

JANSAMPARK PRINTING PRESS

 BYE PASS SIDHRA, JAMMU
 Mob. 9419104223

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS
 Many people with dengue can be cared for at home with adequate rest and hydration. But, if you experience any warning signs, go immediately to the nearest medical center.
 Watch out for dengue warning signs!
 A drop in body temperature accompanied by any of the following symptoms:
 • Increase in body temperature
 • Persistent vomiting
 • A sharp rise in temperature
 • Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool, urine or vomit
 • Severe weakness
 If you have any of these symptoms, go to the nearest medical center IMMEDIATELY

JINDRAH IMAGES

DAILY | JAMMU | VOL NO: 11 | ISSUE NO: 303 | PAGES: 12 | PRICE: Rs 2/- | RNI NO: JKENG/2013/49471 | POSTAL REGD. NO. JK-497/22-24 | dailyjindrahimages.com/Epaper.php | jindrahimages123@gmail.com

CM Omar says 24x7 electricity unlikely without 100% metering

JNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 26

Amidst the promises of 200 free electricity units to the consumers, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has made it clear that the round-the-clock electricity to the consumers would not be possible before the 100 per cent metering is done.

According to the news agency, Omar told the media persons that they are trying their best to provide better facilities to the people and the complaints would pour in with regard to the pesky power cuts as it is the outcome of overloading. "The people have an agreement of 4 bulbs but they use 4 heaters at home, which leads to the overloading and thus results in the unscheduled power cuts," he said. However, he said that the 24x7 electricity would be possible only when the 100 per cent metering is done.

Furthermore, he added that adequate arrangements are put in place for better facilities to the people

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah listens to people's grievances

JNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 26

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today met several delegations and emphasized his government's commitment to addressing the challenges faced by various sectors of society.

The Chief Minister stated this during his public outreach

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4



CM Omar inaugurates Amphitheater, Light & Sound at Bagh-e-Bahu

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, while inaugurating the open-air amphitheater at Bagh-e-Bahu this evening, expressed his vision of transforming Jammu into a tourist destination of distinction.

Highlighting Jammu's potential, the Chief Minister emphasized the

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4



Ex-PM Manmohan Singh, architect of India's economic reforms, dies at 92

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

Former prime minister Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, died here on Thursday night. He was 92.

Singh's death was announced by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, where he was admitted in the Emergency ward around 8.30 PM in a critical condition.

An AIIMS bulletin said "he was treated for age related medical conditions and had sudden loss of consciousness at home" on December 26.



"Resuscitative measures were started immediately at home. He was brought to medical emergency at AIIMS Delhi at 8.06 pm. Despite all efforts, he could not be revived and was declared dead at 9.51 pm," said the bulletin.

Singh, who was prime minister for two terms in the Congress-led UPA government from 2004 to 2014, had been in poor health for the last few months.

He is survived by wife Gurcharan Singh and three daughters. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and her mother Sonia Gandhi reached the

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

LG attends Christmas Celebrations organised by 'All J&K Christian Sabha'

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today attended the Christmas Celebrations organised by 'All J&K Christian Sabha'.

He interacted with Bishop, Priests and members of CNI Church, Jammu-Srinagar Diocese and All J&K Christian Sabha and commended their contribution in building a peaceful, selfless, compassionate and caring society.

"The Christian community has selflessly served the society and made immense contribution in the field of education and healthcare. I hope that their commitment to service inspires others," he added.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor urged every section of society to imbibe the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ and promote the spirit of peace, forgiveness and compassion. "Our prime objective is to light the lamp of love, kindness and brotherhood in the heart of every citizen," he said.

"Lord Jesus Christ had emphasised on the purity of person's

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4



Veer Baal Diwas: Sikh Gurus have made unparalleled sacrifices for the country: LG



JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today paid tributes to the Sahibzades, Mata Gujri Ji and Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 'Vishesh Shaheedi Samagam', a programme organised by 'All Jammu Kashmir Sikh Coordination Committee' on 'Veer Baal Diwas',

at Gurdwara Digiana Ashram.

"Sikh Gurus have made unparalleled sacrifices for the country. India and its history have witnessed the efforts of the Sikh community and the Sikh Gurus to awaken the society and continuously protect its values," the Lieutenant Governor said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

Militant associate detained under PSA in Udhampur

JNEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, DEC 26

Udhampur Police have detained a militant associate under the Public Safety Act (PSA). The individual, identified as Abdul Qayoom alias Bittu, son of Abdul Gani, a resident of Kadwah, Basantgarh, was arrested for his alleged involvement in aiding militant groups.

According to officials, Abdul Qayoom had been actively providing logistical support to militant organizations and serving as a guide and facilitator for their operations.

The accused has several FIRs registered against him at Police Station

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

Newly-elected legislators seek reduction in rentals of MLA Hostel

JNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 26

The Speaker of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly is considering the formation of a House Committee to examine the demand raised by newly-elected MLAs to reduce the rentals of MLA hostels in Srinagar and Jammu, sources disclosed.

Sources told the news agency that Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather is likely to constitute a nine-member panel of MLAs to revise the rent of MLA hostels in Srinagar and Jammu. They disclosed that the newly-elected legislators are seeking a

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

YEAR-ENDER

3 million tourists visit J&K in 2024

JNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 26

In 2024, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a significant surge in its tourism sector, with over three million domestic and international tourists visiting the region this year. Officials said the growth is largely due to the ambitious initiatives undertaken by the government to boost tourism across various sectors.

An official informed the news agency that the Jammu and Kashmir administration launched an ambitious plan to develop 75 new tourist destinations, 75 heritage and cultural sites, 75 Sufism and religious sites and 75 adventure treks, to attract tourists across all four seasons. Work on these projects is in

full swing, with ongoing developments across the region, he added.

These initiatives, he said, encompass various facets of tourism, including nature, adventure, pilgrimage, heritage and sports tourism. "Efforts have been made to explore new tourism avenues such as amusement parks, water sports, rafting, rock climbing, and snow parks to attract a broader spectrum of tourists," the official said.

He said that to strengthen J&K's tourism brand, a sustained marketing strategy has been implemented, with a strong emphasis on utilising information technology to better reach global audiences. "Eco-friendly infrastructure is being developed to standardise tourism prod-

ucts and services, and targeted marketing strategies are being employed to tap into emerging markets, which will contribute significantly to J&K's economic prosperity," he added.

A key initiative includes simplifying the registration and renewal processes for tourism units through a Single Window Clearance mechanism, designed to improve the Ease of Doing Business.

The government has also encouraged private sector participation, particularly through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), in developing tourism infrastructure, according to the official.

He said the tourism strategy in J&K focuses on harnessing the potential of emerging sectors such

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

North Kashmir records 19 gunfights, killing of 27 terrorists in 2024

JNEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA, DEC 26

North Kashmir recorded a total of 19 gunfights, including eight infiltration bids, resulting in the elimination of 27 terrorists, the death of five security personnel and two civilian casualties in 2024, according to details obtained by the news agency.

Infiltration and gunfights begin in April

The first quarter of 2024 remained quiet with no gunfights reported. However, in April, the region saw its first infiltration attempt along the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri on April 5, where two terrorists were killed.

Later in the month, a gunfight in Sopore on April 26 claimed the lives of two terrorists, including top Pakistani terrorist commander Saifullah. This was Sopore's first gunfight in 22 months. The operation also left two soldiers and a civilian injured.

June emerged as a critical month with multiple encounters. On June 19, two foreign terrorists, including top categorised terrorist Usman active since 2020, were killed in Rafiabad, Sopore. A police personnel was also injured in the operation, which was hailed as a major success by security forces, during a media briefing.

On June 22, another

encounter occurred along the LoC in Uri. This was followed by the discovery of a terrorist hideout in Kupwara on June 27, leading to the recovery of a significant cache of arms and ammunition, including AK-47 rifles and RPG shells.

July: Escalation along the LoC

July witnessed increased infiltration attempts and operations along the LoC. On July 15, three foreign terrorists were killed in Keran, Kupwara. Three days later, on July 18, two terrorists were killed in the same sector, with security forces recovering a rare Steyr

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

J&K Police booked two OGW in Kishtwar

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 26

Jammu and Kashmir Police in a decisive crackdown on anti-national activities, on Thursday booked two over-ground workers under the Public Safety Act for their involvement in subversive activities in Kishtwar and Kathua districts, demonstrating a firm commitment to maintaining peace and security in the Jammu region.

The official spokesman said that one Jaffer Husain Butt, resident of Hunjala, Tehsil and District Kishtwar has been booked under the PSA.

Jaffer, a known Over Ground Worker (OGW), has been actively aiding banned organizations in their unlawful activities while his actions posed a grave threat to the stability and security of the region, he said.

He added that following

thorough investigations and procedural diligence, Jaffer was detained under PSA and subsequently lodged in District Jail Kathua.

"The move aims to safeguard the youth of Kishtwar from being influenced by such individuals and to ensure law and order in the district," said the spokesman.

He further added that in another case, one Liyaqat Ali, a resident of Lohai Malhar, Tehsil Malhar, District Kathua, was booked under PSA after the District Magistrate's Office, Kathua, issued the detention order.

Liyaqat was lodged in Central Jail Kot Bhalwal, Jammu, on December 14, 2024.

Liyaqat has a long history of anti-national activities. His name first surfaced in 2003, when he was charged with

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

Vaishno Devi Ropeway project: Fresh stir enters 2nd day

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 26

A protest against the ropeway project, a 72-hour shutdown call given by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sangarsh Samiti on Thursday entered into the second day in Katra town of Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir.

All the stakeholders including pony owners, shopkeepers and other traders are protesting against the proposed ropeway project at Katra-the base camp of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. The businesses in Katra town remained completely closed since morning on the second day of the 72-hours shutdown call.

Jammu and Kashmir Congress leaders, including Working President Raman Bhalla, Former Minister Yogesh Sawhney, and several other prominent leaders said that

they were stopped by the police at Ban Toll Plaza on their way to Katra to extend support to the Katra ropeway protesters.

The leaders were en route to join the ongoing three-day strike supporting local protesters.

"Police action is an attempt to prevent Congress leaders from engaging with the protesting public in Katra," alleged a Congress party spokesperson.

As per the news agency, videos showed the "detained" Congress leaders arguing with police officers at the toll plaza, expressing their intent to participate peacefully in the ongoing strike. However, J&K Police are yet to issue an official statement.

Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) Working President, Raman Bhalla, condemned the "use

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

CS for choosing best implementation strategy to support MSMEs under RAMP

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today held a meeting of Industries & Commerce (I&C) Department to have the first hand appraisal of the plan devised for implementation of GoI sponsored Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme here in J&K.

The meeting besides the Commissioner Secretary, I&C Department was attended by MD, JK TPO; Director Industries, Kashmir/Jammu; Representatives from IIM Jammu; NABARD; SIDBI and other concerned officers.

During this meeting the Chief Secretary took note of the approved Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) for J&K and the roadmap devised by the Department to successfully implement here.



ment to successfully implement here.

Dulloo took this occasion to impress upon the concerned to make a best choice among the options available for implementation of different components of this scheme here in the UT.

He observed that this scheme has a great potential to boost the MSME sector. He maintained that its better implementation is going to usher a progressive era for uplifting this significant industrial segment like never before.

He advised for roping

in better implementing partners who have greater reputation, more expertise and wider presence here in the UT so that each component of this scheme is continuously monitored and efficiently implemented on ground.

He made out that choosing better strategy is going to have direct bearing on the outcomes of this scheme. He called for taking steps to get the scheme going on right earnest for the MSME sector is the backbone of industrial sector of J&K and comprises its largest base here.

The Commissioner Secretary, I&C, Vikramjit Singh presented the meeting about the status of the implementation of this scheme here in the UT. He made out that the scheme aims at strengthening institutions and governance of MSME programme besides providing support for market access, enhancing firm capabilities, and their access to finance in a 5 year period till 2027.

He further apprised the meeting that a SIP of Rs 77.30 Cr has been approved in-principle by a meeting held in October

this year.

The MD, JK Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Khalid Jehangir informed the meeting that the implementation plan formulated by the Department comprises of 8 components including Formalization of MSMEs, MSME Health Clinic (JKMHC), Management Development & Up skilling of existing entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship & Skill Development Programme (ESDP).

It also includes formation of Producer Companies/Associations for GI/ ODO/ DEH/ Unique Products, Penetration of Digital Financing for the units, Buyer Seller Meets and Reverse Buyer Seller Meets, MSME Publicity and Packaging GI/ODO/ DEH/Unique Products and development of RAMP dashboard.

Veer Baal Diwas observed with theme "Veerta" at Doda

J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, DECEMBER 26

A grand event to mark Veer Baal Diwas under the theme "Veerta" was held today here at Government Girls Higher Secondary School. The event was organized by the Office of Chief Education Officer, in collaboration with the District Administration Doda and ICDS Poshan.

Deputy Commissioner (DC), Harvinder Singh was the Chief Guest, while Program Officer ICDS Poshan Paramjeet Singh; CEO Prakash Lal Thappa and District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) Tariq Parvaiz Qazi were the Special guests.

A large audience comprising principals, teachers, students, and civil society members gathered for the vibrant program. The event began with the ceremonial lighting of the



lamp by the Chief Guest, symbolizing the theme of courage and enlightenment.

Students showcased their talents through spirited debates, creative paintings, and cultural performances, all centered on the theme of bravery and resilience.

Addressing the gathering, Harvinder Singh highlighted the importance of inculcating the values of bravery and resilience among young minds. He praised the collaborative efforts of the organizing

departments for providing a platform to celebrate and reflect on the legacy of historical heroes who exemplified courage.

The event also featured the distribution of participation certificates and educational kits to students, alongside the distribution of books to children under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative. The dignitaries further donated books to promote the education of girls, reinforcing the commitment to empowering women through education.

DC reviews performance of Banks in promoting Self-Employment Schemes in Poonch district

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 26

Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal today chaired the meeting of District Level Committee (DLRC) & DCC to review the performance of Banks in achieving Annual Credit Plan (ACP) targets and abetting of Government Sponsored self-employment cases during the first two quarters (April to September Quarter) of the current financial year.

LDO Reserve Bank of India Amit Kumar; DDM NABARD Chander; Deputy Director Employment Mohammad Rafiq; Chief Horticulture Officer Sanjeev Kumar; Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Dr. S.M. Younis; Chief Agriculture Officer Rakesh Sharma; (VAS) Sheep Husbandry Officer Dr. Sandeep Bassan; Project Officer DUDA Bharat Singh Nag; Fisher-



ies Development Officer Bharat Bushan; Assistant Director Handicrafts & Handloom Joginder Mangol; IPO DIC Ramanjeet Singh; DPM NRLM Sakib Shafi; District Officer KVIB Mohd Ghayas Khan; Regional Manager J&K Grameen Bank Gagandeep Singh; Director JK Bank RSETI Vikas Padha; District Coordinators of all Banks & other District Officials of Govt Departments attended the meeting.

Lead District Manager Ravi Kumar informed the house that Banks operating in the district made total credit disbursement of Rs.551.21 Crore against annual target of Rs. 725.03

Cror thereby achieving 76% of the target. "This include credit disbursement of Rs.222.19 crore under Priority sector against the target of Rs.571.10 crore forming 39% of the target and Rs.329.01 Crore under Non-Priority Sector against target of Rs.153.91 crore forming 21% of the target.

It was also informed that Total business of different Banks in District Poonch is Rs. 6133.84 Crore of which Deposits have risen from Rs.3577.76 Crore as on September 30, 2023 to Rs.4030.03 Crores as on September 30, 2024 showing a Year on Year growth of 12.64%. Advances have

risen from Rs.1928.26 Crore as on September 30, 2023 to Rs.2103.81 Crores as on September 30, 2024 showing YOY growth of 9.10%. CD ratio of the District stood at 52.20% as on 30th September, 2024.

The Chairman DLRC impressed upon all the stakeholders to create an enabling environment through Govt. Sponsored Schemes, where youth can think beyond Government Jobs and opt for gainful self employment.

Terming employment generation a major challenge, the Chairman advised all the participants to go an extra mile and show empathy towards the unemployed youth in guiding them towards the path of prosperity and self-sufficiency through various Govt. Sponsored Schemes tailored in accordance to their entrepreneurial aspirations.

DC, SSP Rajouri review security arrangements ahead of Republic Day-2025



J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 26

In a joint effort to ensure a secure and peaceful environment for the upcoming Republic Day celebrations and other major events, Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma alongside SSP Gaurav Sikarwar, chaired a high-level meeting with officers from the Army, BSF, and CRPF. The meeting

focused on reviewing the overall security scenario in the district.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for close coordination among all security agencies to maintain vigil and ensure foolproof arrangements during the Republic Day celebrations. The SSP provided an overview of the district's current security situation and outlined measures to

address any potential challenges.

Recognizing the importance of improved communication in enhancing both security and public services, the Deputy Commissioner directed the BSNL officer to take immediate and effective measures to strengthen connectivity in the region.

The officers from various security agencies pledged to work in unison to uphold peace and harmony in the district. The Deputy Commissioner urged all stakeholders to remain proactive and ensure the successful conduct of Republic Day and other events.

ADDC Rajouri, Raj Kumar Thapa and other district & sectoral officers were also present in the meeting

DC Doda chairs BOCA meeting

J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, DECEMBER 26

District Development Commissioner Doda Harvinder Singh today chaired a meeting of the Building Operation Controlling Authority (BOCA) here in the mini meeting hall of the DC Office to discuss the applications seeking permission for construction of residential and commercial buildings.

A total of 35 cases were discussed including 25 seeking permission for residential and 10 for commercial buildings. Out of 25 residential cases, 14 were approved and others were rejected, deferred and reverted back for fresh No Objection Certificates. In commercial cases, 3 cases were approved, 6 reverted and one case was rejected.

The meeting was also attended by the CEO Bhaderwah Development Authority, Divisional Forest Officer Bhaderwah, Tehsildar Bhaderwah and concerned officers and officials.

NCORD meeting reviews Drug Control measures in Jammu



J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Taking a firm stance against drug abuse, District Magistrate Jammu Sachin Kumar Vaishya today called for outlining a comprehensive strategy to combat the menace in the district.

Chairing the meeting of the District Level Narcotics Coordination (NCORD) Committee, the DM directed the involvement of Drug Inspectors in all drugs-related raids and inspections. He further emphasised on conducting joint inspections led by SDMs, SDPOs and SPs.

Focussing on rehabilitation aspects, the DM called for systematic monitoring of registered drug addicts. "Regular assessment of improvement and relapse conditions is essential for effective control of drug abuse," he stated, direct-

ing officers to maintain detailed statistics of registered cases.

The meeting also raised concerns over the probable abuse of Schedule H drugs - prescription medications that require strict monitoring and can only be dispensed under valid prescriptions. The DM instructed the Assistant Drugs Controller and local police to conduct regular and surprise inspections in their jurisdictions.

A major thrust was given to preventive measures as the District Magistrate outlined the roadmap for declaring Drug-Free Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies. He also stressed on strict implementation of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) effectively.

SSP Joginder Singh emphasised enhanced inter-departmental coordination and stressed on

strict enforcement of law and order to prevent the escalation of drug-related issues in the district.

Strategies were also discussed regarding taking stringent action against illegal properties linked to drug trafficking, under rules.

The meeting delved into educational initiatives, with extensive discussions on awareness programs and identification of drug hotspots in the district. The house also deliberated on mechanisms to monitor unusual transactions of drugs and other scheduled substances.

The meeting saw participation from senior officers including ADM Ansuya Jamwal, SDMs, SDPOs, Chief Medical Officer, Medical Superintendent Government Psychiatry Hospital besides other committee members.

CS reviews preparations for Republic Day celebrations



J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today held a meeting of top civil administration and police officers to take stock of the preparations made for celebrating the upcoming Republic Day, 2025 here in the UT.

The Chief Secretary took this occasion to impress upon the concerned divisional administration to take necessary steps to encourage people to participate in this national event. He asked for creating celebratory aura through out J&K especially in the twin cities of Jammu and Srinagar.

Dulloo took this occasion to direct the administration to illuminate all the landmark sites and prominent govern-

ment buildings. He also stressed on ensuring plausible transport and seating arrangements for the school children.

The Chief Secretary further instructed for making adequate arrangements for parking of vehicles besides ensuring smooth movement of traffic on roads. He took note of the kind of security arrangements required to be put in place for ensuring smooth conduct of this significant event.

During this meeting he keenly enquired about the cultural segments to be presented during the program. He asked for giving opportunity to the school children and the specially abled students of the UT.

He also encouraged the Departments of Culture to make a tableaux on cultural diversity of J&K, PDD on

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, Police on Drug Abuse, Health on TB Mukh J&K and YS&S on Fit India Movement.

In addition the Information Department was obligated to ensure live telecast of the main functions from the regional units of Doordarshan and All India Radio besides facilitating the media persons in carrying out their professional assignments.

The other agenda items which came up for discussion during this meeting includes the uninterrupted power and water supply, sanitation of the venues besides the accomplishment of other civil works taken up by the R&B Department to ready the venues at both Jammu and Srinagar.

Deputy Commissioner Poonch reviews progress of SAMAGRA Shiksha Works



J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 26

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal today convened a meeting to assess the physical and financial progress of the initiatives under the SAMAGRA Shiksha scheme.

Chief Education Officer Lal Hussain Chowdhary, provided a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation detailing advancements in both construction and non-construction components of the program.

The meeting was informed that KGBVs have been established in Mendhar Chakbnola, Balakote Dargloon, Saral, Nangali Surankote, and Mandi. For the KGBV in Mandi, 19 Kanal of land has been identified in Loran Danna, which will feature a play ground and a middle school.

The Deputy Commissioner also discussed the status of girls' hostels proposed for the district. He

directed executing agencies to expedite construction works while ensuring that quality standards are upheld. Additionally, he emphasized the necessity of achieving 100% expenditure of allocated funds within the current financial year to prevent fund lapses.

An overview of the 254 ongoing Public Works Department (PWD) projects under the SAMAGRA Shiksha Civil initiative revealed that 91 projects are completed, 79 are in progress, 35 have been tendered, and 49 are currently in the tendering phase.

The Deputy Commissioner urged all Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs) to commit fully to the effective implementation of government schemes in their respective areas.

The meeting concluded with a strong commitment from all stakeholders to collaborate and ensure the timely completion of all ongoing projects.

DC Poonch calls for prompt response to road clearance, essential services

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 26

Deputy Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kundal today chaired a meeting of officers of line Departments to review necessary arrangements, stock and supply position of essentials and overall winter preparedness in the district.

The DC took a review of power and water supply scenarios, availability of ration, fuel, LPG, Fire & Emergency Services, Stocks of medicine, Ambulances, 24x7 Control Room to listen to public problems and other essentials besides measures taken for snow clearance and maintenance of roads in snowbound areas.

The DC asked the Chief Medical Officer to ensure availability of sufficient stock of medicines, ambulance services in DH,



SDHs, all CHCs and PHCs specially in Snow bound areas besides making proper heating systems in all hospitals in the winter season. During Discussion Healthcare, the DC desired the departments to track pregnancy cases, also make a line list of CA, TB and Dialysis patients and have proper counseling in advance so that in harsh climate conditions they do not face any difficulty.

Reviewing the status of power supply scenario in the district, the Deputy Commissioner directed

the Xen JPDCL to maintain adequate buffer stock of transformers and adequate men and machinery at all sub Divisions for restoration of power supply in case of disruption due to snowfall.

The DC directed the Assistant Director FCS&CA to arrange sufficient stocks of food and LPG in the district to avoid shortage during snow/winter especially in snowbound areas.

The DC also directed for setting up of a special 24x7 Control Room in the district to redress the winter related com-

plaints of the public on a fast track basis. He directed Executive Engineer R&B Poonch, Xen PMGSY Poonch/Mendhar, Xen Mughal Road and BRO to keep men and machinery ready to maintain all the roads. He said that the dept will ensure the adequate number of Snow clearance machines, men and machinery is kept ready with staff for quick snow clearance in the district. The meeting was attended by ADC Poonch, SE PWD Poonch, SDM Mendhar / Surankote CMO, CEO, CAO, CHO, ACP, DSHO, XEN PWD/Jal Shakti/JPDCL/Irrigation/PMGSY, Officers from BRO, AD FCS&CA, Additional SP, Tehsildar, Haveli/Surankote/Mendhar/Mandi/Balakote/Mankote, ARTO, DySP Traffic, CEO MC Poonch, and others concerned officers and officials.

CJ inaugurates Court Complex at Katra



JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI, DECEMBER 26

Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Tashi Rabstan, today inaugurated Court Complex Katra in presence of Justice Mohammad Akram Choudhary, Administrative Judge for Reasi district.

This Court Complex building is coming up with an estimated cost of Rs. 15 crore, being executed by the Housing Board Jammu and Kashmir.

While speaking on the occasion, the Chief Justice said that the Bench and Bar have a huge role in reposing faith in judiciary and

justice delivery system. He said "people come to the court with high hopes considering the courts as 'Temple of Justice' where justice would be meted out to them and it is the duty of the court to provide easy and accessible justice to all the litigants".

Referring to the constitutional guarantees enshrined in the supreme law of land i.e The Constitution of India, the Chief Justice said with the technological interventions the objective of providing inexpensive and speedy justice to all is being realised. This will ultimately pave the way for reducing the burden



of the judiciary besides expediting the disposal of litigations, he added.

While interacting with members of Bar and Bench besides officers of Civil and Police administration, the Chief Justice said Judiciary and Executive are like cogs in the wheel who should work together for imparting speedier and quality justice besides maintaining law and order for larger good of the society. He said under the constitutional framework all the organs viz judiciary, executive and police have collective responsibility to provide justice as these are repositories of constitutional trust.

The Chief Justice also inspected various sections of Court Complex Katra and gave certain on spot directions.

Registrar General Shahzad Azeem, Principal District and Sessions Judge Reasi, Suresh Chander Kattal, Registrar Rules, Rajinder Sapru, Member Secretary State Legal Services Authority, Amit Gupta, Registrar IT, Anoop Sharma, Judicial Officers of District Reasi and Katra, Deputy Commissioner Reasi, Nidhi Malik, Senior Superintendent of Police Katra and members of Bar Association Reasi and Katra were also present on the occasion.

Baal Veer Diwas

Poetry competition on theme "Chaar Sahibzaade" held at SPMR College

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Department of Punjabi Government SPMR College, in collaboration with NSS units and Cultural and Literary Committee organized a Poetry recitation competition on the theme "Chaar Sahibzaade" to observe Baal Veer Diwas. The poems were based on the sacrifices of the sons of the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji-Sahibzada Ajit Singh, Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, and Sahibzada Fateh Singh.

A total of ten students participated in the poetry competition. The first prize was bagged by Taranpreet Kour of 3rd Sem, while the second and third prizes were won by Gurleen Kour and Gurtaz Kour of 1st Sem respectively. Prof. Ashwini Sharma, HOD Hindi and Dr. Chetna Gupta, Associate Professor, Department of English acted as Judges during the competition. Principal of the College Dr. Rajinder Singh congratulated the winners and appreciated the organizers.

Prof. Pawan Gupta addressed the audience and spoke at length about the sacrifices of the young Sahibzaadas and urged



everyone to imbibe their values and virtues to lead an exemplary life.

Dr. Mamta Rani, HOD Punjabi enlightened the audience about the historical and cultural importance of observing Baal Veer Diwas.

The whole programme was coordinated and con-

ducted by Dr. Deepshikha Sharma, Dr. Deepak Pathania and Dr. Mamta Rani. Faculty members who attended the programme were Dr. Sunal, Prof. Esha Abrol, Prof. Sabia, Dr. Gurcharan Singh, Dr. Jasvinder Singh and Dr. Suresh Sharma.

J&K Relief Organisation rebuts social media report on integration of migrant ration cards into NFSA

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

The Relief Organization (M), J&K, has clarified the concerns circulating on social media platforms regarding integration of Ration Cards of Migrants registered with the Relief Organisation (M) J&K, into the National Food Security Act (NFSA) database.

As per a rebuttal issued here today by the organisation in this regard, it is stated that in terms of S.O. 392 and S.O. 393 of 2024, dated August 13, 2024, necessary amendments have been made in the Jammu and Kashmir Food Security Rules, 2021, and the Targeted Public Distribution (Control) Order, 2023, to integrate the Ration cards of Kashmiri/Jammu migrants on the NFSA

database.

Currently, migrant ration cards are neither digitized nor categorized. Consequently, the migrants are not able to avail the benefit of various social security schemes, wherein, one of the essential eligibility conditions laid down is possession of Priority Household (PHH) card by the applicant.

The document added that integration of ration cards into the NFSA database and their categorisation will resolve this issue. The ration cards will be categorized into PHH (Priority Household), NPHH (Non-Priority Household), AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana) and Exclusion category, while digitizing the credentials of all registered migrants. This exercise will ensure that migrants are

seamlessly included in various flagship programmes of the Government and also facilitate the delivery of services to them.

"The S.O. 392, dated 13-08-2024, explicitly provides that the Relief Assistance in respect of Kashmiri/Jammu Migrants shall not be counted as income, but as a source of sustenance only. This ensures that migrants remain eligible for welfare entitlements under existing frameworks, maintaining their socio-economic security. Importantly, the current scale of ration/relief benefits and norms will remain unchanged, added the document.

The Government remains committed to protect the interests and welfare of Kashmiri/Jammu migrants.

Forest dept to establish 3 firewood depots in every district: Javed Rana



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

The Forest department would be establishing three firewood depots in every district, with sufficient quantity of firewood to meet the requisite demands of public and institutions.

The decision was taken in view of the recent directions passed by Forest, Ecology & Environment Minister, Javed Ahmad Rana to ensure adequate availability of firewood across all regions of Jammu and Kashmir for benefit of general public.

The norms for location of depots and availability of firewood will be fixed by Chief Conservator of Forests, Jammu and Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir, as per needs.

Javed Rana, who also holds the Jal Shakti and Tribal Affairs portfolios,

asked for making all depots functional within a week, with efficient distribution of firewood to combat harsh winter conditions.

As winter tightens up its grip in Kashmir and the winter zone of Jammu, Javed Rana said that easy availability of firewood for the benefit of public becomes crucial. "The move aims to provide essential support to the population, especially during the harsh winter months," he added. To further streamline the firewood distribution, Rana called for prioritizing those areas with high demand to alleviate suffering of people.

"The availability of firewood may be ensured with extractions of firewood wherever feasible and if required through inter range and inter division transfer, maintained the Minister."

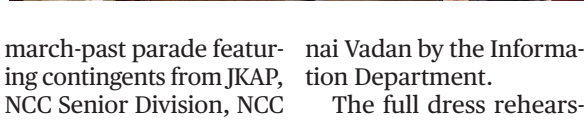
Republic Day 2025 arrangements discussed at Bhadarwah

JI NEWS SERVICE
BHADARWAH, DECEMBER 26

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Sunil Kumar convened a meeting today at Dak Bunglow Bhadarwah to discuss arrangements for the celebration of Republic Day 2025.

The discussions were held regarding security measures, first aid facilities, sanitation, fire and emergency services, seating arrangements, uninterrupted power and water supply, and the issuance of invitation cards. It was also decided that government buildings and offices will be illuminated by the respective departments as part of the celebrations.

It was informed that the Republic Day function will be held at New Bus Stand Kotli. The National flag will be unfurled at 9:55 AM, followed by a



march-past parade featuring contingents from JKAP, NCC Senior Division, NCC Junior Division and tiny platoons from government and private schools.

Additionally, cultural programs will be performed by students from various schools.

The day will commence with the playing of Sheh-

nai Vadan by the Information Department.

The full dress rehearsal for the event will take place on January 24, 2025.

The meeting was attended by the Tehsildar, CDPO, Deputy Commander CRPF, Principal GGHSS, AEE JPDCL, TSO and representatives of other departments.

Mission Director HADP reviews progress on establishment of Kisan Khidmat Ghars across J&K

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Mission Director Holistic Agricultural Development Programme (HADP) Rahul Yadav today chaired a meeting here in the Conference Hall, Directorate of Agriculture Krishi Bhawan, to review the progress on the establishment of Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs) across Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting focused on the operational status of the Phase 1 KKGs, the progress of Krishi Udyamis (KUs), the status of Phase 2 KKG establishments, and the skilling of farmers and Kisan Sathi applicants through the Daksh Kisan Portal.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders, including the Directors of Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry, and Fisheries from Jammu and Kashmir, Deputy Commissioners (DCs) from all districts, Chief Agriculture Officers, officials from SKUAST-K and SKUAST-J, Technical Officers, APD, and other concerned officers. Several outstation officers and stakeholders from Kashmir joined the meeting via video conference.

Rahul Yadav reviewed



the progress of KKG establishments in the districts, urging the concerned authorities to expedite the installation of IT infrastructure at designated sites to ensure the timely commissioning of these centres. He emphasized the need for broadband connectivity, the issuance of seed and fertilizer licenses, installation of P.O.S. machines, and the implementation of the KKG software cum portal across the region.

The Mission Director also stressed the importance of completing the tender process for Phase 2 of the KKGs and directed the Deputy Commissioners to promptly notify the list of Krishi Udyamis to facilitate the functional setup of the centres within the designated timelines.

Highlighting the significance of KKGs as an innovative initiative under

the HADP scheme, Yadav described the centres as a "one-stop solution" for farmers, offering essential services and addressing their grievances. He emphasized that the KKGs will bridge the gap between farmers and essential agricultural services, fostering sustainable agricultural practices and driving economic growth in the region.

Calling this initiative a pioneering project, the Mission Director urged all stakeholders to work collaboratively and diligently for the successful implementation of the KKGs. This initiative is expected to have a profound and lasting impact on the farming community across Jammu and Kashmir, ensuring better access to resources and services for farmers.

DC reviews working of Kisan Khidmat Ghars in Udhampur

JI NEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 26

Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Saloni Rai chaired a meeting with Krishi Udyamis managing Kisan Khidmat Ghars to review their functioning and progress.

The meeting was attended by Chief Agriculture Officer Sanjay Anand and several Krishi Udyamis from across

the district.

The DC assessed the operational status of Kisan Khidmat Ghars and inquired about the challenges faced by Krishi Udyamis in operating these centres. She emphasized the importance of addressing the bottlenecks to ensure the smooth functioning of KKGs and enhance their reach and impact on the farming community.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice

Dy. Chief Elect. Engineer/Const., Northern Railway, Jammu for and on behalf of the President of India invites e-tender on Single Packet System for the under noted work:

Tender Notice No.	17-Elect-C-JAT-HQ-2024
Name of Work	Internal/External electrification works of IRCON Building and Civil IOW office of Headquarters building at Jammu in connection with USBRL Project.
Approximate Cost of the Work	Rs. 37,00,764.87 (Including GST and all other taxes)
Completion Period	03 Months (Three Months)
Bid Security to be deposited	74,000.00
Sale/availability of tender document on Rly. Website	Tender documents will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 26.12.2024.
Last date/Time of upload of tenders	16.01.2025 upto 15.00 hours. Tender documents can be uploaded by the tenderer on IREPS web site.
Date/Time of Opening of Tender	16.01.2025 at 15.00 hrs. (Immediately after close of uploading of tender).
Detailed Tender Notice & Tender document	Tender Notice is available on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in from 26.12.2024 and the tender document will be available for uploading of offers on IREPS website from 02.01.2025 to 16.01.2025. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tender are given in the tender document. Only e-tenders will be accepted and tenders submitted in any other form will be summarily rejected. The detailed notice also can be seen on Notice Board of the above office.
No. 17-Elect-C-JAT-HQ-2024 Dated : 26.12.2024	3946/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

CM Omar says 24x7...

during winters, but since there is a drought-like situation in J&K, he prays for the early snowfall so that the situation improves.

Omar added that the tourist rush is expected to increase once the snowfall occurs, adding that the efforts are on to make J&K a round-the-year tourist destination.

Omar while replying to a query, said that J&K is a UT and some issues cannot be resolved directly, but they are trying to ensure that the issues are at least heard. KNO

Chief Minister Omar...

programme at Raabita office here, where scores of delegations and individuals from various parts of Kashmir presented their concerns and demands.

The Chief Minister interacted with various stakeholders, including representatives from education, artisan, labour, and healthcare sectors, who brought forth issues requiring immediate attention.

Among the delegations, the J&K College Teachers Association urged the Chief Minister to consider the demand for enhancing the retirement age of college teachers in Jammu and Kashmir.

Kashmiri Shawl Makers Welfare Foundation, comprising artisans from different areas, highlighted the challenges faced by the traditional shawl-making trade and sought the government's support in safeguarding their livelihood.

Similarly, a five-member delegation of Hot Mix Plant owners apprised the Chief Minister of the issues confronting their industry, requesting timely interventions.

J&K Casual Labourers United Front, led by its State President, raised concerns regarding the welfare of casual labourers, while the Physiotherapists' deputation briefed the CM about sector-specific challenges that require redressal.

Representatives from the Health Workers Welfare Association, led by their president, presented issues impacting healthcare professionals, and the Employees Joint Action Committee (EJAC) emphasized the need to address employees' welfare comprehensively.

A delegation of Saubhagya Contractors from Ganderbal and South Kashmir sought government support to address operational hurdles in the execution of projects under the Saubhagya scheme.

The public outreach programme also saw numerous individuals meeting the Chief Minister, presenting grievances and suggestions for improvement on a number of issues affecting them.

The Chief Minister assured all deputations and individuals of a patient and responsive approach, emphasizing that their genuine concerns would be addressed on a priority basis.

Also, a joint delegation of traders of different Bazar Committees of City Centre Lal Chowk and other areas called on the Chief Minister during the programme.

The delegation apprised the Chief Minister about various issues of the trader's community of Lal Chowk, Hari Singh High Street, Poloview, Regal Chowk, Maisuma, Court Road and other areas of the City.

They also submitted a memorandum of demands to the Chief Minister demanding development and revival of business and increased customer footfall in City Central Lal Chowk and other markets of Srinagar City.

The Chief Minister assured the delegation of redressal of the genuine concerns and issues on priority.

CM Omar inaugurates...

significance of leveraging the region's prominent pilgrimage sites, particularly the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, which draws over a crore visitors annually. "If we can encourage even 15% of these pilgrims to explore other attractions in Jammu, we could see an influx of 15 lakh tourists—a number comparable to Kashmir's peak tourism years," he remarked.

The event was attended by Minister Satish Sharma, DDC Jammu Bharat Bhushan, MLA Bahu Vikram Randhawa, Principal Secretary (Culture) Suresh Kumar Gupta, Secretary YS&S Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary Floriculture, Gardens & Parks Sheikh Fayaz, and DG Floriculture Jammu Jitender Singh.

Earlier, Secretary Floriculture presented a detailed welcome address, outlining the department's initiatives to enhance the facilities at Bagh-e-Bahu.

Reflecting on the development of Bagh-e-Bahu, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah noted its evolution over the years.

"I have witnessed the transformation of Bagh-e-Bahu, from its modest beginnings to becoming a hub with water fountains, an aquarium, and a sound and light show. Today, it stands as an integral part of this amphitheater, which adds a new dimension to Jammu's cultural and tourism landscape," he remarked.

He urged the concerned departments to maximize the potential of the amphitheater, advocating for its use as a platform for various activities.

"This facility should serve as a venue for school events, providing students with an opportunity to hone their skills and showcase their talent. It's vital to ensure that this amphitheater is not left underutilized."

The Chief Minister also reiterated the need for a concerted effort to give Jammu its unique identity in tourism.

He underscored ongoing projects, such as the long-pending initiative to create a lake in Jammu, which is now nearing completion.

"Jammu will have its own lake—a milestone that will significantly boost tourism. Such projects are crucial to firmly establish Jammu on the tourism map," he stated.

He further urged the departments to organize regular programs at the amphitheater.

"Programs like today's wonderful presentation by the Cultural Academy should become a recurring feature. I hope to see a well-publicized calendar of events, involving private organizations and schools, especially those lacking facilities, to ensure vibrant and diverse participation."

Acknowledging the limitations of seasonal use, the Chief Minister expressed optimism about utilizing the amphitheater for at least 4-5 months each year.

On a lighter note, he shared that his residence across the river offers him a direct view of the amphitheater's activities.

"From my balcony, I can hear the soothing sounds of the river and occasionally enjoy the sound and light

show. I look forward to hearing the vibrant buzz of activities from this amphitheater as a regular feature," he added, urging the department to ensure continuous engagement and wide publicity.

Ex-PM Manmohan Singh...

hospital as soon as the news of his hospitalisation became known.

Singh, who was finance minister under the then prime minister P V Narasimha Rao, was the architect and the brainchild of economic reforms in 1991 that pulled India from the brink of bankruptcy and ushered in an era of economic liberalisation that is widely believed to have changed the course of India's economic trajectory.

Singh died as the Congress party concluded its Congress Working Committee meeting at Belagavi in Karnataka, where all top party leaders were present.

It is believed that party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi are on their way to Delhi from Belagavi.

LG attends Christmas...

thoughts, moral actions and doing good deeds without expecting anything in return. There is a need to follow Lord Christ's ideals and make selfless service our motto," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor called for united resolve from all the sections, especially the younger generation, to promote harmonious living and mutual respect for all. He said the youth are the inheritors of the rich legacy of spiritual values and they must work for equality and fraternity.

"India's culture is unique and ageless. This great country has been a witness to co-existence of almost all major religions known to humankind. The co-existence of all major religions has enriched and diversified our cultural heritage," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said the festivity of the Christmas season is also an occasion to embrace the core values of harmony and brotherhood.

"Our unity is the key for building a just, equitable and vibrant society. Unity provides us the strength to discharge our duties and responsibilities with commitment and sincerity towards the nation," the Lieutenant Governor observed.

He said, Lord Jesus Christ's emphasis on the brotherhood of mankind, harmony, selfless action and his fight against discrimination of any kind are of particular significance in today's world.

"Lord Jesus Christ's life is a testimony of love, non-violence, peace and forgiveness and his teachings are a source of inspiration for the entire human society. I hope his teachings will guide us for betterment of society," the Lieutenant Governor further added.

Speaking on the occasion, Most Rev. Ivan Albert Pereira, Bishop Jammu-Srinagar Diocese, extended the support and cooperation of the Christian community to the government in its endeavours towards inclusive development of J&K.

We are proud that our government has been engaged in fostering an environment where people of all faiths and communities can live in peace and harmony, he said.

Sh Ashu Peter Mattoo, President All J&K Christian Sabha, members of CNI Church, Jammu-Srinagar Diocese, heads of various institutions and organizations, youth, community members and prominent citizens from all walks of life were present.

Veer Baal Diwas: Sikh Gurus...

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has taken various steps to honor the legacy of Sikh Gurus and revive their legacy.

For hassle-free pilgrimage Sri Kartarpur Sahib corridor was developed and state-of-the-art infrastructure was created for devotees, he said.

The Lieutenant Governor further said that the government has also ensured FCRA registration of the Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib, Sri Darbar Sahib, Punjab, creating opportunity for global Sikh Sangat to partake in sewa.

He said the ideals of revered Sikh Gurus are inspiring the society to move forward on the path of peace and progress by strengthening our faith towards Maa Bharti.

Addressing the gathering, the Lieutenant Governor called upon the young generation to learn from the history, honor the sacrifice of the brave Sahibzades and respect the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh ji.

"Guru Gobind Singh Ji's life and teachings are a source of inspiration for our soldiers guarding country's frontiers. Today's solemn occasion reminds all of us to uphold the unity and integrity of the nation and strengthen the bond of brotherhood," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the traditional values taught by Sikh Gurus symbolizes the priceless spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat which inspires us to make India a more powerful, progressive and advanced nation.

"On the occasion of 'Veer Baal Diwas', we should take a pledge to remind the all sections of society about supreme sacrifices of Pujya Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj, Mata Gujri and the four Sahibzades," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor lauded the immense contribution of Sikh community in all-round progress of the country with a commitment to make India a stronger and more prosperous nation.

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on the efforts taken by the government to resolve long pending issues of the Sikh community including installation of statue of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur ji in Jammu, establishment of Guru Nanak Dev Ji Chair in Jammu University, implementation of Anand Marriage Act & notification of rules.

Reiterating the commitment of the government for the promotion of Punjabi language, the Lieutenant Governor said the course curriculum is being prepared to promote Punjabi Language in schools of Jammu region.

The Lieutenant Governor also felicitated youth of Sikh Community who have excelled in diverse fields.

Mahant Manjeet Singh; S. Ajit Singh, Chairman All Jammu Kashmir Sikh Coordination committee, members of Sikh Coordination Committee and eminent persons of the Sikh community were present.

Dr. Narinder Singh Raina, MLA RS Pura Jammu South; Sh Anand Jain, ADGP Jammu; Sh Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, senior officials of Police

and Civil administration were also present on the occasion.

Amid freezing cold...

He said, "For the Kashmir region, snowfall remains a possibility in parts of south Kashmir, with a 25-30% chance, and the highest probability is for the districts of Kulgam and Anantnag. Additionally, a few weather models indicate the possibility of the system extending to central Kashmir, potentially bringing light rain or snowfall".

The weather will remain dry hereafter till December 30, and another spell of light snow is expected at a few higher reaches in the Kashmir Valley at the end of the year.

There was no letup in the bone-chilling cold in Srinagar and other parts of the Kashmir Valley, with night temperatures continuing to fall on Thursday.

The harshest were the three districts of south Kashmir-Pulwama, Anantnag, and Shopian-recording the season's lowest at -9.3°C, respectively, on Thursday, freezing major water bodies, streams, nallas, and taps.

Although there was a slight improvement in the night temperature, Srinagar recorded at -7.0°C on Thursday against the -7.3°C the previous night. This was 4.6°C below the average for the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir during this period of the season.

The relentless cold wave and freezing temperature have seized taps, and several water bodies and a thick layer of ice surface have emerged on the major parts of iconic Dal Lake.

Pahalgam remained the coldest place of the valley, with night temperatures further plunging to a couple of notches and recorded at -8.6°C against the -8.4°C on Wednesday. This was 3.4°C below normal for the tourist spot of south Kashmir's Anantnag district during the period.

Qazigund, the gateway to the Kashmir Valley, slipped down to a low of -7.0°C against the -6.6°C recorded the previous night, and this was 4.6°C below the average for the place on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway.

The picnic spot of Kokernag in south Kashmir also witnessed a drop by a notch and recorded a low of -5.5°C against the -5.4°C a day ago, and this was 3.3°C below the average for the place.

The ski resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district settled at -6.6°C for the second consecutive day on Thursday, and this was 0.6°C below normal for the Valley of Meadows during this period.

The minimum temperature at Kashmir's frontier district of Kupwara further fell to a low of -6.7°C on Thursday against the -6.4°C on Wednesday, and this was 3.7°C below normal for the border town during this period of the season, the MeT office.

3 million tourists...

as Adventure Tourism, Caravan Tourism, Helicopter Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism, Rural Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Agro Tourism, MICE Tourism, Heritage Tourism and Golf Tourism. "Promoting sustainable tourism has been a priority, with a strong emphasis on preserving J&K's unique natural and cultural heritage," he said. "To further complement these efforts, the development of highways and wayside amenities is ongoing to improve accessibility to tourist destinations, including the promotion of off-beat locations."

The official said that a comprehensive roadmap for J&K's tourism sector development in 2024 includes initiatives for developing lakes and wetlands, new tourist circuits, seasonal tourism, and off-the-beaten-path destinations. There is also a focus on improving accessibility to tourist spots, with continued investments in advanced marketing and promotional strategies, he informed.

"Capacity building and human resource development remain central to these efforts, ensuring sustainable tourism that aligns with the region's carrying capacity," he added.

Several major infrastructure projects were completed in 2024, which have enhanced J&K's appeal as a prime tourist destination. Among the highlights is the completion of the Wellness Centre at Mantalai, built under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme at a cost of Rs 80 crore, which offers amenities such as huts, a spa, a yoga and meditation centre and a helipad.

Similarly, the Hazratbal Shrine development in Srinagar, under the PRASAD Scheme, costing Rs 40.46 crore, has not only enhanced facilities for pilgrims but also created job opportunities for locals, the official said.

Looking ahead, the Tourism Department plans to further enhance J&K's offerings through high-quality tented accommodations, five-star hotels, skiing facilities, adventure activities, eco-tourism parks, and wellness centres. There are also plans for the development of international institutes in collaboration with the private sector. "Leisure sports and health and wellness centres at popular tourist spots are part of our strategy to enhance J&K's tourism profile," the official said.

He said the notable projects underway include the development of the Jammu Water Park, a vertical lift from Peerkho to the Mubarak Mandi Complex, and the prioritisation of 20 off-beat tourist destinations for development under the State Capex Budget for 2024. The Tourism Department is also working on optimising the utilisation of newly created assets by outsourcing their operations and maintenance to private players, generating employment opportunities for the local population.

The department is also identifying new trekking routes and pilgrimage/Sufi circuits to connect famous shrines with lesser-known pilgrimage sites to further enhance the tourism potential of J&K, the official said. KNO

North Kashmir records...

AUG rifle. A 36-hour-long gunfight in Kupwara's Lolab area on July 23 resulted in the death of a terrorist and a soldier. On July 27, a Pakistani Border Action Team (BAT) attack in Machil sector led to the death of a soldier and a Pakistani intruder, while four other soldiers sustained injuries.

August to November: Intensified operations

August saw minor activity, with a terrorist killed in Sopore's Rafiabab on August 24 and three infiltrators

eliminated in Kupwara on August 29.

In September, three terrorists were neutralized in the Tapper area of Pattan on September 13, just days ahead of assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

October was marked by a terrorist attack in Gulmarg's Botapathri on October 24, resulting in the deaths of three soldiers and two porters. Two terrorists were also killed earlier in the month in Kupwara's Keran sector.

On November 6, two foreign terrorists were killed in Bandipora and Kupwara, with an M4 rifle recovered. The next day, November 7, Sopore witnessed a significant operation in Sagipora, where two terrorists were killed. Another encounter in Sopore woods on November 9 led to the elimination of a terrorist.

December concluded without any reported gunfights, bringing a relatively calm end to an otherwise tumultuous year.

Casualties and recoveries

Throughout 2024, 27 terrorists were killed, many of whom were top commanders or foreign nationals. Security forces lost five personnel, with eight others injured in various operations. Two army porters also lost their lives in the attack. Multiple hideouts were busted, leading to the recovery of advanced weaponry, including M4 rifles, Steyr AUG rifles, and large quantities of ammunition. KNO

J&K Police booked...

serious offenses, including an attempt to murder and waging war against the Government of India.

Over the years, he has faced several criminal charges, including cases of harassment, wrongful confinement, assault, and aiding terrorist elements in the region, he said.

Reports from intelligence agencies and police diaries further confirmed his role in providing logistical support and shelter to terrorist elements, making his detention under PSA a necessary step to prevent further harm, he added.

The Jammu Zone Police emphasized their unwavering commitment to eliminating anti-national activities and safeguarding public peace.

ADGP Jammu Anand Jain said, "We are resolute in our approach to dealing with individuals involved in activities against the state. Those disrupting peace or attempting to lure youth into anti-national activities will face strict legal action."

The public has been urged to cooperate with the police by reporting any suspicious activities, including anti-national elements, drug abuse, or other unlawful acts while the identity of informants will be strictly protected.

Vaishno Devi Ropeway...

of force against peaceful protesters in Katra". He further said that the project "threatens the livelihoods of thousands of workers". "Instead of engaging in dialogue, the administration is using force, which is unacceptable," Bhalla added.

He criticized the administration for ignoring the concerns of the locals, accusing it of aggravating the situation. "The shutdown has caused significant inconvenience to pilgrims visiting Mata Vaishno Devi, with the closure of eateries and suspension of local transport adding to their hardships," Bhalla said.

Bhalla urged the administration to address the issue on humanitarian grounds and work towards an amicable solution. "Thousands of pilgrims are facing difficulties. The administration must resolve this issue without further escalating tensions," he added.

Bhalla's statement comes at a time when tensions in Katra are running high, with residents and workers continuing their protests against the "controversial" ropeway project, which they believe could lead to massive job losses.

Earlier, the fresh protesters have been on a 72-hour shutdown since Wednesday. Several people were detained by police during a protest. The protestors alleged that the government was derailing the issue and forcing them to come on the roads instead of finding the solution by holding deliberation. They stated that all activity in Katra would be halted during the protest.

What is the project?

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board said last month that it would be installing a ropeway to make it easier for elderly people, children, and anyone who finds it difficult to walk the 13-kilometre trail to the cave shrine to enter the temple. Connecting Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat, which leads to the shrine, is the goal of the proposed Rs 250-crore project.

The initiative, according to the committee, endangered the livelihoods of local labourers, shopkeepers, and service providers that rely on the old pilgrimage path. Residents and employees have voiced worries that the ropeway project will cause them to lose their jobs. KNO

Militant associate...

Basantgarh. Given his continued involvement in anti-national activities, authorities ordered his detention under the PSA, ensuring he was lodged in jail to prevent further threats.

Newly-elected legislators...

reduction in the rentals of these hostels in both capital cities.

As per existing rates, a sitting MLA has to pay between Rs 300 to Rs 700 per day at both hostels, while former legislators are charged between Rs 400 to Rs 900.

These hostels are administered by the Legislative Assembly secretariat.

After the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, MLA hostel in Srinagar was declared a subsidiary jail by the authorities to lodge political prisoners there. On November 14, 2019, 34 mainstream leaders, including Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone, bureaucrat-turned-politician Shah Faesal and NC general secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar were shifted to the MLA hostel due to the escalating cost of their lodging at SKICC.

2nd JWC meeting reviews Cooperative Development achieved in Poonch

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 26

Additional Deputy Commissioner Tahir Mustafa Malik today chaired the second meeting of the Joint Working Committee (JWC) focusing on enhancing cooperative development in the district.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Registrar Cooperatives, along with the officials from allied departments, including representatives from the Animal Husbandry Office, the Fisheries Department, and JCC Bank.

The Deputy Registrar presented the agenda points outlined in the Margdarshika. The progress on each item from the Action Plan following the first JWC was reviewed.

A key emphasis was placed on achieving 100% coverage of Gram Panchayats, particularly in underserved areas of the District with focus on PACs and promotion of Cooperative societies in dairy, and fisheries. Allied departments vowed their support to existing cooperative societies and committed to facilitate



the registration of new Multi-Purpose Agricultural Cooperative Societies (MPACS).

The Additional Deputy Commissioner urged for holistic cooperation among all stakeholders to realize the vision of "Sahakar se Samridhi" (Prosperity through Cooperation). The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the chair.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal today presented registration certificates to newly established Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and dairy cooperatives, marking a significant advancement in strengthening the cooperative movement in the District.

The initiative is part of a broader effort to register 10,000 new MPACS in the country alongside cooperatives in the dairy and fishery sectors. The district administration aims to establish multipurpose PACS and specialized cooperatives in all Panchayats and villages across the country.

This symbolic gesture underscores the district administration's commitment to fostering the growth of the cooperative sector, highlighting its potential to empower local communities. By invigorating enthusiasm among cooperative members, the initiative aims to promote collective progress and collaboration within the community.

DIET Banihal hosts teachers' tour to Government Polytechnic

J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, DECEMBER 26

District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Banihal organized a tour to Government Polytechnic Ramban (Chanderkote) for the faculty of Elementary Schools from Zone Batote, Gool, and Ramban.

The tour aimed to familiarize the faculty with the skill and vocational courses



being offered in the Skill Education Department, as well as the facilities available and the scope for the students after availing the skill education. The event also focused on the imple-

mentation of the NEP curriculum at the elementary level. A team of 40 faculty members, accompanied by Coordinator Irfan Ahmed, Resource Person Jawaz Ahmed, and Sec-

retary Lal Singh, were welcomed by HOD Electronics & Communication Engineering, Er Pawan Kumar and I/C Electrical Department Er Aabid Hussain in the institution.

Er. Aabid Hussain emphasized the impact and need of skill education in today's scenario, highlighting the government's policies in elementary education. Er. Pawan Kumar provided insights into the facilities available at the college, including Computer Center, Electrical Machine Lab, Electronics Lab, Smart Classrooms, Library and Conference Hall.

ABRSM delegation led by State President Rattan Sharma meets DSEJ

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 26

Akhil Bhartiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh delegation led by State President Rattan Sharma met with worthy Director School Education Jammu in his office at Jammu to discuss some important issues pertaining to teaching community.

The important issue discussed with Worthy Director School Education Jammu was adjustment of newly promoted Master's which is pending since June 2024. It is pertinent to mention here that in the month of June in which 1029 Teacher's were promoted as Master's but their adjustment was pending till date. The



delegation members also discussed the issue of DPC of all Cadres pending since long.

After giving patient hearing to the delegation members worthy Director School Education Jammu apprised members that on Saturday Worthy Commissioner Secretary Education has called meeting regarding the adjustment of Master's and he assured members that by Monday

adjustment of newly promoted Master's will be made public.

ABRSM Delegation is hopeful for fruitful result. The other members of delegation are Rakesh ji (State Executive member), Pawan Sharma (President District Jammu), Ved ji (Gen. Secretary District Jammu), Tarsem ji (Media Prabhari District Jammu) and other members from all districts.

GDC Marh celebrates Dogri Manyata Diwas

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Government Degree College Marh celebrated 21 years of Dogri Manyata Diwas today, here under the leadership of the college Principal, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Koul. The event was meticulously organized by Dr. Sheetal Sharma HOD, Department of Dogri.

Principal Dr. Rakesh Kumar Koul was the chief guest. He emphasized the importance of preserving and passing on Dogra culture to future generations. He further captivated the audience by delivering his speech in Dogri, a high-

light of the program that resonated with all present.

As part of the celebrations, students dressed in traditional attires and displayed a variety of traditional Dogra cuisines and food items prepared by them through stalls and served in local eco-friendly pattals and Dunas.

As many as 7 stalls managed by 14 students displayed 17 local delicacies of Quare, Suchhiyaan, Khamirah, Meyri, Chilla, Malpua, Chana-didal, Ambal, Rice, Kimb, Kachaloo, Sund, Madra, Aasra, Alsi-de-Laddu, Gajar-da-Halwa which were well-received and

tasted by faculty and staff alike. The stall competition was judged by a panel of faculty members (Prof. Asha Kumari, HOD Geography, Prof. Sachin Kumar Bhagat, HOD Pol. Science and Dr. Priya Sharma, HOD Economics). The winners (1st position- Laxmi Sharma of Semester I, 2nd position- Kashish Sharma of Semester V and 3rd position- Sangeeta and Sweetie Kaith of Semester-III) were recognized for their outstanding contribution by presenting certificates of appreciation. The celebration also witnessed folk dance by students and faculty.

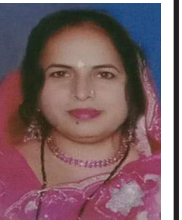
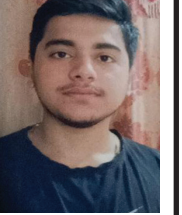
Power shutdown

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 26

Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDC, Jammu has informed that the power supply to Udhampur, Pathi, Army, Airforce, Battalion Ballian, Industry and adjoining areas will remain affected on December 27 and 29 from 1 pm to 5 pm. Similarly, the power supply to Hatli village, Sawla, Bikhiti, Tridwan, Khanyara, Jagatpur, Maroli and adjoining areas will remain affected on December 28 from 8 am to 3 pm.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have appeared in Class SSE (10th) 160118039 Session Annual Regular 2021, HSP-I (11th) 260014255 Session Annual 2022, HSP-II (12th) 360026114 Session Annual 2023 under respectively through the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education, due to the error committed by the concerned School My Mother Name **Anu Sharma To Anu Bakshi**



Now, I have applied for correction/rectification of error in the Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education, Rehari Colony Jammu, if any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Deputy/Assistant Secretary Certificates JD, within seven days from the issuance of this notice, After the expiry of the said period no objection shall be entertained. This is published for the information of the General Public.

Name: - Vivek Bakshi
Father Name: - Rajesh Bakshi
Mother Name: - Anu Bakshi
Anu Sharma to Anu Bakshi
Address: Paloura Jammu

JAMMU MUNICIPAL CORPORATION PWD(R&B) JMC Division Jammu E-mail: xenpwrnbjmcdiv@gmail.com

e-NIT No. PWD(R&B)DIV/JMC/52 of 2024-25 Dated:- 23-12-2024

For and on behalf of The Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Jammu. The Executive Engineer, PWD(R&B) Division JMC Jammu invites Percentage basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with Union Territory of J&K CPWD, Railways, MES and other State /Central Govt. for each of following works are as under:-

Sr. No	Name of work	Advertised Amount (In lacs)	Tender Fee (In Rs.)	EMD %	Class of contractor	Time of completion (In Days)
1.	Construction of drain both side near H.no 61, onward in Lane no 3 Apna Vihar Extension in ward No 55 Jammu	06.33	600.00	2% of advt. cost	"A", "B", "C" & "D"	90 DAYS

- Position of AAA : Accorded
- Position of T.S : Sanctioned
- Major Head : Own Sources 2024-25
- JMC Division : Ex. Engineer PWD(R&B) JMC DIVISION JAMMU

- The Complete bidding process will be online.
- The bids can be uploaded in electronic format on the departmental website <http://jktenders.gov.in>
- The Bidding documents consists of: -
 - Qualification information;
 - Eligibility criteria;
 - Specifications;
 - Bill of quantities (BoQ);
 - Set of terms and conditions of contract; and other details can be seen/ downloaded from department web site <http://jktenders.gov.in> as per below schedule.

S.No	Sequence of Activities	Date and Time
1	Date of issue of Tender Notice	23-12-2024
2	Bid submission start date	23-12-2024
3	Bid submission End date	13-01-2025 upto 16:00 Hrs
4	Date and time of opening of Technical Bid (Online)	14-01-2025 at 12:00 Hrs in the Office of Ex. Engineer PWD(R&B) JMC Division Jammu
5	Date and time of opening of Financial Bid (Online)	To be notified after Technical Evaluation is completed.

- Documents required to be uploaded online for Technical Bid:
- (Note: Non-Submission of any of the below mentioned required document's Online shall rendered the bidder as Non-responsive and his financial bid shall be out rightly rejected)
- Bidder must ensure to upload scanned copy of all the necessary document's mentioned in the e-NIT and S.B.D as a part of Technical Bids:-
- Note: - all the documents Scanned on 100 dpi with black and white options.
- 1. Cost of bidding document in shape of e-challan/single window challan of JMC pledged to PWD(R&B) Division Jammu Municipal Corporation Jammu /tender fee receipt mentioning the eNIT No. & Serial No. of the work through online payment through the JMC link <http://www.jmcjammu.org/online-payment.html>. (Note: The date of challan should must be between date of start of bid submission and bid submission end date. The Bid fee of old e.NIT of the same work if not opened shall also be considered)
- 2. Scanned copy of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in shape CDR/FDR/BG pledged to PWD(R&B) Division JAMMU Municipal Corporation Jammu, @ 2% of Advertised Cost of Work. (Note: The date of issuance of E.M.D (in any of above three forms) should must be between date of start of bid submission and bid submission end date).
- 3. GSTIN Registration/on and latest clearance certificate FORM GST-3B i.e. latest clearance certificate FORM GST-3B of the preceding Month/quarter to the issued of NIT i.e. if the bidder have opted for QRMP scheme under GST then GSTR-3B for quarter ended July 2024 to Sept. 2024 (2024-25) is to be uploaded and if the bidder have not opted for QRMP scheme under GST, then GSTR-3B for the month of November 2024 is to be uploaded.
- 4. Scanned Copy of PAN Card
- 5. Copy of Renewal Registration certificate of Contractor/ Firm for the current Financial year 2024-25 upto 31st March 2025.
- 6. Scanned Copy of duly filled Annexure "A", "B" & "C"
- 7. Mentioned the Name of Work and NIT NO. And Date of Annexure "A".

- Note: Non-submission of any of the above documents online shall render the bidder as non-responsive and his financial bid shall not be opened.

Sd/-

(Er. Lokesh Gupta)
Executive Engineer PWD(R&B)
JMC Division Jammu

No.: PWD(R&B)/JMC/5509-5518
Dt: 23-12-2024

DIP/J-3381-P/24
Date: 26-12-24



Department of Wildlife Protection Office of the Additional Director Jambu Zoo Nagrota, Jammu

Email: wlwjambuzoo@gmail.com

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE

E-TENDERING

Tender Notice : e-NIT No.:-41/WLW/JZ of 2024-25 dated: 24-12-2024

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

Name of work	Adv. Cost (₹. in lacs)	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Cost of Tender Document (in Rs.)	Time of completion	Receiving /Opening Authority
Providing and installation of Modular Tensile Sheds at Jambu Zoo.	100.00	2,00,000	A/Registered Firm/Companies	1000	02 months	Tender opening committee

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

Position of funds: CAPEX 2024-25

Position of AA : Accorded.

Position of TS : Accorded.

Publishing Date	24-12-2024
Download Start Date	24-12-2024
Bid Submission Start Date	24-12-2024
Bid submission End Date	04-01-2025 up to 04:00 PM
Date of opening of Technical Bid	05-01-2025 at 12:00 PM (In the Office of Regional Wildlife Warden, Jammu, Manda Hills, Jammu)
Date of opening of Financial Bid (online)	05-01-2025 at 03:00 PM (In the Office of Regional Wildlife Warden, Jammu, Manda Hills, Jammu)

Bid documents can be seen at and download from the website: - <https://jktenders.gov.in>. Bid documents contain qualifying criteria for bidder, specifications, bill of quantities, conditions and other details.

Additional Director
Jambu Zoo.

DIP/J-8582/24
Date: 26-12-24

EDITORIAL

'Marginalizing' regional voices in J&K

The decision by Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather to exclude the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Conference (PC), Awami Ittehad Party (AIP), and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) from the panel drafting the rules of procedure has ignited a political firestorm. The move has been met with widespread criticism, raising serious concerns about inclusivity and representation in the state's legislative processes. On Tuesday, the Speaker unveiled a nine-member committee under Rule 363 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business. The panel's composition—three members from the National Conference (NC), two from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), one each from Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), along with an independent legislator—reflects a significant skew towards larger political entities. This dominance, coupled with the Speaker's ex-officio role as chairman, has left regional and smaller political outfits sidelined. The exclusion of key regional players like the PDP, PC, AIP, and AAP is alarming. These parties represent diverse perspectives and regional aspirations that are critical to the democratic fabric of Jammu and Kashmir. Their absence from the panel undermines the principle of pluralism, a cornerstone of any vibrant democracy. It also raises questions about the Speaker's impartiality and the commitment of the Assembly's leadership to fostering a truly representative and inclusive legislative environment. Critics have been quick to point out the implications of this exclusion. Inam Un Nabi, spokesperson for AIP, voiced strong disapproval, accusing the NC of renegeing on its electoral promises and aligning with the BJP to marginalize regional voices. His remarks highlight a broader sentiment of betrayal and distrust that threatens to deepen the existing fissures in Jammu and Kashmir's political landscape. This controversy underscores a worrying trend of monopolization by dominant political entities, sidelining smaller parties and independent voices. By excluding these groups from crucial decision-making processes, the Assembly risks alienating significant segments of the population and fostering a perception of legislative bias. This is especially critical in a region as sensitive and politically charged as Jammu and Kashmir, where inclusivity and dialogue are essential to addressing longstanding grievances and building trust. The timing of this decision, ahead of the upcoming Budget session, further complicates matters. With regional parties excluded from the panel, the credibility and legitimacy of the rules of procedure drafted by this committee may come under question. This could lead to heightened political tensions and potentially disrupt the smooth functioning of the Assembly. To address these concerns, the Speaker must reconsider the composition of the committee and ensure representation from all major political groups. Including the PDP, PC, AIP, and AAP would not only enhance the panel's legitimacy but also send a powerful message of inclusivity and fairness. It is imperative to prioritize the collective interests of the people over partisan considerations. As the Budget session approaches, the Assembly's leadership has a critical opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to democratic values. By fostering a more inclusive and participatory legislative process, the Assembly can help bridge the growing divide within Jammu and Kashmir's political ecosystem. Failure to do so risks further alienating regional voices and undermining the credibility of the state's democratic institutions. The path forward lies in dialogue, inclusivity, and a genuine commitment to representing the diverse aspirations of Jammu and Kashmir's people.

State budgets on the brink: RBI sounds alarm

UTTAM GUPTA

According to a report on 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2024-25' released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on December 19, 2024, the consolidated gross fiscal deficit (GFD) of all State governments was contained within 3 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) during the financial years (FY) 2022-23 and 2023-24. For 2024-25, their GFD has been budgeted at 3.2 per cent of GDP. They have complied with the stipulation under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003 which requires them to keep it within the 3 per cent cap. But, the good news ends here. The report reveals that the total outstanding liabilities of States were 28.5 per cent of the GDP in March 2024. Though lower than the peak of 31 per cent reached as of March-end 2021, it remained significantly above the prudential debt-GDP ratio of 20 per cent mandated for the states under the Act.

Another measure of how a State government is managing its budget is its revenue expenditure (RE) about capital outlay (CO). While, the RE being on items such as salaries, wages, pension bills, subsidies etc essentially goes towards non-asset creating spending, CO results in the generation of capital assets thereby providing a foundation for income stream over some time. Greater emphasis on the latter is considered fiscal



ly prudent whereas more of the former can lead to fiscal destabilisation. The record of many states on this crucial parameter is disconcerting. For all states, the total expenditure increased from around Rs 3428,000 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 5760,000 crore during 2024-25 (budget estimate). As regards RE, it increased from Rs 3018,000 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 4840,000 crore in 2024-25. The CO increased from Rs 410,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 920,000 crore during 2024-25. These numbers yield a ratio of RE to CO or RECO of 5.2 (4840,000/920,000).

In several states, the RECO is much higher than even this national average. For instance, in Punjab, at 17.1 it is more than three times followed by Puducherry (14.1), Kerala (10.6) and Delhi (10.3). There are some better-performing states too such as Manipur having the best ratio (2.4), followed by Gujarat (2.9) and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (3.1). However, the abnormally high RECO of other states pushes up the national average.

How does it compare with the Centre?

The total expenditure of the Central Govern-

ment increased from Rs 3042,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 4820,000 crore during 2024-25. Of this, the RE increased from Rs 2603,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 3709,000 crore during 2024-25. On the other hand, its CO increased from Rs 439,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 1111,000 crore during 2024-25. So, RECO for the Centre is 3.3 in 2024-25 (3709,000/1111000) against 5.2 for the States.

Barring a couple of good performers like Gujarat which is doing even better than the Centre, most of the states have been reckless in their revenue spending and that includes a sharp rise in expenditure on subsidies. Since 2018-19, subsidies given by the states have grown 2.5 times to over Rs 470,000 crore being the budget estimate for FY 2024-25). The RBI cites farm loan waivers, free or subsidised services like electricity, transport gas cylinders, and cash transfers to farmers, youth and women as key areas of incipient stress. It suggests that states need to adopt "next-generation" fiscal rules, time-bound glide paths for fiscal consolidation, and rein in subsidies and freebies so that it doesn't crowd out more productive expendi-

tures. Such exhortations have been made umpteen times in the past not just by the RBI but also by several committees set by the government on 'expenditure reforms' from time to time.

Now, we have more jargon like "next-generation" fiscal rules to convey the same message with greater intensity. The RBI posits these rules as "combining the medium-term fiscal sustainability objective with short-term flexibility allowing state governments more maneuverability in dealing with exogenous economic shocks". The banking regulator goes on "these will involve inter alia, the use of data analytics, including machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI); improved data transparency and disclosure practices; and strengthening the institution of State Finance Commissions to deliver public services more effectively and scale up social and physical infrastructure." Put simply, the RBI expects the State governments to not just bring about policy reforms and refinements to better target welfare schemes - focusing primarily on the poor sections of the society but also to galvanise the administrative machinery and institutions to deliver benefits efficiently and prevent misuse/diversion by making the best use of technology interventions.

Do the States understand?

The answer is a categorical 'no'. Forget a finely crafted system desired by the RBI and government

committees, most of the states have put in place crude and non-transparent subsidy regimes call them freebies - a jargon for "something given free of charge" - all aimed at alluring voters and winning elections. The political parties have sought to cover under 'something' literally everything that touches the life of a person.

It includes free food, free health, free education, free LPG cylinder, free laptops, free transport, state support for marriage, and pilgrimage for the elderly; it's an unending list.

In the last couple of years, the freebies promised by them have become more brazen with parties coming out with 'cash transfers' to the account of voters. Such schemes mostly directed at women have won elections for the concerned parties in elections held during 2023 and 2024 in Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana. The parties compete with each other in offering more. A common refrain is 'Who will promise more?'

Look at this. In the budget for 2024-25, Delhi finance minister Atishi announced the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana (MMSY) under which, the AAP government will give Rs 1000 per month to all the women above the age of 18 in the national capital. Now, ex-Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has increased the amount to Rs 2100 per month.

In response, the BJP has reportedly promised a still

higher cash transfer of Rs 2500 per month. Let us be clear. Unlike 'normal' budget expenses which are planned and backed by well-orchestrated efforts to garner revenue, additional financial liabilities imposed by the freebies promised in the election manifesto affect the budgetary position of the State in a totally 'uncontrolled' and 'unplanned' manner. Moreover, these freebies don't have a sunset date meaning these will continue to be given 'eternally' - no matter which party rules. This is the surest invitation to fiscal catastrophe. Take the case of Delhi.

Already, without the MMSY, the financial position of the Delhi government has come to such a pass that CM Atishi has recently forwarded a request to the Centre seeking a loan of Rs 10,000 crore from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). Now, if AAP were to come to power yet again, MMSY @Rs 2100 a month would cost the exchequer an additional Rs 17,000 crore per annum.

Since 2018-19, state subsidies have grown 2.5 times to over Rs 470,000 crore (2024-25), courtesy freebies culture. This will increase exponentially, destabilising State budgets, and making a mockery of the much-touted fiscal consolidation drive. The Supreme Court has on several occasions observed that 'freebies are bad'. Will it force parliamentarians to enact a law to curb them?

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

The Transformative Power of Mantras

ASHWANI GURU JI

You might have heard of Sanjeevani Vidya given by Guru Shukracharya, which could bring back the dead to life, or of a certain herb called Sanjeevani buti, which brought back Lakshman to life. You may have also heard of the Madhu Vidya or Brahmadevi as possessed by Sage Dadhichi which could enable one to attain immortality, or the Chyawanprasha prepared by the Ashvini Kumars to restore the youth of Sage Chyawan.

These are not tales or works of fiction, the Vedic rishis were masters of Creation, the human body being a microscopic part of that. The proof that

these were not fiction lies in the fact that most of the modern scientific discoveries have come from the Vedic shastras. You may visit www.dhyanfoundation.com to know which scientific discovery has come from which shastra. While most of the ancient Vedic healing sciences are lost in the dust of kaliyuga and most herbs have become extinct, a fraction of them still can be accessed and even that fraction is enough to achieve amazing results. Divya Chikitsa Mantras as detailed in Sanatan Kriya is one such gem from the treasure trove of Vedic gyan. Divya Chikitsa Mantras use sound and vibrations to bring about the desired effect and changes

in your body. When done right their healing and transformational effects are apparent for all to see. A combination of 7 mantras they work to unclog certain nadis (energy channels) and awaken specific centres, to channelise the force of divine energies for a practitioner. It is said that the body of a deva resides in the mantra. This has been practically experienced by each one who has attended a yagya at Dhyan Ashram where complete forms of the deities were invoked through specific chants manifested in the Yagya Agni. For the mantra to bear fruit, it has to be received from a Guru who is Siddha in the mantra, in line with

the ancient Guru Shishya Parampara. Guru channelises the force of the respective deity in the mantra and also imparts the dhvani (correct pronunciation) of the mantra. The efficacy of a Vedic mantra depends on the correctness of its chant; faulty pronunciation of even a single syllable changes the entire meaning.

Taittiriya Samhita narrates the story of Tvashta in this regard. Tvashta performed a sacrifice to destroy Indra. He used the mantra, 'indrashatru' to manifest his thought. However, he placed a lofty note on the word 'indra' instead of 'shatru' because of which the meaning of the word changed from

'slayer of indra' to 'the one who will be slain by indra' and thus the son, Vrutra, so born to him was defeated by Indra, just because of a pronunciation defect. To quote from Panini Shiksha, a mantra devoid of the correct vowels (svar) and consonants (varna) is faulty and does not convey its intended meaning. It is like a verbal thunderbolt that harms the one who is chanting, as had happened in the case of erroneous pronunciation of the word, Indrashatru). The Vedic seers had mastered this incredible science of sound in the form of mantras, they were well aware of the high degree of specificity and precision that is required to harness the power of sound.

Shiksha, one of the six vendangas, deals with the science of proper pronunciation of words and laws of euphony. Volumes have been written on Shiksha by Panini, Yadnyavalkya and Vasishtha. Shatpath Brahman states that every alphabet of a word possesses some kind of strength and explains the secret of every alphabet. Therefore it is important that one partakes the vidya of mantras from a Guru. Reading from books/internet or hearing on television/social media and starting self-practice may have detrimental effects if the chant is not proper.

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

Festive cheer meets smart choices: Navigating the real estate boom of 2024

RAHUL MEHROTRA

With the festive season ongoing in full swing, there is a surge in consumer spending. This time is often marked by a flurry of purchases fuelled by tradition and sentiment. While the allure of buying a home can be particularly enticing during this festive period, buyers must approach such decisions with careful consideration. They must look beyond the festive fervour and reflect on key aspects that can guide them to make informed decisions.

Decoding Festive Demand

As per a report 'Unravelling the Trends Shaping India's Real Estate Market in 2024' by CBRE, from January to September, the luxury housing category collectively constituted 16 per cent of the overall housing demand.

This growth has spurred

developers to launch new projects, resulting in the category representing 19 per cent of the total new launches during the first nine months of 2024. This trend is only going to grow further spurred by the festive season as buyers are investing in end-products that offer better amenities such as club-house, larger living spaces, and modern facilities. Metro cities, in particular, have seen a wave of new project launches by developers this year, catering to various buyer segments.

While luxury properties grab headlines, the affordable housing sector remains the backbone of India's real estate market as this is where buyers purchasing their first home find the most value. Having said that, many first-time homebuyers are compelled to buy a property given the abundant promotional offers and incentives provided by



realtors. It is so because the festive season spurs confidence as it often coincides with salary increments, bonuses, and a general uptick in economic activity. However, buyers much before they scout for a property, should evaluate the long-term aspects. Questions such as - "Can I support paying the EMI?"

or "Is it the right approach" may seem overwhelming at first, but assessing one's worth is very crucial at this stage.

Interest Rate Matters

The interest rate set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is a huge factor in deciding other crucial interest rates. The repo

rate is unchanged for the 10th consecutive time, and this implies that the Equated Monthly Installments (EMIs) are likely to remain manageable. Further to this, I believe there would be a pickup in demand for housing loans as the festive season progresses. Recent data from the RBI reveals a remarkable 40 per cent

increase in home loan deployment, highlighting the diminishing gap between monthly rents and EMIs. Additionally, 80 per cent of aspiring homeowners preferred home loans as the top choice for property acquisition this year.

Typically, possessions and property deliveries

are scheduled in the latter half of November, aligning perfectly with the festive momentum. In addition to stable interest rates and EMIs, the array of offers and discounts available during the festive season can be another key factor of consideration. However, it's essential to look for transparent offers that can help avoid hidden fees and unexpected costs. One should seek out reduced processing fees, flexible repayment plans, cash-back schemes, and opportunities for negotiation that can make the festive season an advantageous time to invest.

What Should Buyers And Investors Do?

Investors and buyers must focus on long-term value by evaluating their income and cash flows to ensure manageable EMIs. The festive season can be an opportunity to reduce upfront costs and select

properties in developing areas with strong amenities and connectivity for better appreciation.

The predictability in EMI outflows coupled with festive discounts can make the dream of homeownership more achievable. First-time buyers, particularly in the affordable housing segment, must rely on loans to bridge the financial gap as well as look for special offers and discounts.

While festive discounts are great, buyers should align their decisions with pragmatic goals rather than being swayed by just sentiment. Buying a property during a festive season is certainly the start of a prosperous journey, but to truly benefit, one needs to have a stable financial plan - whether it's the first home or adding to one's portfolio.

(The writer is MD & CEO, RHDFCI; views are personal)

Indian healthcare sector poised to reach \$320 bn by 2028: Report

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC 26

The healthcare sector in India is expected to reach \$320 billion by 2028, even as the country's pharmaceuticals, healthcare, and biotechnology industries continue to evolve in response to global demands, according to a report on Thursday.

The report by Great Place To Work showed that the pharmaceutical sector aspires to reach a milestone of \$130 billion by 2030, while the biotechnology sector is targeting \$150 billion by 2025 and \$300 billion by 2030, showcasing the industry's potential for continued growth.

The report stated that these industries are witnessing a profound transformation due to robust international expansion, increased industry consolidation, and the influx of investments leveraging India's skilled workforce.

To tackle the challenges, organisations in



these sectors are creating environments that foster employee development and growth. They are also focusing on critical areas such as the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), tailored employee development programmes, and workplace initiatives that align with employees' evolving expectations.

To stay ahead, the report urged firms to double down on actively cultivating career development pathways, grooming

future-ready leaders, and refining their strategies to attract and retain top-tier talent, the report said.

"The pharmaceuticals, healthcare, and biotech sectors are at a turning point. What started as a pandemic-driven sprint has transformed into a marathon of innovation, powered by a sharp increase in healthcare research and development investments," said Balbir Singh, CEO, Great Place To Work, India.

"India is leading the charge, with healthcare AI investments projected to reach \$1.6 billion by 2025.

These investments are not only advancing science but also attracting top talent, as organisations create dynamic environments where people can thrive and contribute to groundbreaking solutions," he added.

The report noted that pharmaceutical companies are driving success through key areas such as growth via mentorship, skill enhancement, and continuous learning, as well as by implementing structured systems that enable performance-based career progression and foster innovation.

Similarly, healthcare companies have found success through training initiatives that provide access to new technologies, therapists, and learning platforms, as well as offering flexible work arrangements and cross-departmental mobility

opportunities.

Biotech companies have found success through rotational training, mentoring, and upskilling programmes for both technical and non-technical roles, as well as hands-on training and certifications that boost skill development.

The focus is not solely on providing training opportunities; it extends to ensuring that compensation remains competitive, aligned with market adjustments, and administered with full transparency, the report said.

Singh called on organisations to maximise growth opportunities by creating focused strategies that combine career development, equity, and innovation.

He also stressed the need to integrate "technologies like automation and fostering cross-functional collaboration to amplify both efficiency and employee satisfaction, setting the stage for long-term success."

New laser patterning tech to revolutionise stent surgery for heart diseases

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

A novel stent surface treatment technology using laser patterning can revolutionise surgeries for heart diseases, according to a study on Thursday.

Traditional metal stents may cause restenosis - a re-narrowing of the artery - due to excessive smooth muscle cell proliferation one month after implantation. However, the innovative stent surface technology controls vascular cell responses without drug side effects.

Developed by a team at the Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST), the technology promotes endothelial cell growth while slowing down smooth muscle cell dedifferentiation in blood vessels.

It holds promise for enhancing vascular recovery, especially when combined with chemical coating methods.

"This study demonstrates the potential of

surface patterns to selectively control vascular cell responses without drugs," Dr. Hojeong Jeon, from KIST.

"Using widely industrialised nanosecond lasers allows for precise and rapid stent surface processing, offering significant advantages for commercialisation and process efficiency," Jeon added.

In the study, the team applied nanosecond laser texturing technology that creates nano- and micro-scale wrinkle patterns on nickel-titanium alloy surfaces.

While stent-induced vascular wall injury causes migration and morphological changes of smooth muscle cells, the wrinkle patterns slowed them down and prevented restenosis.

The wrinkle patterns also boost cellular adhesion, promoting re-endothelialisation to restore the vascular lining.

The effectiveness of the technology was validated

via in vitro vascular cell studies and ex-vivo angiogenesis assays using foetal animal bones.

The laser-textured metal surfaces created favourable environments for endothelial cell proliferation while effectively suppressing smooth muscle cell dedifferentiation and excessive growth.

Notably, smooth muscle cell growth on the wrinkled surfaces was reduced by approximately 75 per cent. On the other hand, angiogenesis increased more than two-fold.

The surface patterning technology is expected to apply not only to metal stents but also to biodegradable stents, the researchers said.

In biodegradable stents, the patterns prevented restenosis and enhanced endothelialisation before dissolving. This improved treatment outcomes and reduced the risk of complications, said the team planning to conduct animal tests and clinical trials next.

5-yr survival rate for cancer patients in S. Korea reaches 72.9 pc: Report

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 26

The five-year relative survival rate for cancer patients, reflecting their likelihood of living compared with the general population, stood at 72.9 per cent, South Korea's health ministry said Thursday.

The latest findings from the 2018-2022 period represent a significant increase from 54.2 per cent recorded during the 2001-2005 period, suggesting cancer patients tend to live longer, likely due to more people undergoing medical examinations, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Yonhap news agency reported.

The survival rate for thyroid cancer reached 100.1 per cent, meaning its patients showed a tendency to live longer than the general population.

Prostate cancer fol-



lowed with 96.4 per cent, trailed by breast cancer at 94.3 per cent.

The survival rate for lung cancer stood at 40.6 per cent, while that for liver cancer was 39.4 per cent, the data showed.

The data also showed the country reported 282,047 new cancer patients in 2022, down 0.05 per cent from a year earlier.

The report revealed 37.7 per cent of South Korean males were likely to devel-

op cancer during their lifetime if they lived up to the average life expectancy of 79.9 years.

Similarly, 34.8 per cent of females were estimated to face the same risk if they reached their average life expectancy of 85.6 years.

The country had 287 cancer patients per every 100,000 people, below the 367 posted by the United States. It was higher, however, than Japan's 267.1 and China's 201.6.

Malaria cases, deaths drop significantly by 80 pc from 2015-2023: Centre

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

Malaria cases and deaths have dropped significantly by around 80 per cent from 2015-2023, with cases going down from 11,69,261 in 2015 to 2,27,564 in 2023, while deaths falling from 384 to just 83, the government said on Wednesday, as India envisions to achieve malaria-free status by 2030.

In 2023, zero malaria cases were reported in 122 districts across various states, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

At the time of independence in 1947, malaria was one of the most pressing public health challenges, with an estimated 7.5 crore cases annually and 800,000 deaths.

Over the decades, relentless efforts have drastically reduced these



numbers by over 97 per cent, with cases declining to just 2 million and deaths plummeting to just 83 by 2023.

The latest World Malaria Report 2024, released by the World Health Organisation (WHO), celebrates India's significant progress.

India's achievements include a significant reduc-

tion in malaria cases and malaria-related deaths between 2017 and 2023.

"This success is further highlighted by India's exit from the WHO's High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) group in 2024, signifying a turning point in its fight against malaria.

These achievements reflect the nation's robust public health interven-

tions and its vision to achieve malaria-free status by 2030," said the ministry.

From 2015 to 2023, numerous states have transitioned from the higher-burden category to significantly lower or zero-burden category.

In 2015, 10 states and Union Territories were classified as high burden (Category 3). Of these, in 2023 only two states (Mizoram and Tripura) remain in Category 3, whereas four states such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Meghalaya have reduced the caseload and moved to Category 2.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli have significantly reduced the caseload and moved to Category 1 in 2023.

Simultaneously, intensified surveillance efforts have led to a significant rise in the Annual Blood Examination Rate (ABER), increasing from 9.58 (2015) to 11.62 (2023). This strengthened surveillance has ensured early detection, timely intervention, and more effective treatment, said the government.

Integrated Vector Management (IVM) has been at the core of India's malaria control efforts. Strategies such as Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) and the distribution of Long-Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs) have significantly curtailed mosquito populations and disrupted the transmission cycle.

The targeted management of the invasive *Anopheles stephensi* mosquito has further bolstered urban malaria control efforts, said the ministry.

Bird flu tightens grip on California as human cases rise

AGENCIES
SACRAMENTO, DEC 26

California's battle against avian influenza A (H5N1) intensified amid spreading infections across dairy farms and a growing number of human infection, including two newly confirmed cases in Stanislaus and Los Angeles counties. The virus, commonly known as bird flu, has infected 659 of California's 984 dairy operations since August, with one-quarter of these cases emerging in the past month alone, according to California authorities.

The rapid spread through the state's dairy industry prompted Governor Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency last week to protect agricultural workers and public health, Xinhua news agency reported.

"This proclamation is a targeted action to ensure government agencies have the resources and flexibility they need to respond quickly to this outbreak," Newsom said in a statement.

The outbreak's human

impact has grown increasingly severe, with California reporting at least 36 confirmed cases -- more than half of the nation's total of 65, according to the latest report by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on Tuesday, though the actual count is likely higher as recent local confirmations may not yet be reflected in federal data.

Two new cases were confirmed Monday in California's Los Angeles County and Stanislaus County. Both individuals were exposed to livestock infected with bird flu at a worksite, and both had mild symptoms and were treated with antiviral medications, according to the two counties' health departments.

Public health officials have been monitoring wastewater across the state, detecting the virus in several Bay Area locations, including San Francisco, Napa, and San Jose. However, California State Epidemiologist Erica Pan explained to ABC30 that these detections might be primarily due to "residen-

tial or other commercial milk dumping down in the sinks."

Although health officials said the risk remains low for the general public, the virus kills 90 per cent to 100 per cent of infected poultry and about 1 per cent to 2 per cent of cows. California State Veterinarian Annette M. Jones noted that infected cows may never fully recover.

As the country's largest dairy producing state, California faced a heavy economic toll from the bird flu outbreak. The virus has led to quarantines and increased testing requirements. The authorities said the state is now testing its 1.7 million cows weekly.

California's milk production dropped 9.2 per cent in November from the same month last year, the most significant decline recorded, according to the monthly Milk Production Report released by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) on December 19. Meanwhile, California's reduced output has led to a 1 per cent decrease in national milk production,

raising concerns over US dairy product availability and costs.

The state's poultry operations have also been hit hard. The California Department of Food and Agriculture reported that 51 commercial poultry operations and nine backyard flocks across the state had been affected.

The virus has also appeared in unexpected places, with Los Angeles County confirming two cases in domestic cats that consumed contaminated raw milk.

Los Angeles County health officials warned against feeding pets raw food Tuesday after one brand had samples of bird flu virus detected, noting that a house cat in Oregon had died from consuming the recalled raw frozen pet food. Worker safety has become a critical issue, with the state distributing over 4 million pieces of personal protective equipment. However, Elizabeth Strater, a spokesperson for United Farm Workers, told health news site STAT that many workers avoided testing or report-

ing symptoms due to wage concerns.

"Right now, it's a bad gamble for workers," she said, advocating for compensation for testing and wage coverage for those testing positive.

The USDA has implemented new containment measures, including a mandatory national milk testing program announced on December 6. However, some experts questioned whether these measures were sufficient.

Seema Lakdawala, an associate professor at Emory University's School of Medicine, told STAT that while the new testing strategy would improve understanding of the virus' spread, it may be "arriving too late" -- nine months into the outbreak.

The state is investigating transmission patterns through 40 research projects. "Honestly, there's probably more we don't understand than we actually do know" about how the virus spreads between farms, said Mike Payne, a food animal veterinarian at University of California, Davis.

18-year-old girl gets a new lease of life as AOI treats bone cancer

AGENCIES
VILAYAWADA, DEC 26

In a remarkable medical achievement, an 18-year-old girl has been successfully treated for a rare form of osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer.

The patient, presented with a swelling and discharging sinus in the left gluteal region (buttock), which was diagnosed as Extraosseous Osteosarcoma, a rare variant that affects less than 4 per cent of osteosarcoma cases worldwide. The multidisciplinary tumor board at 'The American Oncology Institute (AOI)', Mangalagiri, near here, coordinated a comprehensive treatment plan for the girl. Dr N. Subba Rao, a Medical Oncologist, initiated neoadjuvant chemotherapy to shrink the tumor before surgery, and Dr Eshant Inapuri, Surgical Oncologist, surgically removed the tumor by cutting out a wide area around it to ensure that no cancer cells were left behind.

After removing the tumor, he used a special technique to close the surgical wound by taking tissue from another part of the body (the thigh) and rotating it to cover the area where the tumor was removed. This helped to heal the wound and restore the area's appearance and function. Post-surgery, the recovery was smooth, and she was discharged on the 5th post-operative day.

The girl is now able to walk normally without any issues, and her follow-up care has been uneventful, with no complications. She is continuing adjuvant chemotherapy to ensure complete recovery.

Harish Trivedi, CEO, CTSI - South Asia, expressed his satisfaction with the outcome, saying: "At AOI, we remain committed to providing world-class healthcare using the latest technologies and the expertise of our multidisciplinary team. Chandrika's successful treatment is a testament

to the exceptional care provided by our doctors. We are proud to have played a part in her journey towards recovery."

Dr Eshant Inapuri, Surgical Oncologist, who led the surgical team, shared, "This rare and complex case required a coordinated effort between multiple specialists. The surgery went smoothly, and I am pleased to see an 18-Year-Old Girl recovering well. This success highlights the importance of early diagnosis and comprehensive care in the treatment of rare cancers."

Mahendra Reddy, RCOO, AOI AP, added, "18-Year-Old Girl case is an example of the high standard of care we offer at AOI. The integration of advanced medical technology and expertise from our dedicated team is key to delivering successful outcomes for our patients. We continue to ensure that every patient receives the best possible treatment and follow-up care."

Their courage forms foundation of India's democracy: PM Modi remembers Sahibzades

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 26

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday attended the Veer Baal Diwas programme at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, where he paid homage to two sons of Sikh Guru Gobind Singh Ji -- Sahibzades Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji -- who were martyred in 1704.

He also interacted with the Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardees. He also launched the 'Suposhit Gram Panchayat Abhiyan,' aimed at improving nutritional outcomes and fostering community participation in health and wellness initiatives.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister said, "Our government recognised this day as Veer

Baal Diwas three years ago in honour of the martyred Sahibzades. Today, this day has become a source of inspiration for the entire nation."

He lauded the bravery of Sahibzades Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji, recounting their sacrifice at a tender age.

"Despite all the atrocities and temptations offered by the Mughals, they stood firm in their faith, even at such a young age. They accepted being buried alive rather than compromising their principles. Their courage forms the foundation of our strong democracy," he said.

The Prime Minister drew parallels between the teachings of Sikh Gurus and the Constitu-



tion of India, emphasising equality, collective welfare, and national interest. He highlighted the role of India's youth in shaping the country's future and stressed the importance of empowering them through youth-centric policies.

"From startups to science, from sports to entrepreneurship, youth power is bringing about a new revolution. Our policies, including the National Education Policy, Atal

Tinkering Labs, and Mera Yuva Bharat Abhiyan, are designed to nurture the talent of our youth. The Fit India initiative and Suposhit Gram Panchayat Abhiyan aim to pave the way toward a Viksit Bharat," he said.

PM Modi urged the youth to aim for excellence in all sectors, reiterating that their innovations and leadership can shape a self-reliant Viksit Bharat.

"The goal of a 'Viksit Bharat' is certain, and the success of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' is assured with the participation of our youth," he added.

He also encouraged greater youth participation in politics, stating, "India's youth have the power to lead the world in every field. I urge them to actively participate in modern politics to bring fresh perspectives and drive progress."

The event culminated in a call for collective efforts toward achieving new milestones for India, inspired by the bravery of the Sahibzades and the promise of the nation's youth.

Earlier in the day, he also interacted with the Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardees.

The day marked the recognition of young achievers and paid homage to the martyred Sahibzades for their sacrifice and bravery.

President Droupadi Murmu presented the Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awards to 17 children, including seven boys and ten girls, from 14 states and Union Territories, at a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre.

The awards were conferred in seven categories -- art and culture, bravery, innovation, science and technology, social service, sports, and environment.

Interacting with the awardees, PM Modi commended their exceptional achievements and aspirations, highlighting the immense potential of India's youth.

Rahul Gandhi slams Nitish govt for lathi-charge on BPSK candidates

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 26

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday slammed the Nitish government for lathi-charge on Bihar Public Service Commission candidates in Patna during their protest to demand the cancellation of the December 13 exams.

"I had said in Parliament that in the same way that Eklavya's thumb was cut off, in the same way the thumbs of the youth are cut off by leaking the papers," said the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha in a post on X.

"The latest example of this is Bihar. BPSK candidates are raising their voices against the paper leak and demanding cancellation of the exam. But to hide its failure, the NDA government is instead resorting to lathi-charge

on the students," he said, attaching a video of police lathi-charge on the social media platform.

Extending support to the protesters, the Gandhi scion said, "This is extremely shameful and reprehensible.

Playing with the future of students will not be tolerated. We are with them and will fight to get them justice."

The ongoing protests by BPSK candidates have escalated, leading to a contentious police response and legal action against protesters and alleged instigators.

The candidates began their dharna on December 18, demanding the cancellation of the entire BPSK examination. Their dissatisfaction grew when the BPSK cancelled the examination for only one centre and rescheduled it for January 4, 2025.

President Murmu confers Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on 17 children

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 26

President Droupadi Murmu, on Thursday, conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on 17 children for their exceptional achievements at a ceremony held here at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The award is given to children in the age group 5-18 years with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievements in seven categories for Bravery, Art & Culture, Environment, Innovation, Science & Technology, Social Service and Sports that deserve national recognition.

17 children (7 boys and 10 girls) from 14 states and union territories have been selected this year for the award.

Each awardee of Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is given a medal,



certificate and a citation booklet.

Speaking on the occasion, President Murmu congratulated all award winners and said that the entire country and the society is proud of them.

The President told children that they have done extraordinary work, achieved amazing accomplishments, have limitless capabilities, and possess

incomparable qualities. They have set an example for the children of the country, she said.

She added that providing opportunities and recognising children's talents has been a part of our tradition and this tradition should be strengthened further.

"In 2047, when the country will celebrate the centenary of India's inde-

pendence, these award winners will be enlightened citizens of the country and will become the builders of a developed India," the President said.

Calling upon the children to imbibe the feeling of patriotism, President Murmu said, "The feeling of patriotism is what takes children and adults on the path of surrendering themselves for the welfare of the nation."

The Union Ministry of Women & Child Development organises Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar every year to celebrate the energy, determination, ability, zeal and enthusiasm of young children. The child should be an Indian citizen and residing in India and the age should not exceed 18 years as on the last date of receipt of application.

Justice Narendar G. sworn in as Chief Justice of Uttarakhand HC

AGENCIES

DEHRADUN, DEC 26

Justice Guhanathan Narendar was on Thursday sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court.

Governor, Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (retd) administered the oath of office to Justice Narendar G at a ceremony held at Raj Bhawan, attended by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, puisne judges of the Uttarakhand High Court and other dignitaries. On Monday, the Centre cleared the appointment of Chief Justices of the High Courts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

In a post on X, Union Minister for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal announced that President Droupadi Murmu had appointed Justice Narendar G as the Chief Justice

of Uttarakhand High Court and Justice G.S. Sandhwalia as the Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court.

"In exercise of the power conferred by clause (1) of Article 217 of the Constitution of India, the President is pleased to appoint Shri Justice Guhanathan Narendar, Judge, Andhra Pradesh High Court, to be Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office," said a notification issued by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice.

In September this year, the Supreme Court Collegium, led by the Chief Justice of India (CJI), recommended the appointment of Justice Narendar G. as the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court consequent upon the

retirement of Justice Ritu Bahri on October 10.

Justice Narendar G. was appointed as a Judge of the High Court of Karnataka in January 2015.

"He was transferred to the High Court of Andhra Pradesh on 30 October 2023 and has been functioning there since then. He is the senior-most Judge in his parent High Court and belongs to the Other Backward Class," noted the SC Collegium, adding that he practised before the Karnataka High Court before elevation.

The Collegium said that Narendar G. is an experienced judge with considerable experience on the judicial and administrative sides of the High Courts of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

"The Collegium is of the considered view that Mr

Justice Narendar G is fit and suitable in all respects for being appointed as Chief Justice of the High Court of Uttarakhand," it said, adding that at present, the Karnataka High Court has no representation among the Chief Justices of the High Courts.

The Memorandum of Procedure relating to the appointment of Chief Justice of a High Court provides that "a fair representation shall be given to various High Courts for selection of Chief Justices. For purposes of such selection, inter-se seniority of puisne Judges will be reckoned on the basis of their seniority in their own High Court. The consideration for appointment of Chief Justices shall be based on the criterion of seniority subject to merit and integrity".

TN Governor, fishermen pay floral tributes to tsunami victims on 20th anniversary

AGENCIES

CHENNAI, DEC 26

Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi paid floral tributes to the victims of the 2004 tsunami as Thursday marks its 20th anniversary.

Thousands of fishermen, their families and local residents also participated in memorial events across the state. In Thoothukudi, a memorial service was held at Thracepuram Beach, presided over by Fishermen's Association leader Isakimuthu.

Fishermen paid their respects by holding candles, sprinkling flowers, and pouring milk into the sea. A good number of

fishermen and their families attended the event to honour those who lost their lives.

K.C. Pachiyappan, a fishermen leader from Nagapattinam, recalled the tragedy, saying, "I shudder to remember what happened this day twenty years ago. Around 8,000 people died in the tsunami in Tamil Nadu alone, and Nagapattinam was one of the worst-hit areas. We immediately initiated rescue efforts, saved some lives, and worked with the district administration to bury the deceased."

The Indian Ocean tsunami struck on December 26, 2004, causing an unparal-

leled wave of destruction. Triggered by a 9.1 magnitude earthquake near Sumatra, Indonesia, the tsunami claimed over 230,000 lives, primarily in southern Asia.

The disaster also devastated Tamil Nadu, where more than 8,000 people perished, and coastal areas such as Nagapattinam, Chennai, Cuddalore, Velankanni, and Poompuhar were most affected.

The tsunami not only claimed thousands of lives but also destroyed over 123,000 houses in Tamil Nadu. Velankanni, which had attracted a large number of visitors for Christmas celebrations, suffered heavy casualties.

The tragedy marked a turning point for disaster preparedness in India. At the time, the Indian Ocean region lacked early warning systems, and infrastructure was poorly equipped to withstand such calamities.

However, significant reforms and advancements have since been made.

The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC), established in 2007, ensures real-time monitoring and alerts.

Advanced tools like GIS mapping, AI-driven risk assessments, and mobile applications further enhance disaster preparedness.

Recovery efforts now prioritise Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), enabling targeted recovery and rebuilding strategies. The disaster has become a case study in how a tragedy can inspire systemic reforms, paving the way for more resilient societies.

Healthcare facilities, schools, and transportation networks have been strengthened, enhancing preparedness for future disasters.

Coastal defence measures, such as sea walls, shelter belt plantations, and multi-hazard shelters, provide vital protection for vulnerable coastal areas.

Bengal school job case: Special court hearing today to monitor progress of framing charges

AGENCIES

KOLKATA, DEC 26

Despite being a holiday, a special court of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Kolkata will conduct a hearing on Thursday to monitor the progress of the formalities for framing charges in the Enforcement Directorate (ED)-registered cash-for-school job case.

The year-end holidays in the courts have started from Wednesday, the occasion of Christmas and they will reopen again on January 2, 2025.

Although the process for charge framing was scheduled for December 23, it could not be completed as yet because of

several complications. First, nine out of 53 named in the subsequent charge sheets filed by ED have filed a petition seeking relief from the case.

Secondly, another hurdle in the charges framing process surfaced in the beginning as some of those named in the charge sheets complained to the court that instead of sending hard copies of the case-related documents, the ED forwarded digital copies of the documents to them, which were posing difficulties for them to spot and go through the relevant portions.

Thereafter, the special court directed the central agency to ensure that hard copies of the case-

related documents were physically delivered to the doorsteps of all the accused named in the charge sheets.

Sources aware of the development said that the special court hearing on Thursday will be specially conducted to review the progress in the delivery of case-related documents so that the charges framing process can be completed as early as possible following which the trial process in the matter will begin.

In the subsequent charge sheets filed by ED in the matter, a total of 53 have been named as accused out of which 29 are individuals and the remaining are corporate entities and trusts.

Delhi HC orders 3rd financial upgradation under MACP scheme to BSF personnel

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 26

The Delhi High Court has ordered the Border Security Force (BSF) to process the benefit of the third financial upgradation under the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) Scheme to the personnel who have completed 30 years of service.

A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Shalinder Kaur was hear-

ing a plea by retired BSF personnel challenging the rejection of their representations for grant of the third financial upgradation under the MACP Scheme for fixing their pension.

The petitioners sought the extension of the benefit of the 3rd MACP upon the completion of 30 years of service in their cadre before them attaining the age of 60 years, and sought revision of the basic pay and their

pension.

The petitioners had joined the BSF on various dates at their respective ranks in the General Duty and Radio Cadre. Initially, they were serving as Personnel Below Officers Rank (PBOs), and, with the progression of time, the petitioners were promoted to the non-gazetted officers rank (i.e. Assistant Sub-Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, and Inspectors).

PM Modi to oversee e-distribution of 58 lakh property cards across 50,000 villages

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 26

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside over the e-distribution of SVAMITVA property cards on Friday (December 27) marking a major milestone in "India's rural empowerment and governance journey", according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on Thursday.

The event will witness the distribution of 58 lakh SVAMITVA Property Cards across approximately 50,000 villages span-

ning 10 states -- Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and two Union Territories -- Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

"This event will also mark a landmark achievement of crossing more than two crore property cards preparation and distribution under the SVAMITVA scheme and distribution of more than 58 lakh property cards on a single day," the statement said.

During the event, the



Prime Minister will interact with selected beneficiaries via video conferencing and deliver a nationwide address.

Union Minister of Pan-

chayati Raj Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for Panchayati Raj S.P. Singh Baghel and Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj Vivek Bhadwaj will be present at the event. The ceremony will also be attended virtually by several Chief Ministers, Union Ministers, senior officials, panchayat representatives, and stakeholders. Around 13 Union Ministers will physically join from designated locations across the country, to oversee the regional distribution ceremony of property cards.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with the states and union territories, will maximise outreach and awareness about the SVAMITVA Scheme and other flagship initiatives of the Ministry by organizing orientation programmes at around 20,000 locations across the country on Friday.

Under the scheme, drone mapping coverage and surveys have been completed in 3.17 lakh villages and over 2.19 crore property cards prepared across 1.49 lakh villages.

Afghanistan won't tolerate any aggression, warns Kabul after Pakistani airstrikes that killed 46

AGENCIES
KABUL, DEC 26

Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Thursday issued a stern warning to Pakistan, urging Islamabad to learn the lessons of history before targetting Afghanistan.

"Afghans will not forget the invasion of their territory, and Pakistani rulers should adopt a measured policy," several reports quoted Muttaqi as saying on Thursday afternoon during an event marking the 45th anniversary of the Soviet invasion.

During his speech, the foreign minister warned Pakistan to "learn from the fate of the Soviet Union and the United States",

emphasising that Afghanistan will never accept invasions. He also reportedly called on the people of Pakistan to stop their rulers' wrong policies.

Muttaqi's strong reaction came less than 48 hours after Pakistani airstrikes inside Afghanistan that killed 46 people, including several women and children on Tuesday night.

The airstrikes by Pakistani fighter jets on parts of Barmal district in Paktika province was the second instance this year of Islamabad directly hitting "civilian areas" on Afghan territory. In March, a similar strike had killed eight people, including three children.

Islamabad's action has



triggered a massive condemnation from people in the war-torn country and the Taliban regime even as several analysts in Pakistan also reckon that the move is fraught with risks.

Enayatullah Khwarazmi, the spokesperson for the Afghan Ministry of Defence, stated on Wednesday that Pakistan must realise such arbitrary actions do not solve any

problems. "The Islamic Emirate considers this brutal act a violation of all international principles and an outright aggression, and strongly condemns it.

The Pakistani side must understand that such arbitrary actions are not a solution to any problem," the spokesperson was quoted as saying by Afghan news outlet Tolo news. Hamid Karzai, the

former President of Afghanistan, while condemning the airstrikes of the Pakistani military forces in the "strongest terms", called it a blatant aggression and violation of Afghan sovereignty.

Karzai said the tension in relations between the two countries was the product of Pakistan's wrong policies of strengthening extremism in the region and trying to weaken Afghanistan.

He warned that civilized relations based on good neighbourliness would be in the interest of both countries.

Hafiz Zia Ahmad, Pakistan's Chargé d'Affaires in Kabul, was also called to the Afghan foreign ministry and issued a strong

demand.

While there has been no official reaction from the Pakistan government or the military establishment on the airstrikes, the local media insists that the action was in response to a recent surge in TTP-sponsored terrorist attacks, including the recent attack in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa that resulted in the death of 16 Pakistani soldiers.

"Perhaps this seemingly paradoxical approach has been employed to send the message to Kabul that while Islamabad is ready to talk, it is also willing to strike at anti-Pakistan terrorists inside Afghanistan if the Taliban fail to act," stated an editorial in Pakistani Daily 'Dawn' on Thursday.

Japan Airlines' system restored after cyberattack

AGENCIES
TOKYO, DEC 26

Japan Airlines (JAL) said Thursday that its network system has been restored after a cyberattack earlier in the day disrupted luggage services and delayed some flights.

JAL said ticket sales for both domestic and international flights have now been resumed after a temporary halt, adding that no personal information was leaked and no damage was caused by computer viruses.

The network disruption occurred at 7:24 a.m. local time, causing problems with baggage check-ins and delays for a dozen flights at several Japanese airports, the airline said.

At 8:56 a.m. local time, JAL blocked the data trans-

mission device that was causing the system failure, Xinhua news agency reported.

JAL told police that it may have been the victim of a distributed denial-of-service, or DDoS attack, in which networks are overwhelmed by massive amounts of data from multiple sources over a short period, according to investigative sources.

Earlier in the day, passengers at Tokyo's Haneda airport were seen checking their phones and speaking with staff, while there was no significant confusion at Narita airport in Chiba Prefecture. A man in his 30s, travelling from Haneda to Ishigaki Island in Okinawa, expressed concern, saying, "I was able to check in fine, but it's worrying that there's trouble."

South Korea: Investigators summon Yoon to appear for questioning Sunday in martial law probe

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 26

The South Korea's anti-corruption investigation body on Thursday summoned President Yoon Suk Yeol to appear for questioning this weekend over his brief imposition of martial law.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) issued the summons ordering Yoon to appear at its office in Gwacheon, just south of Seoul, at 10 a.m. Sunday.

This marked the CIO's third summons after Yoon ignored two previous summonses, including one for questioning on Christmas Day.

The CIO has teamed up with the police and the defense ministry's investigation unit to look into allegations Yoon incit-



ed an insurrection and abused his power when he declared martial law on December 3, Yonhap news agency reported.

Meanwhile, South Korean President Yoon's political future hangs in the balance as the Constitutional Court deliberates on his impeachment trial over his short-lived martial law declaration, raising concerns over a leadership vacuum amid economic and security challenges.

Yoon faces an uphill legal battle next year after being impeached and subjected to widening probes into his failed attempt to impose military rule on the nation's democracy on December 3. The impeached president has defended his imposition of martial law as an act of governance and denied insurrection charges.

The allegations include insurrection and abuse of power for deploying mili-

tary forces to the National Assembly to block lawmakers from repealing the decree.

The final decision on his impeachment rests with the Constitutional Court, where at least six of nine justices must uphold the motion to remove him. The process could take up to 180 days.

If Yoon, who was elected in May 2022 to a single, five-year term, is removed from office, a snap election would be held within 60 days.

Lee Jae-myung, the leader of the main opposition Democratic Party (DP), is currently seen as a top contender, though he faces his own legal risks, including several trials on corruption and other allegations.

Since Yoon's suspension from office on December 14, Prime Minister Han

Duck-soo has assumed interim leadership.

A seasoned technocrat versed in diplomacy and trade, Han has pledged to stabilise state affairs and uphold the country's security and economic resilience during the transitional period.

The political turmoil comes at a challenging time for South Korea, as it works to strengthen alliances with the US and other partners to counter growing threats from North Korea amid its deepening military ties with Russia.

The instability also raises concerns about South Korea's ability to effectively address economic and security uncertainties, especially with the return of former US President Donald Trump to the White House next month.

South Korea: National Assembly set to vote on appointment of 3 Constitutional Court judge nominees

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 26

The opposition-controlled National Assembly of South Korea is set to vote on the appointment of three Constitutional Court justice nominees at a parliamentary plenary meeting on Thursday.

It remains to be seen whether acting President Han Duck-soo would approve the final appointment of the three new judges. The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) has vowed to impeach Han unless the acting president approves their appointments, Yonhap news agency reported.

If appointed, the three nominees will fill vacancies on the court's nine-member bench, where six justices are currently



seated, to deliberate President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment trial. By law, at least six votes are required to uphold an impeachment motion.

The DP earlier pushed ahead with the confirmation hearings for the nominees - Ma Eun-hyuk, and Jeong Gye-seon, both of whom are nominated by the DP, and Cho Han-chang, recommended by the ruling People Power Party (PPP).

The DP and minor opposition parties, which together hold 192 seats in

the 300-seat Assembly, are expected to unilaterally pass the appointment motions.

A motion to appoint a Constitutional Court justice nominee requires a majority of the sitting lawmakers to be present and a majority approval in the National Assembly.

The DP has called on Han to appoint the justices without delay if the motions pass the plenary session, saying it will propose an impeachment motion against Han if he refuses.

US lawmaker expresses concerns over MBK's takeover bid for Korea Zinc

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 26

A member of the United States Congress has expressed concerns over private equity firm MBK Partners Ltd's takeover bid for Korea Zinc, together with its biggest shareholder, Young Poong Corp, due to critical minerals' supply chain issues, the zinc company said on Thursday.

Korea Zinc has been caught in a months-long battle to fend off a takeover bid by the MBK-

Young Poong alliance, which initiated the management tussle on Sept. 13 by launching a tender offer for an additional stake in the world's biggest refined zinc smelter.

In response, Korea Zinc, with the support of US-based Bain Capital, conducted a massive stock buyback.

In his letter sent to Jose Fernandez, US undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, US Rep. Eric Swalwell

(D-CA) said, "Korea Zinc has maintained its position as a global leader in allied efforts to expand and diversify the supply of critical minerals and insulate these supply chains from PRC leverage."

PRC is short for China's official name, the People's Republic of China. Korea Zinc is vital to US-led global efforts to loosen China's grip on the supply of metals for energy transition.

Given the focus and investment track record



of MBK, it is possible that PRC-based or PRC-financed entities may be welcomed into a variety of transactions in case of the MBK side's acquisition of

Korea Zinc, Swalwell said in the letter.

"This could result in technology transfer to PRC entities as well as the dismantling of an important

global player in the joint United States-Korea effort to insulate and expand critical minerals supply chains from the PRC," Swalwell said.

The congressman asked the undersecretary to consult with his counterparts at Korea's foreign and trade ministries "to ensure that this transaction continues to be reviewed in a manner that takes into consideration a variety of factors, including the economic impacts as well as our shared national secu-

urity interests."

When contacted by Yonhap News Agency, MBK said it has no statement on the letter.

Last month, the Seoul government added Korea Zinc's high-nickel precursor manufacturing process to the list of national core and high-tech strategic technologies at the request of the company.

With this designation, any exports of this technology or any foreign investment involving mergers, acquisitions or joint ven-

tures will require approval from the trade ministry, the letter said.

The Young Poong camp now controls 40.97 per cent of Korea Zinc, while Korea Zinc Chairman Choi Yun-beom and related parties own about 34 per cent of the company.

Korea Zinc plans to hold a shareholders' meeting on January 23 to vote on the appointment of two groups of new board members recommended by Korea Zinc and the Young Poong camp.

UAE President, Turkish FM discuss ties, regional stability

AGENCIES
ABU DHABI, DEC 26

President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met with visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on strengthening bilateral ties and addressing pressing regional issues.

During the meeting on Wednesday, Fidan conveyed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's wishes for the UAE's continued prosperity, while the UAE president expressed his hope for Turkey's sustained growth and development, Xinhua news agency reported quoting Emirates News Agency (WAM).

They highlighted the expanding cooperation

between the two countries in areas such as trade, investment, and energy, it reported.

They emphasised the importance of collaboration to address regional challenges and safeguard regional stability, and reiterated their commitment to preventing the escalation of conflicts that threaten regional security, it reported.

The two sides reviewed developments in the Middle East, stressing the need to intensify efforts to prevent the expansion of regional conflict, which threatens security and stability, and pursue a clear path to peace that ensures stability and security for all.

They both stressed unwavering support for

Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the aspirations of the Syrian people for peace, stability, and progress, it said.

They also agreed on the need for concerted international efforts to promote Syria's reconstruction and ensure its long-term stability, it added.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and National Security Adviser; Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Special Affairs; Ali bin Hammad Al Shamsi, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for National Security, and Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, Minister of State.

South Korean Prez Yoon's fate hinges on impeachment trial over botched martial law declaration

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 26

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's political future hangs in the balance as the Constitutional Court deliberates on his impeachment trial over his short-lived martial law declaration, raising concerns over a leadership vacuum amid economic and security challenges.

Yoon faces an uphill legal battle next year after being impeached and subjected to widening probes into his failed attempt to impose military rule on the nation's democracy on December 3. The impeached president has defended his imposition of martial law as an act of governance and denied insurrection charges,



Yonhap news agency reported.

The allegations include insurrection and abuse of power for deploying military forces to the National Assembly to block lawmakers from repealing the decree. The final decision on his impeachment rests

would be held within 60 days.

Lee Jae-myung, the leader of the main opposition Democratic Party (DP), is currently seen as a top contender, though he faces his own legal risks, including several trials on corruption and other allegations.

Since Yoon's suspension from office on December 14, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo has assumed interim leadership.

A seasoned technocrat versed in diplomacy and trade, Han has pledged to stabilise state affairs and uphold the country's security and economic resilience during the transitional period.

The political turmoil comes at a challenging time for South Korea, as

it works to strengthen alliances with the US and other partners to counter growing threats from North Korea amid its deepening military ties with Russia.

The instability also raises concerns about South Korea's ability to effectively address economic and security uncertainties, especially with the return of former US President Donald Trump to the White House next month.

While Yoon had sought to meet Trump as early as his inauguration in late January, it remains unclear whether there will be top-level diplomacy in the early days of the second Trump administration under Seoul's interim leadership.

Centre keeping close watch on prices of 38 food goods to keep inflation in check

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

The Centre's Department of Consumer Affairs is monitoring prices of 38 food commodities such as cereals, pulses, vegetables, edible oils, and spices to control the volatility in prices, according to an official statement issued on Thursday.

The retail sale of chana, moong, and masur Bharat Dal brands at subsidised prices is being done to ensure the availability of essential food items to consumers at affordable prices, the statement said. Intervention is also being undertaken through the Price Stabilisation Fund Scheme to provide subsidised onions and tomatoes to consumers so that the inflation burden is reduced.

The Price Monitor-



ing Division oversees the implementation of daily price monitoring of essential food commodities and price stabilisation interventions.

The Department collects daily retail and wholesale prices of 22 essential commodities and retail prices of 16 additional commodities from 555 price reporting centres through a mobile app viz. Price Monitoring System (PMS), the statement said. These daily prices consti-

tute critical inputs to take decisions purport to mitigate price surges, market intervention, restricting import-export duties and calibrating the monetary policy.

Under the Price Stabilisation Fund, the government undertakes market interventions to control the volatility in prices of agri-horticultural commodities such as onions, potatoes, tomatoes, and pulses to protect the interests of consumers.

Market interventions primarily involve procurement of these commodities for buffer stock and undertaking strategic market disposals to contain price volatility. Buffer stocking also acts as a deterrent for unscrupulous speculations. The procurement of agri-horticultural commodities ensures remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce, the statement noted.

The Price Stabilisation Fund was set up with an initial corpus of Rs 500 crore to tackle price volatility in some agri-horticultural commodities viz. onion, potato and pulses to protect the interests of consumers. These commodities are to be procured from farmers/farmer's associations at the time of harvesting and stored for regu-

lated release during the lean season to help bring down their prices. The PSF Scheme has now been merged with other components of the PM-AASHA scheme of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. Therefore, PSF is now one of the components of the PM-AASHA umbrella scheme. However, the PSF Scheme will continue to be managed by the Department of Consumer Affairs for price stabilisation interventions and daily price monitoring.

According to the statement, special steps are also being taken in North-Eastern states to boost production of pulses and horticultural crops and the government has also launched an initiative towards achieving self-sufficiency in pulses production by 2027.

Digi Yatra clocks over 9 million active users, 30,000 app downloads daily

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, DEC 26



Digi Yatra has registered more than 9 million active users to date, with a daily average of 30,000 app downloads, it was announced on Thursday.

The self-sovereign identity (SSI)-based ecosystem utilises face-biometric technology for contactless and seamless passenger processing at airports, changing the travel game, said the Digi Yatra Foundation.

Starting with just three airports in Delhi, Bengaluru, and Varanasi, it has established an impressive network of 24 airports across the country. The platform has facilitated over 42 million seamless journeys, which is a testament to the growing trust and acceptance among passengers.

"2024 was a defining year for Digi Yatra as it became a nationwide dig-

ital ecosystem reshaping

how Indians experience air travel. Beyond technological advancement, this year has been about building trust," said Suresh Khadakhbavi, CEO of Digi Yatra Foundation.

In the coming year, "we look forward to continuing our growth trajectory by adding four more airports in the early months of 2025," he added.

By March 2025, Digi Yatra plans to support all 22 official languages, making it more accessible to travellers in the country.

One of the key highlights of 2024 was Digi Yatra's collaboration with the International

Air Transport Association (IATA).

In October, Digi Yatra further launched the d-KYC (Don't Know Your Customer) campaign, which highlights its commitment to user privacy and choice.

The campaign was about how Digi Yatra caters to customers' needs without storing or accessing their personal data.

Digi Yatra is also targeting an ambitious international pilot project by June 2025. It aims to conduct trials with foreign passengers holding electronic passports (e-passports), according to Digi Yatra Foundation.

This initiative will require establishing bilateral agreements and demonstrating the robust security of the platform. A social media campaign to emphasise that passenger information is not stored in any central repository is also in the pipeline.

VC funding drops 22.5 pc in China in Jan-Nov as India sees surge

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

As venture capital (VC) funding surged in India this year, China saw a 22.5 per cent decline in VC funding by both volume and value in the January-November period, a report showed on Thursday.

A total of 2,313 VC funding deals were announced in China during January-November 2024, while the total disclosed funding value of these deals stood at \$32.3 billion, according to GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

This represents a year-on-year (YoY) decline of 23.1 per cent in VC deal volume, whereas the total disclosed funding value fell by 22.5 per cent, according to GlobalData,



a leading data and analytics company.

In the same period last year, a total of 3,006 VC deals were announced in China while the total disclosed funding value of these deals was \$41.7 billion.

According to Aurojyoti Bose, lead analyst at GlobalData, VC funding activity in China has continued to remain subdued in 2024 as investor

sentiments seem to have taken a hit on the back of a crackdown on companies, macroeconomic challenges, and uncertain market conditions.

"However, despite the decline, China, apart from being the top APAC market for VC funding activity, also continues to be a key global market, standing just next to the US both in terms of deal volume and value," Bopse mentioned.

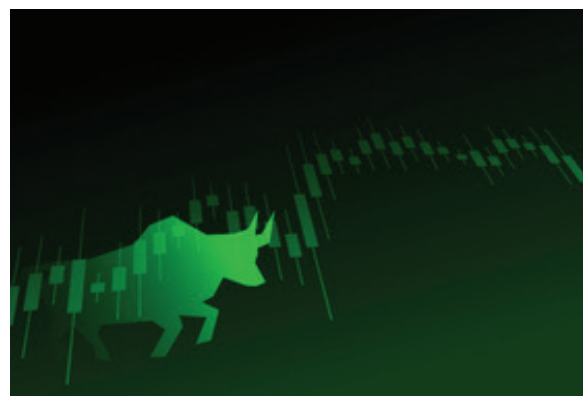
India's equity markets touched \$5.29 trillion market cap this year, 4th largest globally

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC 26

India's equity markets soared to record highs, firmly establishing the nation with a market capitalisation of \$5.29 trillion this year, which was the fourth largest market cap globally after the US, China and Japan, a report said on Thursday.

Benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex hit all-time highs of 26,277.35 and 85,978.25, respectively, this year, according to the report by Pantomath Group, a leading financial services conglomerate.

GDP growth stood at 8.2 per cent in FY24, surpassing expectations, although inflation and weak consumption slowed growth in first half of FY25.



"A rebound is anticipated, driven by government spending, private investments, and rural growth revival," the report mentioned.

According to Madhu Lunawat, CIO and Fund Manager, Bharat Value Fund, there are many opportunities available for both domestic and global

investors such as AIF, PMS, Mutual Funds, etc. for medium-term investments perspectives, to participate in India's long term growth story.

"The investor's preference towards equity as an investment avenue based on their Risk appetite is constantly increasing in the last couple of years

as compared to earlier. Such kind of sustainable fund flow from different investors is a positive sign and this liquidity will help market to support in any kind of correction or declines," Lunawat noted.

The Indian agriculture sector is set for growth, driven by the 'Vision 2047; roadmap that promotes sustainable farming, crop diversification (especially millets), and climate-resilient seeds.

The automobile sector grew 10 per cent to Rs. 6.14 lakh crore, with a sharp focus on EV adoption and exports projected at \$30 billion by FY26, the report mentioned.

India remains committed to net-zero emissions by 2070 and 50 per cent

renewable energy by 2030, supported by the National Green Hydrogen Mission and 100 per cent FDI in renewables.

"Indian corporate earnings are expected to show further improvement. The capex spending by government will lead to revival in overall GDP growth and companies benefiting from a softening in commodity prices, leading to enhanced profitability and margins," said Devang Shah, Head Retail Research, ACMIL.

Companies are expected to continue strong performance in the upcoming quarters, driven by a robust domestic demand environment, positive macroeconomic factors and private capex revival, Shah added.

Micro insurance premium in life segment crosses Rs 10,000 crore in India

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

The micro-insurance premiums in the life insurance sector in the country has surpassed Rs 10,000 crore for the first time in FY24, according to industry data.

Micro insurance helps people in the low-income group via offering affordable products.

According to data by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), the new business premium (NBP) in life insurance's micro-insurance segment reached Rs 10,860.39 crore in FY24, up 23.5 per cent from Rs 8,792.8 crore in FY23.



While individual NBP declined 23.78 per cent to Rs 152.57 crore, the group NBP went up 24.61 per cent to Rs 10,707.82 crore.

According to the IRDAI data, the number of micro-insurance agents stood at 102,000 in FY24. Nearly 19,166 of them belong to

public-sector life insurers and the rest to private ones.

Among the micro-insurance agents, non-government organisations (NGOs) constitute 4.49 per cent, self-help groups 0.25 per cent, microfinance institutions 0.24 per cent, busi-

ness correspondents 0.12 per cent, and others 94.90 per cent, the data showed.

Meanwhile, more than 21 crore people have benefited under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) scheme that provides life insurance coverage.

The PMJJBY, launched in May 2015, is a term life insurance plan. Under this scheme, in case of death due to any reason, the family of the insured gets Rs 2 lakh.

The scheme saw a cumulative enrolment of 21.67 crore till October 20. On the other hand, the cumulative number of claims stood at 860,575, worth Rs 17,211.50.

According to reports,

India's insurance sector clocked a robust 11 per cent compound annual growth rate to cross the \$130 billion mark during FY2020-23, surpassing Asian peers China and Thailand, which grew at less than 5 per cent.

The McKinsey report said that while the country's life insurance industry grew to \$107 billion as of 2023, the general insurance industry touched \$35.2 billion.

A growing middle class, greater awareness, rising healthcare costs, and supportive regulations have combined to offer high growth for India's insurance industry over the last few years, the report added.

Sales value of housing units in India sees 16 pc jump at Rs 5.68 lakh cr in 2024

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC 26

The overall sales value of housing units saw a 16 per cent yearly jump in 2024 - from approximately Rs 4.88 lakh crore in 2023 to about Rs 5.68 lakh crore this year, according to a report on Thursday.

The housing sales in the top seven cities stood at nearly 4,59,650 units in 2024, against 4,76,530 units in 2023, according to the report by Anarock Group.

Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) witnessed the highest sales of nearly 1,55,335 units in 2024, reg-

istering a 1 per cent yearly rise. Pune followed with about 81,090 units sold.

MMR and Bengaluru saw the maximum new launches, together accounting for an almost 50 per cent of the new supply in the year.

"Compared to 2023, 2024 saw a 21 per cent rise in the average price in the top seven cities.

Average residential prices hikes will stabilise in the coming year, though there will be steady growth amid increased input costs and high demand," said Anuj Puri, Chairman, Anarock Group.

2025 will also see gener-

ous new supply infusions by listed developers, who have significant inventory lined up, he mentioned.

Among budget categories, luxury housing demand and new supply increased exponentially in 2024 as homebuyers demand continued the post-pandemic trend of bigger, better homes by branded developers.

The new luxury supply addition across the top 7 cities rose by 24 per cent in 2024 against 2023 and there is no reason to expect luxury housing demand to taper off in 2025, the report mentioned.

India to see record-breaking IPO fundraising in 2025 exceeding Rs 2 lakh crore

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC 26

India is on track to become the world's third-largest economy by 2027 with a \$7 trillion GDP target by 2030, a report said on Thursday, predicting record-breaking IPO fundraising in the country next year, exceeding Rs 2 lakh crore.

According to the report by Pantomath Group, a leading financial services conglomerate, India hosted twice as many IPOs as the US and 2.5 times more than Europe this year, as the country

emerged as the leader in IPO volume globally.

"With the continued momentum in the markets, we now project that equity raised through IPOs will cross Rs 2 lakh crore in the year 2025. This milestone is a testament to the resilience of India's capital markets, the confidence of investors, and the critical role IPOs play in fueling economic growth," said Mahavir Lunawat, Managing Director of Pantomath Capital.

The report outlined stellar economic growth, sectoral advancements, and IPO market domi-

nance, positioning the country as a global economic powerhouse.

In the country, 76 companies raised Rs. 1.3 trillion in the first 11 months of 2024, as favourable regulatory reforms and investor confidence fuelled market momentum, even during downturns.

Qualified institutional placements (QIPs) in 2024 have surged, with 91 deals raising a record Rs 1,29,200 crore, surpassing last year's Rs 52,300 crore, and the previous peak of Rs 80,500 crore in the calendar year 2020 -- marking an all-time high.

Women, youth leading charge in workforce participation in India in 2024: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

India in 2024 saw a boom in employment rates, with women and youth leading the charge in workforce participation, according to a report.

The report by Apna.co, a job and professional networking platform, showed women contributed an impressive 2.8 crore job applications -- 20 per cent higher than in 2023. Similarly, the youth posted a 27 per cent year-on-year increase in job applications.

Women contributed an impressive 2.8 crore job applications out of a



total of 7 crore, a 25 per cent year-on-year surge, in 2024.

Flexible work opportunities, gender-focused initiatives, and the expansion of women-led sectors like e-commerce and healthcare are the primary drivers behind the growth, noted the report.

Women excelled across sectors like healthcare, hospitality, retail,

and e-commerce, and embraced unconventional roles such as field sales, logistics, and security services. Applications for senior and managerial roles surged by 32 per cent, signaling women's growing influence in shaping India's new-age workforce.

Tier 1 cities like Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai led this surge with

1.52 crore applications, while Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities like Jaipur, Lucknow, and Bhopal contributed 1.28 crore, marking a significant rise in opportunities beyond metro hubs, the report said.

Further, the report noted that India's fresher job market is also thriving, with a 27 per cent year-on-year increase in job applications, crossing 2 crore.

High-growth sectors like IT, mobility, retail, BFSI, and services are driving demand as young professionals propel innovation and expansion. Urban hubs like Chennai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad contributed 60 lakh appli-

cations, while regions like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar added 82 lakh, showcasing a balanced regional contribution.

Meanwhile, online job postings rose by 20 per cent YoY with over 12 lakh openings in 2024.

This was driven by digital adoption, growth in the Small and Medium Business (SMB) sector, and business expansion into Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, said the report. Key industries like BFSI, retail, healthcare, and logistics created unprecedented demand, shaping India's evolving and resilient job market.

INDIA FIGHT BACK AFTER AUSTRALIA DOMINATE DAY 1

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE, DEC 26

Australia took the honours on Day 1 of the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), but it was India's dramatic fightback in the final session that stole the spotlight. After Australia dominated much of the day, India's bowlers, spearheaded by Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep, clawed back with three quick wickets to ensure the game remained finely balanced.

Australia's debutant Sam Konstas was the standout performer, blazing to a fiery 60 off 65 balls. His fearless approach, including audacious reverse scoops and aggressive strokes off India's ace bowler Bumrah, set the tone early for the hosts. Konstas became the second-youngest Australian to score a fifty on debut, helping Australia to a solid 96-run opening partnership with Usman Khawaja, who contributed a patient 57. Despite some early breakthroughs for India, including the wickets of Konstas and Khawaja,



Australia's middle order held firm. Marnus Labuschagne top-scored with 72 off 145 balls, while Steven Smith (68*) guided his team through the middle session with calm assurance. The pair put on an important 83-run partnership, with Smith bringing up a fluent fifty.

However, the final session saw a dramatic turn. With Australia cruising at 237/3, India struck back

with a vengeance. Bumrah and Deep claimed the key wickets of Mitchell Marsh (4) and Travis Head (0), reducing Australia to 246/5. The middle-order collapse continued as Deep dismissed Alex Carey for 31, caught behind by Rishabh Pant, leaving Australia 299/6.

India's fightback in the final session leaves the game evenly poised. With Australia at 311/6, India will

be keen to clean up the tail quickly and limit the hosts' first-innings total. While Australia appears to have the upper hand, India's resilient performance has given them a glimmer of hope, setting the stage for an intriguing Day 2.

Brief Scores: Australia: 311/6 (Steven Smith 68*; Marnus Labuschagne 72; Sam Konstas 60; Akash Deep 1/59; Jasprit Bumrah 3/75).

KOHLI-KONSTAS SHOULDER CLASH UNCALLED FOR, SAYS GAVASKAR

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE, DEC 26

Sunil Gavaskar has hinted that disciplinary action could follow a heated confrontation between Virat Kohli and Australian debutant Sam Konstas on Day 1 of the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on Thursday.

The legendary cricketer expressed disappointment at the incident, calling it "uncalled for" and suggesting that fines might be handed out once the match referee reviews the footage.

The altercation occurred in the opening session when Konstas, walking toward his batting partner, collided with Kohli, who was repositioning himself on the field with the ball in hand. The shoulder contact appeared intentional on Kohli's part, although the intent remained unclear.

The collision led to a verbal exchange, prompting intervention from the umpires. Australia's Usman Khawaja also



stepped in, attempting to diffuse the tension by placing his arm around Kohli.

Gavaskar, co-ordinator of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, discussed the incident during the lunch break broadcast, stating, "This was completely avoidable."

It's like walking on a busy street, you just step aside. These incidents don't belong on the cricket field, especially not from someone as experienced as Kohli."

Tests between India and

Australia are renowned for their high intensity, often leading to altercations and controversies, particularly involving Kohli. The former India captain has a history of fiery encounters with Australian players, including a notable clash with Tim Paine during the 2018 series, and a tense duel with Mitchell Johnson while scoring a remarkable century in Adelaide in 2014.

These moments have only added to the fierce rivalry between the two cricketing nations.

Southee to captain Sharjah Warriorz in ILT20 season 3

AGENCIES
SHARJAH, DEC 26

Sharjah Warriorz have announced the addition of Tim Southee, one of modern cricket's best fast bowlers from New Zealand, to the squad for the upcoming edition of the ILT20. Having played in 4 ODI World Cups and 6 T20 World Cups, Southee will captain the Sharjah Warriorz in what is his first appearance in the tournament. Southee has captained the New Zealand men's cricket team across formats, at various points in his career. The 36-year-old has played in 10 seasons of the IPL in India, turning out for the likes of Kolkata Knight Riders, Mumbai Indians, Chennai Super Kings, Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, and also showcased his trade in The Hundred and the Vitality Blast in the UK.

The New Zealander, who began his international career at the age of 19, made his debut in T20I cricket first, after which he went on to play his first games in ODIs and Tests for his country.

India name squad for men's deaf T20I tri-series, ODIs

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 26

Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA) has announced the 16-member squad for the upcoming International T20I tri-series and ODI Deaf cricket series.

The T20I tri-series between India, South Africa and Australia will be held from March 2 to 8 in New Delhi. Following the tri-series, the Indian Deaf Cricket team will be playing a three-match ODI series with Australia from March 10 to 12.

The team will be led by Virender Singh, while Sai Akash will shoulder the vice captain's responsibility.

The Indian men's deaf cricket team will be undergoing extensive training and practice sessions under the expert guidance of head coach Dev Dutt and assistant coach Susheel Gupta.

Head coach Dutt lauded chief selector Vinod Kumar Matta for selecting a highly competent and promis-



ing squad. He further extended gratitude to IDCA for their support in organising and hosting the series.

"The Indian squad looks extremely promising. I stay optimistic that our players in the Deaf Cricket Team will deliver stellar performances to be on the top of both tournaments. The international tri-series and ODI series will be a massive platform for the Indian Deaf Cricket Team to showcase their outstanding performances on a consistent stretch. This will also be an opportunity for the players to establish the team as one of the best in the world," IDCA chief Sumit Jain said.

IDCA CEO Roma Balwani, added, "I keenly look forward to witnessing competitive tournaments ahead, where players from all teams will be showcasing their exceptional talents. My fingers always stay crossed for our Indian players, who have the potential to excel and win many such tournaments."

Squad: Virender Singh (captain), Sai Akash (vice-captain), Umar Ashraf WK, Abhishek Singh, Akash Singh, Yashwanth Naidu, Sanju Sharma, Santosh Kr. Mohapatra, Kuldeep Singh, Vivek Kumar, Sudarsun E, Krishna Gowda-WK, M. Shramith, Sibun Nanda, Ankit Jangir, Sarik Majeed.

BGT: 'It's probably a safe shot for me...', says Konstas on ramps against Bumrah

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE, DEC 26

Australian debutant Sam Konstas admitted that he would have looked silly if he had gotten out on that ramp shot against Indian premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah but feels that it was a safe shot for him.

Konstas made his debut in place of Nathan McSweeney in the fourth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series on Thursday. The 19-year-old made an instant impact on the international stage with his fearless stroke play against Bumrah. During his 65-ball stay at the crease, the right-handed batter struck six fours and two sixes.

The Aussie teen attempted ramp shots against Bumrah in the seventh over of the innings and they went four, six and four. The Indian ace hadn't been hit for a six in his previous 25 Tests over the past four years before Konstas did it twice at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Thursday.

"He's a legend of the



game obviously, so I was trying to put a bit of pressure on him and it paid off today. I'm always challenging myself, trying to bring the best out of myself - so just getting that contest with him and trying to take his lines away was important. I was facing him for the first time, so getting used to his action. He beat my bat quite a few times, and I was lucky enough to get a few away - it was a great contest," Konstas told reporters after the day's play.

"It probably would look silly if I did get out, but I worked pretty hard on that shot, and I feel like it's probably a safe shot for me really," he revealed on his ramp and reverse

ramp shots. "That's the beauty about being young, and maybe a bit naive! I'm just trying to put pressure back on the bowler in the best way I think," Konstas added.

Speaking on the incident, when India star batter Virat Kohli had the ball in hand and changed his walking path to be in a shoulder collision. Konstas said, "I was just doing my gloves, and I think he accidentally bumped me."

"That's just cricket, the tension. For me, just having that freedom, backing myself and trying to bring the best version of each ball. (I was) lucky enough to get a few runs today. I was just trying to get in the contest, and

whoever I was facing, just trying to bring the best version of myself. It got heated at times, which was good for me. (I) feel like that brings the best out of me," he added.

Konstas, who scored a superb century against the Indian team earlier this month in a Prime Minister's XI match, revealed his confidence stemmed from the trust placed in him by his captain and teammates. The teenager felt at home in the Australian setup, which allowed him to play his natural game.

"The boys and (skipper) Pat Cummins have been really good to me, just saying, be myself and I'm here for a reason because I'm scoring runs. I felt that was the right moment today to do it and yeah, it paid off," Konstas shared.

India's assistant coach, Abhishek Nayar, acknowledged Konstas's performance but said the visitors had anticipated the young batter's aggressive tactics.

"We saw him when we

played the PM XI game prior to that as well, he got a hundred against us then as well," Nayar said. "We knew what we were up against."

Nayar highlighted that Konstas's unique strengths were apparent during their analysis, even though they couldn't stop him from executing his plans.

"It was refreshing to see someone come and play good cricket, whether that's in our team or the opposition. It's not something that surprised us, we did expect [it], and we obviously saw a lot of videos and we watched him practice as well."

"So we had an understanding that those are his strengths, they may be different from someone else's. It's always pleasing to the eye when it works."

Following Konstas's aggressive knock, senior players like Usman Khawaja, Steve Smith, and Marnus Labuschagne contributed crucial half-centuries, helping Australia post a formidable 311/6 at stumps on Day 1.

PKL: HARYANA STEELERS EXUDE CONFIDENCE AHEAD OF PLAYOFFS AS BATTLE FOR TITLE BEGINS

AGENCIES
PUNE, DEC 26

The dominance displayed by Haryana Steelers in the ongoing edition of Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) have pegged the JSW Sports-owned franchise as the title favourites going into the playoffs. With 16 wins in 22 games and a score difference of 112, the Steelers ran through the competition to finish on top in the league stage and were also the first team to book a spot in the playoffs.

With head coach Manpreet Singh and skipper Jaideep Dahiya at the helm, the defensive prowess of the side was displayed thoroughly in a season where the Steelers were one of the top defensive units of the season. Steelers also attained 246



successful tackles, and earned 265 team tackle points, the second-highest only after Tamil Thalaivas.

Bringing on Mohammad Reza Shadlou, who played for defending Champions Puneri Paltan last season, proved to be a masterstroke for Haryana, as the Iranian made an immediate impact in both defensive and raiding departments, establishing him-

self as a true allrounder of the highest calibre.

Shadlou earned 76 total tackle points, the second-highest in the league stage, attaining multiple through sleeve exchanges. Throughout the season, Steelers also conflicted a total of 28 All Outs. Meanwhile, Vinay and Shivam were on top form in the attacking department, finishing in the top 10 raiders

of the season in the league stage.

There also have been a few surprise packages for the team. "Our key players have been Shadlou, Rahul Sethpal, Jaideep Dahiya and Sanjay. Their combination and coordination have contributed to the team's performance. The left-right combination of Vinay and Shivam Patore in the raiding department has also surprised the opposition," Manpreet said. Being the first team to qualify for the knockouts also allowed Haryana to test out their bench strength, and Manpreet praised the players for taking the opportunities given to them.

"We have rotated players quite effectively, and several players including Vishal Tate, Jaya

Soorya, Naveen, Sanskar Mishra made the most of the changes. Sanjay has proven to be a surprise package for us as well and hence has grown up to be a mainstay for our team. He meshed well with our defensive unit and proved his worth. We will surely see a few of them in the knockout games as well," he said.

Meanwhile, skipper Jaideep is confident after guiding his team to the playoffs in style. He opened up on his communication practices with the team and praised his side for following the plans laid out by him and the coaches. "I keep on speaking to players about whether we should attack from left or right, depending on the defenders on the other end.

ISL: Fluent Odisha face depleted Mohammedan in search of top four spot

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, DEC 26

Odisha FC will take on Mohammedan SC in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan on Friday. This is the first ISL meeting between the two sides, with Odisha FC looking to extend their strong form while Mohammedan SC seek their second win in the league.

Odisha FC have won their last two away games and are aiming for an outright record with a third consecutive away victory. Meanwhile, Mohammedan SC are enduring a challenging debut season, having lost their last five matches.

Odisha FC have garnered 11 points from their last five games and are fifth in the table with 19



points from 12 matches. They have secured 11 victories in the 25 ISL matches they have played in 2024, already exceeding their previous-best tally of most wins in a calendar year, i.e. 10 in 2023. Notching three points against Mohammedan SC will take Odisha FC's win rate in 2024 to 46.2%, beating the 45.3% they had managed last year.

Mohammedan SC have been unable to find the

back of the net in their last three matches and have only managed five goals all season. In contrast, the Odisha FC defence has conceded 17 goals thus far.

Franca has registered 53 touches in the opposition box, but he remains goalless, highlighting Mohammedan SC's inefficiency in converting chances, something they would need to fix if they are to resurrect their run this term.

MP Agha Syed Ruhullah Mehdi chairs DISHA meeting of Srinagar

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 26

Member Parliament, Srinagar Lok Sabha Constituency, Agha Syed Ruhullah Mehdi today chaired District Development Coordination & Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting of District Srinagar at Tourist Reception Centre, here.

Chairperson, District Development Council Srinagar, Malik Aftab Ahmad and Member Legislative Assembly, Tanveer Sadiq were present in the meeting.

Besides, Chief Executive Officer SSCL/ Commissioner SMC, Dr Owais Ahmad; Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat; ADDC, Srinagar, ADC Srinagar, VC LCMA and Officers & Engineers of all line Departments attended the meeting.

At the outset, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar gave a detailed presentation to give an overview of Central Sponsored Schemes and State Sponsored Schemes implemented by the District Administration Srinagar and the concerned Departments.

The DC shared information about the District profile & demography besides various beneficiary oriented schemes & flagship programmes of different Departments including Rural Development, Rural water Supply, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Power Development Department (KPDCL), Revenue, Education, Health,



FCS&CA, Social Welfare & ICDS, Agriculture/Horticulture, Industries & Commerce, National Informatics Centre, Geology & Mining, Employment Generation Schemes, Skill Oriented Programmes, etc.

The DC also apprised the chair regarding the objectives of the scheme and beneficiary targets achieved by the administration through effective & extensive implementation of said schemes.

CEO, SSCL also presented a brief about the successful execution of projects under Srinagar Smart City Limited regarding beautification of the City.

He briefed the chair regarding Development, Rejuvenation & Streamlining of City roads, walkways, cycle tracks, River Front Development, Development of Central Business District Area, Heritage Conservation &

Renovation, LakeFront Development, Intelligent Traffic Management System, ICCM, Smart Bus Service, steps taken for Green & Resilient Srinagar and other IT driven initiatives. He informed that the ongoing projects of SSCL shall be completed by March 2025.

Addressing the DISHA meeting, Agha Syed Ruhullah Mehdi commended District Administration and SSCL for exemplary achievements in implementation of beneficiary schemes and execution of developmental projects in the City.

He asked the Deputy Commissioner to set higher targets for beneficiary oriented schemes to cover maximum citizens besides exhorted for mass awareness regarding welfare, beneficiary and employment schemes through mainstream

media, social and organization of programmes at Halqa levels.

Regarding the supply of quality drinking water to households, the MP directed the Deputy Commissioner to address the issue of contamination of water which is affecting the quality and colour of drinking water & spreading diseases.

Responding to the concern, DC vouched that all filtration plants supply pure water which is ensured by frequent lab tests at plants. He said that issues of leakages in pipes will be addressed promptly.

On the occasion, MP Mehdi emphasized on restoration of Natural Springs which are in dilapidated condition.

To address one of the major concerns of the City of Dog Menace, Mehdi asked SMC to take urgent measures to address the issue at the earliest.

On the occasion, Commissioner SMC briefed the chair regarding the ongoing measures to control the population of canines in the City including infrastructural development for sterilization and Rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, MP urged SMC for operationalization of nonfunctional toilet blocks particularly at Batamaloo.

He also enjoined DC and CEO SSCL for framing DPRs for development of Downtown areas and Dal Lake interiors.

Preparations for Republic Day celebrations reviewed at Bandipora

J I NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 26



The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, on Thursday chaired a meeting at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora to review the arrangements for the upcoming Republic Day celebrations in the district.

The meeting discussed comprehensive plans for the main function, scheduled to be held at SK Stadium Bandipora, besides at the sub-divisional, block, and panchayat levels, as well as at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora and at all government offices. The meeting was informed that the event will feature a parade with contingents drawn from JK Police, JKAP, IRP, CRPF, CISF, Fire and Emergency Services, NCC, and various schools. Speaking on the occasion, the DC stressed strict adherence to the Flag Code and other necessary protocols, instructing officers to ensure all arrangements are completed well in advance.

The DC directed the Chief Education Officer and DYSSO to organize

cultural programmes, the R&B Department to manage seating and stage arrangements, the Municipal Committee to ensure sanitation, and the ExEn PDD to ensure the illumination of government buildings.

The PHE Department was tasked with providing drinking water, while the CMO was instructed to arrange medical facilities at the main venue.

Qadri urged the officers to ensure participation of all the Government officials in the full-dress rehearsal and on Republic Day celebrations.

On the occasion, SDM Sumbal briefed the chair regarding the preparations underway in Sumbal Sub Division besides SDM Gurez also provided details of preparations in Gurez Sub Division, ensuring that all arrangements will be in place for smooth celebrations. The meeting was attended by SSP Bandipora, Harmeet Singh; ADDC, Mohammad Ashraf Bhatt; ADC, Zaffar Husson Shawl; ACR, Commanding Officer 14RR, CRPF, District Officers of various departments and other concerned.

Forest Department conducts Mega Plantation drive at Mini Secretariat Shopian



J I NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 26

The Forest Department Shopian Thursday launched a mega plantation drive at the Mini Secretariat Shopian, with Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar inaugurating the event.

Plantation drive has been organized under the theme 'Aek Ped Ek Zindagi' and 'Ek Paed Maa ke Naam' in which hundreds of saplings of fir, line and deodar were planted by officers of district admin-

istration and officials of forest department.

This initiative demonstrates the district administration's commitment to creating a Green Campus at Mini Secretariat Shopian.

The drive is part of a broader effort of the Forest Department to enhance the green cover in the district and promote environmental sustainability. ADC Shopian, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz, other district officers and officers of police and forest departments also participated in the drive.

DC Shopian calls for strict adherence to standing rules of government



J I NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 26

A meeting of leading recognized private educational institutions of the district was convened today by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar at Mini-Secretariat Shopian.

During the meeting a detailed discussion was held about the various issues concerning the functioning of these educational institutions.

Standing rules set by the Government on matters of admission, tuition fee, annual charges, provision of basic facilities to the students, etc were discussed with the heads of the institutions wherein the DC conveyed directions for strict adherence to the norms for the welfare of students.

The DC directed all private schools that no

admission fee is charged at all from students, failing which strict and stern action will be initiated against the violators.

He emphasized the critical role of these educational institutions in bridging learning gaps and urged them to work diligently towards academic excellence.

The DC directed the Chief Education Officer for close monitoring over the activities of these educational institutions of the district and reporting of violations.

He also stressed for contributing towards the Red Cross and keeping close vigil on students activities and affairs especially in view of the rising epidemic of Drug Abuse. The meeting was attended by ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; ACR, CEO, ZEOs, besides heads of Govt. recognised private institutions of the district.

DC Baramulla reviews preparations for R-Day-2025 celebrations

J I NEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 26

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today chaired a meeting with the Administrative and Police officers of the district at Dak Bunglow here to review the preparation for the upcoming Republic Day-2025 celebration across Baramulla.

During the meeting, the DC conducted a comprehensive review of the campaigns and events planned by the District Administration in preparation for the grand celebration on January 26th.

The meeting was informed that the main function of the day will be held at the Showkat Ali Sports Stadium Baramulla, where the chief guest will

unfurl the National Flag followed by inspection of parade. The chair was also apprised that a complete dress rehearsal for the event would be conducted on 24th of January.

It was given out that march-past will be presented by contingents of JKP, CRPF, Fire and Emergency and other bands which would be followed by a colorful cultural programme by students.

The DC directed the officers from the concerned departments to ensure proper arrangements related to security, sanitation, seating arrangements, barricading, water supply, power supply, issuance of invitation cards and illumination of important buildings etc on the Republic Day.

Meanwhile, the DC



instructed the officers to ensure the Republic Day celebrations are conducted with enthusiasm and grandeur at their respective office premises at district, sub-divisional, tehsil and block levels to foster a sense of patriotism and community participation across the region.

Furthermore, DC emphasized that this year,

special attention will be given to setting up stalls at the venue, showcasing achievements and raising public awareness about the benefits of HADP, PM-Vishwakarma, and other government-sponsored schemes.

Minga Sherpa also instructed the officers to organize extensive cleanliness drives in their offices

and surrounding areas, both in rural and urban regions, on January 25th in a run-up to the Republic Day celebrations.

Additionally, the DC stressed on the importance of close coordination among all departments for the seamless and successful conduct of the event, and instructed the concerned officers to designate nodal officers to supervise the preparations. Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Baramulla, Zahoor Ahmad Raina; ADC Sopore, Shabir Ahmad Raina; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Assistant Commissioner Development, SDM Pattan/Uri/ Gulmarg, besides other officers from Civil Administration, Police, CRPF were present in the meeting.

SHEW Shopian organises awareness camp at Mujpathri

J I NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 26

Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women (SHEW) Shopian today organized an awareness camp at AWC Mujpathri Shopian.

The programme aimed to sensitize locals about various welfare schemes designed to improve their socio-economic conditions. Representatives from Sankalp Hub provided information about government initiatives and schemes focusing on women's empowerment, education, healthcare, and financial independence.

The event also served as an interactive platform for participants to voice their grievances.

One-day CBP on Grievance Redressal Mechanism 'SEVOTTAM' held at Anantnag

J I NEWS SERVICE
ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 26

A one-day Capacity Building Programme (CBP) on the Grievance Redressal Mechanism 'SEVOTTAM' was successfully organized at Dak Bungalow, Khanabal.

The programme, focused on strengthening grievance redressal frameworks for better public service delivery, and was a collaborative effort of the Institute of Management, Public Administration & Rural Development (J&K IMPARD) and the Department of Public Grievances, Government of J&K, in partnership with the District Administration Anantnag.

The initiative was sponsored by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances, Government of India.



The programme aimed to build the capacity of government officials in implementing an effective grievance redressal mechanism, ensuring prompt and transparent resolution of public grievances in the region.

The training session witnessed the active participation of senior officials, including SF. Hamid, Deputy Commissioner

(DC) Anantnag, Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), all Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs), and various district and sectoral officers. Azeeta Quraishi, Nodal Officer, delivered an informative briefing on the significance of addressing public grievances efficiently, emphasizing the pivotal role of administrative responsiveness in fos-

tering citizen satisfaction. Comprehensive discussions were held on best practices, key challenges in grievance redressal, and strategies for improving grievance resolution timelines and outcomes.

Interactive sessions provided a platform for officers to share their experiences and seek solutions to operational challenges in their respective domains. Equip officials with the knowledge and tools necessary for enhancing the grievance redressal process. Strengthen the capacity of government departments to address public complaints effectively and transparently. Ensure that the mechanisms in place adhere to the highest

standards of accountability and service delivery under the 'SEVOTTAM' framework.

The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the initiative and stressed the need for consistent efforts in streamlining grievance redressal systems across departments. He emphasized the importance of such training programmes in achieving good governance and ensuring public trust.

The programme concluded with a commitment to adopt a citizen-centric approach in grievance handling, reflecting the administration's dedication to improving service standards and fostering accountability at all levels.

Veer Bal Diwas 2024: Inter Childcare institution competition conducted at Palash Shalimar

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 26

An inter Child Care Institution Competition was organized today to commemorate Veer Bal Diwas celebrations, 2024 at Palash Shalimar.

The event was organized by District Social Welfare Officer/ District Child Protection Officer Srinagar. Children of CCIs (boys and girls) of Srinagar District along with other districts including Budgam, Pulwama, Shopian, Anantnag and Ganderbal participated in various activities.

The activities included competitions of drawing, essay writing, singing & quiz competition. Cultural performances and aerobic acts were also



presented on the occasion which added vibrancy to the event and enthralled the audience.

The event aimed to foster creativity and talent among children and boost their self-esteem and confidence.

District Social Welfare Officer/ District Child Protection Officer, Srinagar, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad; Dr. Khair-un-Nisa, Chairperson and other esteemed

members of Child Welfare Committee Srinagar were present at the event.

Speaking at the event, the DSWO/ DCPO Srinagar highlighted the importance of such initiatives in empowering children and providing them with opportunities to grow and express themselves.

The guests felicitated the children and encouraged the participants with their inspiring words.