

JANSAMPARK
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DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Diarrhoea
- Fatigue
- Stomach pain
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Redness on the skin
- Small red spots on the skin
- Severe pain in joints, muscles, or bones
- Severe stomach pain
- Severe headache
- Severe dizziness
- Severe weakness

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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YEAR ENDER 2024

Local terror outfits wiped out in J&K, only 7 natives join militancy

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

The year 2024 saw the wiping out of local terror outfits in Jammu and Kashmir and predominance of Pakistani terrorists.

According to the official data accessed by the news agency, the local recruitment dropped to less than 10 in 2024.

"The number of local terrorists operating in Kashmir is now in single digits. Local recruitment has declined since



2021, when 125 youths joined terrorist ranks. In 2022, the number of new recruits taking up arms dropped to 100. Last year,

around 22 youths joined terrorist ranks, and this year, seven youth joined terrorist ranks," the

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J&K Fire Services Department responds to over 6,700 calls in 2024

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

In 2024, Jammu and Kashmir received 6,752 fire calls, including 42 false alarms. There were 2,938 buildings affected, but the Fire and Emergency Department reported that property worth Rs 1,699 crore was saved.

The department said the main causes of fires were leaks from LPG, electrical overloads, short circuits and the increased use of heating

devices.

According to details obtained by the news agency from the F&ES Department, a total of 6,752 fire calls and 60 rescue calls were recorded throughout 2024, with 42 classified as false alarms.

Notably, 23 firefighters were injured during various operations across the valley. The data also revealed that 6,427 awareness programmes were conducted

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J&K records total deficit rainfall of 29% in 2024, Jan tops with 91% deficiency

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

Jammu and Kashmir has recorded a total deficit rainfall of 29 per cent so far with the highest deficiency recorded in the month of January 2024 at 91 per cent.

The year-long deficit rainfall data, according to the news agency has revealed that against the normal precipitation of 1232.3 mm, J&K saw a rainfall of only 870.9 mm in the last 12 months of 2024 till December 29.

The only pre-Monsoon



season, as per the data, has recorded close to the normal precipitation this year as only 9 per cent deficiency was recorded during the period.

The pre-monsoon season, from March to May has recorded a precipitation of 300.7mm against the normal rainfall of 330.0 mm.

In January this

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Achieve goal of 'terror-free' J&K: Union Home Secy tells security top brass

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan on Monday called on the top security brass to work towards achieving the goal of 'terror-free Jammu and Kashmir' at the earliest.

The Union Home Secretary arrived in Srinagar this morning and chaired a high-level security meet at SKICC on the banks of Dal Lake here.

The meeting was attended by the top officers, including General Officer Commanding of Srinagar based Chinar Corps Lt General Prashant

Chairs security review meeting in Srinagar, lauds agencies for coordinated efforts; To head key meeting on centrally sponsored flagship schemes today

Srivastava, GOC of Nagrota-based 16 Corps Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva, Director General of Police, Nalin Prabhat, Additional Director General (Law and Order) Vijay Kumar, Additional Director General Jammu, Anand Jain, Inspector General of Police (IGP)-Kashmir, V K Birdi, top officers of

Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Intelligence Bureau and other agencies.

Sources privy to the meeting, which commenced at 2:30 pm, told the news agency that the Union Home Secretary emphasized on the need to act tough against the

terrorists, their supporters and anti-national elements.

He reiterated the government's resolve about zero tolerance towards terrorism.

The Union Home Secretary appreciated the security agencies for working in close coordination with each other in the decisive action against the terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and emphasized on the implementation of "Area Domination Plan" and "Zero Terror Plan" in mission mode.

Sources said that other issues that came up

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Lt Governor chairs 88th University Council Meeting of University of Jammu

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired the 88th meeting of the University Council of the University of Jammu at Raj Bhavan, Monday.

The meeting was attended by Sakina Ittoo, Minister for Higher Education; Shantmanu, Additional Chief Secretary, Higher Education Department; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Prof. Alok Kumar Rai, Vice Chancellor, Luc-



know University; Prof. K.S Chandrasekhar, Vice Chancellor, Cluster University Jammu; Prof. AK Kaul, former Professor, Department of Sociology, BHU Varanasi; Dr Neeraj Sharma, Registrar, Jammu

University and other members of the council.

Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Secretary, Planning, Monitoring and Development Department; Prof. Nilofer Khan, Vice Chancellor, Kashmir University

and Prof. Mohd Mohin, Vice Chancellor Cluster University Srinagar joined through virtual mode.

The University Council deliberated on various matters of academic

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SMVD ropeway: Katra agitation intensifies as families of detained Samiti leaders threaten self-immolation

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

The shutdown in Katra, the base camp for the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrimage, against the proposed ropeway project intensified on Monday after family members of 18 detained Sangharsh Samiti leaders joined the ongoing protest. Youths continued a hunger strike, demanding the immediate release of those detained by police during the demonstrations.

Led by Shivani Jamwal, the wife of detained Samiti leader Bhupinder Singh, several women family members of the detained leaders threatened self-



immolation if their loved ones were not released.

According to the news agency, Shivani Jamwal, speaking to the reporters said she had met her husband and the other detained Samiti leaders, who have been in custody since December 25. She stated the detainees' health has

deteriorated significantly, with many losing several kilograms of weight. "They are in a bad state of health," Jamwal said, adding that their condition is worsening every day.

Shivani criticised political parties for exploiting the situation.

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World Bank's Rs 1500 Crore J&K Project Gets 6th Extension

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

In a significant development, the World Bank has granted the 6th extension to the Rs 1500 crore project funded by it in Jammu & Kashmir for the reconstruction of infrastructure damaged by the devastating floods in 2014.

In a communique, a copy of which has been accessed by the news agency, the World Bank has conveyed to the Union Finance Ministry that it has agreed to extend the project till August 31, 2026.

"We refer to the Financing Agreement between India ('Recipient') and the International Development Association ('Asso-



ciation'), dated January 21, 2016 ('Financing Agreement'), pursuant to which the Association has provided the above-captioned Credit ('Credit') for the Jhelum and Tawi Flood Recovery Project ('Project'). We also refer to the letter from the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, DO. No. 05/06/2014-FB.VIII/V, dated November 14, 2024, requesting the Association to extend the Closing Date of the Project by twenty (20) months. We are pleased to inform you that the Association

has established August 31, 2026, as the later date for purposes of Section IV.B.2 of Schedule 2 to the Financing Agreement," reads the communique from Auguste Tano Kouame, World Bank's country director, India, to Manisha Sinha, additional secretary (OMI, Crypto & FB), Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

The WB's India director, in the letter, has stated that this extension is final and has been granted exceptionally for some specific projects. "As agreed, this is the final extension of this credit that has been granted on an exceptional basis.

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No New Year celebrations in J&K this year due to 7-day mourning over ex PM's death

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

There will be no celebration at any place on the occasion of New Year in Jammu and Kashmir due to 7-day mourning declared by the Union government over the death of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, official sources said.

Official sources told news agency that due to declaration of 7-day national mourning over the death of former PM Manmohan Singh any of the departments in Jammu and Kashmir won't observe New Year celebrations this year.

They also said that the

tourism department will celebrate events as part of winter carnival, starting on January 2, 2024 in Pahalgam.

"In mid January, we will celebrate Gulmarg winter carnival. National Tourism Day event will also be celebrated in Srinagar, while several events will also be held in Sonamarg, Doothapthri, Lolab and other places," sources said.

Former Prime Minister and Congress stalwart Dr Manmohan Singh died at the age of 92 at Delhi's AIIMS after being admitted there over age related health issues on Thursday last week.

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Govt appoints Vitul Kumar as Director General of CRPF

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 30

The government on Monday assigned the officiating charge of Director General of CRPF to senior IPS officer Vitul Kumar.

According to a memorandum issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the 1993 batch, Uttar Pradesh cadre IPS officer, Vitul Kumar, who is currently serving as Special Director General in CRPF will take charge

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J&K braces for another moderate to heavy snowfall in first week of Jan

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

Jammu and Kashmir is all set to experience a moderate snowfall in the first week of New Year as two back-to-back Western Disturbances would likely affect the Union Territory from January 3 to 6, the weatherman said on Monday.

According to the news agency, the fresh Western Disturbances would affect J&K after the moderate to heavy snowfall in the parts of Jammu and Kashmir on last Friday, which brought



the life to standstill in the Union Territory due to the closure of all the major roads and also the suspension of the flight operations for two straight days.

Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr

Mukhtar Ahmad told KNO that the two WDs are set to affect J&K and adjoining areas from January 01 onwards.

According to the forecast, Ahmad said that

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Omission of holiday on Sheikh Abdullah's anniversary: Govt says will push for it again

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 30

A day after the government released the list of holidays for 2025, the elected government of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday said that there has been no response to the proposal submitted by the cabinet earlier with regard to the inclusion of holiday on December 05, marked as the birth anniversary of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the founder of National Conference (NC). Minister for Agriculture

Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Javed Ahmad Dar told the news agency that the cabinet sent a proposal for inclusion of holiday on Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's birthday on December 05. "However, there was no response from the administration so far in this regard," he said.

However, he said that the cabinet will continue to push for the inclusion of holiday on Sheikh Abdullah's birthday.

Pertinently, on December 29, the Jammu and

Kashmir government released the official holiday list for 2025, which includes significant religious, national, and regional observances but notably excludes Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's birthday and July 13, Martyrs' Day, as public holidays.

Meanwhile, the NC spokesman and MLA Zadibal, Tannvir Sadiq in a post on X yesterday, stated that "Today's list of holidays and the decision reflects the BJP's disregard for Kashmir's history and

democratic struggle."

"While we had hoped for the inclusion of holidays commemorating leaders like Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and the martyrs of July 13th, their absence does not diminish their significance or our legacy. These holidays will be restored one day," Sadiq said in the post.

Furthermore, the MLA Kulgam and senior CPI (M) leader, Muhammad Yousuf Tarigami, in a statement termed the decision

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GSS MP Unit felicitates Pritam Singh Saini as National President

JI NEWS SERVICE
SAGAR (M.P.), DEC 30

The Madhya Pradesh unit of Ganmanaya Samaj Sangathan (GSS) organized a grand event to felicitate Mr. Pritam Singh Saini on his appointment as the National President of GSS.

The event was organized by Kushwaha community, with founder members of GSS, Mr. Khoob Singh Patel and Mr. Shanker Patel, and Dr. SP Patel, President of the Kushwaha Samaj. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Narayan Singh Kushwah, Minister for Horticulture and Food Processing of Madhya Pradesh, who also attended to show his support for the Kushwaha community and GSS.

Speaking on the occasion, Pritam Singh Saini expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Kushwaha



community for their continued support and trust. He thanked everyone for the warm reception and recognition and reaffirmed his commitment to advancing the mission of GSS.

Pritam Singh Saini said that there is dire need to bring all the Saini communities under a single platform. He said that the main aim of the Sangathan is to work towards building a just and better society and for this the Sangathan is working like an umbrella for the people of all sections of the society.

The National President

stressed on imparting quality education to the children so that they can effectively contribute towards nation building besides pursuing their dream jobs. He observed that education is the key for ensuring holistic development of children and it is our moral responsibility to ensure that quality education and ample extra-curricular avenues are given to our children.

Urging GSS members to redouble their efforts, Pritam Singh Saini called for harmonious cooperation to advance the orga-

nization's noble mission and effect positive societal change. He underscored the importance of collective action and unwavering dedication in driving meaningful progress and building a better future for all.

At the conclusion of the event, a GSS felicitation letter was handed over to the visiting Minister Narayan Singh Kushwah and other distinguished guests, in recognition of their valuable contribution to the community and their unwavering support of GSS's mission.

ADDC Rajouri reviews implementation of HADP Projects

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 30

A crucial meeting to review the implementation of the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP) in Rajouri district was chaired by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Rajouri, Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa here in the conference hall of the DC Office. The meeting aimed at assessing the progress of various projects under HADP and devising strategies for their effective execution.

During the proceedings, the ADDC conducted a detailed review of all projects initiated under HADP and expressed concern over the slow progress and low expenditure. In certain areas, He directed the concerned departments to identify bottlenecks, streamline operations, and ensure timely execu-

tion of the projects. The ADDC underscored the importance of strengthening the functioning of Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs), which serve as one-stop centers for farmers to access agricultural and allied services. He instructed officials to focus on operationalizing these centers effectively to ensure their benefits reach the grassroots level.

Emphasizing the trans-



formative potential of HADP, the ADDC reiterated the administration's commitment to improv-

ing the socio-economic conditions of the farming community. He urged departments to focus on projects with a direct impact on enhancing agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. The ADDC issued instructions to expedite imple-

mentation timelines, achieve expenditure targets and ensure that the benefits of HADP projects are realized by the district's farming community. He also assured regular monitoring of the projects to maintain momentum. Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, District Agriculture Officer, Accounts Officer from the DC Office, Assistant Director Fisheries and Lead District Manager (LDM) Rajouri attended the meeting.

Rajouri gears up for Mission YUVA Baseline Survey from January 1

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 30

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, today chaired a meeting in the DC Office to review the preparations for the effective implementation of Mission Yuva Udhayami Vikas Abhiyan (YUVA) in the district. The initiative, under the aegis of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, aims to foster sustainable employment by supporting the creation of new micro-enterprises, expanding existing businesses, and promoting innovative entrepreneurial ventures.

Addressing the officers, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for coordinated efforts among all line departments to ensure the mission's objectives are achieved efficiently. He directed the departments to focus on key action points and align their roles for effective execution. A detailed review of the baseline survey preparations was conducted during the meeting. The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the significance of training and demonstration sessions for the nominated supervisors and investigators to ensure the smooth conduct of the survey. The baseline survey, commencing on January 1, 2025, will serve as a critical exercise to gather real-time data on existing and potential entrepreneurs in the district, aiding the effective design and implementation of welfare programs.

It was informed that 48 Supervisors and 1,092 Investigators have been deployed for the month-long survey. Training sessions for the personnel have been successfully completed, and pilot surveys have been conducted across all blocks and municipalities.

Deputy Commissioner directed Tehsildars, Block Development Officers, Child Development Officers, Lumberdars and Chowkidars to provide full cooperation to the investigators to ensure the survey's smooth execution. The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Maqsood Ahmed, District Statistics and Evaluation Officer Sandeep Sharma and other concerned officials.

DC tours Zainapora, Shopian areas

JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 30

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today visited various areas of the district including Chitragam (Kalan), Babapora, Zainapora, Turkawangam, Gugloora, Trenz and Pinjora to assess the provision of seamless services following recent snowfall.

He also assessed the snow clearance operations, and was intimated that all major and minor roads have been made through for traffic and efforts are on to widen the clearance wherever required.

The DC during his inspection found shopkeepers and residents at Gugloora and Pinjora dumping snow on roads. He warned them to desist



from such unpleasant behaviours posing risk to commuters.

Shahid Saleem evaluated the effectiveness of snow-clearing measures enroute and interacted with residents of these areas to understand their concerns and responded positively for mitigating the concerns on priority.

The DC directed the officers to take strict

action against individuals or establishments involved in obstructing roads by dumping snow carelessly. These measures aim to ensure smooth movement for vehicles and pedestrians while minimizing disruptions caused by snow accumulation.

Many vehicles were found parked on roads which delayed the snow

clearance process. The DC instructed for 'no parking on roads' as it hampers snow clearance.

Even at some places there was no space left for ambulances to move as people had parked vehicles wrongly. During the visit, the involved persons in the dumping were asked to clear the road themselves and moral policing was done.

The Administration is committed to maintaining essential services and addressing challenges posed by harsh weather conditions in the district, said DC during the visit while reviewing the provision of water, electricity, road connectivity and healthcare services.

The DC was accompanied by DC ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, ACR and other concerned during the visit.

DC Poonch chairs meeting of DLSC on Effective Border Management

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 30

Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal today presided over a crucial meeting of the District Level Standing Committee (DLSC) on Effective Border Management here in the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex. This meeting aimed to enhance coordination between security forces and the local populace residing near the Line of Control (LoC).

DC Kundal conducted a comprehensive review of the security arrangements in the district, focusing on the status of bunker construction and other pressing security concerns affecting border villages.

Officials from the Army and paramilitary forces provided updates on the current security scenario along the LoC, highlighting the ongoing efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region.

Commending the collaborative efforts of civil administration and security personnel, DC Kundal recognized the successful organization of cultural programs and sports events in border villages, which contribute to a vibrant community atmosphere.



Additionally, police representatives reported on the regular verification of outside workers at local establishments, including stone crushers and petrol pumps. They also assured that frequent checks are conducted at fence gates to bolster security.

DC Kundal emphasized the importance of effective communication between the border community and security forces. He directed Tehsildars to hold monthly meetings with Nambardars to ensure continuous dialogue and coordination among border residents.

Key updates were shared regarding the construction of bunkers adjacent to the LoC. The Assistant Commissioner Development was tasked with ensuring the completion of pending bunker projects, while the Execu-

tive Engineer of the PWD (R&B) was instructed to adhere to strict timelines.

The Forest Department was asked to activate beat guards and report any illegal encroachments on forest lands or potential hideouts throughout Poonch.

Furthermore, stress was laid on taking stringent action against drug peddling and other social issues, reinforcing the need for collaboration among civil departments, security agencies, and intelligence services to maintain peace in the district.

The meeting was attended by ADC Poonch, ACR, CPO, ACD, CMO, Tehsildar (HQ), XENS from R&B/Jal Shakti/JPDCL/REW, along with representatives from the Indian Army, BSF, Police and various intelligence agencies.

DC Pulwama reviews preparations for Grand R-Day-2025 celebrations

JI NEWS SERVICE
PULWAMA, DECEMBER 30

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom Monday chaired a comprehensive meeting to meticulously review the arrangements for the Republic Day, 2025 celebrations in Pulwama.

The meeting witnessed the participation of senior officials from various government departments and security agencies, emphasizing the collective commitment to ensuring a flawless and grand celebration.

Dr. Qayoom emphasised on completing preparations promptly, while adhering to stringent security protocols to guarantee a safe and memorable event.

During the discussions, the DC directed all departments to work in close coordination to facilitate the smooth execution of planned events. Special emphasis was laid on preparing the venue, alongside suitable arrangements for seating, sound systems and illumination of government buildings and infrastructure.

The Health Department

was instructed to ensure robust medical preparedness, including first aid and ambulance services at the venue, particularly in light of the cold weather conditions.

Dr. Qayoom also called for a vibrant and culturally enriching celebration, tasking officials with curating captivating cultural programs and a meticulously planned parade. He reiterated the importance of adhering to the Flag Code to ensure the respectful hoisting and handling of the National Flag.

Furthermore, Commit-

tees of officers have been constituted and assigned tasks for effective coordination and smooth preparations for the upcoming Republic Day celebrations.

Highlighting the need for teamwork and timely execution, the DC urged officials to collaborate effectively and submit detailed action plans and progress updates.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to making Republic Day, 2025 a grand and memorable celebration, reflecting the unity and diversity of the nation.

DC Bandipora conducts inspection of Bandipora-Gurez Road

JI NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 30

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, on Monday conducted a comprehensive inspection of the post-snowfall situation of Bandipora-Gurez Road and ongoing snow clearance efforts.

During the visit, the DC carried out inspections at various critical points, aimed at ensuring swift restoration of connectivity and addressing challenges posed by the snowfall.

The DC assessed on ground conditions along the Bandipora-Gurez route. He interacted with the teams involved in



snow clearance operations to gain first-hand insights into the progress and challenges faced during the process.

Qadri emphasized the need to speed up the process of clearance and directed the concerned authorities to continue

operations in all affected areas to minimize disruptions. Availability of Antiskid chains with vehicles travelling along the Bandipora-Gurez road was also inspected during the visit.

Highlighting the administration's commitment to addressing such chal-

lenges, the DC assured the public that all necessary resources and assistance have been mobilized. He informed that control rooms have been activated at district, sub-divisional, and field level for real-time monitoring and instant action.

The administration remains focused on maintaining seamless coordination among departments to ensure the safety and well-being of residents during this period of inclement weather.

The DC was accompanied by Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Bandipora and other officials during the visit.

Udhampur Admin imparts training to supervisors for baseline survey under Mission YUVA



JI NEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 30

A day-long training programme for Supervisors deployed for the Baseline Survey under Mission YUVA, was held today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner

Udhampur Saloni Rai here in the Conference Hall, DC Office Complex.

Additional District Development Commissioner Rajinder Singh, Assistant Commissioner Development Dr. Ranjeet Singh Kotwal, General Manager DIC, District Sta-

tics and Evaluation Officer and other officers from line departments were present.

The DC issued necessary instructions to the Supervisors and concerned departments to ensure the smooth conduct of the Baseline Survey scheduled

for January 1, 2025. Highlighting the significance of Mission YUVA, the DC emphasized the need for active interdepartmental participation, with every department contributing to the program's objectives.

Assistant Director Employment, DE&CC Udhampur, Priyanka Gupta briefed the participants about the objectives of Mission YUVA. She provided a detailed overview of the scheme and elaborated on the procedures for conducting baseline enumerations and surveys.

Dy. CM directs for adherence to rules, regulations during mining operations

Reviews performance, functioning of Mining Deptt.

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 30

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary today directed the officers for strict adherence to already set rules and regulations during mining extractions and the need for following the environmental concerns while carrying these activities.

The Deputy Chief Minister, made these remarks while chairing a meeting to review performance, functioning of the mining department at Civil Secretariat here today.

The meeting was attended by Director, Mining, Member Secretary FAC, other senior officers and stakeholders.

While directing for following the rules set up for mining operations, Surinder Choudhary said that any deviation from the same would not be acceptable. He said that the district



mining officers should ensure that no aberration takes place.

"The Officers should ensure that the mining operations are carried out strictly in accordance with the set norms and procedures. The lessees should also ensure that they don't flout any rules, and they should work in close coordination with the department, so that any violation taking place would be controlled and necessary action initiated against the defaulters", the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He further directed for ensuring environmental concerns be taken into

consideration while doing the excavations. He said that we have to take care of the fragile eco-system of our region and maximum care should be taken for ensuring its preservation. "We have to ensure that the development should be in consonance with the environmental needs and safeguards. Preserving our environment should also be taken into consideration", he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister also directed the officers to take care of the grievances being projected by the stakeholders and take necessary steps for their prompt redressal.

DC Kupwara reviews preparations for implementation of Mission YUVA

JI NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, DECEMBER 30

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today reviewed the preparations in a meeting at D.C Office here for effective implementation of Mission Yuva Udhayami Vikas Abhiyan (YUVA) in the district.

On the occasion, the DC emphasized the objectives of the Mission YUVA, a government initiative aimed at fostering sustainable employment opportunities in J&K by supporting the creation of new micro-enterprises, expanding existing businesses and encouraging innovative entrepreneurial ventures.

She directed all the line departments to focus on the key action points and understand their roles to ensure the Mission's objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently.

Ayushi took a detailed review of training/demonstration sessions to the nominated Supervisors, Investigators to ensure smooth and proper conduct of the baseline survey under Mission YUVA.



Investigators have been deployed to complete the month-long baseline survey starting from 01.01.2025.

Meanwhile, the Tehsildars, Block Development Officers, Child Development Officers, besides, Lumberdars and Chowkidars have been directed to extend full cooperation and coordination with the investigators of Mission YUVA to ensure hassle free conduct of the baseline survey.

CPO Kupwara, AD DE&CC, DSO and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

DC Poonch approves 27 Silkworm Rearing units among 660 cases under HADP

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 30

Deputy Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kundal chaired a meeting of the District Task Force Committee under the Holistic Agricultural Development Programme (HADP), here in the DC office.

The Deputy Commissioner interviewed intending candidates and approved the establishment of 27 Silkworm Rearing units, providing essential loan facilities and margin money subsidies to the beneficiaries.

The discussion also encompassed the HADP schemes for Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, and Animal Husbandry departments.

To kick start silk production in Poonch, the Deputy Commissioner directed the Assistant Director of Handicrafts to organize training sessions for beneficiaries and equipping them with skills.

Furthermore, the meeting approved 160 Horticulture cases, 233 Animal Husbandry cases, and 240 Agriculture cases under the HADP, reflecting a comprehensive approach to agricultural development.

NCORD meeting: DC reviews drug control measures in Poonch District

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 30

Deputy Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kundal chaired a district-level NCORD (Narco Coordination Centre) meeting today in the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex. The meeting brought together stakeholders to review and enhance strategies aimed at combating drug-related challenges in the district.

Representatives from various departments provided updates on ongoing initiatives focused on control of drug trafficking and abuse. The initiatives encompass community outreach programs, awareness drives, and public engagement that target both the supply and demand aspects of the drug problem.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the essential role of educational institutions in raising awareness about the dangers of drug use. He directed the Principals of Degree Colleges and Chief Education Officer (CEO) to organize a series of seminars and special lectures aimed at educating students and the public about the harmful effects of substance abuse. He stressed the importance of scaling up counseling, awareness, and Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities across the district. Furthermore, the



Deputy Commissioner sought a detailed report from the Police Department regarding the types of drugs seized and their locations to develop effective strategies for tracking drug peddlers. He instructed the CID and Police to maintain a comprehensive list of all drug peddlers in the district, emphasizing the need for strict action against them. Law enforcement agencies were also advised to intensify efforts through random inspections in public places.

Calling for a robust enforcement drive, the DC urged the seizure of drugs and prevention of youth, particularly students, from falling victim to drug abuse. He highlighted the importance of a zero-tolerance approach in deterring drug peddlers.

Additionally, the Drug Control Organisation was tasked with ensuring the installation of CCTV cameras by all chemist shops and at locations considered to be hotspots for drug-related activities, alongside regular checks on computerized billing in medical shops.

The Deputy Commissioner also called for the declaration of more Panchayats as Nasha Mukta (Drug-Free) and urged them to conduct regular meetings of Panchayat Level Committees.

The meeting was attended by ADC Poonch, ACR, SDMs of Mendhar and Surankote, CEO, CMO, PO ICDS, DSWO, Tehsildars and officers from the Police, CID, IB, MS DH Poonch, along with other concerned officials.

Aspirational Block Program: Rajouri's Block Khawas achieves remarkable Milestone by securing 5th Rank Nationwide

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 30

Block Khawas-the sole Aspirational Block of Rajouri district has achieved a significant milestone by securing the 5th rank among the country's 500 blocks under the Aspirational Block Programme (ABP).

Block Khawas was identified as an Aspirational Block on January 7, 2023, at the 2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries, with the objective to enhance governance and improve the quality of life for citizens in underdeveloped and challenging regions of the country. The programme focuses on converging existing schemes, defining measurable outcomes, and ensuring continuous monitoring to drive progress.

To achieve saturation of key developmental indicators, the district administration launched a comprehensive initiative titled "Sampooranata Abhiyan" from July to September 2024. Under this initiative, six critical indicators were targeted for saturation including three from the Health Department, one each from ICDS, Agriculture and Social Welfare Departments.

District Development Commissioner Abhishek Sharma, in the capacity of nodal officer, through constant monitoring and regular reviews of stakeholder departments and field-level functionaries, secured 100% saturation in five out of the six indicators. The remaining indicator is pending due to a nationwide technical glitch. The progress of Block Khawas has been remarkable, with a dramatic improvement in its ranking over the quarters: First Quarter: Ranked 405, Second Quarter: Ranked 453 and Third Quarter: Ranked 5.

The extraordinary leap underscores the commitment and hard work of all stakeholders involved in the Aspirational Block Programme in Rajouri district. Speaking on the achievement, District Development Commissioner Abhishek Sharma, lauded the efforts of the administration and grassroots-level workers. "This milestone reflects our collective commitment to ensuring holistic development in the most challenging regions. The significant improvement in Block Khawas' ranking is a testament to the dedication and synergy of all departments and field teams," he stated.

Director Animal Husbandry visits Shopian, reviews achievements under various schemes, activities

JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 30

To gear up the implementation of ongoing Central and UT sector schemes, Director Animal Husbandry Kashmir, Dr. Parvinder Singh Sudan Monday visited District Shopian to take review of physical & financial achievements under various schemes and activities pertaining to the Department.

Dr Sudan emphasized to saturate all the govt. schemes with special focus to cover the maximum number of beneficiaries so as to double the farmers' income from the dairy and poultry sector.

The Director passed directions and stressed



to establish more units under Project 23, 25 & 28 of HADP Scheme. Furthermore, he stressed upon all Veterinary Assis-

tant Surgeons to gear up uploads on Pashudhan Portal in respect to Als, Births & vaccinations in a time bound manner.

Addressing the long pending demand, Dr Sudan informed that District Shopian is going to get a new state of art Veterinary Hospital for which the budget has been earmarked.

The visit highlighted the Department's endeavor for fostering sustainable growth in the Animal Husbandry Sector.

Snow clearance completed up to Peer Ki Gali from Shopian side

JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 30

Significant progress has been achieved vis-à-vis snow clearance up to the Peer Ki Gali via Shopian side, with Mechanical Engineering Department (MED), Shopian completing the job late last night, much before the expected deadline.

Following the Deputy Commissioner's visit to the Mughal Road yesterday instructing concerned for immediate snow clearance, strenuous efforts were made by the MED Shopian resulting in road clearance in a record time yesterday.

Subsequent to the snow clearance, Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar along with Chief Engineer, MED Kashmir, Manga Ram Kotwal and ADDC, Dr.Nasir Ahmad Lone today visited the Mughal Road axis and reviewed the snow clearance operations and assessed the road's traffic worthiness.

The DC assessed the situation of snow accumulation, assessment of avalanche areas and subsequent clearance along the strategic road and deliberated on its reopening for traffic.

Some vulnerable spots were thoroughly taken care of and salt sprinkled to make the spots traffic worthy.

With the snow clearance operations progressing well along Poonch side, the Mughal



Road is expected to be opened for traffic soon,

said Shahid Saleem on the occasion. The DC was

accompanied by ACR and other officers.

District Administration Shopian prepares for maiden Winter Carnival

JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 30

The District Administration, Shopian is gearing up for its maiden Winter Carnival in order to demonstrate the commitment of district administration to promote tourism, culture and community engagement in Shopian.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar has taken a hands-on approach to ensure everything goes smoothly. He chaired a meeting with officers to review the arrangements and preparations for the carnival. Department wise arrangements were fixed on the occasion to make the Winter Carnival a suc-



cess. The event will be organized at Dubjan along the Mughal Road, and shall involve various activities, artistic performances, sports events, entertainment events for promotion of tourism, arts and culture of the district

including snow crafts, snow igloos, ice sports and competitions for children, exhibition of local cuisine, foods and arts among a litany of diverse activities. The meeting was attended by ADDC, ADC, ACR and other district and sectoral officers.

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF SPECIAL TRAIN
For the convenience of Rail Passengers, Northern Railway has decided to extend the Periodicity of following Special train as per details given below:-

Train No.	From	To	Frequency	Earlier Notified Upto	Extended Upto	Total Trips
04688	Budgam	Banihal	Daily (Except Friday)	01.10.2024 to 31.12.2024	01.01.2025 to 31.01.2025	26
04687	Banihal	Budgam				26

Rest of all information will hold good

For detailed information regarding stoppages and timings of above trains, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Please join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/railmadad) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/railmadad) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/railmadad)

RAILMADAD HELPLINE NO. 139

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No:-770-W/169/WA/FZR/2024-25 Date: 30.12.2024

Sr.DENAV/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below listed tenders and available on www.reps.gov.in with closing date 16/1/2025 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offers received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on www.reps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft/Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information login to www.reps.gov.in.

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	278-2024-25-MCTM-DRM-FZR is Two Packet System & 279-2024-25-MCTM-DRM-FZR is Single Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
25/12/2024	02/01/2025	16/01/2025/ 15:00 Hrs

S. No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender
1.	278-2024-25-MCTM-DRM-FZR	Provision of 10.20 km long RCC B/wall and 48.10km metal beam crash barrier fencing along the track to prevent CRO over Vande Bharat Route under SSE-W/UHP in JAT-SVDK (RCC Bwall 2.1 km, 1.0 km wire mesh fencing & Metal Crash Barrier 33.00 km) Advertised Value (Rs.) Earnest Money (Rs.) Validity of Offer Period of Completion 215623296.50 1228100 90 Days 12 Months Similar nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work"
2.	279-2024-25-MCTM-DRM-FZR	Provision of 10.20 km long RCC B/wall and 48.10km metal beam crash barrier fencing along the track to prevent CRO over Vande Bharat Route in JAT-SVDK under SSE-W/SVDK (RCC Bwall 1.0 km & Metal Crash Barrier 14.160 km, wire mesh fencing 2km) Advertised Value (Rs.) Earnest Money (Rs.) Validity of Offer Period of Completion 95916784.56 629600 60 Days 12 Months Similar nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work"

Note 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against the tender.

3974/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Local terror outfits...

data reveals.
42 FOREIGN TERRORISTS KILLED IN 2024
 "Of 68 terrorists killed this year, 42 were foreigners, while 26 local terrorists were eliminated," the data states, adding, "In the preceding years i.e. in 2019, 157, in 2020, 221, in 2021, 180, in 2022, 187 and in 2023, 73 terrorists were gunned down by the security forces in different encounters across Jammu and Kashmir."

Among the 42 foreign terrorists killed this year, 17 were eliminated during infiltration attempts along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB), while 25 were killed during encounters in the interior areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

The foreign terrorists were killed in Udhampur, Kathua, Doda, Rajouri, Kupwara, Bandipora, and Baramulla districts.

North Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded highest number of foreign terrorist casualties, with 14 being shot dead in nine encounters.

30 CIVILIANS, 28 SF PERSONNEL LOST THEIR LIVES

According to the data this year, 30 civilians lost their lives in terrorist initiated incidents across the Union Territory.

In 2019, 44, in 2020, 38, in 2021, 41, in 2022, 31 and in 2023, 14 civilians were killed in the terrorist initiated incidents and encounters.

This year, according to the data, 28 security forces personnel died in various terror related incidents.

According to the data 80 security force personnel lost their lives in 2019, 63 in 2020, 42 in 2021 and 32 in 2022 and 30 in 2023.

In 2024, 60 terrorism related incidents were reported in Jammu and Kashmir, while in 2019, 153, in 2020, 126, in 2021, 129, in 2022, 251 and in 2023, 46 terrorism related incidents were reported.

TOP COMMANDERS ELIMINATED

Top terrorist commanders killed this year included Basit Ahmad Dar in Kulgam encounter, Usman Lashkari in Srinagar encounter, Arbaz Mir in Anantnag encounter, and Farooq Ahmad Bhat (Nali) in Kulgam operation.

Terrorists killed in 2024 were from TRF, PAFF (offshoots of Lashkar-e-Taiba), Kashmir Tigers (offshoot of Jaish-e-Mohammed), and Hizbul Mujahideen.

TIMELINE

June 9, 2024: Terrorists attacked a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims from Shiv Khori to Katra, causing it to plunge into a gorge. Nine, including seven non-local pilgrims, were killed, and 41 were injured.

June 11/12, 2024: Two foreign terrorists and a CRPF jawan were killed in a gunfight after terrorists attacked a joint checkpoint in Kathua district. Five Rashtriya Rifles personnel and a Special Police Officer were also injured in a terrorist attack in Doda district.

July 6, 2024: Six terrorists were killed in twin encounters in Kulgam's Modergam and Chinigam villages. Two soldiers also lost their lives during the operations.

July 8, 2024: Five Army soldiers were killed in action and five others injured after terrorists attacked a military convoy in Machedi forest area of Billawar, Kathua district.

July 16, 2024: Four Army soldiers, including a Captain, were killed in an encounter with terrorists in the Koti forests of Doda district.

August 10, 2024: Two Army jawans and a civilian were killed in a fierce gunfight with terrorists in the Ahlan area of Kokernag, Anantnag district. Another civilian was injured in the encounter.

October 20, 2024: Terrorists attacked a workers' camp near Gagangeer, Sonamarg, killing seven employees, including a Kashmiri doctor, and injuring five others.

October 24, 2024: Terrorists attacked an Army vehicle six kilometers from Gulmarg, killing two soldiers and two porters, and injuring another soldier and porter.

October 29, 2024: Security Forces killed three foreign terrorists in Jammu's Akhnoor after they made an abortive attempt to attack the forces.

November 7, 2024: Terrorists kidnapped and killed two civilians serving as Village Defence Guards in Kishtwar, Jammu.

December 19, 2024: Five Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in Kadder, Behibagh area of Kulgam district. Two soldiers were also injured. KNO

J&K Fire Services...

throughout the region by the end of November 2024, reaching 566,797 students, 50,713 teaching staff, 34,258 health employees, and 118,890 other participants, raising awareness about fire safety.

Speaking exclusively to KNO, Alok Kumar (IPS), ADGP and Director of F&ES, J&K, said, "99% of people want to get out of their burning houses, while we can't wait to get in to save lives. Fighting fires that threaten lives and safety is one of the most dangerous challenges we face. Our deep commitment to saving lives drives us forward. Every fire is a fierce battle, and every life we save reinforces our purpose." He added, "We Serve to Save."

The monthly breakdown of fire service statistics, from January to November, is as

follows:

January: 858 fire calls, 1 rescue call, 1 false call, 3 personnel injured, 377 structures involved, and Rs 155 crore worth of property saved.

February: 382 fire calls, 5 rescue calls, 3 false calls, no injuries, 316 structures involved, and Rs 66 crore worth of property saved.

March: 328 fire calls, 1 rescue call, 4 false calls, no injuries, 225 structures involved, and Rs 66 crore worth of property saved.

April: 355 fire calls, 7 rescue calls, 8 false calls, 3 personnel injured, 197 structures involved, and Rs 543 crore worth of property saved.

May: 1,280 fire calls, 11 rescue calls, 5 false calls, 4 personnel injured, 281 structures involved, and Rs 136 crore worth of property saved.

June: 1,324 fire calls, 7 rescue calls, 4 false calls, 7 personnel injured, 308 structures involved, and Rs 160 crore worth of property saved.

July: 366 fire calls, 8 rescue calls, 3 false calls, 5 personnel injured, 230 structures involved, and Rs 131 crore worth of property saved.

August: 193 fire calls, 8 rescue calls, 1 false call, 1 personnel injured, 144 structures involved, and Rs 70 crore worth of property saved.

September: 209 fire calls, 3 rescue calls, 3 false calls, no injuries, 131 structures involved, and Rs 140 crore worth of property saved.

October: 646 fire calls, 1 rescue call, 5 false calls, no injuries, 404 structures involved, and Rs 99 crore worth of property saved.

November: 811 fire calls, 8 rescue calls, 5 false calls, no injuries, 325 structures involved, and Rs 28 crore worth of property saved.

The department conducted a total of 4,889 fire service audits during the year, with monthly breakdowns as: January: 446 audits, February: 441 audits, March: 453 audits, April: 410 audits, May: 509 audits, June: 440 audits, July: 527 audits, August: 494 audits, September: 333 audits, October: 394 audits and November: 442 audits.

The Fire & Emergency Services Department said it responded to 6,752 fire incidents from January to November 2024. These incidents resulted in the injury of 23 fire service personnel during operations. KNO

J&K records total...

year, the highest deficiency was recorded at 91 per cent as the rainfall of only 8.7 mm was recorded in the first month of 2024.

However, the situation improved in the month of February when 108.4 mm rainfall was recorded, taking the deficiency for the month to only 17 per cent.

It is worth mentioning here that the previous winter season from December to February has seen a deficiency of 54 per cent.

The data shared by an independent weather forecaster, Faizan Arif Keng, had further revealed that the southwest monsoon season, from June to September, saw a rainfall of 408.5 mm against the normal precipitation of 549.1 mm, thereby recording a deficit rainfall of 26 per cent only during the four months of this year till September.

The data however, indicated that the month of August this year, saw a good rainfall as only a 2 per cent deficit was recorded in the eighth month of the year 2024.

Furthermore, the other three months including June, July and September recorded a deficit rainfall ranging 36 to 42 per cent.

The months of October and November this year saw a deficiency of 74 per cent and 69 per cent respectively, the data reads, adding that the overall shortage for the post-monsoon period until November was 71 per cent.

Nonetheless, the post-monsoon rainfall shortage came down to 64 per cent in December due to the recent rainfall and snow spell.

According to the data, the ongoing month till December 29 has recorded a deficit rainfall of 58 per cent.

Earlier, the KNO had reported that Jammu and Kashmir recorded a deficit of 81 per cent from October to December 25, 2024.

From October 01 to December 25, 2024, Jammu and Kashmir has recorded a deficit rainfall of 81 per cent as against the normal precipitation of 110.0 mm; the UT has recorded only 21.0 mm rainfall during the period.

However, the recent rain and snowfall has brought the deficiency down to a large extent. KNO

Achieve goal of...

for discussion during the meeting included anti-terror operations and infiltration threats along the Line of Control (LoC).

Top security officials, according to the sources, briefed the Union Home Secretary about the counter-infiltration grid reinforcement and coordination between security agencies.

He was also briefed about the preparations being made to ensure that upcoming Republic Day passes peacefully.

The meeting which continued till late in the evening discussed strategies to counter infiltration attempts and strengthen anti-

terror operations in the Union Territory.

Pertinently, earlier this month Union Home Minister Amit Shah had chaired a high-level security meet on J&K in New Delhi.

The Union Home Minister had reiterated that in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Zero Tolerance Policy against terrorism, the goal of 'Terror Free Jammu and Kashmir' would be achieved at the earliest and all resources will be made available for this.

He had said that the PM Modi led government, with the joint efforts of all security forces, is committed to establish complete dominance over terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

He had appreciated efforts of the security agencies for a significant decline in terrorist incidents, infiltration and recruitment of youth in terrorist organizations.

Shah had said that due to the sustained and coordinated efforts of the PM Modi led government, the ecosystem of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir has almost ended.

UNION HOME SECRETARY TO CHAIR KEY MEETING TODAY

Meanwhile, the Union Home Secretary will chair a key meeting in Srinagar on Tuesday to assess key flagship schemes funded by the Government of India.

The meeting, according to the sources, will also evaluate the progress of infrastructure and employment-driven projects, particularly those funded by the Centre. KNO

World Bank's Rs 1500 Crore...

This extension is specifically focused on the completion of the LD Hospital in Srinagar and the construction of four bridges," the letter states.

These works, according to documents, would have remained incomplete by the current closing date (December 31, 2024). These works notably include the Lal Ded Hospital, intended to serve as a tertiary care gynecological facility, and the construction of four bridges.

The extension was granted after the project implementing entity, in its letter dated November 9, 2024, requested another 20-month extension from the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA). The Government of India endorsed the request to extend the current project closing date from December 31, 2024, until August 31, 2026.

The project's original closing date of June 30, 2020, has undergone five extensions. In June 2020, the project was granted a one-year extension of the closing date until June 30, 2021. Additional extensions were granted in June 2021 (for 12 months until June 30, 2022), in June 2022 (for six months until December 31, 2022), in December 2022 (for 12 months until December 31, 2023), and in December 2023 (for 12 months until December 31, 2024). KNO

No New Year celebrations...

Following his death, the Union government announced 7-day national mourning with national flag to fly at half mast, while official functions and celebrations also been postponed during this period. KNO

Govt appoints Vitul Kumar...

upon superannuation of Anish Dayal Singh on Tuesday.

"The competent authority has approved to assign the officiating charge for the post of Director General, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to Shri Vitul Kumar, IPS (UP:93), Special Director General, Central Reserve Police Force upon superannuation of Shri Anish Dayal Singh, IPS (MA:88) on 31.12.2024 till the appointment of a regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is earlier," the memorandum said.

J&K braces for...

on January 1st & 2nd, a feeble WD would affect J&K and under its influence, generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light Snow at scattered places during 1st evening or night to 2nd morning.

He added that from January 3-6, a moderate WD would affect J&K and under its influence, generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light to moderate rain in plains of Jammu and snow at many places of J&K with peak activity on 4th & 5th January.

Meanwhile, in its advisory, the weatherman has predicted cold wave at isolated places till tomorrow.

"In view of snowfall, sub-freezing temp & icy conditions over roads plains and higher reaches, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to follow administration and traffic advisory," it reads, adding that there is a possibility of heavy snow at isolated higher reaches during January 4th & 5th.

Furthermore, after the fresh snowfall, the night temperature continued to settle above the normal temperature in Srinagar and Kupwara. Srinagar, the summer capital of J&K, as per the details recorded a minimum temperature of minus 0.9 degree while Kupwara recorded a minimum temperature of 0.1 degree.

However, the Gulmarg, a famous ski resort, recorded a low of minus 10.0 degree Celsius while Pahalgam, a famous tourist destination recorded a minimum temperature of minus 9.2 degree Celsius. Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, has recorded a low of minus 2.8 degree Celsius while Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded minus 2.1 degree Celsius. KNO

Lt Governor chairs...

and administrative importance to further improve the overall functioning of the university.

The meeting accorded in-principle approval to various agenda items and proposals including adoption and inclusion of several provisions as per the guidelines and notifications of UGC and National Education Policy 2020.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the University for regular revision of curriculum and courses, besides introducing new courses in line with the emerging trends and needs of the modern-day world. The University should also give dedicated focus to promotion of local languages and culture of the region, he said.

He further asked the University to start a drive for faculty strengthening, filling up the vacant Teaching / Non-Teaching posts and resolving the promotion related matters under Career Advancement Scheme in fast-track mode.

The Lieutenant Governor also passed necessary directions to the university for streamlining the e-office and timely completion of ongoing projects.

On the occasion, members of the Council congratulated the Vice Chancellor and faculty members and staff of University of Jammu for attaining the coveted A++ Grade from NAAC with an exceptional CGPA score of 3.72, and becoming the only A++ University in J&K UT.

The University Council also discussed the success of Design Your Own Degree undergraduate programme.

Discussions were also held on streamlining the process of direct recruitments for various posts, onboarding of sports experts for effective implementation of Sports Policy of the University, Credit framework for Design Your Degree programme etc.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu presented a detailed report highlighting University's thrust on research, skill development, Internships and Start Ups, experiential learning through major projects; path-breaking initiatives of the University including digital and environment friendly initiatives, and promoting trans-disciplinary and holistic Education.

The chair was also briefed on the action taken on the directions passed during the previous meeting. KNO

Omission of holiday...

of the Lt Governor administration to abolish holidays on Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's birthday and Martyrs' Day on July 13 as an attempt to distort history.

Criticizing the move, Tarigami said, "Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was a towering personality, and his contribution to the freedom struggle and empowerment of the people of J&K cannot be ignored. The empowerment of people we see today came through decisions like Land-to-Tiller without compensation, Education for All, and the empowerment of women, which resulted from that movement."

"To downgrade such a towering personality is a distortion of history," he added.

Tarigami said it is very unfortunate that July 13 and December 5 have been dropped from the list of holidays for the 2025 calendar year. He said July 13 holds immense historical significance for J&K, as it commemorates the sacrifice of those who laid down their lives protesting against autocratic rule and advocating for human dignity.

"Similarly, December 5, Sheikh Sahib's birthday, is of great importance. Sheikh Sahib and his colleagues made great contributions toward empowering people by democratizing society, implementing radical land reforms, introducing free education, and empowering women as part of the Naya Kashmir manifesto," he said. "Attempts to erase such pivotal milestones from our

84 Bn CRPF organizes "Fit India Cycle Rally" at Chatha Jammu

JJ NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, DEC 30

As a nationwide fitness mission, Fit India Cycling, 84 Battalion has organized a 10 km long Cyclothon from Battalion Headquarters Chatha Jammu to SKAUST Chatha Jammu and back.

The Cyclothon was flagged off by N Ranbir Singh Commandant 84 Bn CRPF @ in presence of Suma K P DyCdt.

The event was participated by around 40 school students of R V Public Hakkal Chatha, The Seminary High School Chatha and Wazir Janki Nath Memorial School Rani Bagh and CRPF personnel of 84 Bn. Avtar Singh Sarpanch Chatha, P P Singh a former International Hockey player and coach, Surbi Sharma Principal Seminary High School Chatha, Advocate Jasmeet Kour Pandey Principal R V Public School Chatha and Corporator Jammu Cantonment Board also attended the event.

While speaking during the flag off ceremony, Commandant 84 Bn emphasized the need for a Fit and Healthy society. The young students, who are the future pillars of the nation, should make efforts to stay fit by taking up different physical activities. Cycling is a low-impact, eco-friendly, fun and cheap activity that can be undertaken, by both young and old, on regular basis to stay healthy. The Sarpanch and School principals thanked 84 Bn CRPF for organizing such positive activities for the school children of Chatha area.

collective memory undermine the values they represent. Distorting history this way will serve no purpose."

The CPI (M) leader said the attempt is being made to further divide people. "By such decisions, the administration has insulted the people of Jammu and Kashmir. CPI(M) appeals to the people of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh to unitedly resist such divisive policies of the central government," he added. KNO

SMVD ropeway: Katra...

"They come here to play politics but have failed to secure the release of our loved ones." She urged the Lieutenant Governor and the administration to intervene, saying some detainees have severe health conditions requiring immediate attention.

The bandh, now in its sixth consecutive day, has brought the holy town to a standstill. All shops, restaurants, and businesses remained closed, and vehicular traffic was off the roads. The shutdown has disrupted life in one of the busiest pilgrimage hubs, with thousands of pilgrims arriving daily to visit the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. The number of devotees visiting the shrine has reportedly dropped due to the protests.

The Sangharsh Samiti announced the extension of the bandh till January 1, 2025, vowing to continue the fight against the government's proposed ropeway project. "This is a battle for survival and dignity, and for ensuring that the traditional route to Mata's shrine remains intact," a Samiti spokesperson said.

He accused the government of worsening the situation by refusing to release the detainees or engage in meaningful dialogue. Meanwhile, five youths have been on a hunger strike since Wednesday night, demanding the release of the detained leaders.

In a rare show of unity, BJP MLA Baldev Raj Sharma and former Congress minister Jugal Kishore Sharma shared the stage in support of the Sangharsh Samiti, setting aside their political differences. Their joint presence was seen as a symbolic gesture of solidarity for the ongoing agitation.

The proposed Rs 250-crore Vaishno Devi ropeway project, announced last month by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, aims to connect Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat to facilitate access to the shrine for senior citizens, children and others who find it challenging to climb the 13-km track.

The Sangharsh Samiti, however, opposes the project, claiming it will affect the livelihood of local residents and disrupt the sanctity of the traditional pilgrimage route. KNO

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT DISTRICT JAIL JAMMU
 e-Mail: districtjallammu@gmail.com
 Phone: 0191-2579328.

CORRIGENDUM

Please read e-NIT No.01 of 2024 dated 26.12.2024 instead of e-NIT No. of 2024 dated 26.06.24 figuring in the first line of corrigendum issued under endorsement No.DJJ/Accts/ 2779-82 dated 26.12.2024 by this office. All other components of the corrigendum shall remain same.

No:- DJJ/Accts/ 2779-82-30
 Dated: 28-12-24

DIP/J-8731/24
 Date: 30-12-24

[Signature]
 28.12.2024
 Superintendent,
 District Jail Jammu

MLA Arvind reviews GMC Jammu projects; asks hospital Admin, doctors to enhance patient care

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

Arvind Gupta, MLA Jammu West along with Dr Parnesh Mahajan, senior BJP leader today conducted a comprehensive review of ongoing and completed projects at Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu, emphasizing the importance of efficient utilization of resources to enhance healthcare services. He asked the hospital administration and medical staff to prioritize patient care by improving infrastructure, streamlining services, and ensuring a compassionate approach toward those seeking treatment.

During his visit, the MLA Arvind first examined the teaching sections of the Govt. Medical College, Jammu including newly built Lecture Halls and Teaching Class Rooms. He visited the different sections of the hospital including Patient's Wards, Emergency Section, ICU and other areas. He also taken round of the ongoing projects



like Prof. RN Chopra Nursing Home, construction of new shed in the Emergency Premises, black toping of the Govt. Medical College Complex, and other important projects.

Arvind appreciated the work being done by the Govt. Medical College, Jammu's Administration and the Principal, Govt. Medical College, Jammu for their efforts in direction of better patient care. He directed the Civil Engineering Department to prepare a detailed estimate for up-liftment of the facade of Chopra Nursing Home to expedite the black toping of the Govt. Medical College Jammu Complex and other ongo-

ing projects. He also visited the surrounding including premises of Govt. Medical College, Jammu and directed the concerned Departments to start work for starting of the footpath on the road adjoining Govt. Medical College, Jammu and improvement of exit gate of the GMC, Jammu. He also directed traffic authorities to maintain traffic discipline outside the GMC premises for smooth functioning of the hospital.

Principal, GMC, Jammu acknowledged the visiting MLA regarding the working of the hospital staff various newly installed machinery and equipment and extensions of GMC Hospital including

Bone and Joint Hospital, Cancer Hospital, MCH Gandhinagar, Neonatology Department at SMGS Hospital, Jammu, Services of the PET Scan in Jammu Region, Bio Safety Level-III Lab, Another installation of 03 Tesla MRI Machine, new initiatives being taken for the up-gradation and enhancement of equipment's in the Emergency Wing of the GMC Hospital, Jammu.

Later, the MLA also interacted with the patients, staff as well as doctors on duty and was satisfied with the treatment and care being provided to the patients by the hospital authorities. He showed his satisfaction towards cleanliness, sanitation and beautification of the hospital.

Arvind Gupta also asked the Principal GMC to minimize the presence of attendants within the hospital premises, ensuring that doctors can focus more effectively on their duties and provide uninterrupted medical attention.

BJP Nowshera delegation meets LG

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

A delegation of BJP leaders led by DDC member Smt Sangita Sharma and BJP Distt President Smt Neena Sharma, Senior BJP Leaders from Nowshera including Rakesh Raina, Preeti Gupta Mahila Morcha, Jagmohan Kour Ex Sarpanch, Om Parkash, Sardar Jagjit Singh Ji called on Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha.

The delegation discussed with the Lieutenant Governor various public important issues of Nowshera constituency and problems faces by general public after formation of new Government and the problems being faced by the Common man. BJP Delegation requested for earlier Start of Classes of Degree Colleges at Lambari, Completion of Rajal



gravity irrigation canals; Inclusion of Punjabi subject in Higher Secondary School Nowshera and Higher Secondary School Qila Darhal, creation of separate Educational Zone for Seri, JB Bank Barnch at Bajabain, Sanction of PMGSY Road Ghai Unpas and other border areas of Nowshera Assembly Constituency, Upgradation of High School Langer, Kheri Dharat and Dabber Potha, Upgradation of infrastructure if Seri Higer Secondary School, Seprate BDC Block for Narian Chingus adjoining Panchayats.

Beside this delegation discussed and stressed

upon the smooth functioning of PWD (R&B) department and also requested for fair tendering process where recent violations have been observed and wrongs being done under political pressure.

Hon'ble LG Sh. Manoj Sinha Ji assured the delegation for proper implementation of rule of Law and also said the nine can violation the rules established and anyone found guilty shall face the Law under Criminal proceedings. Delegation also requested Hon'ble LG to make a visit of Nowshera border area in near future.

Sheikh Abdullah had no positive contribution to J&K: Kavinder



JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

Senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister, Kavinder Gupta today strongly criticized the National Conference's demand for the restoration of the holiday on the birth anniversary of Sheikh Abdullah in the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory.

In a statement issued here today, the BJP stalwart pointed out the gross discrimination that several communities, including Gorkhas, Valmiki and refugees had faced under the successive regimes of the National Conference over the past 65 years. He emphasized that these marginalized groups were deprived of basic rights and opportunities, particularly under the guise of Article 370, which kept them from enjoying equal privileges afforded to the rest of the country. He further remarked that even their own community people like Gujjars and Paharis were also neglected and sidelined by the NC leadership.

Kavinder asserted that with the abrogation of Article 370 under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, every section of society in Jammu and Kashmir was now entitled to equal rights, ensuring that the people of Jammu and Kashmir irrespective of caste, colour or religion could avail themselves of the same benefits and opportunities as other citizens across the country.

Kavinder criticized Sheikh Abdullah, stating that his actions had separated Jammu and Kashmir from the rest of India, leading the people into decades of backwardness. He asserted that when Sardar Patel had successfully integrated 562 princely states into the Indian Union, why was the fate of Jammu and Kashmir decided solely by Jawaharlal Nehru, resulting in several communities being deprived of their rightful due. He criticized Sheikh Abdullah for prioritizing his personal and political interests over the welfare of the people, leading to decades of discrimination and backwardness in the region.

The senior BJP leader called on the newly formed NC government to focus on addressing the pressing concerns of the common people, including employment, healthcare, and infrastructure, rather than resurrecting outdated symbolic gestures. He asked NC government to prioritize the welfare of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and take concrete steps toward solving the real challenges facing the region, fostering a brighter and more prosperous future for all.

BJP commends govt decision for status quo in holiday list-2025

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

In an official hand out issued by the Bharatiya Janata Party, it has appreciated the decision of the government to maintain status quo in the list of public holidays to be observed in the JK UT during 2025 issued by the General Administration Department. In a significant decision taken by the LG Administration on 28 December 2019, the two controversial state holidays on July 13 and December 5 were deleted from the list of public holidays to be observed in 2020. The practice has been continuing unchanged since then. The decision was widely welcome across the nation as these holidays were controversial and region specific. The restoration of these two holidays was included in its election manifesto by the National Conference. It was one of the many controversial commitments made by the party. After forming the government its many leaders and legislators including the party's general secre-

tary had upped the ante making fervent appeals to the LG to declare December 5, 2024 as a public holiday but were ignored. It is also learnt that further pressure was exerted on the LG through submitting a cabinet proposal to the LG. "The firm stand taken by the LG and ignoring the parochial demand is really praiseworthy," stated Brig Anil Gupta, Spokesperson of the Party. "Both the holidays were mired in controversy and were thrust upon the people of the other two regions of the erstwhile state by the National Conference," asserted Brig Gupta. Incidentally, December 5 was never a state holiday between 1948-1981 and was declared as a holiday to celebrate the birth anniversary of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah after his death in 1982 by his son and successor Dr Farooq Abdullah. In fact, controversy surrounds the actual birth date of the Sheikh. According to MY Taing, a noted Kashmiri historian and literary assistant of the Sheikh for writing latter's autobiography Aatish-e-Chinar,

December 5 is not the actual birth date of the Sheikh. Even Sheikh has not mentioned December 5 as his birthdate in his autobiography. "What is the justification of December 5 as a state holiday when the Sheikh himself does not acknowledge it as his birth date" exclaimed Brig Gupta!

Nothing can be more controversial and divisive than celebrating July 13 as a state holiday with full government support. While it was celebrated as Martyrs Day in Kashmir, it was celebrated as a Black Day by the Hindus in Jammu including the Kashmiri Pandits to protest against plundering of their properties in Kashmir by members of the majority community and also endangering their dignity, honour and lives. Historically, the events of that day divided the people on regional, religious and ideological basis. The divide continues to persist and has widened further due to the monolithic attitude of Kashmir based regional political parties.

Reacting sharply to the NC Spokesperson

post on the X where he has termed the exclusion of these two holidays as "disregard to Kashmir's history and democratic struggle," Brig Gupta reminded the National Conference that it is Jammu and Kashmir and not Kashmir alone. The Raj Dharma demands the government to be fair and just to the sentiment and aspirations of the people of both the regions. The people of Jammu and their sentiments can not be ignored any more even if the government enjoyed brute majority. "It is high time that NC shuns the politics of exclusivity and embraces inclusivity by giving equal respect and status to the Dogra heritage and sentiments. Cosmetic statements and theatrics wouldn't suffice. It also needs to apologise to the Kashmiri Hindu community for the atrocities committed on them despite being the original inhabitants of the Valley. Rather than opening the old wounds, it should focus on their honourable and safe return to their abode."

Sham Sharma, Mohan Lal holds public Darbar at BJP headquarters

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

J&K BJP Vice-President & MLA Sham Lal Sharma, and MLA Mohan Lal Bhagat held a Public Darbar at party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

More than 30 deputations visited BJP headquarters, to share their issues with the party's senior leaders.

3 dozen deputations visited the BJP headquarters, Trikuta Nagar to share their development and personal issues with the senior party leaders for their proper disposal.

Among other issues, a deputation from Muthi Mehra, Akhnoor presented the issue of recruitment in J&K Police. A deputation from Raipur presented the issue of a link road near Mata Sati Bua Bhajanji Raipur. A deputation from Jadh, Akhnoor requested the issue of an Income/OBC certificate. A deputation from Vikram Nagar, Sarwal presented the issue of damaged concrete road



surface and iron gratings. 2 deputations from Paloura Top & Pamposh Colony, Janipur requested the construction of lane/drain. 3 deputations from Karan Nagar, Trikuta Nagar & Gandhi Nagar presented the issue of street lights. 2 deputations of Pandorian, Mishriwala & Barnai, Raipur presented the issue of repair of Lane/Drain. A deputation from Gandhi Nagar presented the issue of leaking UI pipes. A deputation from Sohail, Akhnoor presented the issues of the Rehabilitation for Shops.

Sham Lal Sharma, while speaking on the occasion, said that the PM Narendra Modi-led Union Government is committed to the welfare of the public in all

spheres. BJP follows the principle of "Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas" and is committed to addressing each and every problem faced by public. He said that BJP has chalked out a schedule to conduct Public Darbars on a regular basis where anybody can approach with the development or personal issues and the party leaders will make the utmost efforts to sort out the same.

Mohan Lal shared that many of the issues presented by the deputations were resolved on the spot while the written and oral communications with the concerned department officials were made for the rest issues for their prompt redressal.

Bharat Bhushan inaugurates development works at Pyt Burn

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

DDC Chairman Jammu, Bharat Bhushan Bodhi today inaugurated three significant development works under the DDC and PRI Components at Panchayat Barn, Tehsil Jammu. The projects are aimed at improving infrastructure and promoting the well-being of the local community.

Among the key initiatives, the highlight was the commencement of the Protection Wall construction at the playground in Panchayat Barn. The development of the ground will serve as an important step toward promoting sports and physical activities for the youth of the region.

Addressing the gathering, the DDC Chairman emphasized the critical need to protect the youth from the rising drug menace. He said, "The rising challenge of drug addiction among our youth is a matter of grave concern. This playground will not only serve as a space for sports and physical activities but will also provide a safe and productive environment for the youth, steering them away from negative influences."

Bharat Bhushan also mentioned that the devel-



opment of the playground aligns with the objectives of the PM Modi's "Khelo India" initiative, which seeks to engage and inspire young people in sports. "By creating facilities like this, we are fostering a culture of sportsmanship and helping our youth unlock their potential in various sporting disciplines," he added.

The DDC Chairman also expressed his gratitude to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha for his continued commitment to the welfare of the youth in Jammu and Kashmir. "Under the leadership of LG Sinha, the J&K administration is dedicated to providing better opportuni-

ties and resources for the younger generation," said Bodhi. The inauguration ceremony was attended by several local officials, PRI members, and community representatives, all of whom expressed their support for the ongoing development initiatives in the region.

Randhawa visits Rajiv Nagar, urges people to stop dumping waste in Nallah

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 30

Senior BJP leader and MLA Bahu Constituency, Vikram Randhawa today conducted an extensive tour of Rajiv Nagar to assess the grievances of the local residents. The primary concern raised by the residents was the persistent issue of a garbage-laden Nallah in the area, which poses a severe threat of overflow during the monsoon season.

During the visit, MLA Randhawa observed the Nallah clogged with garbage and construction waste. Expressing concern over the situation, he questioned the ratio-



nale behind residents discarding waste in the Nallah despite the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) vehicles visiting the area daily for garbage collection. "If this continues, the overflowing Nallah will lead to severe flooding during the rainy season," he stated.

Taking immediate action, MLA Randhawa directed the accompa-

nying officials to erect a six-foot fence along the Nallah to prevent residents from throwing garbage and construction debris into it. He emphasized the need for collective responsibility, urging people to dispose of waste through proper channels and support the Administration's cleanliness initiatives.

Randhawa also assured

the people of Rajiv Nagar for the construction of a proper drainage system in the area to address waterlogging and sanitation issues. He emphasized that this initiative would improve the overall infrastructure and quality of life for the residents, ensuring better management of waste and preventing future flooding.

Highlighting the BJP's commitment to sustainable development and cleanliness, Randhawa said, "Clean surroundings are essential for a healthy life. It is the responsibility of every citizen to contribute to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan by ensuring proper waste disposal."

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Sat Pal S/o Krishan Lal, R/o Galwaday Chak, Tehsil Marh and District Jammu, am applying for registration of date of birth of my son, namely, Ritik Sharma R/o Galwaday Chak, Tehsil Marh, District Jammu as 03.01.2009 at home, with the office of the Executive Magistrate, Marh. Objections if any may kindly be reported to the office of Executive Magistrate, Marh within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice.

EDITORIAL

Winter Wonderland Returns to Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir is set to usher in the New Year with a picturesque blanket of snow, as back-to-back Western Disturbances (WDs) are predicted to bring moderate snowfall to the region between January 3 and 6. The forecast, shared by the Meteorological Department (MeT), comes in the wake of last week's heavy snowfall, which temporarily paralyzed life in the Union Territory, closing roads and grounding flights. While this much-anticipated winter spectacle draws tourists to the region, it also demands preparedness to mitigate disruptions.

The Director of the MeT Department, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, has outlined the timeline for the upcoming WDs. A feeble disturbance is expected to brush past Jammu and Kashmir on January 1 and 2, bringing cloudy weather and light snow in scattered areas. However, the main event will unfold between January 3 and 6, when a moderate WD will likely bring widespread snow to higher altitudes and light to moderate rainfall to the plains. The heaviest activity is forecasted for January 4 and 5, with potential for heavy snowfall in isolated higher reaches.

This forecast builds anticipation for both residents and tourists, as the region's snow-clad landscapes have long been a magnet for winter enthusiasts. Yet, the implications of such weather patterns extend beyond aesthetics and tourism.

Last week's heavy snowfall underscored the challenges posed by harsh winter conditions in Jammu and Kashmir. Major roads were rendered impassable, and flight operations were suspended for two days, isolating communities and disrupting daily life. As temperatures continue to plummet—reaching lows of minus 10 degrees Celsius in Gulmarg and minus 9.2 degrees in Pahalgam—residents must brace for icy roads and potential cold waves.

The MeT Department has already issued advisories for travelers, transporters, and tourists, urging caution and adherence to traffic and administrative directives. The warnings are especially pertinent for those venturing into higher altitudes, where heavy snow is anticipated. These measures are critical to ensuring safety and maintaining connectivity in a region where winter weather can quickly turn hazardous.

The snow-draped vistas of Jammu and Kashmir evoke awe and wonder, reinforcing the region's reputation as a premier winter destination. Gulmarg's ski slopes and Pahalgam's serene beauty are testaments to nature's artistry. Yet, these same conditions demand a balance between celebration and caution. Residents and visitors alike must prioritize safety, particularly on treacherous roads and in sub-zero conditions.

Moreover, this period calls for enhanced coordination among authorities to minimize disruptions. Ensuring the timely clearance of snow-covered roads, maintaining essential services, and providing support to isolated communities will be critical in managing the impact of these weather disturbances.

As Jammu and Kashmir prepares to ring in the New Year under a canopy of snow, the region stands poised to embrace both the challenges and opportunities of winter. The forecasted Western Disturbances serve as a reminder of nature's duality—its power to inspire and disrupt. By combining vigilance with appreciation, the Union Territory can navigate the season's beauty and adversity, reinforcing its resilience and allure as a winter wonderland.

Reaching for the stars, ruining the earth

NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

That was a harrowing near-miss. Trump endured an assassination attempt, and the ensuing spectacle was nothing short of fantastical. As he emerged, emboldened and defiant, a self-proclaimed martyr rallying Americans to "fight...fight...fight," the undercurrent of turmoil in the U.S. political sphere became irrefutable. Following the attack, responsibility was squarely placed on the Secret Service, prompting the resignation of its chief, Kimberly Cheatle. However, the pivotal question is not about security oversights but rather the significance of his survival.

The fact that Trump has now emerged from such an ordeal only solidifies his centrality in American political discourse. His rhetoric will escalate to unprecedented levels of provocation, further inflaming a deeply divided nation. As January 20 nears and he ascends to the presidency as the 47th leader, we must confront an uncomfortable truth: America is on the precipice of a more ominous epoch. This is not merely about one man's political endurance—it is about the disintegration of American society itself, driven to the brink by long-standing forces in motion. On the broader geopolitical stage, 2024 has been a year of unsettling reconfigurations.

In Asia, China's dominance over Taiwan is undeniable, with global

consensus growing that Beijing's ambitions will not yield to Western opposition. For years, the U.S. has provoked China through military deployments and arms to Taiwan. Yet, China's psychological and economic warfare has shifted the global balance of power, eroding America's influence in the Pacific. Despite this, the U.S. persists, its foreign policy increasingly marked by desperation and entrenched arrogance. Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine, now in its third year, serves as a painful reminder of the West's misguided strategy of intervention. NATO's resolve is deteriorating, and support for Kyiv is dwindling in many Western capitals as the economic cost of the war becomes more pronounced. Public disillusionment with the conflict is palpable, yet the U.S. continues to allocate resources to a war with no clear resolution in sight.

The arms industry flourishes, and NATO's failure to pursue a diplomatic resolution leaves a bitter aftertaste, as Russia, empowered by internal European divisions, presses its advantage. In 2024 alone, the global arms trade reached a staggering \$632 billion, with much of that revenue enriching manufacturers who profit from relentless destruction. The grim reality is that war has evolved into a lucrative enterprise, sustaining the military-industrial complex while civilians bear the cost.

A similar dynamic is

unfolding in West Asia, where Israel's military actions against Palestine and Lebanon have extended into Syria by year's end, driven by a voracious expansionist agenda, all under the protective mantle of U.S. support. The missile exchanges between Iran and Israel risk escalating into full-scale warfare, with no resolution in sight.

Yet, the West remains obsessively focused on preserving its hegemonic power, blatantly disregarding the mounting humanitarian catastrophes. In parallel, the Arab world exposes its deep-seated fragmentation, driven by centuries-old dogmas and self-serving political agendas, all of which continue to wreak havoc on the lives of millions of Muslims.

The situation in South Asia mirrors this instability. With the re-election of Narendra Modi and the BJP, India is significantly expanding its global influence, even as internal crises—such as communal violence in the Northeast and Kashmir—continue to intensify, with the government blaming its negligence. India is poised to become the world's third-largest economy within five years, yet rising tensions with the United States present an opportunity to reassess the true nature of America's 'Asia Pivot.' As tensions escalate in Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan, the region teeters on the brink of broader conflict. Political instability in Bangladesh, exacerbated

by alleged U.S.-sponsored 'people's protests' that ousted Sheikh Hasina, and fragile politics in Nepal, which increasingly aligns with China, further fuel the growing unease.

Sri Lanka and the Maldives, after years of political turmoil, have found a degree of stability by year's end. Sri Lanka, in particular, has experienced a remarkable political shift, with a single party securing a supermajority in parliament, now populated by a wave of inexperienced young politicians.

While the Maldives continues to navigate its political challenges, South Asia—often dismissed as a 'dead regional idea'—remains a crucial player in global geopolitics. Meanwhile, in 2024, Africa boldly rejects colonial influence, with nations like Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Chad expelling French forces and reclaiming sovereignty. Yet, the continent's vast resources fuel a neocolonial scramble, exposing deep-rooted corruption and divisive leadership. Despite efforts to break free, Africa remains trapped by external exploitation and the greed of its elites, hindering true autonomy and progress. At the same time, the relentless march of artificial intelligence in 2024 highlights a more subtle threat: the obliteration of labour.

Entire industries, from retail to finance, have been disrupted by automation, leaving millions of workers displaced. In the U.S., unemployment rates

hovered around 4.5% in 2024, but these statistics scarcely reflect the many individuals who have been relegated to underemployment or excluded from the labour market entirely. Meanwhile, global projections suggest that job displacement due to automation will increase by up to 30% over the next decade. While the technocrats celebrate AI's progress, millions are left behind. Simultaneously, the integration of AI into military systems raises the frightening possibility of autonomous warfare, where human lives are subject to the whims of algorithms.

In 2024, climate change worsened, but leaders offered only empty words. The COP29 collapse highlighted the wealthiest nations' evasion of responsibility, leaving the vulnerable to suffer while the crisis, fueled by inequality and unchecked industrialisation, deepened. By 2024, over 700 million people worldwide were living in extreme poverty, with hunger rates climbing sharply due to both the economic pressures of conflict and climate-related calamities.

For many, securing enough food to survive has become an increasingly insurmountable struggle. In space, the race for hegemony reached new heights, as the U.S., China, and private corporations competed for supremacy in the cosmos.

Yet, one must question: why are such vast resources being allocated to space exploration when the world's most press-

ing issues remain unaddressed? The billions being invested in Mars colonisation could be better used to address the problems on Earth, yet the Western obsession with space reflects a deeper sense of hubris.

Humanity looks to the stars but fails to confront the crises that are unfolding on its soil. The year 2024 will be remembered as one that exposed the profound contradictions of our age. The Western world is at war with itself, consumed by political divisions, economic inequality, and an incapacity to respond to the genuine challenges of our time. The rise of populism, authoritarianism, and unchecked technological advancement portends a future in which the divide between the rich and the poor widens, and the planet teeters on the brink of environmental collapse. In this environment, the struggle for survival will no longer be merely political—it will be existential. We are increasingly forfeiting our collective responsibility, continuing to vie for better accommodations in a sinking vessel, fully aware that we are all doomed to submerge. As we enter 2025, may we dare to confront the tumult of our times with the audacity to question everything, forging a future that challenges the very forces seeking to dominate us. Wishing you a year of purpose and unity.

(The writer is a journalist and policy analyst. Views expressed are personal)

The Challenges of a Noble Profession

SAKSHI SETHI

The teaching profession, often referred to as one of the noblest vocations, faces significant challenges in today's world. As society evolves, so do the expectations placed upon educators. Despite their pivotal role in shaping future generations, teachers grapple with numerous issues ranging from inadequate compensation to increased workloads and shifting societal dynamics. Addressing these challenges is crucial towards ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of education systems worldwide.

Today, one of the most pressing issues for teachers is the sheer volume of

work they manage. Beyond classroom teaching, educators are tasked with lesson planning, grading, administrative duties, and even participating in extracurricular activities. This workload which quite often extends beyond school hours, leaves little time for their family life or personal development. Even the pressure to meet standardized testing benchmarks and adaptiveness to diverse student needs adds to their stress levels, contributing to burnout and high attrition rates within the profession. Despite the critical importance of their role, many teachers feel undervalued and underpaid. In numerous countries, teacher salaries lag behind those of other professions

requiring similar levels of education and expertise.

This financial disparity not only affects their quality of life but also discourages talented individuals from entering the profession. There is no denying that recognition for the hard work and dedication put up by a teacher is very limited which nowadays is diminishing their morale and job satisfaction. The integration of technology into education has transformed teaching methodologies, requiring teachers to continually update their skills. While digital tools have enhanced learning experiences, they also demand significant effort from educators to adapt and implement effectively. The shift to

online and hybrid learning models during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored this challenge, highlighting gaps in training and access to resources. Not only adaptations towards new learning models but another complexity that a teacher faces is classroom management.

With the advent of Gen Alpha, the role of a teacher has become increasingly complex as they now have to deal with a wide range of student behaviours and needs. Issues such as bullying, mental health challenges, and lack of discipline have increased enormously, and the abolishment of corporal punishments requires educators to act as counsellors and mediators in addition

to their teaching roles. At the same time, rising parental expectations and involvement have also created added pressure, with some parents demanding individualized attention for their children. Despite so many challenges, there are multiple opportunities to improve the teaching profession and support educators. Increased investment in education systems, including better salaries and benefits, can help attract and retain talented teachers. It is extremely important to know that teaching is the only profession that creates other professions.

Promoting a culture of respect and appreciation for teachers, by recognizing their contributions

through awards, public acknowledgement, and meaningful feedback can boost morale and reaffirm their value to society. The challenges faced by teachers today are multifaceted and require comprehensive solutions. By addressing issues such as workload, compensation, and training, society can ensure that educators are equipped and motivated to excel in their roles. Supporting teachers is not just an investment in their well-being but in the future of the students they inspire and educate. It is imperative to honour their dedication and create conditions that allow them to thrive, for the benefit of all.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

The statesman and a gentleman

VK BAHUGUNA

As the country mourns the death of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who breathed his last on 26th December 2024 at the age of 92. The world leaders condone the death of a man who was a common man's Prime Minister and a golden boy of destiny.

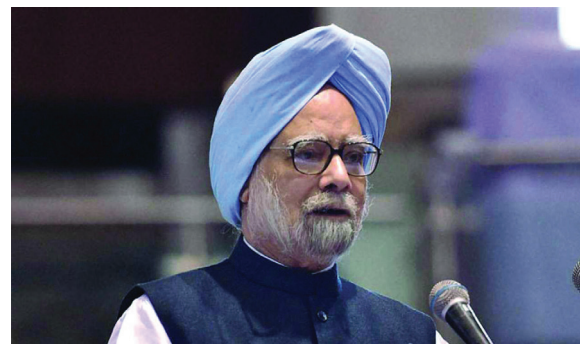
He ruled the nation for 10 years after having successfully dealt with the economic crisis of 1991 when the then Prime Minister Narsimha Rao appointed him Finance Minister and the rest is history of dismantling the license raj and ushering in economic liberalization of the economy and the nation is grateful to him and the Narsimha Rao for opening up the economy of caged lion that is India the benefits of which the nation is reaping today. I write this article when the country's politics

is witnessing high conflicts and drama and the entire gamut of politicians coming from a background which is miles away from Dr Manmohan Singh's academic background as most of the time the politicians are jostling with each other in the quest for power, position and money.

The fractured polity of India is the creation of politics of power and money which also seamlessly spreads across sectors of society and administration. Dr Manmohan Singh was born in Pakistan and came to India as a poor student but due to the sheer dent of his talent, perseverance and hard work obtained a scholarship and attained high educational qualifications as an economist from the University of Cambridge and Oxford. As an academician and economist, he served the nation with dignity and aplomb as an officer and bureaucrat

in the Planning Commission, Chief Economic Advisor and Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Chairman of the University Grant Commission and finally as politician member of Rajya Sabha for more than 30 years and Prime Minister for 10 years.

The luck favours the brave as the saying goes and he had plenty of it. No Prime Minister in the past nor the near distant future is going to have such a background and rich profile as Dr Manmohan Singh has and with this, he has etched his name in the history of India. As such no academician or economist in India could hope to achieve the post of Prime Minister of India considering our varied polity and its nature. Most of the professionals end up on bureaucratic posts and some may occupy the constitutional position of Pres-



ident or Vice-President of India or Governors. Sonia Gandhi will also be remembered for choosing him as Prime Minister of India after she was elected as leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the year 2004 and refused to hold the post considering opposition to her foreign origin.

The Indian masses specially educated elite and young brains aspiring to be great leaders in many fields including politics must take several lessons from the life of Dr Manmohan Singh. The first, he

was talented and humble but more than that he had a very high emotional intelligence.

These days lot of people in diverse fields end up failing even though they have high calibre, capability, knowledge and intelligence but lack emotional intelligence. It is the emotional intelligence that frames the mental makeup of individuals reflected in their demeanour while dealing with people of diverse background and situations.

Second, he had an uncanny talent for perceiv-

ing things with poise and confidence coming his way and organizing his capability most efficiently for the benefit of his organizations and ultimately for the country as Prime Minister of India and for his party. Many of our leaders in politics as also in bureaucracy lack poise and confidence and that results in making mistakes at crucial times. Third is how to handle provocative situations and when to be outspoken. This quality is essential while handling diversified issues with conflicting claims and counterclaims in both politics and administration.

The fourth is to be silent like when Rahul Gandhi tore a proposed bill of his government publicly, and act firm like a solid rock and take a decision to its logical end without any compromise.

The iron will he had shown when while signing the nuclear deal with

America had shown his strong commitment and capability to carry his decision to its logical end even though the CPM withdrew support for his government. His government was, however, bailed out by the Samajwadi party but it has shown his strong personality as a national leader while dealing with international diplomacy. This attitude is the hallmark of excellent leaders who can balance things considering what is best for the governance and the country.

The fifth lesson which is most important for today's leaders is; that he was above favouritism, caste or religion and thus deftly handled his government with loyalty to his party leader and the country. However, sometimes the hangers-on in power especially in the bureaucracy do play mischief as observed by this writer nevertheless, such

things always happen with all powerful posts and people.

Though he was criticised by the opposition he maintained his poise and firmly remained loyal to his way of doing things and because of his scholarly eloquence and demeanours he was respected by all world leaders who mattered in international diplomacy. Dr Manmohan Singh, the academician par excellence, achieved dazzling heights. Such personas are born in politics once in a century or not born at all. I hope the current politicians of his party and the budding politicians/social and administrative aspirants imbibe these virtues to become effective leaders of tomorrow, which India needs today.

(The writer is the former Director-General in the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India; views are personal)

APAC region sees rise in demand for lab-grown meat: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 30

The Asia-Pacific (APAC) region is seeing a rise in interest in cultured meat or lab-grown meat, according to a report on Monday.

Meat is an essential source of proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, and vitamins that the human body needs to meet its energy requirements.

Even as traditional animal farming techniques are becoming insufficient to meet the growing demand, cultivated meat has become a powerful protein substitute, said the report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company.

"APAC nations are exploring opportunities to produce cultured meat driven by technological



advancements and growing consumer awareness of sustainable practices," said Bynagari Susmitha, Consumer Analyst at Global Data.

This comes as the traditional method of raising livestock has been shown to raise serious environmental problems like an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, scarcity of water, and overuse of land

resources. "It is believed that about three-quarters of agricultural land is used for animal husbandry, leaving very little space available for grain cultivation. Furthermore, meat production is responsible for a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions from the food industry. Cultivated meat, also known as lab-grown meat,

is sustainable as it has less environmental impact," Susmitha said.

The report also pointed out a "clear shift in consumer preferences towards alternative protein sources". This, Susmitha said, is leading to greater acceptance and adoption of cultured meat products.

Susmitha noted Singapore as the prime example of this cultural shift.

The country has used cultured meats to adapt to novel foods. And "it sees an opportunity to become a global leader by assisting both domestic and foreign businesses", Susmitha said.

Further, the report cited GlobalData's Q3 Consumer Survey of Asia and Australasia, which showed that 81 per cent of the 6,163 respondents focus on sus-

tainable/environmentally friendly features when deciding to make a food and drink purchase.

"As the world fights the urgent need to address climate change, cultured meat or lab-grown meat minimises greenhouse gas emissions associated with conventional meat production, promotes ethical animal care, and also meets the growing need for food that is high in protein," Susmitha said.

The report projected an increase in investments and legislation for cultured meat technologies as countries in the APAC region aim to achieve their food security and sustainability objectives.

"This will foster a competitive market environment and drive scientific breakthroughs in the region," Susmitha said.

Oestrogen may be promoting binge drinking in females: Study

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 30

Ladies, blame your levels of oestrogen -- female sex hormone -- for making you binge on alcohol, according to a preclinical study in mice on Monday.

Scientists at Weill Cornell Medicine showed that the hormone oestrogen regulates binge drinking in females, causing them to "pregame" or binge. The study, published in the journal Nature Communications, establishes that circulating oestrogen increases binge alcohol consumption in females and contributes to known sex differences in this behaviour.

"We know a lot less about what drives alcohol drinking behaviour in females because most studies of alcohol use have been done in males," said senior author Dr. Kristen Pleil, Associate Professor



hormone levels throughout the oestrous cycle (similar to the menstrual cycle in women) of female mice and then served them alcohol.

The results showed that a high level of circulating oestrogen in women drives them to drink much more than on days when their oestrogen is low. This enhanced bingeing behaviour was reflected in heightened activity in those same neurons in the BNST -- a brain structure involved in the processing of reward, stress, and anxiety.

"When a female takes her first sip from the bottle containing alcohol, those neurons go crazy. And if she's in a high-oestrogen state, they go even crazier," Pleil explained, adding that that extra boost of neural activity means the mice hit the bottle even harder, particularly within the first 30 minutes after the alcohol was made available.

of pharmacology at the varsity.

Yet recent studies indicate that women have increased their heavy alcohol consumption more than men. This overindulgence is set to make them more susceptible to the negative health effects of alcohol than males, said Pleil.

"Many studies show this pattern of drinking enhances alcohol's harmful effects," said the expert, noting that the findings could lead to novel approaches for treating alcohol use disorder in women.

To assess oestrogen's potential involvement, the team first monitored the

Scientists in Guwahati make breakthrough, fabricate Lysozyme bilayers at room temperature

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 30

Scientists from the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) in Guwahati have successfully fabricated lysozyme bilayers on hydrophilic and hydrophobic silicon surfaces at room temperature. This breakthrough mimics the natural protein adsorption process found in living organisms, offering valuable insights into ion-mediated protein interactions on implants and biomaterials, a PIB press release stated. Lysozyme, a well-studied model protein present in human tears, sweat, milk, and saliva, contains four disulfide bonds. Ions, on

the other hand, play a crucial role in various biological processes, including regulating electrochemical potential, fluid-electrolyte balance, and muscle contraction. When implants are introduced into the body, ion-mediated protein-surface interactions inevitably occur. The IASST research team, led by Dr. Sarathi Kundu, along with Mr. Sanu Sarkar & Dr. Aditi Saikia, focused on fabricating lysozyme bilayers in the presence of monovalent (Na⁺), divalent (Ca²⁺), and trivalent (Y³⁺) ions. This resulted in ion-mediated lysozyme adsorption, closely resembling the biological adsorption of proteins in living organisms.

The lysozyme bilayer

structure comprised a bottom layer of lysozyme molecules oriented side-on and an upper layer with molecules tilted or side-on. The team elucidated the mechanism behind the stabilization of these bilayers on the silicon surface, attributing it to modified hydrogen bonding, hydrophobic interactions, and electrostatic interactions within the ionic atmosphere. The study revealed that lysozyme-lysozyme interactions compete with lysozyme-surface interactions, leading to protein adsorption in its native globular form on the hydrophilic surface & a slightly elongated structure on the hydrophobic surface.

REGULAR EYE CHECK-UPS IN 40S KEY TO PREVENTING VISION LOSS FROM GLAUCOMA

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 30

Adults in their 40s must undergo regular eye check-ups to prevent vision loss from glaucoma -- a chronic eye disease that can lead to vision loss and blindness, said an ophthalmologist at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.

Taking to social media platform X, Dr. Tanuj Dada, Professor of Ophthalmology and Head of Glaucoma Services at RP Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, said that early detection of glaucoma, which often presents no symptoms, is crucial. If left



undetected it can lead to vision loss and blindness.

"Glaucoma 'silent thief of sight' can cause irreversible vision loss if left undetected. If you have no symptoms and are above 40 years of age, it is re-

commended that you get an eye check-up every two years," Dada said.

He explained that glaucoma or kala motia is a disease of the optic nerve of the eye, which is the number one cause of irre-

versible blindness in the world.

"Glaucoma is called the 'silent thief of vision,' because this disease often has no symptoms," the expert said.

People at risk of developing glaucoma include those with "diabetes, hypertension, and any family member with glaucoma".

"People using steroids, creams, eye drops, tablets or inhalers or have had any eye injury are also at high risk of developing this disease," the ophthalmologist said.

According to various independent studies, reports, and data from

hospitals, glaucoma-related blindness continues to rise in India due lack of awareness and delay in detection.

In many cases, about 90 per cent time in India, the disease goes undetected.

He stressed the importance of regular eye check-ups, early diagnosis, and effective management to safeguard vision for a lifetime.

"People with the risks must get annual eye check-ups to rule out glaucoma. If you are above the age of 60 years, an annual check-up is required.

It is a must to prevent blindness from this disease," Dada said.

India's economy, banks in robust health: RBI

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC 30

The Indian economy and the domestic financial system are underpinned by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, healthy balance sheets of banks and non-banks with returns on assets at decadal highs, according to the RBI financial stability report released on Monday.

"The Indian economy is exhibiting steady growth, underpinned by solid macroeconomic fundamentals and strong domestic growth drivers," the report states.

The soundness of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) has been bolstered by strong profitability, declining non-performing assets and adequate capital and liquidity buffers. Return on assets (RoA) and return on equity (RoE) are at decadal highs while the gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratio has fallen to a multi-year low, the report states.



Macro stress tests demonstrate that most banks have adequate capital buffers relative to the regulatory minimum even under adverse stress scenarios. Stress tests also validate the resilience of mutual funds and clearing corporations.

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) remain healthy with sizable capital buffers, robust interest margins and earn-

ings and improving asset quality.

The consolidated solvency ratio of the insurance sector also remains above the minimum threshold limit, the report points out.

It also observes that the global economy and the financial system remain resilient despite heightened uncertainty.

While near-term risks have receded, vulnerabili-

ties such as stretched asset valuations, high public debt, prolonged geopolitical conflicts and risks from emerging technologies pose medium-term risks to financial stability.

The domestic financial system is demonstrating resilience, supported by healthy balance sheets of banks and non-banks, and fortified by strong capital buffers, robust earnings and improving asset qual-

ity.

Vulnerabilities in the form of stretched equity valuations, pockets of stress in the microfinance and consumer credit segments and risks from external spillovers require close monitoring, the RBI report added.

Domestic regulatory initiatives continue to focus on reinforcing the safety and resilience of the financial system. Efforts have been focused on strengthening the resilience of financial intermediaries and market infrastructure, with emphasis on cyber resilience, fraud prevention and customer protection, the report said.

Global regulatory initiatives have concentrated on mitigating risks arising from technological advancements, cyber security threats and third-party dependencies. Addressing vulnerabilities in non-bank financial intermediaries and cross-border payment systems remain priorities, the report added.

Fearing backlash, CPI-M dumps naming Health Minister Veena George as first woman district party Secretary

AGENCIES
PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA), DEC 30

With Kerala CPI-M's organisational polls currently underway, the prospect of the first party woman district Secretary failed to materialise on Monday amid speculations that state Health Minister Veena George might be named for Pathanamthitta district, but fearing a backlash, senior party leaders decided to appoint veteran former legislator Raju Abraham to the post instead. In the last six decades, the CPI-M in Kerala has had no woman Chief Minister, or a state chief, and not a single woman leader has even served as party district Secretary in any of the present-day 14 district committees. Thus, it has been coming under fire over poor representation of women in the party's internal framework.

Journalist-turned-two-



the ballot, then she might lose, decided not to back her and Abraham was unanimously selected as the new Pathanamthitta district CPI-M Secretary.

Abraham who has a huge following in the district and has been the legislator from the Ranni assembly constituency from 1996 till 2021, does not fall into the good books of Vijayan and that was one reason he was not given the chance to contest the April Lok Sabha elections from the Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha constituency.

Earlier, veteran woman leader and former minister J. Mercykutty, who served in the 2016-21 Pinarayi Vijayan cabinet, was

billed for the post of district Secretary in Kollam, but, at the last minute, this failed to happen when the decision came that the incumbent district secretary was chosen to continue for a second three-year term.

time CPI-M legislator George is a protege of the power Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and eyebrows were raised when after winning a second successive term, he opted for her as Health Minister and did not retain outgoing Minister K.K. Shailaja who had won accolades for her work during the Covid pandemic.

On Monday when it came to selecting the new Pathanamthitta district secretary and a new district committee, even though Vijayan and the top party bosses pre-ferred to bring in George, they, after getting a feel that if the move goes to

ER organises training session to ensure safer, healthier food at railway stations

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, DEC 30

Food served at stations and other railway establishments is on its way towards becoming safer and healthier with Eastern Railway (ER) hosting a comprehensive Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) session on Saturday. This is part of the nationwide 'Eat Right Campus and Station' initia-

tive led by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

"The medical department of ER has taken significant strides towards enhancing food safety and promoting healthier eating habits in its railway jurisdiction. In a move aimed at fostering safe, healthy, and sustainable food practices, the FoSTaC session was conducted at the office of the Joint Food Safety Com-

missioner at Old Koilaghat Building in Kolkata," said Kausik Mitra, CPRO, ER.

The session was attended by senior officials from ER and IRCTC, including Dr Anupam Sett, additional chief medical director; Dr Sanghamitra Chatterjee, additional chief medical superintendent, ER; Manoj Kumar Singh, chief general manager, IRCTC, Eastern Zone and others. It was conducted by Prof

Deborshi De, a leading food safety expert and representative of Parikshan, FSSAI's training partner.

"The full-day workshop focused on equipping Food Business Operators (FBOs) and food handlers from various key stations and establishments under ER, including the General Manager's Staff Canteen, B R Singh Hospital, and the Kolkata, Baharampore Court and Murshidabad

workplaces, hospitals, and railway stations, targeting a wide range of stakeholders, including food handlers, business operators, and consumers.

The overarching goal is to ensure the health and well-being of individuals while also fostering the social and economic development of the nation," he added.

The FoSTaC training session covered a wide array

of topics, including food safety regulations, hygiene practices, waste management, and the importance of promoting healthy and sustainable food. The programme aims to empower food handlers with the skills and knowledge needed to meet FSSAI's high standards of food safety and to support the vision of an "Eat Right" nation.

FSSAI is a statutory body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, responsible for regulating and overseeing food safety and standards in the country.

Through initiatives like 'Eat Right Campus' and 'Eat Right Station', FSSAI aims to create awareness about safe and healthy food choices and encourage responsible food consumption.

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Through initiatives like 'Eat Right Campus' and 'Eat Right Station', FSSAI aims to create awareness about safe and healthy food choices and encourage responsible food consumption.

India's defence production poised to clock 20 pc annual growth in FY 2024-29

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, DEC. 30

On the back of robust government reforms and increasing private sector participation, India's defence sector production is set to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 20 per cent during FY24-FY29, according to a report released on Monday.

Indian defence sector companies are set to further enhance the country's defence capabilities, reduce import dependence, and elevate its global stature, the CareEdge Ratings report stated.

The collaboration between government and private sector entities in India's defence sector has driven advancements in arms and ammunition, aerospace, electronics, and naval technologies.

Private sector entities, both domestic and multinational, are expected



to play a pivotal role in advancing defence modernisation, leveraging their engineering and technological expertise, the report observed.

This collaboration has been supported by policies such as 'Make in India' and liberalised FDI norms, which have enhanced domestic manufacturing capabilities, attracted international investments in defence innovation and

driven notable growth in exports of military equipment, the report pointed out.

In recent years, India's defence budget has consistently ranged between 1.90 to 2.8 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP).

For the fiscal year 2024-25, a substantial allocation of Rs 6.22 lakh crore has been dedicated for the defence sector.

Furthermore, India has set an ambitious annual defence production outlay of Rs 1.75 lakh crore for FY25 which is expected to grow at a CAGR of around 20 per cent to Rs 3 lakh crore (as per Ministry of Defence) by FY29, underscoring its commitment to becoming a self-reliant defence powerhouse, the report noted.

Historically, India has been a net importer of

defence equipment, heavily relying on foreign suppliers to meet its critical military needs.

However, concerted efforts to promote indigenous defence manufacturing and technology development, supported by policy reforms such as the 'Make in India' initiative, are bringing about a gradual shift.

Over the last six years ending FY24, Indian defence exports have grown at a healthy CAGR of approximately 28 per cent.

CareEdge Ratings anticipated that India's defence exports will grow in tandem with government spending in the sector at an estimated rate of about 19 per cent during the next 5 years (i.e. from FY24 to FY29) on a more extensive base.

India's defence exports include various products, such as aircraft, naval systems, missile technology, and military hardware.

As AAP, BJP trade barbs over voters' list, EC to publish final Delhi electoral rolls on Jan 6

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC. 30



zens who have not yet registered as voters can still apply for enrolment using Form 6.

For modifications or deletions in the electoral roll, Form 8 and Form 7 can be filed.

It also informed that till date, 8 FIRs have been filed for submitting false documents for voter registration in the Okhla Assembly constituency and strict action is being contemplated.

"If political parties have any objection to any addition/deletions/modifications carried out in the Electoral roll during the special summary revision period and during the continuous updation, they can file their objections before the ERO/AERO/BLO concerned," it said.

It said that the addition of names will be carried out till the last date of filing nominations and emphasised that voters must ensure their names are correctly reflected in the electoral roll, as mere possession of a voter ID card does not guarantee the right to vote.

that the AAP government has been 'nurturing' Rohingyas as its vote bank by providing them shelter in the capital.

With the EC putting the facts in public domain, it is likely to clear the air over the raging controversy and bring an end to barb-trading over electoral rolls.

"The process of updation i.e. addition, deletion and modification is a continuous activity and the same is undergoing at present also. Between November 29, 2024, and the present date 4,85,624 applications for new registrations (Form 6), 82,450 applications for deletions (Form 7), and 1,71,385 applications for modifications (Form 8) have been received till date," it said in a press statement.

It also said that the citi-

Year Ender: Mahayuti's 2024 jackpot hits MVA hard, Fadnavis govt readies to overcome challenges

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, DEC. 30

The Mahayuti comprising BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP hit the jackpot in 2024 reporting a landslide victory in the Maharashtra Assembly elections after a dismal performance in the Lok Sabha polls. BJP not only succeeded in asserting its big brother role in the grand alliance but also getting the chief minister's post which it had sacrificed in June 2022 for Eknath Shinde after he staged a rebellion against Uddhav Thackeray.

The Maha Vikas Agadhi, which had outsmarted the MahaYuti in the Lok Sabha elections, met with a complete washout in the Assembly elections. MVA now faces an acid challenge to keep the alliance relevant and more importantly, its constituents -- Congress, Shiv Sena UBT and NCP(SP) -- to keep their respective flock together while pursuing efforts for revival in the next five years.

Mahayuti not only weathered the anti-incumbency factor but also worked cohesively to turn odds into opportunity by putting up a massive show of unity. BJP after the dismal performance in the Lok Sabha elections, tweaked its strategy for the Assembly polls by making sure that with allies, Shiv Sena and NCP, it would regain power in Maharash-

tra which continues to be a leading state known for its vibrancy and leadership in political, financial and social sectors with a progressive and pragmatic status. RSS, which was silent during the general elections, swung into action and pulled out its organisational network to help the BJP not only emerge as the single largest party but also get a thumping win for the Mahayuti. BJP will make all efforts to achieve its ambitious 'Shat Pratishat (winning power on its own)' in the 2029 elections as already announced by Home Minister Amit Shah during the Assembly poll campaign.

On the other hand, despite winning more seats in the Lok Sabha elections, the MVA failed to create the same magic in the Assembly elections majorly due to egos, internal disputes, lack of a formidable and convincing roadmap for the voters and above all failure to tweak the conflict among various castes and communities. Congress, despite loss in the Haryana Assembly elections after a humiliating defeat, failed to show maturity in working with allies, taking various castes and communities into confidence and leading from the front of the MVA against the mighty BJP and its allies. MVA thereby lost its opportunity to oust Mahayuti.



Despite financial distress in agriculture, especially, due to the rising mismatch between the cost of production and market prices of cotton and soybean, burgeoning cases of farmers' suicides, unrest over reservations in the Maratha, OBC and Dhanger communities and spate of crimes against women and delicate state of Maharashtra's finances, MVA failed to score a victory over Mahayuti. On its part, Mahayuti played its cards well by launching a slew of welfare and development schemes, including the much-debated Ladki Bahin Yojana and implemented them through military-like precision planning. BJP's move to reach out to various castes and communities from OBC by organising over 350 meetings and also to take the Hindu Dalits into confidence, especially after the Supreme Court's

order which ruled that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes.

BJP in particular succeeded in the consolidation of OBCs while reaffirming its commitment to the Maratha reservation. This is despite violent and strong protests by the activists pressing for the reservation for Marathas, OBCs and Dhangers. Pro-Maratha activist Manoj Jarange Patil factor had worked in favour of MVA in general elections but it did not come to MVA's help in the Assembly elections. Mahayuti still faces an acid test to address the contentious reservation issue as Jarange Patil has already announced to launch a fresh protest while OBCs after the denial of ministerial berth to Chhagan Bhujbal are up in the arms declaring that they would not allow encroachment

in their reservation quota. Mahayuti will have to trade its path cautiously.

The rape and molestation of two minor girls in the private school in Badlapur from Thane district shook the state. Opposition and various organisations staged protests blaming the Mahayuti government for deteriorating law and order.

The opposition also cried foul over the encounter of the main accused in the Badlapur rape incident, but the Mahayuti strongly defended the police action citing it was done after the accused had attacked the police party. Ironically, the crime against women did not get enough prominence during the poll campaign, especially after the then Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had promised stern action against those involved in such incidents. The Mahayuti government

will have to ensure that it is committed to curbing crimes against women by strict implementation of Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita in true letter and spirit, especially after the Centre has sought its opinion about the necessity of Shakti Act to deal with such crimes.

The collapse of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue at Malvan in the coastal Sindhudurg district gave ammunition to opposition to target the Mahayuti over alleged corruption and haste in awarding the contract. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not waste time but tendered an apology reiterating that Chhatrapati Shivaji is their ideal. Opposition failed to keep the issue alive during the poll campaign. Although Shiv Sena(UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray promised the reconstruction of the Chhatrapati Shivaji temple in every district, it did not click with the voters. Ironically, the opposition could not properly flag off Marathi Asmita (Martin Pride) with the voters.

The Mahayuti's freebies and populist slogans yielded positive results as the beneficiaries overwhelmingly extended their support. The Mahayuti despite the opposition's criticism was able to successfully play up the welfare economics in tune with its political agenda.

Although MVA had

promised monthly aid of Rs 2,100 to eligible women and free rides in state transport buses, it did not work as 2.34 crore women beneficiaries had already received Rs 7,500 (Rs 1,500 per month) for July-November. To address the unemployment and lack of necessary skill sets among youth, the Mahayuti launched the training programme with a monthly stipend that also helped to win the young and first-time voters. MVA had promised a monthly allowance of RS 4,000 to the educated unemployed but it remained merely a promise while the youth had benefited from the Mahayuti's training scheme.

Even though the handouts and 'revalidis' have helped Mahayuti with its big victory, it has put up an added burden on the state economy.

The fiscal deficit has already crossed Rs 2.30 lakh crore while the public debt is expected to be Rs 8 lakh crore plus leaving limited room for capital expenditure and raising funds from the markets. Opposition is claiming that some of the welfare schemes, including Ladki Bahin Yojana, will be either closed or the funding will be reduced.

However, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and his two deputies have reiterated that the state is quite capable of continuing

these schemes, reassuring that the government will make all efforts to maintain fiscal management and fiscal prudence. Despite that, the state government will have to strive to mobilise additional resources while pursuing its ambition of Maharashtra achieving a \$1 trillion economy by 2028.

Despite a bumpy road ahead, Maharashtra continues to be the most favoured investment destination in the country. Maharashtra has topped in getting FDI in two consecutive years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The state topped the country in foreign direct investment with Rs 1,25,101 crore in 2023-24 and it again topped in the first two quarters, from April to September of this year 2024-25 with FDI of Rs 1,13,236 crore, which is more than 90 per cent of last year's total FDI. The state is a preferred destination for FDI.

The government will have to actively pursue fast-track development of infrastructure, including roads, highways, sea links, metro and various other projects such as river linking and water grid of over Rs 5 lakh crore. Besides, it needs to take due steps for achieving the Mumbai Metropolitan Region's turnover to become \$300 billion by 2030 from the present level of \$140 billion.

Spreads hate yet no action taken against him: Oppn leaders slam Nitesh Rane's 'Kerala mini-Pak' quip

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, DEC. 30

Maharashtra's newly-appointed BJP minister, Nitesh Rane, has landed in hot water following his "mini-Pakistan" remarks on Kerala.

Speaking at a programme in Pune, Rane referred to Kerala as a "mini-Pakistan" and alleged that "only extremists in Kerala" vote for members of the Gandhi family, including Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi. Rane's statement has triggered a political storm, drawing severe criticism from Opposition parties, who accused him of "spreading hatred" and demanded immediate action against him.

Speaking to IANS, Sama-

rajwadi Party MP Abu Azmi slammed Rane, saying, "He is such a small person. A cabinet of hatred should be formed for him as he always talks about hatred. Such baseless statements are made without any consequences. Even the Supreme Court has said that people who spread hatred should be punished, yet no action is taken against him."

Azmi also defended Kerala, stating, "Calling a state 'mini-Pakistan' is completely wrong. Kerala is a state that does not align with hatred. That's what troubles him. Rahul Gandhi has been winning elections before as well. His father and grandmother sacrificed their lives for the nation, and his mother continues to struggle for

the country." "People like Rane aim only to spread hatred towards Muslims, degrade them, and appease the majority to gain power. This must be why he was allotted his portfolio. Such statements expose their true intentions," he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Anand Dubey accused the BJP of benefiting politically from such divisive remarks.

"Since the Prime Minister won from Banaras with just around one lakh votes, the BJP has been restless. The real blow came when Priyanka Gandhi won from Wayanad by lakhs of votes. Now they resort to defaming Kerala by calling it 'mini-Pakistan' and alleging terrorists live there," he told IANS.

Budget 2025-26: CII seeks cut in income tax, 3-tier Customs duty to spur growth

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC. 30

Apex business chamber CII on Monday urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to reduce personal income tax for individuals earning up to Rs 20 lakh per annum, introduce a three-tier customs duty structure with higher tariffs on finished goods and go for a 25 per cent increase in government capex in the Union Budget 2025-26 to spur growth in the economy.

At a meeting held here with the Finance Minister in the run-up to the Budget, CII president Sanjiv Puri CII suggested the adoption of a 3-tier customs tariff structure with rates of inputs at 0 - 2.5 per cent, intermediates at 2.5 - 5.0 per cent, and final goods at 7.5 per cent



over a period of time, with certain exceptions.

CII also underlined the need to build on the success in manufacturing in certain sectors, with similar targeted interventions for sectors, that can create large-scale employment, like readymade garments, footwear, furniture, tourism, real estate and construction. CII said FTAs with countries like the EU and the UK should be expedited

and lower duties should be levied on imports of raw materials like cotton. The introduction of Next Gen reforms, particularly Labour reforms would go a long way in unlocking the potential of such labour-intensive sectors, according to the CII presentation.

CII emphasised the need for a continued increase in the government's capex spending by 25 per cent over the Rs 11.1 lakh crore budget for FY 25, with an

enhanced focus on rural infrastructure which would have a multiplier effect on the economy and spur growth.

CII further emphasised the need to develop an integrated foreign trade, investment and industrial policy. An expert group under the Finance Minister's leadership could be constituted with industry participation to draft the policy, the chamber said.

The CII presentation favours a fiscal deficit at 4.5 per cent for FY26 as a sharper contraction could impact demand.

Debt targeting from FY27, with a glide path to bring the Central government's debt to below 50 per cent of GDP by 2030-31. This is likely to have a positive impact on India's sovereign credit rating and interest rates, the CII pre-

sentation states.

Various measures to boost consumption suggested by CII include a reduction in excise duty on fuel to reduce overall inflation and boost disposable incomes. Reducing marginal tax rates for personal income up to Rs 20 lakh per annum to trigger the virtuous cycle of consumption, higher growth and higher tax revenue.

The CII presentation also favours the divestment of government stakes in select PSEs to retain 51 per cent to unlock about Rs 10 lakh crore which could be utilised for -- enhancing public capex, retiring government debt, and setting up a Sovereign Wealth Fund for investing in strategic assets overseas towards acquiring critical technologies and minerals.

At least 45 killed in Israel's violations of ceasefire deal with Lebanon

AGENCIES
BEIRUT, DEC. 30

At least 45 people have been killed between November 27 and December 22 in Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement, according to a source from the Lebanese army.

During the period, the Israeli army also arrested 17 people from border towns, all of whom were civilians working in agriculture and livestock, the source said on condition of anonymity.

According to the sources the violations include airstrikes, drone and air-plane flights over eastern and southern Lebanon, artillery shelling, machine gun fire, incursions, bulldozing of roads and agricultural fields, erecting earthen barriers, as well as burning and crushing vehicles, Xinhua news agency reported.

According to estimates by the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between November 27



and December 22, Israel launched over 816 land and air attacks against Lebanon, shelling border villages, booby-trapping homes, destroying residential neighborhoods, and blocking roads.

Candice Ardell, deputy director of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) media office, said on Sunday that

the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) informed its forces that the safety of peacekeepers cannot be guaranteed in the vicinity of the Taybeh area, and patrols must avoid this area.

"The safety of the peacekeepers is a top priority, and we will not do anything to put them at unnecessary risk," Ardell stressed.

"We remind the IDF of their obligations under Resolution 1701 to ensure the safety of the peacekeepers and ensure their freedom of movement throughout the UNIFIL area of operations in southern Lebanon," she added.

In a statement on Saturday, the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture said

the latest Israeli attacks destroyed and bulldozed the seed multiplication project built in Wadi al-Hujayr in 2020 with the support of the World Food Program and funding from the European Union.

A ceasefire, brokered by the US and France, went into effect on November 27, aiming to halt nearly 14 months of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

The terms of the ceasefire agreement include Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory within 60 days, with the Lebanese army deploying on the Lebanese-Israeli border and in the south, taking over security there, and banning any presence of weapons and militants.

Despite the ceasefire agreement, the Israeli army has continued to carry out strikes in Lebanon, though at a significantly reduced intensity, with some attacks resulting in casualties in southern and eastern Lebanon.

New Syrian authorities arrest 300 alleged 'Assad militias'

AGENCIES
DAMASCUS, DEC. 30

Syria's new interim authorities have detained around 300 people since the start of a crackdown on "remnants of Assad's militias", the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The state-run news agency SANA confirmed that the interim authorities apprehended "several remnants of Assad's militias and suspects" in the coastal province of Latakia on Saturday, and in Hama on Thursday. SANA also reported the confiscation of "quantities of weapons and ammunition."

The Observatory said on Sunday, those arrested include "security informants, pro-regime and pro-Iranian armed elements, as well as lower-ranking military officers."

Security forces under the new administration launched an extensive operation Thursday targeting individuals linked to the previous authorities



around Damascus, Latakia, Tartus, and Homs, Xinhua news agency reported.

Those detained include former regime informants, pro-Iranian fighters, and lower-ranking military officers accused of killings and torture, Abdel Rahman said. Notable among them is General Mohammed Kanjo Hassan, the former head of military justice under Assad, who allegedly oversaw thousands of death sentences following summary trials at the notorious Saydnaya prison.

The Observatory noted that arrests have gone more smoothly "with

cooperation from local residents," adding that the campaign also involves "disarming civilians."

Earlier this month, armed factions led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) mounted a surprise offensive, capturing major cities and entering Damascus by early December. The new administration has since intensified efforts to consolidate power.

International rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, have urged the factions now in power to uphold humane treatment and due process for all detainees, including former officials.

South Korea: Investigators seek arrest warrant for Yoon in first for sitting Prez

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC. 30

South Korea's joint investigation team said on Monday that it has sought an arrest warrant for President Yoon Suk Yeol over his short-lived imposition of martial law, making him the first sitting President to face arrest.

The team said it sought the warrant on insurrection and abuse of power charges after Yoon ignored three summonses to appear for questioning.

The request was filed with the Seoul Western District Court at midnight on Sunday, according to the team comprised of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), the police and the Defence ministry's investigation unit.

Investigators say Yoon led an insurrection and abused his power when he declared martial law



news agency reported. Yoon earlier vowed to take 'formal steps' in response to the CIO's move.

"It's a request by an agency that does not have the authority to investigate (insurrection charges)," he told Yonhap News Agency, referring to the CIO.

on December 3 and allegedly ordered troops to the National Assembly to stop lawmakers from voting down the decree.

Yoon has denied the charges, saying his declaration of martial law was an 'act of governance' to warn the opposition party against what he described as its abuse of legislative power.

In response, Yun Gapeun, one of Yoon's legal representatives, said they will submit a document of opinions to the court over the arrest warrant request and a notice of the appointment of lawyers later in the day, Yonhap

Earlier on December 26, South Korea's anti-corruption investigation body summoned President Yoon Suk Yeol to appear for questioning over his brief imposition of martial law.

The CIO for high-ranking officials issued the summons, ordering Yoon to appear at its office in Gwacheon, just south of Seoul.

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

South Africa steps up law enforcement efforts along border with Mozambique

AGENCIES
JOHANNESBURG, DEC. 30

South Africa has stepped up law enforcement efforts along its border with Mozambique amid post-election protests in the neighbouring country.

In a statement issued on Sunday by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), the South African government expressed its concern over the ongoing protests in parts of Mozambique and reports of individuals escaping from a maximum-security prison during this period of unrest, Xinhua news agency reported.

"These developments have understandably raised apprehensions among South African citizens regarding the potential cross-border implications," the GCIS said.



On Monday, Mozambique's Constitutional Council declared Daniel Chapo, the presidential candidate of the ruling party Prelimo, as the winner of the general elections held on October 9. According to local media reports, more than 100 civilians have died in

the post-election chaos, and hundreds have been injured.

In the GCIS statement, the South African government said it remains committed to ensuring the safety and security of its citizens and upholding regional stability.

"To this end, the Nation-

al Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS) has intensified its operations along the South Africa-Mozambique border. These measures aim to prevent and combat any opportunistic crimes that may arise as a result of the unrest, both during and after the protests," said the statement.

NATJOINTS, which comprises various government departments led by the State Security Agency, South African Police Service, and South African National Defense Force, is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the country.

In the statement, the South African government said it is taking measures as a country and region to end the impasse in Mozambique. "The government of South Africa is actively engaging the government

of Mozambique at a bilateral level to address these concerns and explore sustainable solutions."

"The government recognises the interconnected nature of regional security and is determined to uphold its responsibilities in fostering peace and stability in southern Africa," it said, adding that South Africa reaffirms its commitment to support Mozambique in restoring peace and stability to ensure the safety of everyone.

The South African government also urged its citizens to remain calm and to refrain from spreading unverified information that may lead to unnecessary panic. "The relevant authorities are monitoring the situation closely and will provide timely updates as new information becomes available."

WORLD LEADERS EXTEND CONDOLENCES AFTER 170 KILLED IN S.KOREA PLANE CRASH

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC. 30

World leaders have expressed condolences and solidarity with South Korea after the tragic airplane crash in Muan claimed more than 170 lives.

In a statement released by the White House, US President Joe Biden on Sunday expressed his grief over the accident and pledged support to South Korea.

"Jill and I are deeply saddened to learn of the loss of life that occurred as a result of the Jeju Airlines accident in Muan, South Korea. As close allies, the American people share deep bonds of friendship with the South Korean people, and our thoughts and prayers are with those impacted by this tragedy. The US stands ready to provide any necessary assistance," the White House statement said.

Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru extended his sympathies to the bereaved families on behalf of the government

and the people of Japan.

"I am deeply saddened by the loss of many precious lives due to the airplane accident that occurred in South Korea. On behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, I wish to express my sincere condolences for the loss of life and send my deepest sympathies to the bereaved families. My thoughts go out to all those who were injured, and I sincerely hope they will make a swift recovery," the statement from the Office of the Prime Minister of Japan said.

India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, also expressed deep sorrow over the airplane crash.

David Lammy, the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs, and Penny Wong, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, offered their condolences on the tragic accident.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said he was "shocked" to learn of the crash, in a message to South Korea's



acting President Choi Sang-mok.

"I express our deep condolences to the victims, sincere sympathy for the victims' families, and wish those injured a speedy recovery," he said, quoted by China's state broadcaster CCTV.

In a statement late on December 29, a spokesperson for Singapore's Foreign Affairs Ministry said: "The Singapore Government is saddened by the news of the tragic crash of Jeju Air Flight 2216 on December 29, 2024.

We convey our deepest condolences to the government of South Korea and the families and

loved ones of those who have perished. We wish the survivors a full recovery."

"We are in contact with the South Korean authorities and there were no reports of Singaporeans on board the flight."

EU Chief Ursula von der Leyen said she was "heartbroken to see images of the plane crash in Muan."

"As your partner, Europe stands with you in this time of grief," the European Commission President said.

and the dead".

"My thoughts are with the many families in South Korea who are mourning today following the dramatic plane crash," Pope Francis said.

France's Foreign Ministry said that Paris learnt "with great emotion the terrible toll" and sends condolences to the affected families.

Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said the crash is "yet another blow to the nation's heart" after "a difficult period" -- alluding to weeks of political turmoil in Seoul.

"This is an incredible loss and pain" for the friends and families of those killed, Steinmeier said.

"Profoundly saddened by the tragic incident," Greece's Foreign Affairs Ministry said on X, sending condolences "during this difficult time".

Earlier, the South Korean authorities confirmed that 179 people were killed and two people were rescued out of 181 aboard following a plane

crash in South Korea's Muan region, Yonhap news agency reported.

The incident occurred on Sunday morning when a Jeju Air passenger jet, carrying 175 passengers and six crew members, belly-landed and exploded at Muan International Airport, the Yonhap news agency reported.

The aircraft veered off the runway while landing, with its landing gear not deployed, skidding across the ground, hitting a concrete wall, and bursting into flames.

South Korea's acting President Choi Sang-mok, also declared Muan County a special disaster zone and visited the crash site to direct search operations.

Jeju Air CEO Kim E-bae further issued an apology and expressed condolences to the victims' families, taking full responsibility for the incident.

The airline has promised full support for the surviving families, including financial assistance, citing its \$1 billion insurance plan.

EAM Jaishankar to visit Doha today, meet Qatari PM

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC. 30

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar is set to embark on a three-day official visit to the State of Qatar from December 30, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Sunday.

The MEA in an official statement said that during his visit, the EAM would meet with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani.

The visit also aims to review various aspects of bilateral relations between India and Qatar with discussion on key areas, which include political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural, and people-to-people relations.

"EAM's visit will enable both sides to review various aspects of bilateral relations, including political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural, and people-to-people, as well as the regional and international issues of mutual interest," the MEA said.

EAM Jaishankar will depart from Qatar on January 1. India and Qatar

share warm and friendly relations, marked by regular high-level interactions to further strengthen their partnership.

Their most recent interaction occurred during EAM Jaishankar's official tour to Qatar and Bahrain from December 6 to 9.

During the visit, he met Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Faisal bin Thani Al Thani, and Minister of State, Ahmed Al Sayed, on the sidelines of the Doha Forum.

In late October, the two countries held the fifth round of Foreign Office Consultations.

Both sides comprehensively reviewed the entire spectrum of India-Qatar bilateral relations, including high-level exchanges, trade, investment, energy, education, culture, and people-to-people ties.

Discussions also explored avenues to deepen the relationship in areas such as renewable energy, fintech, startups, and technology. They exchanged perspectives on important regional and global issues of mutual interest, as noted by the MEA in a press statement.

CES 2025: AI-powered tech to dominate world's biggest electronics trade show

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC.30

South Korean companies are poised to showcase their advanced artificial intelligence (AI) technologies at CES 2025, the world's largest consumer electronics and IT trade show, scheduled to open in Las Vegas next week.

Not only will major home appliance companies like Samsung Electronics Co. and LG Electronics Inc. participate, but other prominent Korean firms, such as SK hynix Inc., SK Telecom Co. and Hyundai Mobis Co., will also unveil cutting-edge innovations.

AI is expected to dominate this year's CES, scheduled for January 7-10, at the Las Vegas Convention Center under the theme "Dive In," reports Yonhap news agency.

Samsung Electronics, the world's largest mobile phone and memory chip-maker, will present its AI-powered smart home



concept, "AI for All: Connectivity in the Age of AI."

The company plans to introduce its latest home appliance lineup, including the new Bespoke refrigerator, washer and dryer, all integrated with its AI-driven SmartThings

connectivity, enabling seamless integration and remote monitoring of its devices.

In addition, Samsung will preview its first air-to-water heat pump lineup for the North American market at CES 2025, aiming to expand its foot-

print in the growing U.S. heating, ventilation and air conditioning sector.

Currently available in Europe under the Eco Heating System (EHS) brand, these energy-efficient systems use ambient air heat for heating and hot water.

Affiliates of Samsung Electronics -- Samsung SDS Co. and Samsung Display Co. -- will have separate booths to showcase their innovations to potential global clients.

LG Electronics, which has been expanding its business portfolio to business-to-business segments, including automotive electronics and air solutions businesses, will also spotlight its latest AI-powered technologies.

The company will host an interactive space featuring its in-cabin sensing solutions, designed to detect driver behavior and the interior conditions of vehicles.

Visitors can experience a driving simulator that monitors not only their motions but also emotions, as well as alert rates, to provide alerts in case of emergencies.

Additionally, LG will display its AI-powered refrigerators and dishwashers, further demonstrating its commitment to smart home solutions.

SK Telecom and SK hynix will share a booth to present their efforts in AI data centres and chips. SK Telecom will feature a 6-meter LED pillar at the centre of its exhibit, highlighting four AI data centre solutions: energy, AI, operations and security.

The company will also showcase its AI assistant, aster, slated for launch in the North American market next year, and announce its service plans.

SK hynix, a leader in the high-bandwidth memory (HBM) sector, will show off its 16-layer HBM3E chips, currently the most advanced HBM products available in the world.

Hyundai Mobis Co., an auto parts-making affiliate of South Korean auto giant Hyundai Motor Group, also plans to join the upcoming CES to showcase its cutting-edge technologies, including its holographic windshield display and human-centric interior lighting system.

POS solutions provider Mswipe reports Rs 46 crore loss in FY24

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC.30

Mswipe, a point of sale (POS) solutions provider, has registered a loss of Rs 46.2 crore in FY24, against Rs 49 crore loss in FY23.

Mswipe's income and expenditure last fiscal remained almost the same as compared to FY23. The company's total expenditure in FY24 was Rs 327.3 crore, compared to Rs 328.3 crore in FY23.

IT expenditures account for the largest share -- 50.16 per cent -- of the total expenditures. These increased by 5.2 per cent (year-on-year) to Rs 164.2 crore in FY24, as per its financials.

The company's employee expenditures declined by 2.2 per cent to Rs 77.3 crore in the same period. During this period, depreciation expense increased by 7.1 per cent to Rs 34.5 crore. Other expenses were Rs 51.3 crore.

The total income of the company in FY24 was Rs 276.9 crore, against Rs 274.4 crore in FY23.

Transaction processing fees had the largest share of 63.09 per cent in

the company's operating income. It increased by 7.6 per cent (on-year) to Rs 174.7 crore in FY24.

Income from support services fees increased by 4 per cent to Rs 70.1 crore. Apart from this, the company's income from sign-up fees fell by 44.4 per cent to Rs 5 crore, according to its financials.

The company's return on capital employed (ROCE) stood at -16.94 per cent and EBITDA margin at -2.09 per cent.

Last fiscal, the company spent Rs 1.18 to earn one rupee.

The company had current assets of Rs 262 crore at the end of FY24. This also includes a cash balance of Rs 157 crore.

Mswipe is a Mumbai-based B2B payment service provider that offers POS solutions including cards, wallets, mobile payment apps, bank apps, contactless payments and QR code payments.

The startup has so far raised over Rs 1,000 crore from investors. Its investors include Matrix Partners, B Capital, DSG Consumer Partners, Epic Capital, UC-RNT and Ola.

Indian insurance sector sees 62pc surge in female salespersons in FY24: Report

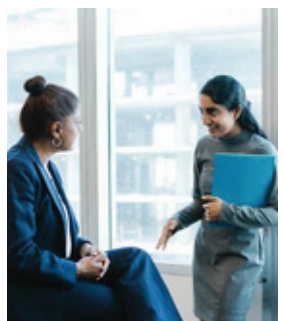
AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC.30

India's insurance sector, traditionally dominated by men, has in FY24 witnessed a 62 per cent rise in active female Point of Salespersons (POSPs), compared to the previous year, according to a report on Monday.

POSPs play a crucial role as intermediaries, simplifying insurance products for customers and guiding them in policy selection. The report by Probus, an InsurTech platform, showed that women are emerging as key players, promoting diversity and enhancing customer engagement.

It noted that there has been an extraordinary rise of 120 per cent in the total number of women added in this role since FY22.

This growth is powered by the inherent flexibility of the POSP profession, allowing women to manage their work



schedules while balancing family commitments, said the report.

The minimal entry barriers, coupled with increasing aspirations for financial independence and empowerment, have made the role an ideal choice for women seeking meaningful careers.

"The increasing participation of women has introduced a fresh perspective to the insurance ecosystem, enhancing customer trust and engagement.

Their contributions have also translated into measurable outcomes, with women POSPs

driving a 15 per cent increase in premium revenues in FY24," the report said.

The remarkable rise of female POSPs also highlights the transformative potential of inclusivity, empowerment, and innovation in shaping India's insurance sector.

With their growing presence, women are not just changing the face of the workforce, but are also driving sustainable growth and redefining industry benchmarks.

The insurance sector in India has grown significantly over the past few decades.

According to the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), the insurance market in India is expected to reach \$222 billion by 2026. In the next 10 years.

The country is also expected to be the sixth-largest insurance market, leapfrogging Germany, Canada, Italy, and South Korea.

INDIAN STOCK MARKET SET TO RIDE ON STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH IN 2025

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC.30

The Indian benchmark indices in 2025 are set to ride on strong economic growth and government efforts to boost infrastructure and digital innovation, experts said on Monday.

Sectors like capital goods, technology, financial services, consumption, and healthcare are expected to shine, with emerging areas such as semiconductors, electronic and manufacturing, renewable energy and electric mobility grabbing more attention, said Deepak Ramaraju, Senior Fund Manager, Shriram AMC.

Indian equities were buoyant amid a challenging and eventful year with higher volatility. The markets were volatile with multiple global events, a slowdown in the Indian economy, tighter liquidity conditions and delayed government spending.

"However, a recent cut in CRR is expected to ease the liquidity conditions followed by a pickup in government spending. These



two factors are expected to improve overall consumption and pickup in industrial output," Ramaraju mentioned.

Capital expenditure by the government till October 2024 stood at Rs 4,66,545 crore.

With government stepping up investments in the second half this fiscal, sectors such as infrastructure, defence and railways may witness recovery.

"FMCG, badly hit by urban consumption slow-

down, could witness recovery as valuation looks attractive. Besides, with government spending revival and possible interest rate cut in IH CY25, urban consumption should recover," Ramaraju explained.

The IT sector, which has already recovered from its lows after rate cuts, may do well in 2025 as discretionary spending picks up, provided US President-elect Donald Trump does not impose any surprise

tariffs.

Banks may also witness recovery post interest rate cuts resulting in possible pick up in credit growth. Moreover, the recent CRR cut by 50 bps (in two tranches) should boost liquidity and credit growth in the banking sector, said experts.

According to Bajaj Broking research team, 2024 has been a remarkable year for Indian equity markets, particularly for the smallcap and midcap

indices, which have significantly outperformed.

This stellar performance is attributed to strong domestic liquidity, with domestic institutional investors (DIIs) consistently being net buyers, and heightened retail participation through SIPs. Broader economic tailwinds, such as an above-average monsoon and strategic sectoral rotation, further supported the uptrend.

"Looking ahead to CY25, the smallcap and midcap indices are expected to maintain their positive trajectory. The Nifty Smallcap index, which recently achieved a breakout above multi-year resistance levels, is projected to advance to 22,700, while the Nifty Midcap index is anticipated to reach 67,700," said the research team.

These projections are bolstered by a robust domestic economy, pro-growth policies in the Union Budget, and anticipated rate cuts of 75-100 bps by the RBI, creating favourable conditions for sustained growth in these segments.

December 30: Indian share market opens lower, Nifty below 23,800

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC.30

The Indian stock market opened lower on Monday as selling was seen in the auto, IT, PSU bank, financial service, FMCG, media, energy and metal sectors on Nifty in early trade.

At around 9:30 am, Sensex was trading at 78,523.25 after declining 175.82 points or 0.22 per cent, while the Nifty was trading at 23,758.20 after declining 55.20 points or 0.23 per cent.

The market trend remained negative. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 815 stocks were trading in green, while 1,454 stocks were in red.

According to experts, "as investors leave 2024 behind and look forward



to the New Year, there will be more concerns than confidence, at least in the early days of 2025."

"The biggest concern for stock markets, globally, is uncertainty surrounding Trump 2.0. The concern is that since market valuations are high any negative news might cause corrections," they added.

Nifty Bank was down

74.80 points or 0.15 per cent at 51,236.50. Nifty Midcap 100 index was trading at 56,796.90 after dropping 182.90 points or 0.32 per cent. Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 18,673.75 after dropping 82.10 points or 0.44 per cent.

On the sectoral front, buying was seen in the Pharma and Healthcare

sector.

In the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, M&M, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, Bajaj Finserv, Titan, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Reliance were the top losers. Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel, ITC, Zomato, Nestle India, ICICI Bank, NTPC and UltraTech Cement were the top gainers.

The Dow Jones declined 0.77 per cent to close at 42,992.21. The S&P 500 declined 1.11 per cent to 5,970.84 and the Nasdaq declined 1.49 per cent to close at 19,722.03 in the previous trading session on Friday.

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

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC.30

The government's decision to waive bank guarantees for the telecom industry has come as a major relief and will help to boost 4G and 5G investments in India, according to telecom major Vodafone Idea.

Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea (Vi) stated in a regulatory filing that it has received a letter regarding the waiver of bank guarantee from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). The move comes as a big relief to the debt-ridden telco.

"The waiver is a clear indication of the government's continued support to the telecom industry. It will ensure that the exposure of the banking system



is utilised by telecom operators towards further proliferation of 4G and 5G networks in India," Vodafone Idea said in a statement.

The Department of Telecom (DoT), in a communication dated December 27, 2024, has dispensed with the requirement of submission of Financial Bank Guarantees for the spectrum acquired in auction held in 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2021, subject to

certain terms and conditions.

Prior to this reform, bank guarantees aggregating to about Rs 24,800 crore were required to be provided by Vi against each spectrum instalment, 13 months prior to the instalment falling due for the above auctions, the company said in a BSE filing.

Other major players such as Bharti Airtel are

also expected to gain from the decision. No bank guarantees will be required to be provided by the operator for the 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2021 auctions, Vodafone Idea said in a statement.

However, there would be a one-time partial shortfall only for the 2015 auction, where the net present value of all payments made would be less than the pro-rated value of the spectrum used, it said. "We are in discussion with the DoT to determine the final amount of this partial shortfall for the 2015 auction," Vodafone Idea said.

The moratorium for spectrum auction dues for Vi is ending in October next year and bank guarantees were to be submitted 13 months before the next due payment.

4th Test: Lacklustre batting show from India gives Australia 184-run win and 2-1 series

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE, DEC. 30

When India's score read 112/3 at tea, Yashasvi Jaiswal was unbeaten on a controlled fifty and Rishabh Pant showed remarkable restraint. In the chase of 340, a draw looked imminent, especially after playing a wicketless second session.

But when it mattered the most, India suffered a batting collapse in the final session by losing their last seven wickets for 34 runs and suffer a 184-run defeat to Australia in the Boxing Day Test at Melbourne Cricket Ground on Monday.

In front of a record 74,362 fans, Australia looked on course for the win after reducing India to 33/3 in the first session. But Jaiswal and Pant kept them at bay in the second session, as the old ball began to soften.

But in the final session of the gripping Test match, Pant fell to Travis Head and that opened the door for Australia to barge in as India collapsed from 121/3 to 155 all out. Captain Pat Cummins and Scott Boland picked three wickets in a terrific bowling performance from Australia,

who now have a 2-1 lead in the five-match series, ahead of next week's Test match in Sydney.

India will be disappointed as it was a game which they could have drawn, but have now ended up on the losing side. The shot selection of the batters in second innings to fall like a pack of cards along with failing form of their senior batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli will come under scrutiny.

The inability to bowl out Australia's lower order quickly and lack of bowling depth, especially with three all-rounders picked in, along with inability to seize crucial moments will come under scanner too for India as the final Test in Sydney now becomes a must-win affair for India to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

In the morning, India took only ten balls and conceded just six runs to wrap up Australia's second innings on 234 in 83.4 overs. Jasprit Bumrah got his fifth wicket by sending Nathan Lyon's stumps flying with an inswinger sneaking through the gate. It also took Bumrah's match figures to 9/156, with his tally of wickets in this series standing at 30.



Chasing 340, India had an extremely watchful start as Australia's bowlers beat them consistently with great deliveries. It meant Rohit Sharma and Jaiswal had to curb their run-scoring shots, allowing Australia to settle into great rhythm.

Rohit's first attempt in playing an aggressive shot caused his downfall - in a bid to whip off Cummins through the leg-side, he got a leading edge and was caught by gully on second attempt to be out for nine off 40 balls.

On last ball of the same over, Cummins bowled a back of the length ball which left KL Rahul in two minds and nicked behind to second slip for a five-ball duck. With Australia keeping a lid on the run-flow, Jaiswal and Kohli went into

a shell.

They were also beaten while defending, but at the stroke of lunch, Kohli went for a big drive and was caught at first slip off Starc to be out for five off 29 balls. The post-lunch session began with Jaiswal playing back-to-back controlled cut shots to take boundaries off Scott Boland, followed by hitting the same shot for a similar result in the pacer's next over.

Pant also had a go at Boland by swiping across the line for four, before Jaiswal slashed Mitchell Starc for another boundary. A ball later, Starc's nip-backer hit Jaiswal on the back pad and Australia went in for a review, only for the umpire's call to save the batter, as replays showed the ball clipping

just top of leg-stump.

With the old ball softening and Australia's bowlers tiring, Jaiswal and Pant were diligent in seeking runs while trying to be patient at the crease. Jaiswal got his second half-century of the match with a delightful flick off Nathan Lyon, also his seventh four of the innings.

Pant, who was content in defending and leaving deliveries after copping criticism for his first-innings dismissal, flicked Starc through fine leg for four before the duo walked off for tea break after a brilliant session of playing rearguard cricket for India.

But things changed dramatically after tea break - Australia had a funky start to the final session by opening the bowling with part-time off-spin of Travis Head. The ploy worked for Australia when Head broke the 88-run stand by having Pant miscue a pull to tumbling long-on, and fall for 30 off 104 balls.

Three overs later, Boland struck by getting a back of the length ball to jump at Ravindra Jadeja, who couldn't help but fend at it, and edged behind to Alex Carey. Lyon joined the wicket-takers

party by getting a to skid on straight and take the outside edge of a defending Nitish Kumar Reddy to first slip, as the batter fell for just one.

Jaiswal continued to battle hard alongside Washington Sundar, even as Australia tested him against the short ball. The ploy worked when Jaiswal looked to pull a bouncer from Cummins, but gloved behind to Carey, who took a great low catch.

Australia went for the review, where third umpire Sharfuddoula ruled Jaiswal out for 84, citing the enormous and visible deflection between bat and glove, despite no line showing on snicko. From there, the result was a foregone conclusion - Boland had Akash Deep and Jasprit Bumrah caught out while Lyon trapped Mohammed Siraj lbw to seal a memorable win for Australia.

Brief Scores: Australia 474 and 234 in 83.4 overs (Marnus Labuschagne 70, Nathan Lyon 41; Jasprit Bumrah 5-57, Mohammed Siraj 3-70) beat India 369 and 155 in 79.1 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 84, Rishabh Pant 30; Pat Cummins 3-28, Scott Boland 3-39) by 184 runs

Bumrah, Head nominated for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year

AGENCIES
DUBAI, DEC. 30



India's premium fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah is nominated for the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for Men's Cricketer of the Year. Alongside Indian ace, who is also nominated for the Test Cricketer of the year, Australia's Travis Head and the English batting duo of Joe Root and Harry Brook also made the list for the prestigious honour.

Bumrah nabbed 15 wickets from eight overs in the final against South Africa, as India went unbeaten at the 2024 T20 World Cup.

India's spearhead also had a memorable year in the longest format by picking 71 wickets in 13 Tests, the most scalps taken by a bowler this year.

In the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, Bumrah is leading the wicket-takers charts with 30 wickets at an average of 12.83. He also completed 200 Test wickets and became the first bowler to achieve the feat with an average less than 20.

Indian bowling attack's nemesis Head also made the list after shining across all formats for his country. After playing a vital role in the 2023 ICC World Cup

final, Head continued his form as he was the third highest scorer in the 2024 T20 World Cup with 255 runs in seven innings, with his highest score being 76 against India. The left-hander is also the leading run scorer during the ongoing BGT helping Australia get in a good position to solidify their spot in the 2025 WTC final.

Root, England's premier batter, made 1556 runs from 17 Tests at an average of 55.57, his second-best annual run tally in Tests after amassing 1708 runs in 2021. It was also the fifth instance of Root scoring over 1000 Test runs in a calendar year. With six Test hundreds to go alongside five fifties, Root's impressive run saw him become the joint-fifth highest century maker in Tests (36) alongside Rahul Dravid.

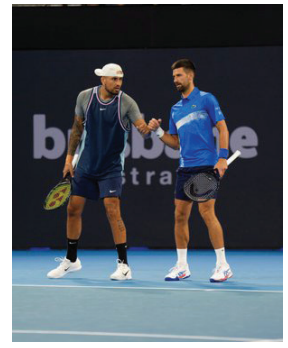
ATP Tour: Djokovic/Kyrgios light up Brisbane with stunning doubles win

AGENCIES
BRISBANE, DEC. 30

Novak Djokovic and Nick Kyrgios teamed up to defeat Alexander Erler and Andreas Mies 6-4, 6-7(4), 10-8 in the men's double of Brisbane International, an ATP 250 event at Pat Rafter Arena on Monday. The match which lasted for an hour and 48 minutes was a showcase of creativity and skill, with Djokovic and Kyrgios delighting fans through their contrasting styles.

A standout moment occurred in the 10th game of the first set when Djokovic executed an around-the-net backhand winner off a sharp-angled volley from Mies.

The Serbian maestro's precision drew a raucous cheer from the Brisbane crowd, leaving Kyrgios in awe. "That was a great setup by Mies, and I just went for it," Djokovic recounted. "It was 5-4 to



us, but they were 30/0 up, and winning that point really lifted our energy. The crowd got behind us, and we used that momentum to win the game and the set."

Kyrgios was quick to laud his partner's brilliance: "That's just an iconic Novak moment. The way he moves, I've never moved like that in my life! My tweener might be flashier, but that shot is what the fans will remember. Honestly, I was just loving it."

Kyrgios also produced his own jaw-dropping

moments, including a perfectly executed lob winner and a daring forehand pass that sealed the first set. The second set saw the pair's flair continue as Kyrgios attempted a tweener, much to the delight of the crowd. For Djokovic, the match marked his return to Brisbane after a five-year absence, and he was full of praise for the Australian tennis culture. "It's amazing to be back in Brisbane.

The energy here is unmatched. A packed house, incredible atmosphere—it's why we play this game," Djokovic said post-match.

Kyrgios, making his competitive comeback after an 18-month injury layoff, echoed the sentiment. "This injury has been brutal, so I don't take any of this for granted. I don't know how many Aussie summers I have left, so I'm soaking in every moment."

IDCA announces 2nd edition of T10 Women's Deaf Premier League from Jan 7 to 9

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC. 30

The Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA) announced the second edition of the T10 Women's Deaf Premier League, scheduled from January 7 to 9, 2025. The tournament will feature five specially-abled women's teams from different parts of the country, with the final taking

place on January 9.

The five deaf women's cricket teams -- UP Warriorz, Mumbai Stars, Delhi Bulls, Hyderabad Eagles, and Bangalore Badshahs -- will play a total of 10 matches before making it to the finals. The three-day tournament will kick off with an opening ceremony on January 7 at Police Gymkhana Cricket Ground in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

The winning team and the players will be felicitated for their exceptional performance at the closing ceremony to be held on January 9. The IDCA T10 champions will receive a prize of Rs 1,00,000, while the runner-up will get Rs 50,000. The best individual in categories such as batting, bowling, fielding, and super sixes will also receive cash awards.

'We wanted to tear the book up': Haryana Steelers reflect on maiden PKL title journey

AGENCIES
PUNE, DEC. 30

Haryana Steelers' camp roared in celebration on Sunday at the Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Balewadi, Pune, after scripting a memorable 32-23 win in the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) Season 11 final against Patna Pirates.

Shivam Patare continued his supreme attacking form on the night, with ample support from Vinay, as the duo earned 9 and 6 points, respectively, to help the JSW Sports-owned franchise maintain their lead.

Mohammadreza Shadlou's defensive prowess put shackles around Patna's formidable attacking line-up, as the Iranian scored five successful tackles to keep the opposition at bay.

This was Haryana's first-ever title win in the PKL. It is a result of impeccable scouting efforts made by the management over the past couple of years, as they continued to put faith in youngsters and invested in developing local talent. The hard push to rope in Shadlou, who was part of the title-winning Purneri Paltan side last year, proved to be the masterstroke, as the Iranian proved himself to be a complete allrounder, and brought in attitude and confidence to Haryana's defence.

Skipper Jaideep gave a glimpse of the team's



mindset going into the final and said, "We already had played Patna twice before and we spent a lot of time analysing the videos and understanding their game. We prepared our plans accordingly and stuck to our plans. We told the coach that we will not be making any mistakes."

Jaideep further reflected on Patna's raider Devank's remarks on 'turning the page' against Steelers. "They wanted to turn the page. We wanted to tear the book up. That was our message to the team. We were fully confident we would win. We lifted the trophy in style because we wanted to have fun and enjoy this moment," he added.

The win meant even more to Haryana head coach Manpreet Singh who took his side to be the final last season as well, but was unable to help them lift the trophy. Speaking immediately after the win, Manpreet said, "We feel great. We put in a bit

of effort last year. We converted our silver medal to gold medal. This was a great journey. I had a great time teaching the young players. When there is raw material, you can mould it any side you want to. It was great to see young players do what they were taught and they converted the hard work and helped us win the trophy."

With a focus on sports science and a training camp at the JSW Sports Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) over the years, further helped Haryana players in being in tremendous shape and maintaining amazing levels of fitness. Haryana Steelers CEO and JSW Sports COO Divyanshu Singh gave an insight into the efforts taken behind the scenes to prepare the team to reach this stage.

"This is a long time coming. It has been a lot of hard work - from missing out in the playoffs to improving our efforts in scouting, bringing our coach Manpreet Singh and

focusing on implementing sports science through Inspire Institute of Sports and ensuring that we look for the right youngsters to improve our team composition. Last year we made a lot of great strides with the team reaching the final and being so close to the trophy. This year it was all about bridging those gaps, and making those small differences so that we can go all the way," he said.

"While the league is three months, the work cannot be confined to 4-5 months.

The players who were retained, we ensured we are working with them throughout the year at IIS. We are in the process of setting up our academy in Haryana as well. Those things make a big difference," he added.

The dominance and attitude displayed by the Steelers throughout the season caught attention and became a massive talking point. Steelers were the first team to qualify for

the playoffs and finished in the top position in the league stage. Apart from Shadlou finishing as the top defender of the season with 82 tackle points and 78 successful tackles, Vinay also earned 48 points in do-or-die raids, the highest by any player. Overall, Haryana attained 260 successful tackles, and 290 total team tackle points, the maximum by any team this year.

Looking into the future, Shadlou expressed delight over his time at Haryana and said that he now aims to win his third title in a row. "Haryana Steelers was a great team for me. Everything from the management, the players and the support staff was remarkable. And finally - we won the trophy. I am happy and I speak from the heart. I hope the next year, we, at Haryana Steelers, can win trophy again," he said. Divyanshu further praised Manpreet and Jaideep for their roles in the title win and explained how the duo have grown over the years.

"Our coach is a great tactician. He has evolved so much in his ability to handle students and understanding that different athletes have different keys to get the best out of them. We have really seen that change. Jaideep is one of the youngest captains and the way he plays selflessly and everyone has a voice, and that shows in his performances," he signed off.

BERHANU READY FOR A HAT-TRICK WHILE MINSEWO RETURNS TO DEFEND TITLE IN MUMBAI MARATHON

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, DEC. 30

Ethiopia's defending champions Hayle Lemi Berhanu and Aberash Minsewo are returning to retain their titles at the Mumbai Marathon 2025, a World Athletics Gold Label Race, scheduled on January 19. Berhanu will attempt a hat-trick of wins after his back-to-

back victories in 2023 and 2024 in the men's section. If successful, he will be the first runner to achieve this honour in the 20 years of the race.

Incidentally, Kenyan John Kelai, who won in 2007 and 2008, made such an attempt earlier but could finish only third in 2009.

Although Ethiopian

woman Mulu Seboka secured three wins in Mumbai, she skipped the 2007 edition before claiming her third title.

The first three finishers in both men's and women's categories will receive USD 50,000, \$25,000, and \$15,000 from the prize pot of USD 390,238. A reward of USD 15,000 also awaits those who break the exist-

ing records in their respective categories. Ethiopians Hayle Lemi Berhanu (2:07:32) and Anchialem Haymanot (2:24:15) have held the event records since 2023.

The 2025 field includes 11 men and six women having their personal bests faster than the existing Mumbai Marathon course records.

Commenting on the

stellar line-up of elite athletes, Vivek Singh, Jt. MD, Procam International, said,

"The return of the defending champions, Berhanu and Minsewo augurs well as we step into the landmark 20th edition of the Tata Mumbai Marathon. This race has been the catalyst for the success of the sport of distance running in India, and this elite

line-up is a testimony to the growing popularity of TMM worldwide.

We wish all participants Godspeed and good luck, as they prepare to go the distance on Sunday, January 19th."

Apart from Berhanu, the men's roster includes Kenya's Philemon Cherop Rono, who finished runner-up in the 2023 edition here.

Among other runners with previous Mumbai outings is Eritrean Merhawi Kesenet, who finished ninth place the same year.

However, the best from the 2020 batch who is making another appearance this time is Bahrain's Abdi Ali Gelchu, the fifth-place finisher in his previous running in Mumbai. Gelchu, the Asian junior

cross-country champion in 2016, has migrated from Ethiopia and has run for his adopted country Bahrain, from 2014 onwards.

Two promising names to challenge Berhanu this time will be his countrymates Asrar Aberberhan Hiyrden (2:04:43) and Bazezew Asmare (2:04:57) with super-fast timings logged in recent years.

JKTPO organizes Onboarding Events for PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries across Kashmir Division

J1NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 30

To empower artisans and craftsmen trained under the PM Vishwakarma program, the Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO) conducted a series of awareness and onboarding events within the Kashmir division on December 24th, 27th and 30th, 2024.

These events were hosted at government-authorized training institutes namely ITI Bemina, Government Polytechnic for Women and ITI Budgam, which are situated in the Srinagar and Budgam districts. The onboarding session was conducted by a team of consultants from the JKTPO, who presented a detailed overview of the benefits associated with the scheme.

The primary objective of the initiative is to sub-



stantially enhance the digital presence and market visibility of local artisans who are registered under the Vishwakarma scheme. By facilitating their integration into e-commerce platforms, JKTPO seeks to establish valuable marketing channels that pave the way for meaningful business prospects for these artisans.

This initiative represents a significant advancement in creating new opportunities for the PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries, with a strong focus on promoting growth and development among local craftsmen. The program included awareness and capacity building sessions that attracted over

140 beneficiaries, particularly those specialised in masonry, carpentry, and tailoring. Furthermore, participants were provided with comprehensive support in the development of product listings, which encompassed creation of compelling descriptions, the selection of appropriate imagery, and implementation of effective pricing strategies.

In addition, the Government e-Marketplace (Gem), a national public procurement e-commerce platform, has successfully onboarded more than 80 beneficiaries trained under the PM Vishwakarma initiative.

Additionally, Kashmir

Art & Craft Impex (KaCI), a local e-commerce entity in the valley, has integrated approximately 50 PM Vishwakarma-trained beneficiaries as sellers on its platform.

In previous initiatives, the JKTPO has conducted various onboarding drives in collaboration with leading e-commerce partners. These initiatives have successfully facilitated onboarding of sellers, artisans, retailers, small merchants, and traders onto their respective platforms, thereby enabling them to promote their products on a global scale.

It has been planned to organize similar onboarding initiatives with prominent national e-commerce platforms and local enterprises across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir. These efforts aim to promote self-reliance and support traditional artisanship within the region.

DC Rajouri reviews winter arrangements at children Home Pareesha

J1NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 30

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma today visited Children Home Pareesha to assess the facilities provided to the inmates residing there and ensure their well-being. During the visit, he interacted with the children, inquired about their needs, and inspected the arrangements in place, particularly for the winter season.

The DC toured the premises of the Pareesha and reviewed the quality of basic amenities, including accommodation, food, health care, and education. He engaged in an interactive session with the children, listened to their concerns, and encouraged them to focus on their studies and extracurricular activities for holistic development. In light of the harsh



winter conditions, the Deputy Commissioner closely examined the arrangements to ensure the comfort and safety of the children. He directed the concerned officials to prioritize the availability of adequate heating facilities, sufficient bedding, and warm clothing. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of regular health check-ups and nutritious meals to maintain the overall well-being of the children during the winter months.

The DC also reviewed the safety measures in place and instructed the Social Welfare Depart-

ment to conduct regular inspections to address any shortcomings promptly. He assured the children and staff of the administration's full support in ensuring their needs are met.

Speaking on the occasion, DC Abhishek Sharma said, "It is our collective responsibility to ensure that children residing in such facilities are not only safe but also provided with every opportunity to thrive. Every child deserves a dignified and nurturing environment, especially during winter when extra care is required."

DC Jammu conducts surprise inspection of offices in Tehsil Bahu

J1NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 30

Deputy Commissioner Sachin Kumar Vaishya today conducted an extensive surprise inspection of offices and the delivery of public services.

Accompanied by Additional District Development Commissioner Sher Singh and Assistant Deputy Commissioner Shishir Gupta, the DC visited key offices, including the Tehsil and Niabat offices, to assess their performance and ensure efficient services delivery.

As part of the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner also undertook a field inspection in Chatta area, accompanied by the District Forest Officer and other concerned officials.

Transport Commissioner visits ARTO Office Udhampur



J1NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 30

Transport Commissioner J&K Vishesh Paul Mahajan visited ARTO office Udhampur and took a brief overview of its functioning and reviewed the status of the services being provided to the public.

The Transport Commissioner directed the staff to ensure delivery of the services to the general public in an efficient and transparent manner.

The ARTO Udhampur was directed to increase

the enforcement activities in the district to curb traffic violations to minimize road accidents and save precious human lives.

Later, the Transport Commissioner convened a meeting with the delegations of Transport unions where the issues projected by them were discussed.

The Transport Commissioner assured early resolution of the grievances. The transporters also assured that they will extend all necessary cooperation to the department.

Arrangements for celebration of Republic Day-2025 reviewed at Kupwara

J1NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, DECEMBER 30

In order to ensure proper arrangements for ensuring Republic Day (RD) celebration in district Kupwara, the Deputy Commissioner (DC), Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today convened a meeting of all concerned officers, here and reviewed the arrangements.

Speaking at the occasion, the DC stressed upon the officers to ensure hassle free arrangements for smooth conduct of the national event and instructed them to maintain proper coordination and follow a timeline for ensuring arrangements well in advance.

The DC directed all the departments to display Tableaus on the eve of Republic Day Parade to showcase government schemes and achievements of their respective



departments. She said all efforts shall be made to make the National Function more attractive and informative.

She also stressed the need for maintaining protocol in seating arrangement and also issued directions to the police department for taking proper protocol of the National Flag and security arrangements.

The DC gave directions that Republic Day celebra-

tion functions shall also be held at Sub divisional, Tehsil and Block levels with the same fervour and enthusiasm.

Earlier, ACR Kupwara briefed the meeting about the programme and responsibilities of each officer and informed that the main function of the Republic Day will be held at District Police Lines (DPL) Kupwara, where National Flag will be hoisted and the VIP will take salute on

the March Past comprising the contingents of JKP, JKAP, CRPF, IRP, BSF, FPP, Home Guard, NCC cadets and school children. The DC took segment wise review of all arrangements including power supply, water, sanitation, seating arrangements and directed the concerned departments to ensure these arrangements.

Other arrangements including refreshment, deployment of magistrates, arrangement of cultural programmes, barricading, facility of commentators and availability of fire-tenders were also reviewed. The DC also directed Officers to ensure their presence including staff in the Republic Day functions. ACR Kupwara, District and Sectoral Officers, besides senior officers of BSF, CRPF and Police were present in the meeting.

DC Shopian reviews winter preparedness; calls for a coordinated approach to mitigate winter challenges



J1NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 30

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today chaired a meeting to review winter preparedness and emphasized the need for a coordinated approach to mitigate winter challenges.

He instructed concerned officers to execute mitigation plans efficiently, ensuring prompt responses to avoid inconvenience to the public.

Focus was given on publicizing the Action Plan mentioning the Priority 1, 2 & 3 roads so that the public is well aware of the snow clearance operations in order to arrest

the distress calls for snow clearance.

The meeting focused on interdepartmental coordination, evolving efficient mechanisms to address public grievances, and ensuring seamless services during the winter season.

The DC instructed for setting up Integrated Winter Control Room, to be manned by R&B, MED, PMGSY, MC, Revenue, Jal Shakti etc.

ADDC, Dr Nasir Ahmad Lone, ADC Dr Zakir Husain Faaz, ACR, ACD, Tehsildars, ExEns of various Engineering Departments, CEO, DIO, ARTO, BDOs, Dy.CMO, DYSSO and other officers attended the meeting.

Chief Justice virtually inaugurates State-of-the-Art High Court Guest House at Melongthang Leh, Additional Court at High Court Complex Srinagar

J1NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 30

Justice Tashi Rabstan, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, today virtually inaugurated the State-of-the-Art High Court Guest House at Melongthang, Leh, UT of Ladakh, in presence of Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Justice Sindhu Sharma, Justice Rajesh Oswal, Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul, Justice Sanjay Dhar, Justice Puneet Gupta, Justice Javed Iqbal Wani, Justice Mohd. Akram Chowdhary, Justice Rahul Bharti, Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi, Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal, Justice Rajesh Sekhri and Justice Mohd. Yousuf Wani, Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh. The inauguration was also graced by the presence of Dr. Pawan Dev Kotwal, Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor, UT of Ladakh.

The Guest House, constructed at a cost of Rs 12.42 crore has eight suites, eight deluxe rooms and three additional rooms with centrally heated features and in-house lounge, dining room and office with facility of air conditioning; ensuring comfort for

its occupants. A separate accommodation for staff Guest House has been built in close proximity.

The facility is dedicated for comfortable lodging and boarding of not only visiting Judges of the Supreme Court, various High Courts, Judges of High Court of J&K and Ladakh but also other judicial officers from different States visiting the UT of Ladakh.

During his inaugural address, Chief Justice, Tashi Rabstan emphasized on the integral role of robust infrastructure in the efficient functioning of the judiciary. He expressed his gratitude to Lieutenant Governor and the officers of the UT Administration for their unwavering cooperation and support in developing judicial infrastructure in both Leh and Kargil districts.

The Chief Justice highlighted that earlier there was no suitable option for visiting judges of the Supreme Court, various High Courts or even judges of our own High Court and other judicial officers for comfortable stay in the region except for the Hotels. He added that the newly constructed, State-



of-the-Art High Court Guest House will now cater to the lodging and boarding requirements of judges and judicial officers, ensuring a comfortable stay during their visits.

Chief Justice lauded the dedication and swift response of the UT Administration in completing this project and expressed the hope that similar enthu-

iasm and efficiency would be demonstrated in completing other vital infrastructure projects within stipulated timelines.

Dr. Pawan Dev Kotwal, congratulated the judiciary on the inauguration of the Guest House. He credited the regular reviews and personal intervention of the Chief Justice for the timely completion of the

project. Dr. Kotwal reiterated the administration's commitment to providing top-notch infrastructure to meet the needs of the judiciary.

On the occasion, Principal District Judge (PDJ) Leh felicitated various officers and officials of the executing agencies who showed their dedication in timely completion of this project, by presenting traditional Khataks as a token of appreciation for their commendable efforts.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Shahzad Azeem, Registrar General; Amit Kumar Gupta, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority; Anoop Sharma, Registrar IT; Farooq Ahmad Bhat, Registrar Judicial, Srinagar; Fayaz Ahmed Qureshi, CPC e-Courts; Abdul Bari, Joint Registrar Judicial and other officers of the High Court Registry at Srinagar. Spalzes Angmo, Member Secretary, Ladakh Legal Services Authority; Manoj Parihar, Principal District and Sessions Judge, Leh; Shafi Lassu, President Bar

Association Leh and other senior officers and officials were present at Leh.

Manoj Parihar, Principal District and Sessions Judge Leh, delivered the welcome address, wherein, he extended a warm welcome to the Chief Justice and Hon'ble Judges of the High Court, as well as other dignitaries present.

Tsewang Phuntsog, CJM Leh proposed the formal vote of thanks. The Proceedings of the event were conducted by Chemit Yuryal, Secretary DLSA Kargil and Nodal Officer for Judicial Infrastructure Projects in UT Ladakh.

Subsequently, Chief Justice also inaugurated an Additional Court at the High Court Complex, Srinagar. This initiative marks a significant step towards enhancing judicial accessibility and expediting justice delivery for the people of the region.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Justice reiterated the judiciary's commitment to ensuring that the public has access to efficient and timely justice. He further acknowledged the efforts of all stakeholders who contributed to the successful establishment of the Additional Court.

Training for Enumerators under Mission Yuva held at Ganderbal



J1NEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 30

A training program for enumerators under the ambit of 'Mission Yuva' was conducted today at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, Ganderbal.

The event, presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ganderbal, Gulzar Ahmad, aimed to equip enumerators with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out surveys and data collection under Mission Yuva. This initiative focuses on identifying the aspirations, needs, and challenges of youth in the

district, ensuring effective implementation of youth-centric policies and programs.

Addressing the participants, the ADC emphasized the critical role of enumerators in accurately collecting data to form a foundation for policy formulation. He encouraged the team to approach their responsibilities with dedication and professionalism.

The session included comprehensive presentations, demonstrations, and practical exercises designed to enhance the enumerators' technical and interpersonal skills.