be sent and assured me of a refund for the Rs 50,000 I paid for

the upgrade. But, It has been over a month, and despite countless follow-ups, I am yet to receive the refund. The delay in addressing this has shattered my trust in Air India, an airline I chose in good faith over other options," Bazaz said.

"What's most upsetting is the lack of accountability and empathy shown by Air India. No passenger should have to go through this, especially during such an important time in their life. I'm sharing this because I hope Air India will take this seriously, expedite my refund and improve their processes so others don't face such harrowing experiences," she added.

Meanwhile, the Air India management responded to her string of posts on X, assuring her that her problem would be dealt with on high priority.

"Dear Ms. Bazaz, we truly apologize for the inconvenience you've experienced. Kindly share your booking details via DM. We will get this reviewed on priority," Air India posted on X.

GST on rice kernels slashed to help poor, no hike in tax for salted popcorn: Sitharaman

AGENCIES
JAISALMER (RAJASTHAN), DEC 22

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced that the Goods and Services Tax Council has approved the reduction of GST on rice kernels to 5 per cent, exempted life-saving gene therapy from tax, and extended the GST exemption for parts used in manufacturing surface-to-air missiles (SAM).

Addressing the media here after the 55th GST Council meeting, the Finance Minister said the decision to cut GST on rice kernels from 18 per cent to 5 per cent has been taken as the commodity is supplied to the weaker sections of society through the public distribution system.

"Similarly, the concessional 5 per cent GST is applicable on inputs of food preparations that are supplied for free distribution to economically weaker sections under government programs subject to existing conditions; so this is also an extension of the 5 per



cent rate that prevails," she said.

Explaining the rationale for increasing the tax on caramelised popcorn to 18 per cent, the Finance Minister said that these included added sugar which constituted a separate category just like carbonated drinks that are harmful to health and hence, are put under a higher tax slab.

She pointed out that salted and plain popcorn were also being sold in the market and the GST on them had not been increased.

She further stated that black pepper, whether fresh green or black pepper or dried black pepper, and raisins, when supplied by an agriculturist, are not liable to GST.

However, if these commodities are sold by merchants, then they would be liable to pay tax.

She also said that all parts used for the manufacture of SAM missiles including software will continue to be exempt from GST.

The Finance Minister also said that while payment aggregators handling transactions below Rs 2,000 are eligible for exemptions, this does not apply to payment gateways and fintech services.

She said that no GST is payable on penal charges or levies collected by banks and NBFCs for non-compliance with loan terms by borrowers. This step would go a long way to help small businesses.

The Finance Minister further stated that the issue of whether there should be a separate GST on delivery charges of food provided by quick commerce companies and e-commerce apps was discussed at the meeting but no decision has been taken in the matter. It was felt by the Council that more detailed discussions were required on the issue, she added.

The Finance Minister also said that ACC blocks containing more than 50 per cent fly ash will attract 12 per cent GST.

Sitharaman disclosed that no decision has been made regarding the inclusion of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) under the GST framework as several states were opposed to the move. Further discussions are expected on the issue in future meetings.

She further stated that the GoM on health insurance has not received inputs from the insurance regulator IRDAI as yet so more time is required to take a decision on the issue.

The GoM on rate rationalisation also needs addi-

tional time as the report is yet to be finalised, she added.

The Finance Minister further said that the Council discussed whether the GST on floor space index (FSI) for construction should be on the reverse charge or forward charge. No decision was taken on the issue as it has implications for the revenue of municipalities and besides, land is a state subject.

She also disclosed that a concept note has been given in-principle approval by the GST Council to bring amendments in GST to make registration easier for small companies who avail low input tax credit. These companies are facing problems in registrations and it has been decided to simplify the system to make the process smoother for them.

The Council has approved an amendment to the definition of pre-packaged and labelled items intended for retail sale. The step is aimed at clarifying the definition for all goods as currently there is a lot of confusion on the issue, Sitharaman added.

Central PSUs record 47 per cent jump in net profit for 2023-24, market cap doubles

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 22

Overall Net Profit of operating Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) rose to Rs 3.22 lakh crore in FY24 as against Rs 2.18 lakh crore in FY23 showing an increase of over 47 per cent, according to an official report.

The market capitalisation of CPSEs more than doubled in Fiscal Year 2024-25 as compared to Fiscal Year 2023-24, the report said.

The major contributors to the increase in market cap are NTPC Ltd, Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Ltd, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, Coal India Ltd and Indian Railway Finance Corporation Ltd.

A major proportion of the increase in profit of Rs 0.89 lakh crore was contributed by the Petroleum (Refinery & Marketing) group, according to the report compiled by the Public Enterprises Department of the Finance Ministry.

"Within the Petroleum (Refinery & Marketing) group, the major contribution towards the increase in Overall Net Profit is con-



tributed by Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (Rs 0.31 lakh crore). The profitability of the Petroleum (Refinery & Marketing) group has impacted the overall profitability," the survey said.

Net Loss of loss-incurring CPSEs was Rs 0.21 lakh crore as against Rs 0.29 lakh crore showing a decrease of over 27 per cent. Major loss-incurring CPSEs are Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd, Bharat Petro Resources Ltd and NMDC Steel Ltd.

"Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. converted from a loss of Rs 0.15 lakh crore to a profit of Rs 0.15 Lakh crores in FY 2023-24, while Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd was able to reduce the loss

from Rs 0.08 lakh crore in FY 2022-23 to Rs 0.05 lakh crore in FY 2023-24," the report said.

Contribution to the Central Exchequer (CCE) of all CPSEs by way of excise duty, customs duty, GST, corporation tax, interest on Central Government loans, dividend, and other duties and taxes stood at Rs 4.85 lakh crore in FY 24 as against Rs 4.58 lakh crore in FY 23, showing an increase of around 6 per cent. Among the components of CCE, Excise duty is the highest component which accounts for 46 per cent in FY 2023-24. The increase in CCE is mainly due to an increase in Corporation tax from Rs 0.56 lakh crore in (FY 2022-23) to Rs 0.81 lakh crore in (FY 2023-24).

G Trisha, spinners star as India win inaugural U19 Women's Asia Cup title

AGENCIES
KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 22

G Trisha stood tall to hit a fine 52 while spinners took seven wickets collectively as India beat Bangladesh by 41 runs to become first-ever winners of the inaugural U19 Women's Asia Cup at the Bayuemas Cricket Oval on Sunday.

Trisha, who was a member of the Indian team winning the first-ever U19 Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa in 2023, hit five fours and two sixes in her 47-ball knock on a challenging pitch as the side made 117/7.

In reply, left-arm spinner Aayushi Shukla picked 3-17 and became the leading wicket-taker



of the competition, while fellow left-arm spin bowlers Parunika Sisodia and Sonam Yadav took wickets each to dry the run flow of Bangladesh after the power play and dismiss them for 76 in 18.3 overs to win the title.

Pushed into batting first, Trisha became the key for leading India's charge once G Kamalini and Sanika Chalke fell early. She struck a balance between playing elegant shots and rebuilding India's innings through a

41-run stand with captain Niki Prasad (12).

After the duo and Ishwari Awsare fell, a calm Mithila Vinod stepped up to hit a cameo of 17 and take India past the 110-mark, with Bangladesh's Farjana Easmin taking 4-30. In defence of the modest total, Joshitha VJ and Sonam Yadav struck to leave Bangladesh two down in the power play.

Fahomida Choya and Juairiya Ferdous tried to get Bangladesh's chase on track with 18 and 22, respectively. But with Indian spinners stemming the run flow by bowling more dot balls and the required run rate rising, the duo couldn't break free from the shackles of

pressure and gave their wickets to them.

From 64/5 in 14.2 overs, Bangladesh eventually slumped to 76 all out, giving India an emphatic win.

Trisha was rightfully named Player of the Final and also took Player of the Tournament award, as India will be pleased with how they emerged triumphant in the all-Asian event ahead of their defence of the U19 Women's T20 World Cup, whose second edition begins next month in Malaysia.

Brief Scores: India 117/7 (G Trisha 52; Farjana Easmin 4-30) beat Bangladesh 76 in 18.3 overs (Juairiya Ferdous 22; Aayushi Shukla 3-17) by 41 runs

Next Gen ATP Finals: Tien wins 'battle of the besties' against Michelsen to reach final

AGENCIES
JEDDAH (SAUDI ARABIA), DEC 22

American Learner Tien came up with a fine performance to get the better of compatriot and friend Alex Michelsen in a thrilling five-setter as his hard-fought win making him the third American to reach the summit clash of the Next Gen ATP Finals here on Saturday.

Tien, who went 2-1 in Blue Group play, will face the winner of the second semifinal between Brazilian Joao Fonseca and Frenchman Luca Van Assche in the final on Sunday.

It was his win over Michelsen that made it all possible for Tien.

Over the last 10 years, Michelsen and Tien have

developed a strong friendship. They train together in California and compete in Fortnite battles and table tennis duels. However, their off-court relationship was put on the sidelines in Saudi Arabia, where they produced an entertaining battle on Saturday. Their semifinal clash was played in front of a lively crowd and former World No. 1 Rafael Nadal, who was court-side at King Abdullah Sports City. The two Americans did not differ much in the opening three sets as they competed in their first ATP head-to-head meeting.

On Saturday, Michelsen powered down serves to dominate Tien physically at times. Still, the 19-year-old responded, outmanoeuvring the 20-year-old with an array of stunning

angles and aggressive groundstrokes to pull Michelsen from corner to corner.

However, from the start of the fourth set, Tien dominated. The American, who won seven straight games, locked in on the baseline exchanges and rode momentum in the fifth set to advance after one hour and 36 minutes.

"I can't put it into words right now," Tien said following his win after hitting 21 winners. "I am really happy with the win but I hate it was against him, but that is just how it goes."

I started smiling when I came out here and saw him on the other side of the net, but I am really happy to get through and think I played really well."

Sports Minister flags off 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' initiative

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 22

Keeping continuity with the Fit India Cycling Drive launched earlier this week, Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya flagged off the 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' initiative at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium here on Sunday.

Besides the sports minister, the event saw the presence of over 500 riders, ranging from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sports Authority of India campers and young gymnasts from the IG Stadium, senior officials and various cycling clubs in the national capital.

Sunday's flag-off ceremony also saw the presence of former WWE star Shanky Singh, revered



for being a part of the tag team stable featuring former WWE champion Jinder Mahal. Padma Shri and Arjuna Awardee Table Tennis player Mouma Das, meanwhile, flagged off the Sundays on Cycle event in Sports Authority of India National Centre of Excellence (NCOE) Kolkata.

Mentioning the wide impact of the Cycling Drive, Mandaviya said, "The Fit India Sundays on Cycle initiative is being held simultaneously at over 1100+ locations in

India. The launch of the cycling drive earlier this week has spread the awareness of cycling exponentially."

"Cycling is the need today. The vision of Viksit Bharat needs a healthy individual, who in turn makes a healthy society and that ultimately results in a healthy nation. The benefits of cycling also uphold the message of the Fit India movement, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019," the minister added.

Atletico upset Barcelona to go top of La Liga

AGENCIES
MADRID, DEC 22

Atletico Madrid ended the year as leader in La Liga after winning 2-1 away to FC Barcelona with virtually the last attack of the game.

Alexander Sorloth scored the winning goal for Atletico with a thumping left-foot finish in the sixth minute of injury time, after Atletico caught Barca flat-footed as the home side looked for the winning goal in a game it could have resolved long beforehand.

Pedri opened the scoring in the 30th minute after a run outside the Atletico area ended with Gavi giving him what looked like an accidental return pass to beat goalkeeper Jan Oblak.

In the second half, the midfielder set up Raphinha, who saw a lob hit the bar, just three minutes



before Rodrigo De Paul levelled with his side's first shot on target in the 60th minute.

Robert Lewandowski produced an incredible miss as the game heated up, moments before Inaki Pena stuck out a providential foot to deny Pablo Barrios at the other end.

Barca was pushing Atletico back, with coach Diego Simeone reverting

to a five-man defence to try and keep Barca at bay, but it needed two brilliant saves from Oblak to deny Raphinha and Pedri to keep Atletico in the game before Sorloth stunned the home side.

The win enabled Atletico Madrid to overtake Barcelona on top of the standings with 41 points, three ahead of Barca with one game in hand.

Gorka Guruzeta and Alex Berenguer both scored as Athletic Bilbao fought back from a goal down to win 2-1 away to Osasuna to move to within just two points of Barca.

Lucas Torro put Osasuna ahead moments after the VAR ruled out a penalty for Athletic, but Guruzeta levelled with a powerful header soon afterwards, and former Osasuna winger Berenguer won the game with a first-time shot after the home defence made a mess of goalkeeper Unai Simon's long clearance.

Pablo Duran scored twice in six minutes as Celta Vigo won 2-0 at home to Real Sociedad, with his first goal coming from a shot from outside the penalty area, while his second came after a pass from Borja Iglesias in first-half injury time.

Duran was denied a hat

trick early in the second half after his effort was ruled out after a prior offside from Iglesias.

Cyle Larin scored the only goal of the game from the penalty spot in the 53rd minute as Mallorca ended 2024 with a win that lifts it into the top six.

Getafe pressed for an equaliser after Larin's goal but couldn't find a way past Mallorca's rock-solid defence.

Diego Cocca had a debut to forget at Valladolid as his struggling side was outplayed in a 3-0 defeat away to Girona.

David Lopez opened the scoring when he deflected Miguel Gutierrez's free kick into the net after 31 minutes, and eight minutes later, Miguel crossed for Abel Ruiz to nod in the second for Girona, with Arnaut Danjuma finishing the scoring nine minutes from time.

BGT: Shastri suggests Rohit to channel his white-ball mindset while batting at no. 6

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 22

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri has suggested skipper Rohit Sharma needs to channel his successful white-ball approach while coming out to bat at number six in the upcoming Boxing Day Test against Australia, starting in Melbourne on Thursday.

Rohit made a move to number six following KL Rahul doing well as an opener in the 295-run win in Perth, a game he missed due to the birth of his second child. But after moving down to number six in the batting order, Rohit has managed scores of 10, three and six in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series so far.

"I think he's got to be very clear in his mindset to go out there and take



the attack to the opposition and not worry about anything else. The last thing you want is him to be in two minds whether to defend or attack. In his case, it should be attack. He picks up length quickly, he should take the opposition on at that number.

"Because if he gets away in the first 10-15 minutes, in any way, he's not got

past that 15-20 minutes, half an hour. So why don't you play a natural game, go and take the attack to the opposition and take it from there? Because I think that is his best way of not just coming back into form, winning a game for India as well.

"Because that number is a crucial number. The best No.6s in the world are

the guys who know how to have the ability to counter-attack. They read the situation well. Yes, if a lot of wickets have fallen, maybe for a little while.

"You might have to be circumspect, but the intent has to be far sooner than later.

Especially when you have that kind of ability and especially when you open the batting for India and you have all the shots for Australian conditions," said Shastri on the ICC Review show.

With the five-match series currently tied at 1-1, Shastri also heaped praise on Rahul, who's been India's best batter on tour by scoring 235 runs from six innings at an average of 47, and formed a strong opening partnership with Yashasvi Jaiswal. Rahul's 84 in Brisbane also helped India save themselves from

being made to follow-on.

"I would have asked him (Rohit) to open in the last Test match but then the way Rahul has batted, I mean he was a joy to watch and the way he's batting, I believe he struck a purple patch.

"It could be a position he might just want to keep and enhance the way he's playing because his technique was faultless. The way he left the ball, the way he allowed the ball to come onto the bat, I mean some of his cover drives were as good as any played by anyone in world cricket at the moment.

"And so I think when there's that much confidence there, you know, let it be. I would like to see Rohit Sharma, his tactics change a bit because he can still be extremely dangerous at that number (six)," concluded Shastri.

Yuva Kabaddi Series: Vasco Vipers beat Himalayan Tahrs to win Division 3, qualify for Grand Finale

AGENCIES
COIMBATORE (TAMIL NADU), DEC 22

Vasco Vipers defeated the undefeated Himalayan Tahrs in a nail-biting final of the 11th edition of the Yuva Kabaddi Series and became the first team to qualify for the Grand Finale as Division 3 stage of the event concluded in dramatic fashion at the Karpagam Academy of Higher Education here on Saturday. Vasco Vipers, following their incredible victory in the Division 3 Final, become the first team to qualify for the Grand Finale.

The Yuva Kabaddi Series has established a clear pathway for teams to qualify for the Grand Finale, set to take place in January-February 2025. This marquee event will feature 12 teams.

The qualification structure ensures inclusivity,



with at least one team from Division 3, a minimum of two teams from Division 2, and at least three teams from Division 1 earning their spots in the Grand Finale. The remaining spots will be determined in the upcoming Division 2 and Division 1 stages, with teams battling it out for a chance to compete for the coveted title.

The day began with the last league match of Division 3, where the Vasco Vipers delivered a resounding 62-38 win over the Ranchi Rangers. The

Vipers, who had already secured a spot in the final, used the game as a warm-up. Laxman Gowda and Bhargav were in scintillating form, both securing Super 10s, while Abhishek came off the bench to contribute 13 raid points and two tackle points.

For the Rangers, substitutes Bittu Kumar, with 15 raid points, and Monu Kumar, with five tackle points, put up a fight, but the rest of the team faltered, leaving them to end their campaign on a disappointing note.

BGT 2024-25: Richardson 'excited' to return to Australia Test squad for last two games against India

AGENCIES
HOBART, DEC 22

Australia pacer Jhye Richardson is excited over his return to the Test side for the final two games against India in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

Australia have added Richardson as an extra pace option in the squad after a calf injury ruled Josh Hazlewood out of the series. Richardson admitted he was somewhat surprised by his call-up to

Australia's squad for the Boxing Day Test but feels "really good" about the prospect of an international comeback against India.

Richardson, who featured for the Perth Scorchers on Saturday in Hobart, will skip Monday night's match against Melbourne Renegades to prepare for a potential Test return. The 28-year-old pacer and teenage opener Sam Konstas were the two fresh faces named in Australia's 15-player squad for the remainder of the series.

"Even a week ago, I was like, 'I'm not really thinking about that just yet,'" Richardson said on Fox Cricket during the Scorchers' clash with the Hurricanes on Saturday.

"I just wanted to stay on the park and play Big Bash cricket and make sure that the body was OK and keep ramping up (the workloads) and following the processes that we've got in place. But here we are, and if there's an opportunity, then it's obviously really exciting."



In the Scorchers' recent loss to the Hobart Hurricanes, Richardson went wicketless, a contrast to his standout perfor-

mance in their BBL season opener, where he claimed 3-19 against the Melbourne Stars, earning Player of the Match honours.

The speedster's surprise at his selection stemmed from his gradual return to long-form cricket this domestic season. Despite limited opportunities, Richardson has consistently demonstrated his exceptional skill as one of Australia's top bowlers when fit.

Only a week earlier, Richardson had told reporters it was "unrealistic" to consider an international return, with his focus primarily on achieving consistent match fit-

ness. He has played just one four-day game this season but made an immediate impact, taking two wickets in his first over during Western Australia's pink-ball Shield match against South Australia in Adelaide last month.

Richardson's confidence also grew after successfully returning to bowl following a dislocated shoulder sustained while celebrating one of those wickets.

Although he has played two T20 matches for the Scorchers since that

first-class appearance, Richardson said shifting to Test cricket wouldn't be difficult, as much of his summer training has focused on conditioning for the longer format.

"I'd probably argue that I've had less white-ball practice leading into this Big Bash. Having played a couple of second XI games and a Shield game, we've really been prioritising trying to build (my bowling) loads to get my body right for four-day cricket," Richardson said.

Sakeena Itoo distributes Artificial Limbs, Clutches, Callipers, Wheelchairs among specially abled

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 22

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare, Education, Sakeena Itoo, today remarked that the Government is committed to provide necessary resources and support to specially abled persons so that they lead an independent, quality and dignified life.

The Minister made these remarks during distribution of artificial limbs, callipers, clutches, tricycles and wheel chairs among specially abled persons at Brahman Sabha Parade here. The event was organised by Shree Atam Vallabh Jain Clinic Jammu and sponsored by Rural Electrification Corporation in collaboration with Bhagwan Mahavir Viklang Sahayta Samiti Kota.

Addressing the gathering, Sakeena Itoo emphasised the Government's unwavering commitment towards welfare of the



disabled community in order to make their lives dignified. "The present dispensation has always been determined to uplift and improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. We are committed towards providing them with necessary resources, equipments and support, so that they too can live a dignified life", she asserted.

"The present Omar led Government is committed to address all issues of people especially the specially abled community. We are working on to increase the disability

pension from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 3000 per month", Sakeena maintained. She added that this increase will alleviate the financial burden on families and provide them financial support.

The Minister, on the occasion, also highlighted the importance of inclusive growth and need to focus on marginalised communities, especially the disabled persons. She assured the gathering that the Government will continue to prioritize the needs of disabled community, with plans for providing them greater accessi-

bility and support.

Sakeena Itoo, in her address, also commended the NGO for this noble work. She assured them of Government's continuous support and said that the issues raised by them will be addressed promptly. She advised them to organise awareness campaigns across the regions in order to educate people, especially the disabled persons about the rights and facilities available for disabled persons.

The Minister also interacted with the specially abled persons and assured them continuous support from the government.

General Secretary, Shree Atam Vallabh Jain Clinic Jammu, Pradeep Jain informed that 429 persons were screened in the camp while 123 hearing aids were given to the patients in addition to distribution of 104 artificial limbs, 73 callipers 22 artificial hands, 20 wheel chairs and 19 tricycle among the beneficiaries in the three day camp.

FCSCA refutes claim of cancellation of BPL ration cards

JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 22

The Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs has strongly refuted reports from certain quarters on social media, particularly a video, wherein it is being alleged that "...the Government has issued an order cancelling around 1.5 lakh Below Poverty Line ration cards affecting a huge number of beneficiaries and putting their families in distress ..." while terming the assertion totally fabricated and based on false assumptions.

As per the statement issued by the Department, no such order has been issued. Besides, it has rebutted the claims that the figure being quoted in the said video does not even match the actual deletion figure of 1.27 lakh cited in media reports for having been reported to the parliament recently with regard to fake and duplicate ration card deletions in Jammu and Kashmir since 2013. These are in fact the deletions carried out in the past, over 10 years in J&K as a part of reforms pursued by the Government of India across the country.

The document added that elimination of bogus/duplicate ration cards and beneficiaries is an essential requirement under Targeted PDS Control Order of Government of India, which is now being established through technology interventions like Aadhaar seeding, eKYC and through field verification.

As a result of accelerated Aadhaar seeding, pursued by the Department, huge duplication of ration cards and beneficiaries was established leading to deletion of such ration cards and beneficiaries over the years. At the same time, bringing the left out eligible beneficiaries under the PDS cover has also been seriously pursued by the Department, and this effort has also led to the addition of 8.6 lakh eligible beneficiaries to PDS in J&K since shifting to a dependable Ration Card Management System in September, 2022.

Further, it is clarified that only order issued by the Department in recent past in the context of PDS seeks inclusion of children born during years 2011 to 2016 in their family ration cards so that additional benefits flow to these ben-

eficiaries and households as per eligibility under PDS. The Department has also issued explicit orders for prompt inclusion of any eligible beneficiary still left out under PDS, wherever reported. As a result of these efforts the number of beneficiaries under NFSA, who are provided free food grains every month, has gone up from 66.37 lakh to 66.59 lakh during last three months.

Additionally, the Department has also pursued, in a mission mode, the inclusion of left out JK registrants on e-Shram Portal so that none such registrant who is eligible under PDS for free or subsidised food grains, remains uncovered.

A mammoth exercise for matching of nearly 34.80 lakh such registrants in J&K was carried out in coordination with NIC and every registrant who remained unmatched with PDS data base, was approached by the Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs and Labour & Employment Department for securing their inclusion. Of these, nearly 34.40 lakh registrants are presently availing benefits under

PDS or other schemes, and remaining forty thousand, could not either be traced by the Department or they refused to share their details and documents, despite making efforts in coordination with respective district administrations.

Expressing firm resolve of the Department, a spokesman of the Department said the Department is making arrangements for providing free food grains every month to 66.59 lakh beneficiaries under NFSA and for providing highly subsidised food grains to another group of 31.81 lakh beneficiaries in the Non Priority Households category, which implies that 98.40 lakh people are presently benefitted under PDS every month in J&K.

The spokesman further said that the technological interventions like aadhaar seeding, e-PDS etcetera are aimed at securing the marginalised communities their due share in ration distribution and this would remain a priority of the Department so that eligible beneficiaries are benefitted under Targeted Public Distribution System and undeserving are weeded out.

Education Department organizes debate, painting competition under Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore

JINNEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 22

Education Department Ganderbal organized a program on Good Governance under the banner of 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' at Sheikhul Alam High School Kangan today.

The event featured a debate, painting & drawing competition of students from various institutions across the Kangan Sub-division.

The program aimed to promote awareness about effective governance, focusing on transparency, accountability, and grassroots development.

The debate competition highlighted students' oratory skills as they presented thought-provoking arguments on governance



reforms and public participation.

Meanwhile, the painting competition served as a creative platform for students to visually express ideas related to justice, equality, and community welfare.

The program saw enthusiastic involvement from students, teachers,

and Officers, who appreciated the participants' efforts and creativity.

Organized under the 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' initiative, the event effectively underscored the importance of inclusive governance and inspired young minds to reflect on societal challenges and solutions.

ADC Kupwara inspects JKSSB Examination Centres in district

JINNEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, DECEMBER 22

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kupwara, Mohammad Rouf Rehman today inspected various examination centers across the district to monitor the conduct of the OMR-based examination for the post of Constable-Photographer in the Home Department, conducted by the J&K Services Selection Board (JKSSB).

The ADC visited several examination centres including AGS Chandigam, BHSS Sogam, AGS Krsan and other centres where he reviewed the arrangements and interacted with the examination staff. He emphasized for maintaining transparency, fairness, and strict adherence to prescribed guidelines.

The ADC appreciated



the efforts of the district administration, law enforcement agencies, and examination staff for their coordinated efforts in facilitating a conducive and secure environment

for the candidates.

Meanwhile, 36 examination centres had been established in district Kupwara where 351 candidates out of 8996 appeared for the examination.

Deputy Commissioner inspects JKSSB Examination Centers in Poonch

JINNEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 22

The JKSSB examination for the recruitment of Constables (Photographer) in the Home Department was conducted smoothly across 23 centers in the District Poonch, today.

Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal and ADC Tahir Mustafa Malik visited the examination centers to oversee the process, ensuring that it was carried out in a fair and peaceful manner.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of strict verification of admit cards to prevent any malpractice, ensuring that only legitimate candidates were allowed to participate. He also collected attendance data to track the number of students present and noted the examination procedures being followed in various rooms.

DC Bandipora inspects JKSSB examination centres, reviews arrangements



JINNEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 22

The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) on Sunday successfully conducted the OMR-based examination for the post of J&K Police Constable (Photographer).

Out of the 4062 candidates scheduled to appear, 183 participated in the examination held across 14 designated centres in the district.

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Manzoor Ahmad Qadri accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bandipora, Zaffar Husson

Shawl, visited several examination centres to oversee the arrangements and ensure the smooth and transparent conduct of the examination.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner inspected various facilities including security, logistics, and overall management at High School Bagh, GHSS PLAN, GDC Hajin, GHSS Hajin and other centres in Bandipora and Sumbal Sub Division.

He expressed satisfaction with the arrangements and commended the efforts of all stakeholders involved in maintaining the integrity of the examination process.

Good Governance Week-2024 Series of grievances redressal camps held across Ramban on Day 4 of "Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur" campaign

JINNEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, DECEMBER 22

On the fourth day of the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur" campaign under Good Governance Week 2024, the District Administration Ramban, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, reached out to the residents of Blocks Rajgarh and Batote to address public grievances and enhance service delivery at their doorsteps. As many as 52 grievances were resolved on the spot by the concerned departments,

At Block Rajgarh, a team of officers led by local BDO Ashfaq Tantry and BDO Headquarter Shalini Chandel, along with Naib Tehsildar Rajgarh, AE Jal Shakti, and officers from the Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, PDD, and other departments, addressed and resolved all 20 griev-

ances of varied nature. The camp emphasized prompt resolution of public issues, strengthening the link between governance and rural communities.

Similar camp was held in Block Batote with a special focus on the theme "Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur". Local Tehsildar Vijay Sharma, local BDO Kavita Bendhral and officers from various departments attended to the public grievances engaged the rural populace through interactive sessions.

The villagers were also educated on multiple government schemes, including MGNREGA, PMAY, and other welfare initiatives aimed at empowering rural communities. Additionally, digital literacy workshops were conducted to familiarize residents with online government services, ensuring greater accessibility and transparency.

578 Aspirants appear for JKSSB Examination in Kishtwar



JINNEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 22

The OMR-based objective-type written test for recruitment of Constables (Photographer), conducted by the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB), concluded successfully today in District Kishtwar.

General Examination Observer/ADC, Pawan Kotwal, informed that a total of 3,759 aspirants were scheduled to appear for the examination in the

district, out of which 578 attended today's exam.

On the occasion/Chief Inspector Pawan Kotwal, representatives from the JKSSB, and other senior officers visited all 09 designated examination centers within the town and adjoining areas of the district. They reviewed the facilities and arrangements put in place to ensure the smooth and transparent conduct of the written examination.

All SOPs were strictly adhered to besides control

rooms were established for every designated center to assist aspirants. Videography was ensured in all centers to maintain transparency and fairness during the examination.

Additionally, the ADC interacted with aspirants and inquired about the facilities and arrangements made by the district administration. The aspirants expressed satisfaction and thanked the district administration for the measures taken for their convenience.