

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Severe and continuous headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Dizziness
- Steady but painless or mild, brief or even, rashes or itchy

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

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Dismantling entire terror ecosystem in J&K priority of PM Modi led Govt: Home Minister

JI NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

Reiterating that dismantling entire terror ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir is the priority of PM Modi led government Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday directed the paramilitary forces to take strong steps for 'zero terror plan' and "zero infiltration" in the Union Territory.

In continuation of the high level meetings with Indian Army and J&K Police held on February 4 and 5, the Union Home



Minister today chaired another security review meeting vis-à-vis J&K.

The meeting, according to the news agency, was attended by the Union

Home Secretary, Director (IB), Director Generals of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Border Security Force (BSF) and other senior officers.

While addressing the meeting Shah said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Central Government is committed to 'Terror

free Jammu & Kashmir'. He emphasized the role of paramilitary to achieve the target of terror free J&K.

Shah directed all security agencies to remain alert and continue work in a synergies mode to eliminate terrorism in J&K. He assured that all the resources will be made available in this endeavor. The Home Minister directed the BSF to ensure zero infiltration from the international borders by adopting strong vigil, strengthening the

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USBRL: PM Modi to flag-off Vande Bharat train on Feb 17

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 11

Marking a significant milestone in the completion of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is all set to inaugurate a train to Kashmir on February 17.

Sources told the news agency that the Prime Minister will flag off the specially designed Vande Bharat Express from the Jammu division while the arrangements are being made for the historic inauguration event.

"After years of hard work, dedication, and



engineering marvels, the dream of Kashmir's rail connectivity has finally come true with the Vande Bharat Express set to run on this route," they said. Railway officials have

been directed to make necessary preparations for the grand launch of the rail service on February 17. Authorities have decided that no leave will

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BRIEF

J&K gets Rs 350 cr for Panchayat infra, digital push in 3 years: GoI

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 11

The Government of India has approved Rs 350.56 crore for strengthening Panchayat infrastructure in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh over the past three years, reveals the official data accessed by the news agency.

The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) has allocated significant funds to J&K for rural governance and digital infrastructure development.

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Higher reaches receive fresh snowfall, light rains lash plains

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 11

For the second straight day, the higher reaches in north and central Kashmir areas received fresh snowfall while the plains witnessed light rainfall on Tuesday.

According to the news agency, the fresh snowfall occurred at multiple places today including Sonamarg and other areas. The light rains lashed the plains including Srinagar and other areas of the Valley today.

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Er Rashid attends Lok Sabha for first time, raises J&K civilian deaths in maiden speech

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 11

Member of Parliament from Baramulla, Engineer Rashid on Tuesday attended the Lok Sabha proceedings for the first time after his election last year.

He was brought from Tihar Jail under custody parole granted by the Delhi High Court to participate in the ongoing Budget session.

Er Rashid, who has been in custody since 2019 in connection with a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, was granted a two-day custody parole.

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No Chances of Forming Govt with NC: LoP Sunil Sharma

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 11

Leader of the opposition in the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly, Sunil Kumar Sharma, on Tuesday said there are no chances of the BJP allying with the National Conference (NC) to form a government in J&K. Sharma emphasized that the party would seek answers from the government over issues faced by the common masses in the Union Territory. In an exclusive chat with the news agency, Sharma asserted

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Pre-budget consultations continue as traders, hoteliers meet CM Omar in Srinagar



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 11

Ahead of the maiden Budget session of Jammu

and Kashmir Assembly, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday met traders, tour operators, hoteliers and people

associated with education sector to seek their suggestions. According to details available wit news

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Rules of Assembly: House panel gave its go-ahead to Speaker to carry out bare minimum modifications

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 11

The Legislative Assembly's Committee on Rules on Tuesday gave its go-ahead to the Speaker to carry out bare minimum modifications in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

The House panel comprises legislators of the ruling NC-led alliance and BJP met today morning in the Legislative Assembly complex, Jammu to dis-

uss amendments/ modifications in the Rules governing functioning of the House.

Sources told news agency that there was unanimity among members against major changes in the rules and converged on making bare minimum modifications in the Rules.

A legislator, who is part of the committee, wishing anonymity, said that all panel members agreed upon replacing Governor, State, both Houses of legislature and Joint

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India ready to share its experience with the world: PM Modi at AI Summit in Paris

AGENCIES
PARIS/NEW DELHI, FEB 11 (UND)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today shared India's experience and success in developing AI applications for the public good and offered to share its experience and expertise with the world.

Addressing the AI Action Summit, attended by many heads of government and heads of tech giants at the Grand Palais in Paris, PM Modi also said that loss of jobs is AI's most feared disruption. "But history has shown that work does not disappear due to technology. Its



nature changes and new types of jobs are created," he added.

To overcome this, the world needs to invest in skilling and re-skilling of the people "for an AI-driv-

en future". "AI is developing at an unprecedented scale and speed and being adapted and deployed even faster. There is also a deep interdependence across bor-



Corps salutes and pays tribute to the supreme sacrifice of two gallant soldiers," it said.

"Lt Gen M V Suchindra Kumar Army Commander Northern Command and all ranks of Dhruva Com-

mand solemnly salute the supreme sacrifice of brave hearts Capt Karamjit Singh Bakshi and Naik Mukesh in a suspected IED blast in Akhnoor," said an Army official. "Dhruva

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 4

Chief Secretary chairs 7th State Broadband Committee meet

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 11

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired the 7th State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting for smooth implementation of National Broadband Mission (NBM) across Jammu & Kashmir at Civil Secretariat here today.

The meeting was attended by Committee members including Commissioner Secretary Forest, Ecology & Environment; Commissioner Secretary Information Technology Department; Commissioner Secretary Housing & Urban Development Department; Secretary Public Works (R&B) Department; Member Con-



venor, Addl. DGT, J&K LSA, DoT, Jammu; CGM, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., J&K, representatives of the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) and Digital Infrastructure Providers Association (DIPA).

Principal Secretary Power Development Department; Secretary Rural Development & Panchayat Raj; DCs of Jammu, Samba, Udhampur, Srinagar, Shopian, and Baramulla districts also attended the meeting.

The meeting deliberated at length on action points of 6th SBC meeting decisions; 4G Saturation Project being executed by

BSNL; RoW; 5G implementation Plan; Call Before u Dig (CBuD); BharatNet/Amended BharatNet Project and other issues.

While addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary called for intensifying the saturation of implementation of National Broadband Mis-

sion in Jammu and Kashmir. He maintained that seminal progress has been achieved and enjoined upon officers for greater coordination among departments and agencies to resolve impediments at the earliest to achieve the target.

The Chief Secretary

directed DCs for conducting DLTC meeting for CBuD and resolution of site allotment issues for erection of towers at district level.

While reviewing the provision of electricity connections to Mobile Towers, Chief Secretary instructed concerned to reflect actual position on ground and update the entire data.

Meanwhile, Chief Secretary reviewed status of RoW applications like received, approved, rejected, withdrawn, in-process and pending cases. Future, he directed for integration of CBuD with GatiShakti portal for management of overall progress and fast-tracking applications.

Comm Secy HUDD reviews Swachhta Survekshan 2025 preparations

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

Commissioner Secretary Housing and Urban Development Department, Mandeeep Kaur, chaired a high level meeting to review the preparations for Swachhta Survekshan 2025 here today. Speaking about the Swachh Survekshan - a cleanliness survey among the Urban Local Bodies across the country, the Commissioner Secretary emphasised the importance of improving sanitation, waste management and citizen participation to achieve better rankings in the upcoming survey. She directed the concerned to implement innovative solutions for maintaining cleanliness and ensuring active involvement of local communities.

Dr. Devansh Yadav highlighted the steps already taken by JMC and other urban bodies to enhance

sanitation infrastructure and public awareness. He stressed the need for coordinated efforts among all stakeholders to achieve cleaner and more sustainable urban environments across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Commissioner Secretary also reviewed the activities undertaken by the ULBs during the 'Swachhanttra' a pre-Republic Day Swachhata campaign that was initiated by the Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD). The campaign had galvanized people from all walks of life to work towards cleaner and healthier urban environment.

During the campaign, over 1032 different sanitation and cleanliness activities were carried out in which the citizens participated with great enthusiasm and more than



3,50,00 people participated in different sanitation activities undertaken by the ULBs. Besides, more than 2,21,000 citizens took pledge for sustained sanitation & cleanliness. 188 Garbage Points were cleared and 52 water bodies were cleaned.

During the 'Swachhanttra', a painting competition on the theme "Importance of Waste Segregation", was organised for all 80 ULBs of J&K. 1040 people had participated in the painting competition reflecting the enthusiasm of people

especially youth towards a Swachhata initiative. 26 best paintings were received by the Mission Director, Swachh Bharat Mission- Urban, 2.0 from Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Jammu/Kashmir & JMC/SMC.

The Mission Director framed a panel of Judges which evaluated the 26 best painting received. Aqsa from Doda, Sana Firdous from Shopian and Raksha Gurung from Jammu secured 1st, 2nd & 3rd positions respectively. The 1st, 2nd &

paving the way for a cleaner and healthier future.

The meeting concluded with a call for strengthened monitoring mechanisms, increased public engagement, and enhanced waste management strategies to ensure a significant improvement in Jammu and Kashmir's performance in Swachhta Survekshan 2025.

Present in the meeting were Commissioner, JMC, Dr. Devansh Yadav, Director, Urban Local Bodies, Jammu Manisha Sarin, Joint Commissioner, (H&S) Abdul Star, Health Officer, JMC Dr. Vinod Kumar Sharma and other officers and officials from JMC. The officers and officials from Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Executive Officers (EOs) from other Municipal Councils and Municipal Committees of Jammu and Kashmir, attended the meeting through video conferencing.

The Commissioner Secretary stressed the need to engage more citizens in all such Swachhata initiatives to bring about measurable impact, fostering greater awareness and action within the community

Doda students participate in Pariksha Pe Charcha-2025



J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, FEBRUARY 11

Students from across Doda district took part in the live streaming of Pariksha Pe Charcha 2025, a significant educational event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi directly engaged with students to address academic challenges.

The live streaming was held in the Conference Hall of the Chief Education Office, with all higher secondary and high schools participating in the event at their own respective schools. The event was organized under the guidance of District Development Commissioner Harvinder Singh and under the supervision of Chief

Education Officer Mohammad Hafiz and DEPO Dr. Anis Ahmed.

A total of 52400 students and staff from higher secondary and high schools from across the district participated in the live streaming of the event. Schools were equipped with advanced ICT labs and digital tools, ensuring a smooth and uninterrupted transmission of the Prime Minister's address. Students across the district, including those from the most remote schools such as HSS Kahaljugasar, Chanti, Chilly, Halaran, Malan, Dessa, Topneel, Behota, Goha, Gundana, Shadiwan, and Chiralla, attended the event with full arrangements.

Safer Internet Day: DC Jammu urges responsible use of internet technologies

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

District headquarters Jammu hosted a programme today to commemorate Safer Internet Day. The event was chaired by Deputy Commissioner Sachin Kumar Vaishya and saw participation from various district officers and government officials.

District Informatics Centre Jammu, under the guidance of Director NIC and District Informatics Officer Sanjeev Kapoor, organised the event.

In his address, Deputy Commissioner Vaishya emphasised the importance of judicious and mindful use of the internet. He urged officials to exercise caution when sharing official documents and communications



through various channels. He also highlighted the need to remain vigilant against fake calls and scams, such as impersonation and digital fraud. Furthermore, the Deputy Commissioner underscored the necessity of protecting children from unfettered internet use to prevent potential harm or abuse.

The District Informatics Officer delivered a detailed presentation on the sig-

nificance of Safer Internet Day. He provided insights into safeguarding personal identity and financial security online, offering daily tips for safe internet usage. He also educated attendees on identifying fake websites and advised against entering personal or banking information on such platforms.

The event featured discussions on various aspects of digital safety, including phishing, vish-

ing and maintaining digital hygiene. These topics were addressed as part of the broader awareness activities aimed at promoting responsible internet use.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Rakesh Kumar, ACR Dr. Rajesh Kumar, ACG Vikas Dhar Bagati, Dy DEO Rajeshwar Kumar besides other district officers, along with their staff, were present on the occasion.

NDMA to conduct Disaster Management Mock Exercise at Jammu Airport in Non Aviation Domain on 18, 19 Feb

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) will be conducting Disaster Management related Mock Exercise at Jammu Airport in Non Aviation Domain on 18 and 19 February, 2025 based on Earth quake scenario in collaboration with Jammu & Kashmir Disaster Management department JKDMA and Airport Authority of India at Jammu Airport.

The main objective of the Mock Exercise is to highlight the key roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in various simulated hazard situations and institutionalize adoption of the Incident Response System (IRS) in the response mechanism

and generating public awareness regarding the Disaster Management. The Mock & TTEX's are designed to appraise all key functionaries related to disaster management of the Jammu Airport of their roles and responsibilities on various simulated/other natural & man made hazards, discern areas for further improvement and set the stage for the conduct of the Mock Exercise. This exercise is aimed to gauge the responses of various stake holders to a simulated hazard/emergency. Further, there will be deliberation on various facets of Disaster Management to include preparedness, mitigation, evacuation, relief procedures etc to draw important lessons for further improvement.

MVD team conducts enforcement drive in Poonch

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, FEBRUARY 11

To enhance the road safety, the Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) Poonch conducted a comprehensive enforcement drive today, on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal and Transport Commissioner Vishesh Pal Mahajan.

The drive focused particularly on school buses and vans, ensuring compliance with safety regulations designed to protect young passengers. During the operation, approximately 50 vehicles were inspected for adherence to established safety features.

As a result of the drive, officials issued 10 challans, which collectively amounted to Rs 70,000. The initiative underscores the commitment of the MVD to enforce traffic regulations and prioritize the welfare of school children.

The ARTO appealed to vehicle operators to adopt all recommended safety features. He emphasized the critical role that operators play in ensuring the safety and well-being of children during their daily commutes.

Additionally, he requested school principals to evaluate and potentially increase their transportation fleet in accordance with the strength of their student population. This collaborative approach is essential in fostering a safe environment for children traveling to and from school.

Comm Secy Tourism reviews wayside amenities along major highways in J&K

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

Commissioner Secretary, Tourism, Yasha Mudgal, chaired a high level meeting at Civil Secretariat, Jammu, to review the status of wayside amenities and toilet facilities along major highways and roads across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was aimed to address the growing needs of both local commuters and the increasing number of tourists visiting the Union Territory.

Secretary, R&B, senior officers from NHAI, BRO, NHIDCL, R&B and the Tourism Department attended the meeting.

The meeting had detailed discussions on enhancing infrastructure to improve travel experiences and ensure seamless access to essential facilities along major routes.

The Commissioner Secretary asked the officers to expedite work progress on infrastructure improvements. She directed the Beacon authorities to submit a location plan for wayside amenities within one month besides asking the NHAI to ensure that all non-starter amenities



become functional by June 2026.

She tasked the NHIDCL with developing a wayside amenity complex between Sonmarg Tunnel and Zojila Tunnel, with a priority project for a toilet complex in Sonmarg. She also asked for making the public conveniences at Qazigund, Marhama and Jhajjar Kotli operational by April 2025. She directed to install new signboards marking toilet facilities and indicating distances along highways to enhance visibility and accessibility.

The Commissioner Secretary laid special emphasis on improving amenities in key tourist destinations including Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Pahalgam, Patnitop, Sanasar, Bhaderwah and Doodpathri, where high quality wayside facilities are essential to accommodate increasing tourist footfall. To facilitate this, the Chief Engineers of R&B have been assigned the responsibility of pre-

paring concept plans for toilet complexes and parking spaces at strategic locations.

Additionally, the R&B and Tourism Departments were asked to conduct a gap analysis to identify location specific requirements for new wayside amenities along major highways. This will ensure a well-rounded infrastructure development plan that meets the evolving needs of both residents and visitors.

Emphasizing the importance of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir's economy, Yasha Mudgal reaffirmed the government's commitment towards enhancing travel experiences through modern and well-maintained facilities. She asked the CEOs of Tourism Development Agencies to propose amenities only on encumbrance-free land, where all necessary approvals from the Forest Department can be availed well in time.

Commissioner Secretary IT inaugurates Safer Internet Day celebration



J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

The Jammu and Kashmir Government today celebrated Safer Internet Day with a comprehensive workshop aimed at promoting cyber security awareness and best practices for a safer digital environment.

The event was inaugurated by Commissioner Secretary Information Technology, Saurabh Bhagat.

The workshop was conducted in hybrid mode, connecting participants from Civil Secretariat Srinagar and Jammu, all districts of the UT, IT department, senior officers from NIC SeMT and other entities.

In his address, the Commissioner Secretary, underscored the

importance of cyber security and cyber hygiene practices, particularly in government offices where digital threats are increasingly prevalent. He stressed the necessity of awareness campaigns to educate school and college students, as well as senior citizens, on how to stay vigilant against cyber frauds and online threats.

Following the inaugural session, the participants took a pledge for a safer internet, reinforcing their commitment towards responsible online behavior.

Jaskaran Singh Modi, SIO NIC J&K, provided a detailed overview of Safer Internet and highlighted the theme of the workshop "Together for a Better Internet" encouraging adoption of best practices for online security. He

reiterated the significance of collaborative efforts to create a safer digital environment.

The workshop featured an insightful presentation by Anil Kumar Sharma, Senior Director, NIC, who elaborated on cyber hygiene practices and common threats faced by government workplaces and citizens at large. He addressed various risks including phishing, ransomware and data breaches while recommending preventive measures to enhance cyber security.

This was followed by a Digital Well Being Video, which emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced digital lifestyle and practicing mindful internet usage to prevent cyber threats and digital fatigue. The event concluded with Jaskaran

Power shutdown

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL Jammu has informed that the power supply to Jhajjar Kotli, Kaba Mohari, Dansal, Nandani, Kanyala, Jandrah, Domail, Krishnapur and adjoining areas will remain affected on February 13 from 9 am to 3 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Ware House, PHE, MAM Stadium, Dogra Mohalla, Parade, Bus Stand, Residency Road and adjoining areas will remain affected on February 13 from 9 am to 3 pm.

Superintending Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, O&M Circle Kathua has informed that the power supply to Logate Industry, Sahar, Sher Kotla, Kumri, Kathera, Boura and Bhed Blode will remain affected on February 13 and 15 from 8 am to 2 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Kalu Chack and adjoining areas will remain affected on February 14 from 10.30 pm to 4.30 am.

Likewise, the power supply to Vijaypur Industry, Old Vijaypur and adjoining areas will remain affected February 13 and 14 from 8 am to 2 pm.

Workshops, awareness events held to observe Safer Internet Day across Jammu division



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

District administrations, government offices and educational institutions across Jammu Division observed Safer internet by organizing varied Information, Education and Communication events, affirming their resolve of "Together, for a better internet,"- this year's theme for the Day.

At RAMBAN: The District Administration, under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, organized a Cyber Security Awareness Workshop to enhance digital security awareness among government officials and institutions.

Presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner Varunjeet Singh Charak, the session covered crucial aspects of cyber security, including data protection, threat identification, and preventive measures. District and Sectoral Officers, along with their technical staff, participated in the workshop to further disseminate key learning.

The workshop was also attended virtually by all Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges of District Ramban, ensuring widespread awareness among students and faculty members.

Meanwhile, the Department of Computer Applications, Government Degree College (GDC) Ramban, organized a one-day awareness workshop on "Safer Internet Day 2025" under the theme "Together for a Better Internet." The event was held under the patronage of Prof. Satish Kumar, Principal of the College.

Prof. Aditya Sharma, Head of the Computer Applications Department and Resource Person for

the workshop, shed light on various cyber threats and human errors that often lead to cyber frauds.

The workshop witnessed active participation from a large number of students and faculty members.

At SAMBA: The District Administration Samba, in collaboration with NIC, observed Safer Internet Day 2025 to raise awareness about cyber safety and promote responsible use of the internet among the officials.

Network Engineers of NIC Satish Kumar and Hatish Kumar provided detailed insights on safeguarding sensitive data, identifying potential cyber threats, and adopting best practices for cyber security.

Officials from across all departments participated in the session and were encouraged to share the knowledge gained with their teams to foster a safer and more secure digital environment.

At REASI: The District Administration Reasi observed Safer Internet Day under the Leadership of Deputy Commissioner Nidhi Malik by hosting a special awareness session to promote awareness about responsible and secure use of the internet.

The event aimed to educate officials and stakeholders about best practices for ensuring cyber security and digital safety.

The keynote presentation was delivered by Asheesh Kumar Dogra, District Informatics Officer, who emphasized the importance of online safety, protection of digital identity, and the need for vigilance against cyber threats. The session covered key aspects of cyber security, including secure browsing habits, data privacy, and measures to

counter online fraud. The attendees engaged in discussions on safeguarding personal and official data while using digital platforms.

At POONCH: A workshop to mark Safer Internet Day was organized here at the DC Office Complex with the aim of raising awareness about the importance of safe internet usage.

The event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kudal.

In his address, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the growing need for safer internet practices in both personal and professional spheres. He underscored the significance of maintaining security online and urged all attendees to implement robust digital practices within and outside the office environment.

The workshop featured a detailed presentation by District Informatics Officer (DIO), NIC Parvinder Singh, covering critical areas of internet safety, including:

The informative session provided valuable insights and practical steps to ensure secure internet usage across various platforms.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Tahir Mustafa Malik also spoke on the occasion.

At DODA: The District Administration Doda, in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the National Informatics Centre (NIC), and other digital initiatives, observed Safer Internet Day under the global slogan "Together for a Better Internet."

The event, held in Town Hall Doda, aimed to educate the public about responsible digital practices, online security, and the prevention of cyber

threats.

Presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Doda, Sudershan Kumar, the program witnessed the participation of teachers, government officials, and members of the public, all coming together to promote a cyber-aware community.

A key highlight of the event was a virtual lecture delivered by Asheesh Kumar Dogra, Scientist-D and Joint Director (IT), serving as the District Informatics Officer. He emphasized the importance of digital literacy, cyber security measures, and best practices for protecting personal data online.

At RAJOURI: The District Administration Rajouri observed Safer Internet Day with a series of awareness programs across all Degree Colleges and educational institutions to promote safe and responsible internet usage. The main event was held in the Conference Hall, DC Office, under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma.

Experts addressed key issues such as cyber bullying, data privacy, and safe social media practices, urging participants to be vigilant and responsible digital citizens.

The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the growing need for digital awareness in today's interconnected world. He encouraged students to use the internet as a tool for knowledge and development while being mindful of cyber threats. DIO NIC, Muzaffar Mir, played a key role in facilitating the online conduct of awareness sessions, ensuring seamless participation from various educational institutions.

Faculty members, cyber

security professionals, and law enforcement officials also participated through virtual mode.

While addressing the participants, the ADC highlighted the risks associated with excessive internet usage, mobile addiction and online fraud.

District Informatics Officer NIC, Anurag Yadav, as the Resource Person. Representatives from various government departments participated in the interactive session, gaining insights into key aspects of internet security.

The session covered essential topics such as internet safety, social media risks, fake websites, phishing, digital arrests, and other potential cyber threats.

A dedicated query session allowed attendees to clarify doubts, debunk common myths, and seek expert guidance on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for protecting sensitive data.

At Udhampur: To promote cyber awareness and educate officers and students about digital safety, District Administration in collaboration with NIC Udhampur organized a one-day workshop on Safer Internet Day under the theme "Together for a Better Internet."

The workshop was conducted under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai here at Conference Hall, DC Office Complex, Udhampur.

The event witnessed the participation of Additional Deputy Commissioner Prem Singh, officers from various departments. The students from different

educational institutions also participated through virtual mode.

While addressing the participants, the ADC highlighted the risks associated with excessive internet usage, mobile addiction and online fraud.

District Informatics Officer NIC, Anish Sharma, delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation on various emerging cybercrimes, including online scams, Bank frauds, Money laundering, Identity theft, Credit card fraud, Data breaches, OTP frauds etc.

Participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences with cybercrimes, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by internet users.

GDC Marh: Cyber Jagrukta/Digital Initiative Club of Government Degree College organized a workshop to promote a safer and more responsible use of the internet, in line with this year's theme, "Together for a Better Internet."

The workshop raised awareness about online safety among students and faculty members, equipping them with practical knowledge on identifying and mitigating cyber threats. Attendees provided positive feedback, appreciating the relevance and effectiveness of the sessions. The workshop was attended by the College Principal Dr. Rakesh Kumar Koul, who addressed the participants, emphasizing the importance of relying on authentic sources, time management, and practicing safe online habits. His motivational words inspired the attendees to embrace digital literacy and cyber hygiene. Dr. Rahul Sharma, Assistant Professor of Computer Application, delivered an insightful session on cyber security, addressing several critical topics essential for online safety.

DC reviews progress of work on NH144-A, other road projects in Poonch



JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, FEBRUARY 11

Deputy Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kudal on Tuesday chaired a meeting to review the progress of work on Road Projects being executed by Border Roads Organization (BRO) in the District.

The meeting was attended by key BRO officers, the collector of land acquisition, and Tehsildars. The discussions centered on the advancement of critical infrastructure projects, including the Jammu to Poonch NH144-A highway, Rajouri Thanamandi Surankote Road (RTS) and Shahpur Road which are essential for regional connectivity and development.

The Deputy Commissioner received updates on the progress of work on Jammu - Poonch NH144-A. It was informed that land acquisition and utility shifting processes are underway. He emphasized the urgency of timely disbursement of land compensation to facilitate the progress of these projects.

The concerned agencies were asked to expedite the removal of the structures within the alignment of RTS and NH144-A, for which compensation has already been paid to landowners. "This step is vital to clear the bottlenecks and ensure the smooth execution of these pivotal projects" the DC said.

Kishtwar administration organizes special events to mark Safer Internet Day



JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 11

The District Administration Kishtwar, in collaboration with the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) Kishtwar, GDC Kishtwar and NIC Kishtwar today organized special events to mark Safer Internet Day at Kishtwar.

The events were held under the close supervision of DC Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan which aimed to raise awareness about online safety, responsible digital behavior, and the importance of cybersecurity in today's digital era.

In one instance, the District Administration Kishtwar, in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC) Kishtwar, conducted a training-cum-awareness session at the Conference Hall, New DC Office Complex, Kishtwar which aimed to promote digital security, responsible online behavior, and cyber awareness.

ACR Kishtwar, who was the chief guest on the occasion, emphasized

that the internet plays a crucial role in education, communication, and professional development in today's world. However, with the rising issues of cyberbullying, online fraud, privacy violations, and misinformation, it has become essential to educate people on safe and responsible internet usage.

He also mentioned that Safer Internet Day is observed every year on the second Tuesday of February. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness about cyber safety, online ethics, and digital citizenship among students, parents, and teachers. In another event at GDC Kishtwar, the program witnessed the participation of students, faculty members, and officials from the administration, who engaged in insightful discussions on the challenges and risks associated with internet usage.

The event was conducted under the able guidance of DIPR Kishtwar in collaboration with GDC Kishtwar was appreciated by participants.

DC chairs DCDC meeting, reviews cooperatives projects in Jammu

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

Deputy Commissioner, Sachin Kumar Vaishya chaired the sixth meeting of the District Level Cooperative Development Committee at the district headquarters to discuss cooperative sector plans.

Deputy Registrar Cooperative Societies Jammu, Tasbina Sheikh apprised the meeting that for the International Year of Cooperatives, the committee set out activities for the year. These include awareness camps for Multipurpose PACS (M-PACS) formation, food processing unit launches and coopera-

tive week celebrations with farmer awareness camps.

During the proceedings, the DC emphasized the critical importance of timely implementation of food processing and storage infrastructure projects, including Consumer Marketing Societies and super bazaars. These initiatives are designed to boost farmer incomes while ensuring the long-term sustainability of cooperative enterprises.

The committee reviewed progress on targets from the Margdarshika document. Three PACS are in registration, with two more in process. Eight dairy and three fishery cooperatives have

registered, with mapping and geo-tagging of areas in progress.

In the food processing sector, Multiple Purpose Cooperative Societies (MPCS) Sohal MPCS Akhnoor, Nandpur MPCS Bishnah and Biaspur MPCS RS Pura - have received loans and subsidies.

DDM NABARD Sonika Rana, Chief Agricultural Officer Vinod Kundal, AD Fisheries Munish Sharma, Lead District Manager Romesh Chander, Chief Horticulture Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Assistant Registrars, among others concerned were present at the meeting.

FPF Kathua foils timber smuggling attempt

JI NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, FEBRUARY 11

A Forest Protection Force (FPF) team has thwarted a timber smuggling attempt with timely action and alertness.

As per the forest department, on getting specific inputs regarding export of willow left, illegally out of state, a team led by Deputy Director, Forest Protection Force, Gamma Unit J03 Kathua Dherminder Sharma, assisted by Assistant Director (Adm.) Rajesh Kumar, & Assistant Director (Operation)

Atul Kumar Gupta, with staff laid a Nakka on February 9 night near Basohli More, ahead of Lakahnpur toll plaza.

At about 12.00 midnight,

the suspected truck was signaled at Nakka point to stop for checking but escaped the Nakka due to heavy traffic on National Highway and left for Punjab.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E- TENDER NOTICE

The Deputy Chief Engineer/ BR/Workshop, Northern Railway, Jalandhar Cantt, for and on behalf of the President of India invites open - tender under Single Packet System for the under noted work :-

S. No.	Tender Notice No.	Name of work	Approx Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Date of opening	Bidding start date on REPS	Cost of tender form Rs.	Completion period of work
1.	OT-03-JRC-2025	Transportation of PSC slab/RCC retainers from Bridge casting unit to various site of bridge including loading and unloading under SSE/BWS/JRC.	2,48,07,946.49	2,74,000.00	27.02.2025	13.02.2025 to 27.02.2025	0	24 Months
2.	OT-04-JRC-2025	Replacement of corroded members of Br no. 188 DN (14x45.7 m) on JUC-PTK Line under SSE/BRIDGE/MPTK.	1,04,46,755.24	2,02,200.00	27.02.2025	13.02.2025 to 27.02.2025	0	6 Months

Date & Time for submission of Tender and opening of tender: Up to 15:00 hrs on dates shown against each and opening of tender thereafter at 15:00 hrs on same date.

Website Particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded: The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway web site i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in and tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in.

No. 80-W/30/Bridges/ Invitation Dated: 04.02.2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

406/25

Amit Shah chairs Parliamentary Consultative Committee for Ministry of Home Affairs on 'Cyber Security and Cyber Crime' in New Delhi

J NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah chaired a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Home Affairs on the topic of 'Cyber Security and Cyber Crime' in New Delhi. The meeting was attended by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Shri Nityanand Rai, Shri Bandi Sanjay Kumar, members of the Committee, the Union Home Secretary, and senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The committee discussed various issues related to 'Cyber Security and Cyber Crime' during the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah said that in recent years, there has been an expansion of digital infrastructure in India, which has naturally led to an increase in the number of cyber attacks. He said that when we look at cyberspace from a different perspective, it forms a complex network of 'software,' 'services,' and

'users.' He emphasized that until we consider controlling cyber fraud through 'software,' 'services,' and 'users,' it will be impossible to resolve the issues of cyberspace. Shri Shah further mentioned that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Home Affairs has taken several significant steps towards making India a cyber-safe nation.

Shri Amit Shah said that cybercrime has erased all geographical boundaries. He stated that it is a 'borderless' and 'formless' crime, as it has no limits or fixed form. He mentioned that India has witnessed a 'digital revolution' in the last decade. Without understanding the size and scale of the 'digital revolution,' we cannot face the challenges in the cyber domain.

Union Home Minister said that today, 95 per cent villages in the country are digitally connected, and one lakh gram panchayats are equipped with Wi-Fi hotspots. In the past ten years, the number of internet users has increased by 4.5



times. He mentioned that in 2024, a total of 246 trillion transactions worth Rs 17.221 lakh crore were made through UPI. In 2024, 48 per cent of the global digital transactions took place in India. He also said that in terms of the startup ecosystem, India has become the third-largest country in the world. In 2023, the contribution of the digital economy to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was around Rs 32 lakh crore, which is 12 per cent, and nearly 15 million jobs were created.

Shri Amit Shah said that today India has become the third-largest country in terms of digital landscape in the world. The digital economy contributes 20 per cent to the total economy of India. He also mentioned that the Ministry of Home Affairs' goal is to ensure zero cybercrime cases and their FIRs.

Union Home Minister said that to tackle cybercrime, we have adopted four types of strategies, which include Convergence, Coordination, Communication, and Capac-

ity. All of these are being implemented with clear objectives and a strategic approach. He mentioned that inter-ministerial and inter-departmental coordination within the Ministry of Home Affairs has been strengthened, ensuring seamless communication and smooth flow of information.

Shri Amit Shah said that a healthy tradition of exchange of information between the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Electronics and IT, CERT-IN, I4C, and departments like Telecom and Bank-

ing has led to successfully tackling many cybercrime cases.

Union Home Minister emphasized the importance of raising awareness among the public to prevent cybercrime and requested all the members of the committee to promote the I4C helpline number 1930. He stated that in light of cyber financial fraud, the '1930' helpline provides a one-point solution offering various services, such as blocking cards.

Shri Amit Shah said that efforts are underway to use Artificial Intelligence for identifying mule accounts, in coordination with the Reserve Bank and all banks, to establish a system for their detection. He mentioned that we will ensure the closure of mule accounts before they are even operational. Union Home Minister stated that the government has also ensured that people are made aware of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's mantra 'STOP-THINK-TAKE ACTION' in order to make them more vigilant against cybercrimes.

Union Home Minister stated that a total of 1 lakh 43 thou-

sands FIRs have been registered on the I4C portal, and over 19 crore people have used this portal. He mentioned that, for national security reasons, 805 apps and 3,266 website links have been blocked based on I4C's recommendations. Additionally, 399 banks and financial intermediaries have come on board. Over 6 lakh suspicious data points have been shared, more than 19 lakh mule accounts have been caught, and suspicious transactions worth Rs 2,038 crore have been prevented.

Shri Amit Shah said that Cyber Crime Forensic Training Labs have been established in 33 states and union territories. On the 'CyTrain' platform, a "Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)" platform, 101,561 police officers have registered, and over 78,000 certificates have been issued.

The committee members gave their suggestions on issues related to 'Cyber Security and Cyber Crime' and appreciated the important steps taken by the government for enhancing cyber security.

FROM THE PAGE 1...

Dismantling entire...

border grid and use of advanced technologies for surveillance and border guarding.

He directed CRPF to continue with the synergy with Indian Army and J&K Police. He reviewed the winter action plan of CRPF and directed to ensure there are no gaps in area domination.

Shah also instructed the paramilitary forces to focus on the Jammu region and dominate the heights.

The Home Minister also reviewed the intelligence apparatus working in Jammu and Kashmir and directed them to increase coverage and penetration to generate quality intelligence.

He reiterated the importance of technology in intelligence generation. "Monitoring of terror-financing, tightening grip over narco-terror cases is a must," he added.

The Home Minister also directed to focus on countering the negative propaganda by the anti-national elements so as to place the correct picture in public domain.

He directed to continue with the synergy amongst the agencies and guided for adopting technology and increasing intelligence.

Pertinently, last week the Union Home Minister had chaired two J&K security review meetings in New Delhi. Shah had discussed the J&K security situation with the Chief of the Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, the Home Secretary and other senior officers of MHA and Army.

The Home Minister had also discussed the security scenario with J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Secretary Atal Duloo and the Director General of J&K Police Nalin Prabhat. "Due to the sustained and coordinated efforts of the PM Modi led government, the terrorism ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir has been significantly weakened," Shah had said. KNO

USBRL: PM Modi...

be sanctioned for the employees in the coming week to ensure the smooth execution of the event.

As part of the USBRL project, Indian Railways conducted multiple successful trial runs, traversing some of the nation's most iconic bridges.

The Anji Khad Bridge, with its 331-meter-high pylon, stands as a remarkable feat of engineering, while the Chenab Bridge, at 359 meters, holds the distinction of being the world's highest railway bridge—surpassing even the Eiffel Tower. These bridges not only enhance regional connectivity but also showcase India's technological and infrastructural prowess.

"The train has been specially designed to operate efficiently in Jammu and Kashmir's harsh winter conditions on the Katra-Srinagar rail route," an official said, adding, "It features advanced climate-resistant technologies, including heating systems that prevent water and bio-toilet tanks from freezing."

He said that the air-brake system is optimized for smooth operations even in sub-zero temperatures. "The Vande Bharat Express also includes embedded heating elements in the windshield to automatically defrost the driver's front lookout glass, ensuring clear visibility in extreme winter conditions," the official said. "Apart from these specialized adaptations, the train offers all standard Vande Bharat amenities, such as fully air-conditioned coaches, automatic plug doors, mobile charging sockets, and more."

The Railways has completed the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, spanning 272 kilometers. The project, which began in 2005-06, was completed in phases. The 118-km Qazigund-Baramulla stretch in Kashmir was inaugurated in October 2009, followed by the 18-km Banihal-Qazigund and 25-km Udhampur-Katra sections, which were completed in 2013 and 2014, respectively. KNO

Pre-budget consultations...

agency, representatives of different bodies, including the KCCI, FCIK, KTMF, Travel Agents Association, Education, Hoteliers and others put forth their suggestions for the upcoming budget.

The KCCI delegation led by senior vice president

Ashiq Hussain Shangloo, secretary general Faiz Bakshi and Mushtaq Ahmad Wani presented a detailed document, mentioning the challenges and priorities for different sectors.

According to the KCCI, it put forth suggestions regarding alarming rise in unemployment and sought budgetary provisions in sectors with potential to create jobs, promote private sector, encourage entrepreneurship and start-ups and lay stress on skill development.

Also, the delegation sought incentives on exports for handicraft products, enhancement in incentives for GI products and also the establishment of an international exhibition mart.

The traders also demanded promotion of adventure tourism, preservation of houseboats as heritages and also promotion of Downtown (Shehr-e-Khas) as a heritage tourism destination.

The delegation also put forth their suggestions for sectors like Agriculture, Horticulture, Education, Industry, Health and general trade.

Rouf Trambo, who participated in the meeting, told KNO that they put forth their demands regarding enhancement of budget for tourism development authorities.

"We have raised the issue of increasing carrying capacity at popular tourist places like Gulmarg, Pahalgam and others. Flow of tourists is increasing and thus there is a need to increase the capacity and also come up with tourism related facilities at these places," Trambo said, adding that they also raised the issue of promotion of Kashmir as a tourism destination at apt places.

In the meeting, the hoteliers also raised the issue of hindrances they face with regard to upgrading their infrastructure. Demand for separate skill development university was also raised in the meeting.

The representatives said that the Chief Minister gave them a patient hearing and they are hopeful that suggestions put forth by them will be incorporated in the upcoming budget.

Earlier, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah held three back-to-back pre-budget consultation meetings with the stakeholders to get suggestions from people associated with different sectors. KNO

Army Captain among...

Command stands firm with the bereaved family in this hour of grief."

Pertinently, the General Officer Commanding of the Jammu-based White Knight Corps unit of the Army, Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva, had reviewed "hostile activities" along the LoC in Rajouri district on Monday. KNO

Rules of Assembly: House...

Select Committee respectively with Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory, Legislative Assembly and Select Committee.

"The committee gave its go-ahead to the Speaker to carry out these minimal modifications," he said.

Talking to KNO, MLA Rajouri and member of the committee Muzaffar Iqbal Khan said there was unanimity among the committee members that there should be no amendments in the existing rules except slight modifications required for transaction of business in the House.

He said the committee has given its go-ahead to the Speaker for carrying out slight modifications in the existing Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the House. "The Speaker was already empowered to do so under the Reorganisation Act-2019," he said, adding that the committee has finalised its work.

BJP MLA RS Pathania told KNO that certain modifications and adaptations which are necessary and germane to the fruitful working of the Legislative Assembly would be carried out by the Speaker.

"The speaker is empowered to do so after passing of the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019," he said.

It is worthwhile to mention that Peoples Democratic Party had termed the modifications as an endorsement to August 5, 2019 constitutional changes.

"The modified J&K Assembly business rules mark a shift from Article 370, effectively endorsing the constitutional changes of August 5, 2019. A clear acknowl-

edgement of the new status quo," PDP MLA Waheed-ur-Rehman wrote in a post on X. KNO

India ready to share...

to Sustainable Development Goals becomes easier and faster. To do this we must pool together resources and talent.

"We must develop opensource systems that enhance trust and transparency," he said, and called for building quality data sets, free from biases and to democratise technology and create people centric applications."

PM Modi said there is need to address concerns related to cyber security, disinformation and deep fakes.

"And we must also ensure that technology is rooted in local ecosystems for it to be effective and useful.

He said India has successfully built a Digital Public Infrastructure for its over 1.4 billion people at a very low cost. "It is built around an open and accessible network. It has regulations, and a wide range of applications to modernize our economy, reform governance and transform the lives of our people."

"We have unlocked the power of data through our Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture. And, we have made digital commerce democratic and accessible to all. This vision is the foundation of India's National AI Mission," the PM added.

"That is why, during our G20 Presidency, we built a consensus on Harnessing AI Responsibly, for Good, and for All. Today, India leads in AI adoption, and technological solutions on data privacy.

"We are developing AI applications for public good. We have one of the world's largest AI talent pools. India is building its own Large Language Model considering our diversity. We also have a unique public-private partnership model for pooling resources like compute power. It is made available to our start-ups and researchers at an affordable cost. And, India is ready to share its experience and expertise to ensure that the AI future is for Good, and for All," the PM said.

Later, the PM said in a post on X:

"The AI Action Summit in Paris is a commendable effort to bring together world leaders, policy makers, thinkers, innovators and youngsters to have meaningful conversations around AI."

The MEA spokesperson said in a post:

"Significant milestone on the global AI stage.

"PM @narendramodi and President @Emmanuel-Macron of France co-chaired the AI Action Summit in Paris today. The Summit saw participation from several world leaders & global tech experts.

"Addressing the Summit, PM talked about India's perspectives & priorities on AI. The event marked a crucial step towards shaping the global AI agenda, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity, & harnessing AI for a sustainable future for all."

Later, PM Modi alongwith President Macron and with several world leaders and global tech experts joined together for a group photo at the AI Action Summit.

J&K gets Rs 350 cr...

According to the data a total of Rs 290.23 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of Panchayat Bhawans, while Rs 164.9 crore has been allocated for Common Service Centres (CSCs). "Additionally, Rs 6.31 crore has been earmarked for providing computers to enhance digital governance in the region," it states.

"In the fiscal year 2022-23, Rs 104.6 crore was sanctioned for Gram Panchayat buildings in J&K. This was followed by allocations of Rs 100 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 85.63 crore in 2024-25. For CSC the allocation remained consistent at Rs 55.3 crore in both 2022-23 and 2023-24, with a slight reduction to Rs 54.3 crore in 2024-25," the data reveals.

In comparison, Ladakh received a smaller allocation of Rs 0.6 crore in 2024-25 for the construction of Gram Panchayat Bhawans. Over the last three years, the region has been allocated Rs 0.77 crore for digital infrastructure, including the provision of computers.

Jammu and Kashmir has made significant strides in e-governance adoption, with 7,795 Gram Panchayats onboarded on the eGramSwaraj platform. Of these, 7,729 Gram Panchayats are actively making online pay-

ments, showcasing the region's progress in digital governance.

LADAKH'S PANCHAYAT E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES

In contrast, Ladakh's Panchayat e-governance initiatives remain limited, with gradual adoption of digital tools and platforms. Despite these efforts, the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj has no specific data on the use of eco-friendly materials in the construction of Gram Panchayat buildings in J&K and Ladakh. KNO

Higher reaches receive...

Meanwhile, Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that generally dry weather is expected from tomorrow till February 14 while there is a possibility of light rain and snow at isolated places on February 15 & 16.

Director MeT also said that on February 17, the weather would remain generally dry while generally cloudy with possibility of light rain and snow is expected at isolated places on February 18 & 19. KNO

Er Rashid attends...

In his maiden speech in the Lok Sabha, Er Rashid as per the news agency, raised concerns over recent civilian deaths in J&K, asserting that the "blood of Kashmiris is not cheap."

He demanded an impartial probe into the deaths of Waseem Ahmed Mir, who was killed in alleged Army firing during a naka checking in Baramulla and Makhan Din, who died by suicide after he was questioned by Police in Kathua.

"Do our forces need Waseem Mir's blood every day?" Rashid asked, calling for accountability and a fair investigation into both incidents. "Kashmiris have the right to live with dignity and the government should do justice with them," he added.

Additionally, Baramulla MP highlighted the hardships faced by residents of remote areas like Karnah, Keran, and Machil in North Kashmir, which become inaccessible in wintery months.

He appealed for the construction of a tunnel to improve connectivity and ease their struggles.

Pertinently, the Delhi High Court had imposed restrictions on Rashid's parole, barring him from using the internet or speaking to the media during his time in the Parliament. KNO

No Chances of...

that there is no question of forming a government with the NC. "We are in opposition, and we will play a role of constructive opposition and seek answers from the Omar Abdullah-led government over issues faced by the general public," said Sharma, who is considered close to top BJP leadership.

Sharma, who played a key role in the BJP's best-ever performance in the J&K polls in 2024 and campaigned for the party in the Delhi polls, accused Omar Abdullah of being non-serious about governance issues.

"The common masses are suffering due to the apathetic attitude of the NC-led government. There is nobody on the ground to listen to the woes and sufferings of common people in Jammu, Doda-Kishtwar, or even in Kashmir. CM Omar Abdullah is always in picnicking mode. Hosting lunches and dinners in five-star hotels of Delhi will not ease the sufferings of common masses of Jammu & Kashmir," he said, adding that corruption has started to take roots in government departments.

Sharma said that the BJP will leave no stone unturned to raise the issues of common masses within and outside the Assembly. "We will hold the government accountable over its electoral promises ranging from free electricity to 12 gas cylinders to free ration. They cannot deceive and hoodwink the gullible masses of J&K. They will have to give answers for each and every promise made by them to the public," he said.

However, he added that they wouldn't allow any anti-constitution or anti-national bill or resolution on the floor of the House. "We will oppose any such move tooth and nail," he said. KNO

45 Crore Devotees at Maha Kumbh 2025

Maha Kumbh 2025 Witnesses Record-Breaking Footfall

JINNEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 11 FEB 2025

The Maha Kumbh 2025 has become one of the largest religious gatherings in history, with over 450 million (45 crore) devotees participating in the bathing rituals as of February 11, 2025. The state government was expecting the number of devotees to reach 45 crore in 45 days but this number has already been achieved within one month, with 15 days still remaining for the Maha Kumbh to conclude. With its blend of spiritual significance, grand rituals, and cutting-edge technological interventions, this Kumbh Mela has set new benchmarks in crowd management, sanitation, and digital facilitation.

With the number of visitors surpassing 45 crore, crowd management has been a major focus. The next Amrit Snan is on February 12, 2025, Magh Purnima Snan, which is renowned for its connection with the veneration of Guru Brahaspati and the belief that the Hindu deity Gandharva descends from

the heavens to the sacred Sangam. To ensure smooth crowd management during the Magh Purnima Snan, the state government has designated the mela area as a 'no vehicle zone' from the morning of February 11, 2025, allowing only essential and emergency services.

Indian Railways is also operating at full capacity to manage the Maha Kumbh 2025 crowd. On February 9, around 330 trains transported 12.5 lakh pilgrims, with 130 more departing by 3 PM on February 10. Preparations for the upcoming Amrit Snan on February 12, 2025 were reviewed by the officials and the Union Minister. All eight stations, including Prayagraj Junction, are fully operational, while Prayagraj Sangam station is temporarily closed around major bathing dates for crowd management.

The state government, in collaboration with various agencies, implemented a multi-tier security and monitoring system. A network of AI-powered

CCTV cameras, drone surveillance, and real-time analytics ensured the safe movement of pilgrims across designated sectors. The administration also introduced a digital token system to streamline access to bathing ghats, reducing overcrowding. Special provisions were made for senior citizens and differently-abled devotees, ensuring that the Kumbh remained an inclusive spiritual experience.

Adding to the historical significance of Maha Kumbh 2025, the honourable President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu participated in the religious festivities on February 10, 2025. Her visit included a sacred dip at the Triveni Sangam, reinforcing the event's spiritual importance at the highest levels of governance. The President also paid homage at key religious sites, and interacted with saints and devotees. Apart from President Murmu, several union ministers, chief ministers, and governors, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi,



Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh have also taken a holy dip in the Sangam. As per tradition, Kalpavasis will perform Satyanarayan Katha, Havan Puja, and offer donations to their Tirthpurohiths. The barley sown at the start of Kalpavas is immersed in the Ganga, and the Tulsi plant is taken home as a divine blessing. The twelve-year Kalpavas cycle culminates in Maha Kumbh, followed by a community feast in their villages.

Over 7 lakh pilgrims have received medical care through extensive healthcare services. This includes treatment of

more than 4.5 lakh individuals at 23 allopathic hospitals, with over 3.71 lakh undergoing pathology tests, and the successful completion of 3,800 minor and 12 major surgeries. Additionally, 20 AYUSH hospitals have provided Ayurveda, Homeopathy, and Naturopathy treatments to over 2.18 lakh pilgrims. The integration of specialists from AIIMS Delhi, IMS BHU, and international experts from Canada, Germany, and Russia has ensured world-class healthcare. Services such as Panchakarma, yoga therapy, and the distri-

bution of health awareness materials have been well-received, enhancing the overall well-being of attendees. Aiming to make this the cleanest Kumbh Mela ever, authorities have enforced a stringent waste management plan. Over 22,000 sanitation workers have been deployed, ensuring that the premises remain free of litter. A large-scale water treatment initiative has also been implemented to keep the river water clean and suitable for the sacred dips. Eco-friendly practices, such as banning plastic and using biodegradable cutlery, have been strictly enforced. The Swachh Bharat Mission's influence is evident in the installation of thousands of bio-toilets and automated garbage disposal units across the Kumbh grounds.

Throughout the event, cultural programs featuring classical dance performances, folk music, and spiritual discourses take center stage, captivating devotees and visitors alike. Renowned artists,

including Padma award-winners and folk troupes from various states, showcase the diverse traditions of India through Kathak, Bharatanatyam, and traditional folk dances like Lavani and Bihu. The Kumbh Mela is also hosting various literary gatherings, where scholars discuss ancient scriptures, Vedic philosophy, and the relevance of Sanatan Dharma in contemporary times. Artisans set up stalls displaying handicrafts, handloom products, and religious artifacts, turning the mela into a vibrant cultural confluence.

Maha Kumbh 2025 is not just a religious gathering; it is a monumental example of meticulous planning, cultural preservation, and technological innovation. With over 45 crore devotees already participating and more expected before its conclusion, this Kumbh stands as a testament to India's ability to blend tradition with modernity, ensuring a spiritually enriching and seamless experience for all.

Raksha Mantri invites global community to codevelop & co-produce advanced systems in India

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEB 11

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has exhorted the global community to join India in the co-development and co-production of advanced systems, emphasising that the present global security scenario demands innovative approaches & stronger partnerships. He was addressing the Defence Ministers' Conclave 'Building Resilience through International Defence and Global Engagement (BRIDGE)', organised as part of the 15th Aero India in Bengaluru, Karnataka on February 11, 2025. The event witnessed the participation of over 162 delegates from 81 countries, including 15 Defence Ministers, 11 Deputy Defence Ministers, 15 Permanent Secretaries, and 17 Service Chiefs.

"Increasing number of conflicts, new power plays, new methods & means of weaponisation, growing role of non-state actors and the emergence of disruptive technologies have made the world order more fragile. The distinction between border security and internal security is getting blurred as hybrid warfare has the ability to target critical national infrastructure even during peace time. Cyberspace and Outer space are challenging the established definition of sovereignty," said Raksha Mantri.

Shri Rajnath Singh added that disruptive technologies such as AI, quantum technologies, hypersonic and directed energy are transforming the character of warfare, creating new vulnerabilities. He stressed that these changes would have a deep impact on future warfare, forcing reassessment of the capabilities required to meet the challenges.

Raksha Mantri pointed out that international order and peace cannot be ensured from a position of weakness, and the Government of India, under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, is leaving no stone unturned to transform defence capabilities. "We have put in place a conducive policy regime



which encourages investment and production of an entire range of modern state-of-the-art land, maritime & air systems. India's emergence as a global hub for R&D and innovation in defence is a testament to our capabilities and aspirations," he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh said India possesses a vibrant defence start-up ecosystem which has the third largest number of unicorns in the world. He highlighted the unparalleled opportunities for collaboration offered by the thriving Indian aerospace and defence sectors, supported by a significant R&D base and an entrepreneurial spirit. "Our skill base enables us to produce at highly competitive costs. India is committed to share state-of-the-art defence equipment, hardware, services, and technology with our friends and partners," he told the Defence Ministers and other foreign delegates.

Raksha Mantri voiced India's vision of peace, security and development, which is inclusive & collaborative, stating that it is guided by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's dynamic five 'S' approach: Samman (Respect), Samvaad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Shanti (Peace) and Samridhi (Prosperity). These principles, he added, form the cornerstone of India's international engagements and resonate strongly in today's world, which is increasingly witnessing divisions.

Shri Rajnath Singh asserted that India has embraced the vision of 'Security and Growth for

All in the Region (SAGAR)' for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), focussing on key areas such as maritime security, economic development and blue economy. He added that India's collaborative efforts in combating non-traditional threats such as piracy, terrorism, illegal & unregulated fishing, and climate-related challenges underline the commitment for global cooperative action beyond IOR. "Our commitment extends beyond IOR and serves as a blueprint for fostering global partnerships built on equality, trust, mutual respect, and adherence to international law," he said.

Raksha Mantri laid stress on the fact that India does not believe in transactional relationships or imposing solutions, and its approach emphasises on mutual capacity building, prosperity and security for the sovereignty of partner nations. He stated that the aim is to empower its partners to chart their own paths, through support that aligns with their national priorities. He described equitable partnership as the foundation of defence collaboration, whether it involves supplying Indian-made ships and aircraft, sharing expertise or conducting joint training programmes.

Shri Rajnath Singh highlighted that India's position as a preferred partner for defence exports is reinforced by its adherence to quality, reliability, and commitment to the specific needs of partners. "Our defence industry is well-equipped to meet diverse requirements from cutting-edge technology to

cost-effective solutions. We take pride in offering customised support that strengthens the capabilities of our partner nations, enabling them to address their security challenges effectively," he said.

Raksha Mantri termed the BRIDGE initiative as the commitment to transforming dialogue into actionable outcomes, fostering partnerships that are resilient, adaptable, and forward-looking. Challenges ranging from terrorism and cyber-crime to humanitarian crises and climate-induced disasters transcend borders, and they demand a united response.

During the meeting, the Defence Ministers lauded the efforts of Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence for organising Aero India and providing an opportunity to world-class manufacturers for showcasing latest innovations and technologies under one roof. They appreciated the concept of BRIDGE which promises to work for peace and prosperity for all. They expressed their willingness to work with India for their defence and other requirements, reaffirming their commitment to further deepen the ties with New Delhi.

The delegates conveyed their desire for Transfer of Technology and co-development & co-production of latest equipment and products, terming India as a partner in resilient supply chain. They acknowledged India's role in peacekeeping and its efforts towards upgrading the capabilities of many countries in various fields,

including defence, health and education.

Shared security concerns also figured during the deliberations, with the Ministers unanimously agreeing to avoid armed conflict, describing it as anti-people and anti-development. Various challenges such as illegal drug trafficking, illegal fishing, terrorism and cybercrime were discussed, with the nations pledging to fight together against these menaces. They collectively agreed to move forward together with the idea of

'One Earth, One Family, One Future', which was the theme given by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for India's G20 Presidency.

Delivering the closing remarks, Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Sanjay Seth expressed gratitude to the attending dignitaries for their participation. He thanked the Defence Ministers, senior officials, and distinguished guests for their engagement and contributions to the conclave. He emphasised the spirit of collaboration embodied

by the theme BRIDGE and expressed optimism for continuing existing partnerships while exploring new areas of mutual prosperity through cooperation.

Secretary (Defence Production) Shri Sanjeev Kumar delivered the welcome address.

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP

Singh, Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh and Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Dr Samir V Kamat were also among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

The conclave provided a platform to discuss key aspects such as defence capacity building through investment, joint ventures & co-production, collaboration in R&D, training & technological advancements in AI & space, Maritime security cooperation and strategic partnerships.

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI MECH. G.W.D. DIVISION JAMMU

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

E -NIT NO GWD/217 OF 2024-25 DATED 10.02.2025

On behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT of J&K, the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Mech. Ground Water Drilling Division Jammu invites tenders by e-tendering mode from reputed and registered firms with Jal Shakti PHE//FC Deptt. J&K Govt. who have sufficient experience in the field of drilling and are well equipped with drilling Rigs suitable for ODEX method of drilling.

Name of the Work	Name of the Division	Cost of Tender Document/Tender Fee(In Rs)	Qty.	Estimated cost (value of work) (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (In Rs)	Validity of Rates
Providing, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Submersible Pump at Near Madarsa Fatima Tu Zahira Raza Nagar Ward No. 8 Pyl. Janyar Dingla, Poonch in District Poonch under District Capex Budget 2024-25	Jal Shakti Mech. Ground Water Drilling Division Jammu	500.00 (Non - Refundable) Deposited in Govt. treasury through e-challan under the receipt head 0215 in favour of the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Mech. GWD Div. Jammu payable at Jammu mentioning name of work	01 No.	Rs. 1.20 lacs	@ 2% of the estimated value in shape of Fresh CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer PHE (M) GWD Division	31 st March 2025

- The complete bidding process shall be online.
- Bid documents can be seen and downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 10.02.2025 to 17.02.2025.
- The pre bid meeting if desired by the participating firms shall be held in the office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (M) GWD Division Jammu on 11.02.2025 (1300hrs).
- The bids shall be submitted/uploaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 11.02.2025 (1400 hrs) to 17.02.2025 (1800hrs).
- The complete bidding process shall be online and scanned copies of the following documents will have to be uploaded before due date:-
(i) Scanned copy of treasury e-Challan/receipt for Rs. 500.00 against the cost of tender document under the receipt Head 0215 in favour of Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (M) Ground Water Drilling Division Jammu indicating name of work to be executed. **It may be noted that** the receipt of the e-challan should be of the date after the issuance of publication of the e-tender. (ii) Scanned copy of EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR @2% of the estimated value pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, PHE (M) Ground Water Drilling Division Jammu. **It may be noted that** the EMD should be of the date after the issuance of publication of the e-tender (iii) Scanned Copies of tender documents, terms and conditions duly signed and stamped (each page) by bidder. (iv) Scanned copy of GST Registration from competent authority (v) Scanned copy of PAN Card.
- The Technical Bids of the tender document received shall be opened online in the office of Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (M) GWD Division Jammu on 18.02.2025 at 1400 hours. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids shall be opened on the next working day during the office hours.
- The Financial Bids of the tender document of the qualified bidders shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (M) GWD Division Jammu. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids shall be opened on the next working day or as to be decided by tender opening committee.
- Other details can be seen inside the detailed tender document.
- Major Head: District Capex Budget 2025-25 (Untied Grants)
- Status of Funds: under approved budget
- AAA No. 102-A, DDCP of 2024 Dated 26.07.2024
- Technical Sanction No. 675 of 02/2025 Dated 18.02.2025

Sd/-
GWD/7182-84
Dated:- 10.02.2025

DIP/J-10060/24
Date: 11-2-24

Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti Mech. G.W.D. Division
Jammu

EDITORIAL

A Comprehensive Approach to a Terror-Free Jammu & Kashmir

The recent high-level security review meetings chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah underscore the unwavering commitment of the Narendra Modi-led government to dismantle the terror ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir. The government's "Zero Terror Plan" and "Zero Infiltration" strategy signal a decisive push to eradicate terrorism from the region and ensure long-term peace and stability.

The Union Home Minister's directive to paramilitary forces to adopt a strong, coordinated approach highlights the critical role of synergy among security agencies, including the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF), the Indian Army, and the J&K Police. The emphasis on ensuring zero infiltration from international borders, coupled with the use of advanced technology for surveillance and intelligence gathering, reflects a proactive and multi-dimensional strategy to combat terror threats effectively.

Over the years, J&K has been the focal point of security concerns due to cross-border terrorism and internal insurgency. However, the sustained and coordinated efforts of the Central Government have significantly weakened the terrorism ecosystem in the region. The recent review meetings, attended by top officials from security agencies and intelligence bodies, reaffirm the government's determination to eliminate all remnants of terrorism. The Home Minister's focus on increasing intelligence penetration, countering narco-terrorism, and tightening surveillance measures marks a strategic shift toward preemptive counterterrorism efforts.

A key takeaway from these discussions is the increased focus on the Jammu region, ensuring area domination, particularly in the heights. This move is crucial to prevent any resurgence of militant activities and to establish security dominance in vulnerable zones. The government's approach also includes countering anti-national propaganda by placing accurate information in the public domain, an essential step to winning the information war against those who seek to destabilize the region.

The importance of technology in intelligence gathering, border security, and counterterrorism efforts cannot be overstated. The deployment of state-of-the-art surveillance mechanisms, AI-driven monitoring systems, and cyber intelligence tools will further strengthen security measures. Additionally, focusing on terror financing and disrupting the funding channels of militant organizations is integral to dismantling the structural foundation of terrorism in J&K.

The security measures being undertaken are not just reactive but also preventive, aiming to address the root causes of insurgency while ensuring the safety and security of civilians. A terror-free J&K is not just a security goal; it is an essential step toward economic development, social stability, and political integration of the region with the rest of India. The people of J&K have long suffered due to terrorism, and it is imperative that they experience the dividends of peace and prosperity.

While the government's efforts are commendable, the path to complete eradication of terrorism requires continued vigilance, sustained counterterrorism operations, and unwavering political will. The commitment of the Modi government, as reiterated by Amit Shah, sends a clear message: the days of militancy in Jammu & Kashmir are numbered. Through a combination of military precision, intelligence-driven operations, and socio-economic development, India is on course to achieving lasting peace in the region.

Aga Khan IV: A bridge of tolerance in a polarised world

BHOPINDER SINGH

World at large is suffering from acute polarisation based on religious fervour laced with extremism, supremacism and revisionism, across all faiths. This aggressive phenomenon when conflated with politics conjures a dangerous admixture of hatemongering, intolerance and 'othering'.

Very rarely do such dark times lead to the positing of alternatives that bear progressive and reformist interpretations of faith, inter-faith dialogues, and celebration of the proverbial 'other'. One relatively small sect (estimated globally at about 20 million) that defied this regressive trend has been the Ismaili Muslims, led by their spiritual leader, Aga Khan, an honorific title held by the hereditary Imam of the Nizari Ismaili Shias.

Recently the 49th Imam, Prince Shah Karim al Husseini, Aga Khan IV (revered as Mawlana Hazar Imam, by his adherents), passed away peacefully, leaving the world poorer with the loss of the rare

'bridge' in the divided world of faiths. He was a shining and rare example of how faith could be led to coexist in complete harmony with modernity, tolerance and large purposes in life. He defied so many stereotypes of religious leaders as he seamlessly connected the seemingly disconnected world of Ummah (Muslim world) with other faiths, the proverbial 'East' with the 'West', and even the sense of connecting the spiritual with the material, without ever losing the essential essence and benefit to humankind.

The wise leader of his faith always chose the nobler path of dialogue, inclusion and even protection of the 'other' with his foremost organisation, Aga Khan Development Network, employing over 96,000 people in 30 countries towards community work.

As his foundation noted, "Throughout his life, His Highness emphasised the view of Islam as a thinking, spiritual faith: one that teaches compassion and tolerance and that upholds the dignity of humankind.

As such, pluralism - the embrace and celebration of diversity - has formed a central pillar of the Ismaili Imam's work". Delhi itself is witness to the yeoman service in restoring historical sites like the Humayun Tomb, Sunder Nursery, Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti and Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan's Mausoleum. Their societal impact in reaching out to unseen millions with initiatives on health and nutrition, education, early childhood development, agriculture and food security, climate resilience, or even in the space of enterprise, is unprecedented in walking the talk of pluralism and social service.

Even though the larger fount of Islam is going through a crisis of sectarian tensions - the sect led by Aga Khan constantly guided his adherents towards education, employability and peaceful coexistence with all other faiths. Sadly, such progressive anchorage and beliefs also led many within the Ummah to declare the Ismailis as apostates. Ironically no place personifies that dichotomy within

faith than Pakistan itself, whose father of the nation, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was an Ismaili.

It is said Aga Khan I himself gave the name 'Mohammed Ali' to Qaid-e-Azam - however today Ismailis are now openly persecuted and discriminated against within Pakistan. They have even attempted to rewrite history by suggesting that Jinnah had opted to practice Sunni Islam by the end of his life! However, such open diminishment by the other majority strains of Islam has never stopped the Ismailis under Aga Khan to continue investing selflessly in things like Universities, Health facilities, rural support programs etc., be it Pakistan, or even in Afghanistan, where the Aga Khan Development Network remains committed with relief work, socio-economic projects and restoration work, despite the puritanical and discriminatory outlook of the Taliban.

It is little wonder that the Indian Sub-Continent (home to the largest presence of Ismailis) has given a large number of

Ismailis of eminence like entrepreneur-philanthropist Azim Premji, nuclear physicist-commentator Pervez Hoodbhoy, painter-filmmaker Tyeb Mehta, jurist-diplomat MC Chagla, Indian Air Force Chief Idris Hasan Latif, journalist-activist Sharmeen Obaid etc., proving how the community always punched above its weight in terms of population numbers. Befittingly, the Indian Prime Minister condoled the passing away of Aga Khan IV by recollecting, "He was a visionary, who dedicated his life to service and spirituality.

His contributions in areas like health, education, rural development and women empowerment will continue to inspire several people." Earlier in 2015, the Indian Government had conferred the Padma Vibhushan to Aga Khan IV.

Given the bitter politics and narratives of the day that seek to 'divide' rather than 'unite' each other - the Aga Khanis are a glorious example of the model citizenry that is inclusive, progressive and concerned about the future,

and not just mired in the darkness of the past.

The forward-looking moorings were perhaps institutionalised with the selection of a twenty-one year Aga Khan IV (by his grandfather) overlooking his father, "in view of the altered conditions in the world in very recent years, including the discoveries of atomic sciences, I am convinced that it is in the best interest of the Shia Muslim Ismailian Community that I should be succeeded by a young man", and therefore the "Imam of the atomic age" lived up to his credo and expected anchorage.

Today the mantle passes on to his son, Prince Rahim Aga Khan, to continue providing that hope and direction not just to Ismailis, but also to the larger comity of Ummah and mankind, to still persevere with hope in interfaith dialogue and collective progress, as an investable possibility.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

Natural farming: India's path to sustainable agriculture and food security

PARAG ACHARYA

Ending hunger, ensuring food security and promoting sustainable agriculture are the main objectives of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agriculture plays a role in achieving all 17 SDGs directly or indirectly by supporting economic, social and environmental progress. Sustainable agriculture focuses on meeting the needs of a growing population while protecting the environment, fostering social equity and ensuring economic viability. By 2050, under current agricultural trends, 60 per cent of India's population - over 10 per cent of the global population may face severe food shortages. Addressing the crisis requires increased production, but high input costs and price volatility are pushing farmers into debt. Natural farming offers a cost-effective alternative aiming to reduce dependency on chemical inputs while promoting

sustainable practices.

Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a grassroots initiative aimed at enhancing farm viability by minimising costs. Over one million hectares in India are currently under natural farming. Natural farming represents an Indianised approach to sustainable agriculture, integrating local ecological principles and indigenous knowledge, in contrast to the European-origin organic farming practices. India is making significant strides in promoting natural farming, with leading states including Andhra Pradesh (1 lakh hectares), Madhya Pradesh (0.99 lakh hectares) and Chhattisgarh (0.85 lakh hectares).

Other notable contributors are Kerala (0.84 lakh hectares), Odisha (0.24 lakh hectares), Himachal Pradesh (0.12 lakh hectares), Jharkhand (0.034 lakh hectares) and Tamil Nadu (0.02 lakh hectares). ZBNF and the Andhra Pradesh Com-



munity-Based Natural Farming (APCNF) models are the most widely used approaches. A NITI Aayog report highlights the potential to double the share of chemical-free farming to 15 per cent immediately and expand it to 30 per cent by 2030, with no adverse impact on food security. The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, serves as the central agency for promoting natural farming.

Natural farming reduces cultivation costs by 60-70 per cent by eliminating chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

To promote natural farming, the Central Government introduced the Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP) scheme in 2020-21 under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY). By 2023, the scheme covered 6.1 lakh hectares with a budget of Rs 49.8 crore.

Additionally, a five-kilometre natural farming corridor along the Ganges River was launched to cover 960,000 hectares. The National Mission on Natural Farming aims to form 15,000 clusters in Gram Panchayats, involving 1 crore farmers and covering 750,000 hectares. Natural farm-

ing optimises the use of resources such as soil, labour and equipment, leading to enhanced crop productivity. It eliminates the dependency on chemical fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides.

This approach fosters rapid development of soil microbiota and improves soil aeration through the use of natural inputs. Sikkim achieved its 100 per cent organic status in 2016 through the "Sikkim Organic Mission," which began in 2003. With minimal chemical fertilizer use (5.8 kg/ha) and traditional practices already in place for crops like cardamom, the government phased out fertiliser subsidies, promoted water conservation and trained farmers in practices like vermicomposting and non-pesticide pest management. ICAR is currently studying Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) practices in states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand to assess productivity and soil health impacts.

India's unique agro-ecological diversity and rich traditional knowledge systems position the country as a potential leader in the global transition to sustainable agricultural practices.

However, careful planning, robust infrastructure and targeted training are essential to avoid the pitfalls observed in other nations like Sri Lanka. By integrating modern technologies with natural farming methods, India can further optimise resources, ensure resilience against climate change and bolster long-term food security for its growing population. In essence, natural farming is not just a return to traditional practices but a forward-looking approach that harmonises ecological balance with agricultural productivity, fostering a sustainable future for generations to come.

(The writer is Scientist in Odisha University of Agriculture & Technology; views are personal)

When teacher fails the students

SAKSHI SETHI

The question of whether a teacher's underperformance affects students more than teachers themselves is a complex one. While it may seem that underperforming teachers primarily bear the consequences of their shortcomings such as poor evaluations, job insecurity, and professional stagnation there is significant evidence to suggest that their underperformance also has a profound and lasting impact on students. However, the extent of this impact depends on multiple factors, including the school environment, student resilience and administrative interventions.

While effective teaching is undoubtedly beneficial, some argue that teacher underperformance has minimal impact on students due to various com-

pensatory factors such as student resilience, external learning resources, peer support, and the overall educational environment. Although it is sometimes argued that learners can still learn despite ineffective teaching, research suggests that a teacher's performance plays a crucial role in student outcomes.

Underperforming teachers whether due to lack of subject knowledge, ineffective instructional methods, or poor classroom management can hinder student learning, motivation, and overall academic achievement. Research studies also show that learners with such teachers for consecutive years are more likely to experience learning gaps that persist throughout their education. Moreover, these teachers often fail to provide the neces-

sary support for students to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities and enthusiasm for learning and this can particularly disadvantage students from low-income or marginalised backgrounds who rely heavily on schools for academic and personal development. In extreme cases, a teacher's underperformance can lead to disengagement, higher dropout rates, and a lack of preparation for future education or careers. While students undoubtedly suffer from teacher underperformance, teachers themselves often experience significant negative consequences as well. Underperforming teachers may face criticism from administrators, colleagues and parents, leading to stress, anxiety and low self-esteem.

Many teachers enter the



profession with a passion for education and realising that they are not meeting expectations can be emo-

tionally draining. Additionally, such teachers are more likely to receive negative performance evalu-

ations, which can impact their job security, salary and professional growth opportunities. In some

cases, chronic underperformance can even lead to disciplinary action or even job loss. The pressure to improve without adequate support can also lead to burnout, causing teachers to leave the profession altogether. Ultimately, the effects of teacher underperformance are felt on both sides, but the consequences for students can be more lasting and difficult to reverse.

While teachers may struggle with professional setbacks, students who receive inadequate instruction may face lifelong challenges in education and career readiness. Schools must provide struggling teachers with professional development, mentorship, and support rather than simply penalising them. At the same time, policies must be in place to ensure that students do not suffer due to prolonged ineffec-

tive teaching. The argument that underperformance affects teachers more than students is not entirely accurate. The role of teachers in shaping student success is widely acknowledged, but the extent to which underperformance affects students remains a debated topic. Today, the presence of a standardised curriculum ensures that learning objectives remain consistent regardless of teacher quality. Moreover, beyond the classroom, students have access to private tutors, educational applications, library resources, and academic workshops. Many education systems do follow structured guidelines that specify what students must learn at each grade level, reducing variability in learning outcomes.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Study shows potassium-enriched salt can reduce recurrent stroke risk

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

Potassium supplements in salt can significantly reduce the risks of stroke recurrence as well as death, according to an international study.

The study comes amidst the new recommendation by the World Health Organization (WHO) to take potassium-enriched salt to combat hypertension and related heart risks.

Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability, and recurrent events remain a major concern. High sodium intake and low potassium intake are considered key risk factors.

"The study suggests that potassium salt substitute



significantly reduced the risks of stroke recurrence and death, and is a novel and practical therapeutic option for patients with stroke," said the researchers, including from China, Australia, and the UK.

The randomised clinical trial involved 15,249 participants from China who had previously reported

suffering from a stroke.

The participants were assigned to use either a salt substitute, consisting of 75 per cent sodium chloride and 25 per cent potassium chloride by mass, or regular salt.

The findings, published in JAMA Cardiology, showed that recurrent stroke was reduced by 14

per cent in the potassium substitute group compared with those in the regular salt group.

A total of 2,735 recurrent stroke events occurred, with 691 fatal and 2,044 nonfatal episodes.

Haemorrhagic stroke showed a 30 per cent relative reduction, and stroke-related deaths decreased by 21 per cent. The researchers also found no meaningful difference in hyperkalemia (high potassium levels) between groups.

"Results of this cluster trial demonstrate that salt substitution was safe, along with reduced risks of stroke recurrence and death, which underscores large health gains

from scaling up this low-cost intervention among patients with stroke," the researchers said.

The WHO, in its recent guideline, suggests using K-salt or potassium chloride instead of regular table salt, which is rich in sodium. The K-salt may help reduce the risk of hypertension, which can lead to cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) and chronic kidney disease, by lowering blood pressure.

It also lowers the risks of other conditions associated with high sodium intake, such as gastric cancer.

As per the WHO, every year, 80 Lakh people die due to poor diet. Of these, 19 lakh deaths are attributable to high sodium intake.

Apollo Hospitals reports 4 pc drop in Q3 net profit, revenue slips

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, FEB 11



Apollo Hospitals has reported a net profit of Rs 379.4 crore in the third quarter this fiscal (Q3 FY25), a decline of 4.12 per cent from Rs 395.7 crore profit in the second quarter (Q2 FY25).

The company's total income in Q3 stood at Rs 5,590.7 crore, slightly lower than Rs 5,627.5 crore reported in the second quarter (Q2).

Its revenue from operations also saw a decline of 1.79 per cent at Rs 5,527 crore in Q3, compared to Rs 5,627.5 crore in the previous quarter.

EBITDA was down 6.6 per cent (on-quarter) to Rs. 762 crore, while EBITDA margin stood at 13.8 per cent (down 81bps QoQ) in Q3, led by con-

traction in gross margins by 135bps QoQ to 47.5 per cent. The healthcare major announced an interim dividend of Rs 9 per share for the financial year ending March 31, 2025.

This represents 180 per cent of the face value of Rs 5 per share.

Apollo Hospitals is also focusing on expansion and plans to add 3,512 beds across 11 locations over the next three to four years,

starting from FY26.

The hospital chain is seeing strong demand for healthcare services, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. "From Mumbai to Varanasi and Chennai to Gurugram, we are committed to ensuring that quality healthcare is not a privilege but a fundamental right for all," said Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Chairman, Prathap C Reddy.

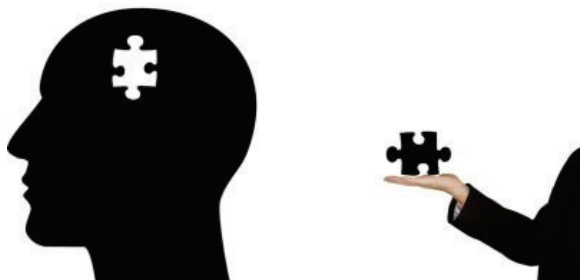
Australian research discovers brain swelling in long Covid, chronic fatigue patients

AGENCIES
SYDNEY, FEB 11

Patients with Long Covid and chronic fatigue tend to have swelling in an area of the brain associated with memory and concentration, according to a study published on Tuesday.

Researchers from Griffith University in Australia used an ultra-high-field magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine to analyse how long Covid and myalgic encephalomyelitis -- also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) -- similarly impact brain structure, Xinhua news agency reported.

The research involved 17 long Covid patients, 29 CFS patients, and 15 people with neither con-



dition. The team identified significantly larger hippocampus volume in long Covid and CFS patients compared to healthy individuals.

The hippocampus is a small but important part of the brain that helps with learning and converting short-term memories into long-term memories, as well as verbal and spatial

memory.

The research, published in the scientific journal PLOS ONE, found that hippocampal volume was similar among long Covid and CFS patients and that hippocampal swelling was linked to symptom severity in both groups.

Kiran Thapaliya, lead author of the new study, said that the findings show

that hippocampal impairment in long Covid and CFS patients "may play a significant role in cognitive difficulties such as memory problems, difficulty concentrating, and delayed responses to questions or conversations."

He said that the larger volume could be caused by neurogenesis -- the process by which new cells are formed in the brain -- or by a virus in the brain.

Further, the study also found the size of the hippocampus was associated with symptom severity in both patient groups.

People with high hippocampus volume had "impaired concentration, unrestorative sleep, pain, and fatigue," Thapaliya said.

Common antibiotic shows hope for inflammatory bowel disease

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

An antibiotic used to treat infective diarrhoea may be an effective drug for a type of inflammatory bowel disease, according to a new study.

Researchers from the University of Birmingham, UK, showed that an antibiotic called vancomycin may also be effective in treating people who have a specific type of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which develops due to an incurable autoimmune liver disease called primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC).

Notably, four in five patients who participated in the study achieved



who have PSC developing IBD, and up to 14 per cent of patients with IBD also developing PSC.

Together, the condition raised the need for colon surgery and/or developing colon or liver cancer, which would then need a liver transplant. It also raises the overall risk of death.

"Our findings suggest that vancomycin could offer a new therapeutic option for patients with this challenging combination of IBD and autoimmune liver disease," said Dr. Mohammed Nabil Quraishi from the University of Birmingham.

During the trial, participants were treated with oral antibiotics for

four weeks. About 80 per cent of patients achieved clinical remission after the treatment.

They also showed a significant decrease in inflammatory markers, and 100 per cent showed mucosal healing.

However, when the treatment was stopped after 8 weeks, the symptoms returned.

Vancomycin was also shown to induce changes in certain bile acids, which are now being further investigated to develop and refine treatments for IBD-associated PSC.

Although the results are preliminary, they provide a strong foundation for further research, said the team.

TN Health Department to begin counselling for appointment of doctors from tomorrow

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, FEB 11

The Tamil Nadu Health Department will commence counselling for doctors selected for government service appointments from tomorrow.

State Health Minister Ma Subramanian announced that 2,642 doctors would receive their appointment orders immediately after completing the counselling process.

The selection process followed an online examination conducted by Tata Consultancy on January 5, in which approximately 24,000 doctors participated.

According to the minister, the evaluation process is complete, and merit marks have been awarded to those who served during the COVID-

19 pandemic.

Doctors who served for two years received five points, those who served for 18 months were given three points, and those who worked for a year earned two points.

The counselling process, which will conclude on February 15, will allow doctors to choose their preferred postings.

Subramanian highlighted that last year, 1,021 doctors were appointed to various government hospitals (GHs) across Tamil Nadu. These doctors, who are completing their one-year tenure on February 15, will now participate in counselling to select their next postings.

"These appointments will ensure that all government hospitals in Tamil Nadu have adequate medical staff,

thereby strengthening the state's healthcare infrastructure," the minister stated. The move comes amid concerns over a shortage of doctors in the state, especially as Tamil Nadu continues to battle contagious diseases like dengue.

Protests had erupted in several areas over the lack of sufficient medical professionals, prompting the Health Department to conduct the competitive recruitment exam.

In 2024, Tamil Nadu recorded 26,740 cases of dengue and 13 related deaths, according to data from the Directorate of Public Health (DPH) and Preventive Medicine. This was the highest number of dengue cases reported in the state since 2012. The previous record was in 2017, with 23,294 cases and 65 deaths.

NATURAL MEDICINES SOLUTION TO GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES: RAJASTHAN SPEAKER

AGENCIES
JAIPUR, FEB 11

Calling natural medicines as the solution to global health challenges, Rajasthan Assembly Speaker Vasudev Devnani called for the need for coordination between ancient and modern medical systems.

He was speaking at the international conference organised by the Faculty of Botany and Diet & Nutrition at Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati University, Ajmer, on new research in plant-based nutraceuticals and medicine. The event was organised under the aegis of the National Academy of Sciences and the Department of Biotechnology.

Addressing the conference, Assembly Speaker



Devnani emphasised the university's commitment to pioneering research and innovation.

He noted that health challenges are increasing worldwide, making diet and nutrition not just a personal concern but a global priority. He stressed the need for deeper research into the medicinal properties of natural plants, urging scholars to explore traditional knowledge and

ancestral remedies.

He also highlighted a key difference between Western allopathy and Indian Ayurveda.

While allopathy focuses on treating diseases, Ayurveda emphasises preventive care through a balanced diet and lifestyle. He called for better coordination between ancient wisdom and modern medical science.

He underscored the

importance of plant-based research, which can reveal the nutritional and medicinal values found in various plant parts, including leaves, stems, roots, and fruits.

These findings, he said, should be incorporated into daily diets.

He also urged scientists to ensure that laboratory research translates into real-world benefits rather than remaining confined to academic papers. Professor Devnani pointed out that India has long embraced medicinal foods such as turmeric, neem, and antibiotic-rich spices in daily consumption. These natural remedies contributed to longer and healthier lives.

However, he cautioned that foreign companies have patented many of

India's traditional medical practices, urging the need for strong documentation and legal protection of indigenous knowledge.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Kailash Sodani described the conference as a significant platform for researchers and science enthusiasts to explore ways of making their research practically useful for society.

The event saw participation from eminent scientists, researchers, and subject experts from India and abroad.

Over the next two days, 120 research papers will be discussed, covering topics such as disease-preventive properties of plants, nutritional therapy and dietary treatments and the role of a balanced diet in daily life.

Adani Group joins Mayo Clinic, donates Rs 6,000 cr to build two integrated health campuses in India

AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD, FEB 11

Gautam Adani, the Chairman of the Adani Group, on Monday announced to launch Adani Health City (AHC) in partnership with US-based Mayo Clinic that aims to pioneer world-class medical research, affordable healthcare and education.

The Adani family will donate upwards of Rs 6,000 crore to build the first two of these integrated health campuses in Ahmedabad and Mumbai. These will constitute two

1,000-bed multi-specialty Hospitals and Medical Colleges in Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

The Rs 6,000 crore donation is part of the recent announcement of Rs 10,000 crore social donation by the billionaire industrialist at his son Jeet Adani's wedding, which would be channelled into various social causes.

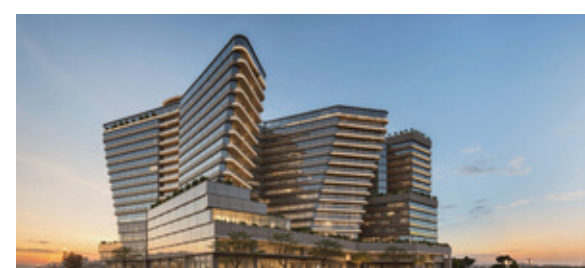
Gautam Adani has plans for more such integrated Adani Health Cities in cities and towns across the country, according to the company.

"Proud to launch Adani

Health City in partnership with Mayo Clinic, pioneering world-class medical research, affordable healthcare and education," the Adani Group Chairperson said in a post on X social media platform.

"Starting with two 1,000-bed hospitals and medical colleges in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, we are on a mission to bring cutting-edge medical innovation across India. This is just the beginning for a healthier, stronger India - one campus at a time," the billionaire industrialist noted.

Mayo Clinic, the world's



largest integrated not-for-profit medical group practice, will provide technical expertise in healthcare excellence.

Each of these integrated AHC campuses will comprise hospitals, medical colleges with an annual intake of 150 undergradu-

ates, 80+ residents and 40+ fellows, step-down and transitional care facilities, and cutting-edge research facilities.

The AHC medical ecosystem aims to serve people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, train the next generation

of doctors and focus on clinical research, artificial intelligence and biomedical informatics.

The Adani Group has engaged USA's Mayo Clinic Global Consulting (Mayo Clinic) to provide strategic advice on organisational objectives and clinical practices at these establishments.

Mayo Clinic will also offer expert guidance on the integration of technology, with a focus on digital and information technology and healthcare quality enhancement.

"Two years ago, as a gift

to me on my 60th birthday, my family committed Rs 60,000 crore towards improving healthcare, education and skill development," said Gautam Adani.

"The development of Adani Health City is the first of many major projects from this contribution, which will go a long way towards providing affordable, world-class healthcare to people from every section of Indian society," the Adani Group Chairman noted.

"I am confident that our partnership with Mayo Clinic, the world's largest

integrated not-for-profit medical group practice, will help to elevate healthcare standards in India, with a special emphasis on complex disease care and medical innovation," he emphasised.

Mayo Clinic extends its expertise to independent healthcare providers wherever they are located.

The Mayo Clinic programme provides a tailored approach by designing engagements that help clients get the right answers from the right experts to help them achieve their goals.

INDIA IS DRIVING GLOBAL GROWTH: PM MODI ON INDIA ENERGY WEEK

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday underscored India's crucial role in driving both domestic and global economic growth, with the energy sector playing a pivotal part.

Speaking at the India Energy Week, he expressed confidence that the event would foster productive discussions and collaborations.

"I extend my greetings to all the delegates and partners from across the country and the world who have gathered here at Yashobhumi. You are not just participants in Energy Week; you are an important part of India's energy ambitions," PM Modi said.

"Today, every expert in the world is saying that the 21st century is India's century. India is not only driving its own growth, but also the global growth and our energy sector has an important role in it,"



PM Modi said.

Laying out foundation of India's energy ambitions, the Prime Minister said they rest on five pillars - abundant resources, brilliant minds, economic strength, political stability, strategic geography, and a commitment to global sustainability.

"The next two decades are crucial for achieving the vision of 'Viksit Bharat', and in the next five years, we will accomplish several milestones. Many of our energy goals align with the 2030 deadline," he said.

PM Modi outlined key targets for 2030, including adding 500 gigawatts of energy capacity, achieving net-zero carbon emissions for Indian Railways, and producing green hydrogen gas. While these goals may appear ambitious, he asserted that India's achievements over the past decade have built confidence in their feasibility.

"Over the last 10 years, India has become the fifth-largest economy, doubled its solar generation capacity, and emerged as the

third-largest solar power-generating nation. Our non-fossil fuel energy capacity has tripled," he noted.

Citing India's leadership in sustainability, the Prime Minister highlighted that the country is the first to meet the Paris G20 agreement goals, achieving a 90 per cent ethanol blending rate and making significant progress in biofuels.

"India's biofuels industry is poised for rapid growth, with 500 million metric tons of sustainable feedstock available. The Global Biofuels Alliance, established during India's G20 presidency, continues to expand, now comprising 28 nations and 12 international organisations. This initiative is transforming waste into wealth and creating Centers of Excellence," he said.

Discussing India's strides in hydrocarbon resources, PM Modi mentioned key policy initiatives such as the Open Acreage License Policy

(OALP), the opening of the exclusive economic zone, and the implementation of a single-window clearance system to attract investment.

He also highlighted efforts to empower ordinary families and farmers as energy providers.

"Last year, we launched the PM Suryodaya Mukta Bijli Yojana. This scheme goes beyond energy production; it fosters new skills in the solar sector, builds a new service ecosystem, and enhances investment opportunities," he stated.

Reaffirming India's commitment to sustainable energy solutions, PM Modi expressed hope that the India Energy Week would lead to innovative breakthroughs in the sector.

"India is dedicated to providing energy solutions that drive our growth while preserving nature. I hope this Energy Week brings new ideas and solutions for a sustainable future," he concluded.

INDIA bloc still strong but internal discussion required: Kapil Sibal

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal has asserted that the INDIA bloc remains intact and has a bright future, though internal discussions are necessary.

Speaking to IANS, Sibal dismissed any notion of the alliance falling apart.

"It has a very bright future. There is no such issue. This was a national alliance, as Sharad Pawar Ji said. During national elections, the alliance remains intact. However, at the state level, there is no national alliance as such," he explained.

Sibal also responded to Congress leader Tariq Anwar's recent remarks questioning his party's leadership and calling for fundamental changes.

Acknowledging the validity of Anwar's concerns, Sibal pointed out that such discussions should have happened earlier.

"I believe there is some truth in what Tariq Anwar Sahab has said. However,



this question should have been raised when Kejriwal Ji was fielding candidates, whether in Haryana, Goa, Gujarat, or Karnataka. Nevertheless, this issue must be discussed," he said.

When asked about West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's decision to contest the upcoming elections alone, Sibal refrained from commenting directly.

"I have no comments

on that. They will decide among themselves. These are mature and responsible leaders, and they will sit together and determine the way forward," he remarked.

His statements come at a time when the INDIA bloc faces challenges, with Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress, part of the INDIA bloc charting its own course in Bengal and Congress leaders questioning internal strategies.

TN agriculture dept to boost farmer awareness for 'Agristack' portal enrolment

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, FEB 11

The Tamil Nadu Agriculture Department is actively working to raise awareness among farmers about enrolling in the 'Agristack' portal.

Awareness campaigns will be conducted across districts with significant agricultural activity, including the Delta region, which is considered the rice bowl of the state.

The Agristack portal, developed by the Union Ministry of Agriculture, is a digital platform designed to provide farmers with centralised, data-driven services.

It aims to streamline access to various government schemes, ensuring that benefits reach farmers efficiently.

Under this initiative, farmers are required to upload their details into the Farmer's Registry,



which will store comprehensive information about their agricultural land and crop survey data.

Once registered, farmers will no longer need to apply separately for different schemes. Instead, they will receive a unique ID that grants direct access to multiple government benefits.

The portal will maintain essential details such as KYC, PAN, Aadhaar, bank account information, and other relevant data.

Various schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, crop insurance, and other agricultural benefits, will be accessible based on the information stored in the database.

Beyond financial assistance, Agristack supports sustainable farming by offering insights into soil health, water usage, and climate conditions, enabling farmers to improve productivity.

Additionally, real-time

weather updates will help them plan better and reduce crop losses.

The platform will also facilitate improved access to credit. To encourage widespread participation, the Tamil Nadu Agriculture Department, in collaboration with other government agencies, will conduct awareness camps across rural areas.

Officials have outlined a one-month intensive awareness campaign, after which feedback will be collected to assess enrolment levels.

Based on this analysis, a second phase of awareness initiatives will be launched to ensure maximum farmer participation.

A senior agriculture department official emphasised that the goal is to achieve 100 per cent enrolment so that no farmer misses out on the benefits of government schemes in the future.

Gujarat's GCC push: Rs 10,000 crore investment, 50,000 jobs on the horizon

AGENCIES
GANDHINAGAR, FEB 11

In a move to establish Gujarat as a global hub for Global Capability Centers (GCCs), Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel launched the 'Gujarat GCC Policy 2025-30' from GIFT City.

The policy aims to boost innovation, digital transformation, and economic growth.

With a target of 250 new GCC units, the policy is expected to attract over Rs 10,000 crore investments and generate more than 50,000 high-value jobs.

It focuses on enhancing infrastructure, strengthening connectivity, and fostering a skilled workforce, making Gujarat an attractive destination for multinational corporations.

Designed by the Department of Science and Technology, the policy provides a range of incentives, including capital



(CAPEX) and operating expense (OPEX) support, to encourage businesses to set up their GCCs in Gujarat.

As of the financial year 2023, the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) stood at approximately Rs 22 trillion, reflecting a steady increase from over Rs 19 trillion in the previous year.

In 2022-23, Gujarat accounted for 33 per cent of India's total exports, leading in sectors such as chemicals, petrochemi-

cals, dairy, pharmaceuticals, cement, ceramics, gems and jewellery, textiles, and engineering. The state also boasts the highest electricity production capacity and maritime port cargo volume among all Indian states.

Looking ahead, Gujarat aims to increase its contribution to India's GDP from 8 per cent to 10 per cent by 2030, as stated by Mona Khandhar, Principal Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology.

From September

to December 2022, the state achieved its highest recorded employment figure of 26.7 million individuals, marking an increase from 25.9 million during the same months in 2021.

In terms of unemployment, Gujarat has maintained rates lower than the national average. For individuals aged 15 and above, the state's unemployment rate stood at 3.1 per cent, compared to the national average of 6.6 per cent. However, urban areas in Gujarat have experienced fluctuations. In the 2022-23 period, the urban unemployment rate rose to 8.7 per cent, indicating challenges in the labour market during that time.

Encouragingly, the subsequent year saw a significant decline, with the rate dropping to 2.3 per cent, suggesting a positive trend in urban employment.

Nature of scam in RG Kar financial irregularities case will have far reaching impact: Calcutta HC

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, FEB 11

The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday observed that the nature of the scam in financial irregularities case in state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital will have a far-reaching effect on any internal administrative system in government functioning. A division bench of Justice Joyimalya Bagchi and Justice Gaurang Kanth also observed that besides administrative functioning, the healthcare system in the state might also be adversely impacted by the nature of the crime.

The main charges in the R.G. Kara financial irregularities case are manipulations in the tendering system of the said medical institute, getting the infrastructure-related work there done by outsourced contractors bypassing the state Public Works Department, smuggling of biomedical wastes of the hospital and finally selling of organs of unidentified bodies coming to the hospital morgue for autopsy purposes at premium prices outside. The five main accused in the case, as mentioned in the chargesheet filed by the

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) are former and controversial R.G. Kar principal, Sandip Ghosh, his assistant-cum-bodyguard Afsar Alir, private contractors Biplab Sinha and Suman Hazra and a junior doctor Ashish Pandey. All of them are in judicial custody now.

The chargesheet identified Ghosh as the mastermind behind the entire scam. The division bench also directed the CBI to complete the process of the handover of all case-related documents to the counsels of the accused by Wednesday.

Jharkhand Board exams begin, nearly 8 lakh students appear across 1,297 centres

AGENCIES
RANCHI, FEB 11

The Jharkhand Academic Council (JAC) commenced its matriculation and intermediate examinations on Tuesday, with 7.83 lakh students appearing for the exams across the state.

The council has assured a strict, malpractice-free examination environment, with CCTV surveillance at all centres, monitored from a central control room at JAC's headquarters. Control rooms have also been set up at district headquarters.

A total of 1,297 centres have been designated for the matriculation exami-



nation, while the intermediate exams are being conducted at 789 centres.

There are as many as 4,33,890 candidates for the Matriculation exams and 3,50,138 candidates for the Intermediate exams.

JIT and other vocational subjects in the first shift from 9:45 a.m., while the second shift, from 2 p.m. to 5:15 p.m., was allocated for vocational subjects across all three intermediate faculties. Students have been granted an additional 15 minutes to read the question paper. The exams will continue until March 3, followed by practical examinations from March 4 at respective schools. To ensure smooth conduct, authorities have deployed magistrates and police personnel at all examination centres. Flying squads have been constituted in each district, and senior officials --

including Deputy Commissioners, SPs, and District Education Officers -- will conduct surprise inspections. Additionally, prohibitory orders have been enforced within a 200-metre radius of all examination centres. To prevent any unfair means, photocopy, printing, and cyber cafe shops around the centres have been ordered to remain closed during the examination period. The evaluation will be based on 50 marks for subjective questions, 30 marks for objective questions, and 20 marks for internal assessment or practical exams, officials said.

Warm January lifts electricity demand to 138 bn units in India, power generation in sync

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

The third-warmest January in 125 years and industrial activity lifted demand for electricity 2.2 per cent (year-on-year) to 138 billion units (BU) in the first month of 2025, according to a report on Tuesday.

In January, peak power demand is estimated to have risen 14 GW on-year to 237 GW. On the other

hand, power generation rose an estimated 3.9 per cent on-year to 149 BU in January, surpassing typical monthly demand.

Real-time market (RTM) volume surged 27 per cent on-year to 3,036 million units (MUs), while the day-ahead market (DAM) spiked 8 per cent to 6,015 MU. Overall RTM volume at the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) rose 400 basis points to 26 per

cent on-year in January, according to the report by Crisil Intelligence.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the all-India mean temperature in January was 0.94 degree Celsius higher than the average of 18.04 degree Celsius seen since 1901.

Typical heating requirements, a key driver of power demand, was subdued this time because of



warmer and drier weather conditions.

While temperatures have been warmer across the nation, growth in power demand has not been uniform on a regional level, the report mentioned.

Power generation rose an estimated 3.9 per cent on-year to 149 BU in January, surpassing typical monthly demand.

Coal generation inched

up 0.8 per cent on-year on a high base of 10 per cent on-year growth last fiscal. Generation of hydro, nuclear and renewable energy rose 24 per cent, 15 per cent and 24 per cent on-year, respectively.

Additionally, manufacturing activity continues well, as underscored by the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) reading 57.7 for January, well above the mark of 50 that under-

scores expansion.

With nearly half of India's power demand coming from industrial and commercial consumers, expansion of relevant activities is crucial for power demand to continue growing.

Between April 2024 and January 2025, power demand is estimated to have increased 4.2 per cent on-year, the report noted.

EAM Jaishankar meets French FM, discusses AI and innovation

AGENCIES
PARIS, FEB 11

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar met with his French counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot in Paris, where the two leaders discussed strengthening India-France bilateral ties with a focus on artificial intelligence (AI), innovation, connectivity, and clean energy.

Taking to X, Jaishankar shared details of the meeting, stating, "A pleasure meeting FM Jean-Noel Barrot in Paris this evening. Discussed our wide-ranging cooperation with a focus on AI & innovation, connectivity, and clean energy. Also spoke about regional and global developments."

"Our strong convergence reflects the strength and comfort of our Strategic Partnership," he added.

The French Foreign Minister also took to social media and posted, "With India, AI is the new frontier of our strategic part-



nership. In 2026, we will write together a Franco-Indian year of innovation!"

The meeting took place on the sidelines of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's engagements at a welcome dinner ahead of co-chair-

ing the AI Summit in Paris. PM Modi arrived in France earlier on Monday as part of the first leg of his two-nation tour, which will later take him to the United States.

During his three-day

visit, he will co-chair the AI Action Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron, engage in bilateral discussions, and address business leaders. Upon his arrival in Paris, he received a grand welcome from the Indian diaspora.

Later in the evening, PM Modi received a warm welcome from President Macron at a dinner at the Elysee Palace in Paris, with both leaders exchanging a friendly embrace.

"Delighted to meet my friend, President Macron in Paris," PM Modi posted on X.

During the dinner, the Prime Minister also met US Vice President J.D. Vance, who is in France to attend the AI Summit.

In addition to AI-focused discussions, PM Modi and the French President will participate in both restricted and delegation-level talks and address the India-France CEO's Forum.

In a departure statement, PM Modi high-

lighted that his visit will serve as an opportunity to review progress on the 2047 Horizon Roadmap for India-France strategic ties with "my friend" President Macron.

On Wednesday, the two leaders will visit the Mazarques War Cemetery in Marseille, maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, to pay tribute to Indian soldiers who fought in World War I. They will also inaugurate India's newest Consulate General in Marseille.

This marks PM Modi's sixth visit to France, underscoring the growing depth of the strategic partnership between the two nations.

The AI Action Summit will convene global leaders and top tech CEOs to deliberate on AI's future, emphasising innovation and ethical development.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, PM Modi's visit will see several key initiatives aimed at further strengthening India-France ties.

India, Nepal set to hold power transmission discussions

AGENCIES
KATHMANDU, FEB 11

The energy secretaries of Nepal and India are meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday as both neighbouring countries focus on building at least five cross-border transmission lines in order to generate at least 16,000 megawatts of power by 2035.

Leading Nepal's 12-member delegation, Energy Secretary Suresh Acharya will engage in talks with Indian officials to finalise the roadmap for constructing these vital transmission corridors.

The meeting will focus on ensuring smooth energy exports to India and Bangladesh, reports Nepal's leading daily, The Kathmandu Post.

Representatives from Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Energy, the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi, Nepal Electricity Authority, and the Department of Electricity Development will also take part in the deliberations.

Additionally, a meeting of the power exchange committee will be held

to discuss energy trade and pricing mechanisms between Nepal and India.

Last month, officials from both countries, during the 12th Joint Working Group on Power Sector Cooperation, agreed on investment modalities and timelines for five cross-border transmission lines.

These projects, once completed, will enable Nepal to increase its energy exports to Bangladesh through India, adding to the 40 MW already being supplied. Among the major projects under discussion are the 400 kV Inaruwa (Duhabi)-Purnia (Bihar) and Dodhara (Lamki)-Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) cross-border transmission lines.

These two key lines are expected to be completed within four years, with the Duhabi-Purnia line slated for 2027-2028 and the Dodhara-Bareilly line for 2028-2029.

Three additional transmission lines are planned to be operational by 2035, including the 400 kV Nijgadh (Bara)-Motihari (Bihar) line, the Kohalpur-Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) line, and the 220 kV

double-circuit Chameliya-Jauljibi cross-border line.

Sandip Dev, Joint Secretary at Nepal's Ministry of Energy, stated that the Chameliya-Jauljibi project is on track for completion by 2027, with a detailed project report expected by March.

"The meeting will approve the construction of these cross-border lines and ensure that the deadlines are met, as discussed in previous meetings," Dev said, adding that both sides have already agreed on investment modalities.

With India committing to purchase up to 10,000 MW of power from Nepal over the next decade under a long-term trade agreement, the need for high-capacity transmission lines has become increasingly pressing.

Additionally, work is progressing on the New Butwal-Gorakhpur Transmission Line, which will have a capacity of 3,500 MW. This project was

jointly inaugurated by then-Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2023.

India, International Solar Alliance discuss sustainable energy initiatives in Denmark

AGENCIES
COPENHAGEN, FEB 11

India discussed sustainable renewable energy initiatives with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in Denmark, to attract global funding and technology from both countries.

The Indian envoy to Denmark met with the top officials of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in Copenhagen and discussed the initiatives.

"Indian Ambassador to Denmark, Manish Prabhat, DG Mathur, DG-elect Khanna discussed ISA's Sustainable Renewable Energy initiatives attracting global funding and technology, including from India and Denmark," the Indian Embassy in Copenhagen posted on X on Monday.

In 2021, Denmark signed a framework agreement on the International Solar Alliance with India and became the first country to ratify the International Solar Alliance Framework



Agreement.

India and Denmark also collaborated in the ISA and during India's G20 presidency. Denmark participated in the working groups on climate, environment and energy transmission as a part of the Green Strategic Partnership between both nations.

The International Solar Alliance organised the third edition of the High-level Conference on New Technologies for Clean Energy Transition in November 2024.

It was held in collaboration with India's Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Solar Energy Society.

A report on the 'Readiness Assessment of Green Hydrogen African Countries' by ISA and Denmark was released during the inaugural session of the event.

Sharing his insights on the report, Emil S. Lauritsen, Head of Strategic Sector Cooperation, Embassy of Denmark in

New Delhi, stated, "This report is the first project under the umbrella of the memorandum of understanding for the green hydrogen partnership, which the Embassy of Denmark has inked with the ISA.

The objective is to conduct a readiness assessment of the target countries: Egypt, Morocco, Namibia, and Egypt."

"The report focuses on three categories: country-specific parameters, financing requirements and possible financing methods. It also includes assessing risks and preparing plans to develop a green hydrogen economy in these countries," he said.

"Under the partnership, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark will also support ISA with three years of content, focusing on green hydrogen policy, regulation, and other components of the green hydrogen value chain," Emil S. Lauritsen added.

Iran's FM discusses Trump's Gaza plan with UN chief, Malaysian counterpart

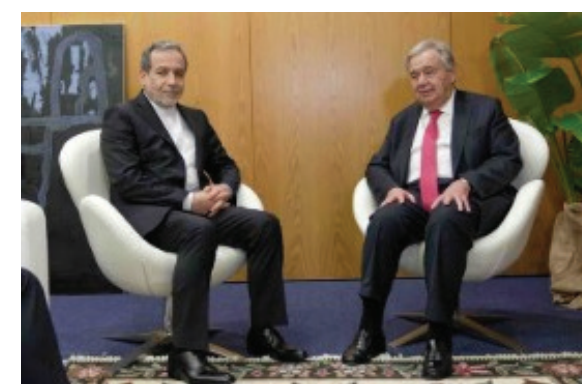
AGENCIES
TEHRAN, FEB 11

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi has exchanged views with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and his Malaysian counterpart Mohamad Hasan on the US President's plan to relocate Palestinians from Gaza.

In two separate phone calls, Araghchi discussed the developments in the West Asia region with the UN Chief and the Malaysian Foreign Minister, according to statements released by the Iranian Foreign Ministry on Monday.

On Tuesday, US President Donald Trump suggested that the US would take over Gaza and redevelop it after Palestinians are relocated elsewhere, Xinhua news agency reported.

He made the remarks at a joint press conference at the White House with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



Speaking to Guterres, Araghchi condemned the US-Israeli plan to "forcefully relocate" Palestinians from Gaza to other countries, calling on the UN and the Security Council to adopt a "decisive and explicit" stance against the "dangerous conspiracy, which threatens international peace and security".

He added the proposal to forcefully displace Palestinians was in violation of all principles and regulations of international law and the UN Charter and, in fact, aimed at complementing Israel's plans of

"genocide against Palestinians and eliminating Palestine".

He condemned Netanyahu's suggestion on Thursday to transfer Palestinians to Saudi Arabia, emphasising that those remarks were "a clear example of Israel's rude approach".

The UN Chief, for his part, expressed the organisation's opposition to any plan that would relocate Palestinians from their homeland, stressing the need to respect the Palestinian people's legitimate rights.

Guterres added the

forceful relocation of Palestinians from Gaza was "completely rejected and unacceptable," noting that the main priorities at present were to accelerate humanitarian aid delivery to Gazans and help reconstruct Gaza.

Making similar remarks in his phone call with the Malaysian Foreign Minister, Araghchi called on major and influential Muslim states to adopt a "decisive and consistent" stance towards the US President's plan.

He also called for Malaysia's support for Iran's proposal to hold an emergency ministerial meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss and decide about Trump's "illegal" plan about Gaza.

Hasan elaborated on his country's position in condemnation of any plan to transfer Palestinians out of Gaza, noting that the forceful relocation of Gazans amounted to an "ethnic cleansing and is completely rejected".

Trump formally announces 25 pc tariffs on all steel, aluminium imports

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, FEB 11

US President Donald Trump has announced plans to impose 25 per cent tariffs on all steel and aluminium imports coming into the United States "without exceptions or exemptions," raising concerns over its ramifications on South Korean and other exporters.

Trump signed two proclamations regarding the sweeping tariffs, while affirming a plan to announce "reciprocal" tariffs "over the next two days" - duties on U.S. imports designed to match tariff rates that other countries impose on U.S. exports, reports Yonhap news agency.

During his first term, Trump imposed a 25 per cent tariff on steel imports and 10 per cent on aluminium imports on national security grounds. The new measures will remove

exceptions, exemptions and duty-free quotas for U.S. trading partners, while raising the tariff on aluminium to 25 per cent. They are set to take effect on March 4.

"Today, I am simplifying our tariffs on steel and aluminium so that everyone can understand exactly what it means. It's 25 per cent without exceptions or exemptions, and that's all countries, no matter where it comes from," Trump told reporters as he signed the documents.

"If it's made in the United States, there is no tariff. All you have to do is make it in the United States. We don't need it from another country," he added.

Announcing what he cast as "massive" tariffs, Trump claimed that America was "being pummeled by both friend and foe alike."

"Our nation requires steel and aluminium to be made in America, not in foreign lands. We need to

create in order to protect our country's future resurgence of U.S. manufacturing and production, the likes of which has not been seen for many decades," he said.

"It's time for our great industries to come back to America ... This is the first of many."

Asked about what the president plans to do if other countries retaliate, Trump said, "I don't mind. If they retaliate, as I said, it's reciprocal," he said. "If they raise it a little bit, then we raise it automatically. So I don't think it helps for them to retaliate."

Trump also warned that his administration is looking into the possible imposition of tariffs on cars, semiconductors and pharmaceuticals, among other items.

"Cars is going to be a very big one and a very important one, and America is going to be stronger than it ever was before," he said.

Slovak PM seeks information from Elon Musk on US grants to NGOs, media in Slovakia

AGENCIES
BRATISLAVA, FEB 11

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has unveiled a letter addressed to Elon Musk, head of the US Department of Government Efficiency, requesting details on US grants provided to Slovak non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media outlets.

In the letter shared on Monday on social media, Fico expressed concerns over "the misuse of foreign funds in Slovakia to disadvantage part of the political spectrum," adding he expects to meet Musk in person, Xinhua news agency reported.

"It's indisputable that USAID money was used in Slovakia for political purposes, aimed at distorting the political system and favouring certain political parties," Fico wrote in the letter, adding that



"based on incomplete public sources, it's clear that USAID has supported these entities with grants totalling several million dollars in a relatively short period".

To distinguish between beneficial projects and what he described as "blatant interference in Slovakia's internal affairs," the Slovak PM urged Musk to facilitate access to information regarding grants and funding allocated by

the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to NGOs, media organisations, and individual journalists in Slovakia.

Moreover, the Prime Minister would also like to discuss with Musk other projects mutually beneficial for Slovak-American relations.

USAID oversaw humanitarian, health care, and emergency programmes in nearly 120 countries around the world and has

an annual budget of nearly €43 billion.

The USAID has been a top target of a government reduction overhaul spearheaded by billionaire and Trump ally Musk since the Republican President took office on January 20.

Fico, the leader of the leftist-nationalist government in Slovakia, has long waged a war of words against the pro-Western liberal opposition, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media in his country, accusing them of conspiring against Slovakia.

In January, US President Donald Trump signed a decree suspending all foreign aid provided by USAID for 90 days and later granted several exceptions.

Fico has faced peaceful protests in recent weeks by tens of thousands of people across the central European country for

what they see as backsliding on democracy and a turn in foreign policy towards Russia.

He has accused organisers of the protests of planning to overthrow the government in a coup, without providing any evidence.

Fico's letter followed comments by his ally and neighbour Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, who said on Friday he would take steps to ensure all aid funding coming from the US to NGOs and media critical of the government is revealed, saying the time had come to "eliminate these foreign networks".

The Roman Catholic Church's worldwide charity arm sharply criticised Trump's cuts to US foreign aid on Monday, saying his plans to end funding for USAID will have a "catastrophic" impact in the developing world.

India, France stress on synergy at AI Roundtable on sidelines of summit

AGENCIES
PARIS, FEB II

The second India-France AI Policy Roundtable held on the sidelines of AI Action Summit 2025 stressed the potential for India and France to synergise on various policy positions and technological initiatives, fostering benefits not only at the bilateral level but also on a global scale by leveraging complementary knowledge and skill sets.

The roundtable discussion started with opening remarks by India's Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) Ajay Kumar Sood where he highlighted India's priorities in global AI policy and governance, including responsible AI development and deployment, equitable benefit sharing, adoption of a techno-legal framework for AI governance, interoperable data flows, and collaboration on AI safety, research, and



innovation.

Amit A. Shukla, Joint Secretary, Cyber Diplomacy Division, Ministry of External Affairs and Henri Verdier, Ambassador for Digital Affairs, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs gave co-chairs remarks highlighting DPI for AI, global AI governance, AI foundation models and priority areas, such as integrating AI in addressing global challenges. They also mentioned cross-border data flows lacking arbi-

tration mechanisms and the importance of aligned views on data sovereignty.

Speakers at the roundtable emphasised the need for democratised access to AI resources, and capacity building while recognising the importance of technological frameworks. The participants highlighted the significance of sovereign AI models, ethical AI deployment and the need to define globally accepted terminologies and standards. They also aligned on multilingual

LLMs, federated AI compute infrastructure, and interoperable access to AI research, datasets, and high-performance computing resources.

Besides, the meeting covered key discussions on collaboration between India and France. Opportunities mentioned included creating indigenous foundation models and adopting a balanced governance approach to minimize risks while fostering innovation.

Sustainable AI and energy-efficient computing were highlighted, alongside the importance of cross-border cooperation in AI research, datasets, and startups.

The conversation also touched on AI's societal impact, data governance, and the role of global institutions in shaping AI safety frameworks.

The official event titled '2nd India-France AI Policy Roundtable' at the Sci-

ences Po Paris University campus on Tuesday was organised by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India in partnership with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, India AI Mission and Sciences Po Paris.

The Second Roundtable was built upon key objectives from the First Roundtable organised in IISc, Bengaluru during Technology Dialogue 2025 on 25th January 2025. The First Roundtable discussion focussed on inclusive AI frameworks, diverse datasets, infrastructure and skills, and foundational models.

It also addressed governance and innovation, public-private partnerships, sustainability and health, and academic and data collaboration. Both discussions highlighted ethical and responsible AI, along with sector-specific and long-term goals.

Concerns raised over potential data leak to China via BYD cars

AGENCIES
SEOUL, FEB II

With the recent entry by China's BYD into South Korea's passenger electric vehicle (EV) market, concerns have been raised over potential personal data leaks to China through the vehicles manufactured by the company, industry observers said on Tuesday.

The security risks of private data leaks to China emerged following BYD's official entry into the South Korean passenger vehicle market last month, reports Yonhap news agency.

BYD's first model launched here, the Atto 3, is equipped with connected car features, such as over-the-air (OTA) software update capability and navigation features, through which sensitive driver data could be transferred to China, according to the market watchers.

"BYD must disclose exactly what types of data

are collected and how they are processed," said Yom Heung-yeol, professor emeritus of cybersecurity at Soonchunhyang University.

He stressed that an "opt-out mechanism," allowing consumers to reject the collection of personal data if they choose, was necessary.

BYD Korea has addressed data protection concerns, stating, "We fully understand Korean customers' concerns regarding personal data security and strictly comply with the Personal Information Protection Act."

It said that data collected in South Korea is managed locally and not shared with BYD headquarters in China.

The company has also stated that it has no plans to integrate DeepSeek, China's generative artificial intelligence (AI) service, into its vehicles.

Chinese EV manufacturer Geely recently

announced a plan to incorporate DeepSeek's AI model into its vehicles.

The recent launch of DeepSeek has raised concerns over potential data leaks globally, having prompted South Korean government agencies and private companies to ban the use of its service at work.

Despite BYD's assurances, concerns persist regarding the storage of Korean user data on Tencent Cloud servers, which belong to a Chinese IT company.

Although managed within South Korea, the storage of Korean user data on a China-affiliated server has sparked unease among experts.

Lim Jong-in, professor emeritus at Korea University's graduate school of information security, said the government must conduct rigorous inspections of BYD vehicles not only in terms of performance but also from a cybersecurity standpoint.

India's deal activity off to a strong start with 217 pacts worth \$9 billion in Jan

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB II

India's deal activity started the year on a strong note with 217 agreements worth \$9 billion in January, a report showed on Tuesday.

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) and private equity (PE) deals witnessed a 19 per cent increase in volumes over December 2024, according to Grant Thornton Bharat Dealtracker.

Encouragingly, deal values surged 66 per cent, driven by significant deals in the billion-dollar club and \$100 million-plus category. "The Indian deal landscape is poised for a strong 2025, with January's numbers setting a positive tone. The growth in the deal activity, the surge in big ticket deals and the increased deal activity across key sectors like retail, IT, and pharma, all point to a promising year ahead," said Shanthi Vijetha, Partner, Growth at Grant Thornton Bharat.

Indian businesses'

ambitions for domestic and global expansions and resilience of the domestic markets will continue to be the main themes.

India's M&A landscape witnessed a notable uptick in January, with 69 deals valued at \$5.4 billion.

Several prominent players, including the Adani Group, HDFC Bank, and Kore Digital, made significant acquisitions, with three deals each.

Notably, inbound transactions saw a substantial surge, with values increasing by 6.6 times over the previous month, boosted by Wilmar International's billion-dollar acquisition of Adani Wilmar's Staples business. The country's PE landscape continued to show upward momentum in January, with 129 deals valued at \$2.1 billion. This represents a 21 per cent growth in PE volumes over December, when 107 deals were recorded, and a 16 per cent increase in deal values, rising from \$1.8 billion to \$2.09 billion.

DEMAND FOR OFFICE SPACES IN INDIA'S TOP 6 CITIES POISED FOR DOUBLE DIGIT SURGE IN 2025

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB II

India's top six cities have witnessed significant scale-up in office leasing and supply which is likely to gain further momentum, with gross leasing across the top six cities projected to reach 65-70 million square feet in 2025, according to a report on Tuesday.

The demand from engineering and manufacturing, BFSI firms and flex space operators can surge by 10-15 per cent in 2025, said the report by real estate consultancy Colliers.

Bengaluru will account for an estimated one-third of the overall office space demand in 2025, led by space uptake from GCCs, engineering and manufacturing firms and flex space operators.

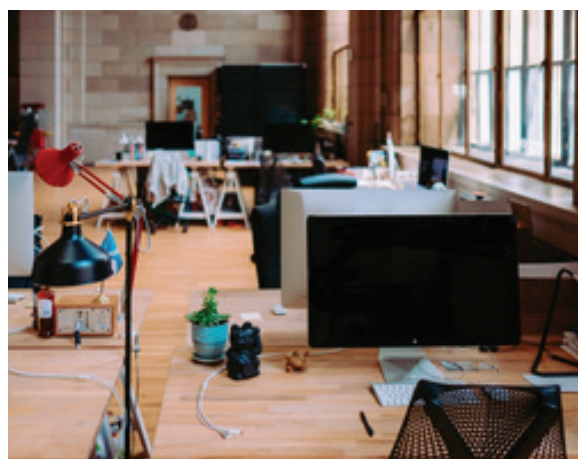
While Bengaluru will continue to lead the other major markets by a considerable margin, Hyderabad and Delhi NCR are likely to see heightened activity

and register 10-15 million sq ft of leasing activity each, 5-10 per cent higher compared to the previous year.

Mumbai, Chennai and Pune will meanwhile continue to be preferred by occupiers from BFSI and Engineering & manufacturing sectors and flex space operators respectively. "The three cities are likely to witness 5-10 million sq ft of Grade A office space demand each in 2025," said Arpit Mehrotra, Managing Director, Office Services, Colliers India.

The report, titled 'India Office: Setting New Standards for 2025,' released at the FICCI '18th Real Estate summit' takes into account continuance of favourable business sentiments and excludes impact of external volatilities or disruptive events.

The surge in overall leasing volume is likely to be driven by diversification of occupier base, continued expansion of Global Capability Centers (GCCs) and



business optimism amid domestic occupiers. The office market will continue to evolve from a supply-led environment to an occupier-driven landscape, shaping the next growth phase of commercial real estate in India, according to the report.

This transition has pushed developers to become more agile and tailor office spaces to match evolving occupier needs. Approximately 60-65 million sq ft of new supply is anticipated in

2025. Moreover, a growing emphasis on energy efficiency and sustainable material and energy usage is set to further redefine standards in Indian commercial estate throughout 2025.

Engineering and manufacturing, BFSI firms and flex space operators are expected to drive office demand in 2025, with each segment poised for a 10-15 per cent annual rise in space uptake. Cumulatively, these three sectors are likely to continue to

account for half of the leasing activity in 2025. Engineering and manufacturing sector will see heightened activity across most major office markets, with Bengaluru likely to dominate leasing volumes, the report stated.

BFSI firms will continue to prefer having a presence in Mumbai, but increasing traction in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune highlights a growing trend of diversification beyond traditional hubs. Meanwhile, flex space operators are set to emerge as one of the leading demand drivers, accounting for nearly 20 per cent of total leasing activity in 2025.

According to the report, GCC leasing saw a 41 per cent YoY increase in 2024, at 25.7 million sq ft across the top 6 cities. This demand is expected to further increase and be close to 30 million sq ft, accounting for around 40 per cent of the total office space demand in 2025.

Bengaluru and Hyderabad are likely to remain

preferred knowledge and innovation-driven GCC hubs. In line with past trends, US-based companies are likely to drive GCC expansion across most markets and contribute around 70 per cent of the GCC demand in 2025, led by Technology, BFSI and Engineering and manufacturing firms.

With REITs in India gaining traction, driven by increasing retail investor participation and favourable regulatory environment, developers are focusing on curating high-quality real estate portfolios. Simultaneously, the growing occupier demand for sustainable, green-certified developments can fast-track the realisation of national carbon emission and net-zero goals. Increasing adoption of sustainable elements and low-carbon construction materials in the built environment, especially commercial real estate, can accelerate long-term green economy transition, the report added.

India sees record high growth in apprenticeship, will boost workforce: Report

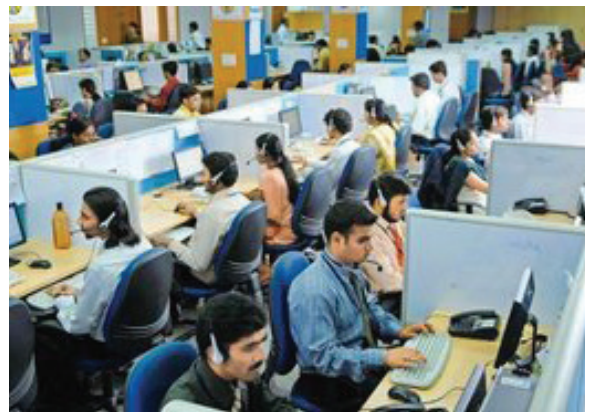
AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB II

With skilling emerging as a national priority, India's apprenticeship ecosystem is witnessing unprecedented momentum, solidifying its role as a key driver of workforce transformation, according to a report on Tuesday.

India achieved a record-high Net Apprenticeship Outlook (NAO) of 76 per cent during Q1 2024-25 (Jan-Mar) -- an 8 per cent surge from the previous Oct-Dec 2023-24 period, revealed the report by TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship, a supply chain organisation that facilitates the creation of a skilled entry-level workforce.

This historic rise in NAO signals a fundamental shift in employer sentiment, with businesses increasingly recognising apprenticeships as a strategic lever for talent acquisition, cost-effective hiring, and industry sustainability.

"The rise in apprentice-



ships is driven by strategic workforce planning, cost-efficient hiring, and a focus on enhancing gender diversity," said Sumit Kumar, Chief Strategy Officer at TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship.

The trend is being led by large enterprises (85 per cent, up from 77 per cent) and medium-sized businesses (77 per cent, up from 71 per cent), and all categories of businesses are seeing a boost in apprenticeship adoption.

Further, "government initiatives such as Make in India, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI)

schemes, and the rise in academia-industry collaboration have accelerated this growth, enabling employers to recognise the business benefits of apprenticeships in closing skill gaps, boosting productivity, and optimizing long-term workforce costs," Kumar said.

The report noted that the record-breaking growth is due to the rising prominence of sunrise industries, which are spearheading a new era of workforce development.

The drone industry leads the charge with an unparalleled 86 per cent

NAO, closely followed by the EV and mobility sector with a robust 75 per cent NAO.

Meanwhile, Global Capability Centers (GCCs), with a 79 per cent NAO, are also leveraging apprenticeships to fortify their talent pipelines and drive operational excellence in the global business landscape.

The report noted that Hyderabad, Nagpur, Chennai, Indore, Pune, and Bengaluru have emerged as frontrunners, setting new benchmarks for apprenticeship engagement.

About 75 per cent of organisations are now consistently absorbing apprentices into permanent roles post-training, acknowledging the effectiveness of structured skill-building programmes in building a job-ready workforce.

In addition, "the increasing focus on women's participation in sectors like solar and semiconductors signals positive change toward a more inclusive workforce," Kumar said.

Signature Global's expenses up by 6.5 pc in Q3, liabilities jump 17 pc as stock drops

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB II

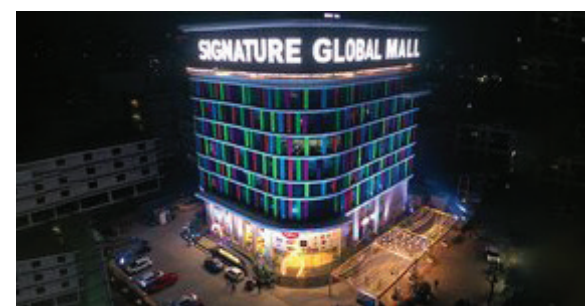
Real estate developer Signature Global has reported an increase in its total expenses to Rs 835.89 crore during the third quarter of the financial year 2025 (Q3 FY25), up by 6.54 per cent from Rs 784.60 crore in Q2.

The company's expenses rose by nearly 179 per cent from Rs 299.70 crore in the year-ago period (Q3 FY24).

According to its stock exchange filing, the jump in total expenses was due to a higher cost associated with project execution and completion.

At the same time, the company's total liabilities saw a steep rise to Rs 11,525.72 crore in Q3, compared to Rs 9,852 crore in Q2 and Rs 7,181 crore in the year-ago period.

This was a 16.99 per cent increase from Q2 to Q3, while the total liabili-



ties surged by 60.50 per cent from the year-ago period.

On the stock market, Signature Global's shares declined 4.05 per cent on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) at Rs 1,272.30 during intra-day trade on Tuesday.

However, Signature Global recorded a multi-fold increase in revenue, which surged to Rs 830 crore in Q3, up from Rs 280 crore in the last fiscal.

The strong revenue growth was driven by higher project completions and execution.

The company also

posted a significant jump in its profit after tax (PAT) for the quarter at Rs 28.99 crore, compared to just Rs 2 crore in the same period last year.

However, the company faced a net loss of Rs 25 crore in the first nine months of FY25 (9M FY25).

Additionally, its adjusted EBITDA margin rose to 12 per cent in the third quarter as compared to 10 per cent in the year-ago period.

The net debt reduced to Rs 740 crore, compared to Rs 1,160 crore at the end of FY24.

Sensex, Nifty crash as US steel tariffs weigh on markets

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, FEB II

The Indian stock market crashed on Tuesday, with the Sensex and Nifty falling over 1.3 per cent in the afternoon trade, as US President Donald Trump formally announced plans to impose 25 per cent tariffs on all steel and aluminium imports.

In the afternoon trade, the Sensex tumbled nearly 1,000 points, or 1.25 per cent, to around 76,300, while the Nifty slipped 300 points, or 1.3 per cent, falling below the 23,100 mark. The broader market suffered even more, with midcap and smallcap indices plunging as much as 3.5 per cent amid deeper concerns beyond blue-chip stocks.

The ongoing market decline comes after former US President Donald Trump signed executive orders on February 10 to expand tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from March 12.

WPL 2025: Expect the wickets in Vadodara and Lucknow to be really high-scoring, says Batty

AGENCIES
VADODARA, FEB 11

The third edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL), starting on February 14 will be played across four cities: Vadodara, Lucknow, Bengaluru and Mumbai. Bengaluru and Mumbai are familiar grounds for all five teams, but the addition of Vadodara and Lucknow injects a captivating and new element into the WPL.

Jonathan Batty, head coach of the Delhi Capitals (DC), believes the pitches in Vadodara and Lucknow can offer high-scoring games. "We've been really lucky the last two years that the wickets we've played on have been absolutely fantastic, and we've seen some really competitive high scoring games."

"Again, we're just taking it game by game, assessing the conditions as we go. We were really lucky with the practice facility we had in Pune - we practiced on black soil and red soil wickets. So we're trying to cover all those bases without really knowing necessarily what we're going to find."

"Here in the Kotambi stadium, it's a fantastic wicket. Obviously, the Indian women played a series here recently (against Ireland) that was really high scoring. So I expect the wickets to be fantastic from that angle. As always with cricket, you have to assess those conditions when you get on the field, and you try and do those assessments beforehand."

"It's only when the players step out onto them, they really know what they're going to do. So you've got to stay flexible, stay fluid with your thinking and react to what's in front of you. But it's really exciting to have these new venues on the calendar," said Batty while replying to a query from IANS in the pre-season press conference.

The Meg Lanning-led side reached Vadodara ahead of their tournament-opening game against Mumbai Indians on February 15 after wrapping an extensive pre-season camp in Pune.

Batty said he linked up after the whole squad had assembled and revealed there were intra-squad



practice games played in the camp, which he called 'excellent'. He added the camp also presented players chance to find their T20 rhythm and get themselves clarity on their roles in the team.

"We got out of it what we wanted individually and as a team, so that's nice. So we sort of got that part out of the way now. Now it's just about fine tuning a little bit more for the game coming up on Saturday for us."

"So, we've got a session at the stadium where we'll be playing the games, which will give us a good chance to see what the surroundings are like and get used to that. Then it sort of becomes a little bit more individualised, I guess, in terms of what individual players need to get ready

to play, and we feel like we're ready."

"Everyone's adapted to the conditions and got back into the swing of things after sort of a year apart as a full squad. So preparation's been really good, and we're excited. There's good energy amongst the group. So it's just about now, fine tuning, as I said, and getting ready for the game coming up on Saturday."

In terms of their playing eleven composition, DC have to decide who between the incumbent Taniya Bhatia, and new joiners Nandini Kashyap and Scotland's Sarah Bryce don the keeping gloves. Taniya has led the charge with the gloves for the first two seasons, but hasn't contributed substantially with the bat for DC.

"Taniya's been probably the best wicketkeeper in the tournament the last two years. I've been really impressed with her glove work. Our job as a team is to keep involving, developing, and growing. So obviously getting some more challenge for that we're keeping role is really important for us."

"It's an open floor at the moment. We will obviously come Saturday, pick the best 11 to try and win that first game, and that will continue through the tournament."

So selection is always in the players hands. It's up to them to sort of show to us that they should be in the team, prove that they should be in the team."

"So it's nice to have some real competition for Taniya in that wicket keeping spot."

But it's nice that we have grown our squad. I think we're really strong again. We've kept the core together. But our job is to have the strongest 18 player squad we possibly can do," he added.

WPL 2025 re-starts DC's quest to win their first title after suffering consecutive runners-up finishes. Batty

signed off by saying their planning for WPL 2025 began shortly after losing last year's final at their home ground Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, including having specialised camps for their Indian contingent.

"From the moment a tournament finishes, you start planning for the next cycle as well. We actually stay connected with the WhatsApp group. So players obviously stay connected, wish each other happy birthday, watch how each other are doing in different tournaments and share those congratulations and good luck messages around. So there's a really nice connection through the rest of the year with that."

"But also we then come together as a squad when players are available outside of their regular seasons."

We do run specialist training camps at various places around India. Coaches will go to meet them at their home location if that's appropriate, and it's that constant evolution, trying to upskill players and help them grow as individuals."

Chess: Mumbai's rising star Vedant Panesar qualifies for 2026 Challengers section in Wijk aan Zee

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, FEB 11



Vedant Panesar, hailing from Mumbai, secured a place in the Challengers section of Chess 2026 after winning the qualifiers, held in Wijk aan Zee, Netherlands.

Scoring 6/9, Panesar finished half a point ahead of a competitive international field and booked his place in one of the most prestigious tournaments.

Speaking about his win, Vedant said, "Playing at Wijk aan Zee is a dream of every chess player. I read a quote there that said, 'Before dying, people want to visit Prague, but for a chess player, it's about winning at Wijk aan Zee.' Winning at Wijk aan Zee, where the best chess players in the world compete, is truly special. Qualifying for the Tata Steel Challengers 2026 is a dream come true, and I hope to return next year as a Grandmaster."

This achievement is particularly remarkable as Mumbai is not traditionally known for its chess culture in comparison to Chennai, the chess hub of India, which has produced many top players.

Despite this, Vedant

has steadily climbed the ranks on the international stage, showcasing the growing chess talent from Mumbai, where only a few pursue chess professionally at this level.

"I'm incredibly grateful to my friends who rallied around me and helped me prepare for this tournament."

Their support made a huge difference. Going forward, I know that to reach the next level and be fully ready for the Challengers, I'll need to build a professional team around me."

"I also want to express my deepest gratitude to Old Bridge Mutual Fund for their unwavering support, Tata Steel Chess for giving me this entry, and my mother, who has always been a strong pillar of support behind my success," he added.

Gilchrist disagrees with Ponting, declares Warne the greatest cricketer ever

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

Australian cricket legend Adam Gilchrist has weighed in on the greatest all-rounder debate, challenging Ricky Ponting's assertion that Jacques Kallis is the best cricketer of all time.

While Ponting recently hailed Kallis for his staggering numbers with both bat and ball, Gilchrist believes statistics alone don't define greatness and instead placed the late Shane Warne at the top of cricket's all-time elite.

"I understand where Ricky is coming from—statistically, the runs, wickets, and catches—but there is more to it than just num-

bers," Gilchrist said in an interview with news.com.au. "I personally think Shane Warne is the greatest to have played."

Ponting had earlier named Kallis as the cricketing GOAT, citing his 13,289 Test runs, 45 centuries, and 292 wickets as unparalleled achievements. However, Gilchrist insisted that Warne's impact on the game, both as a bowler and a tactician, was unmatched.

"For Warne to achieve what he did, especially living the way he did and still managing to perform at that level, it shows he was a true champion," Gilchrist said. "Beyond his bowling,

he was also an incredible batsman. He just left way too many runs out there when he played. I don't even think he knew his own batting talent. When it comes down to pure cricketing genius—batting, bowling, catching, and tactical brilliance—Warne is No.1 for me."

Gilchrist's comments come amid Australia's dominance in world cricket, which has led to criticism from England supporters. After Australia completed a 2-0 series win against Sri Lanka, England's Barmy Army accused them of "stat-padding" by selecting weaker opponents to boost their records.

WI spinner Jomel Warrican crowned ICC Men's Players of the Month for January

AGENCIES
DUBAI, FEB 11

West Indies' Jomel Warrican has been awarded as the ICC Men's Player of the Month for January 2025.

Warrican won the accolade on the back of a splendid run in Pakistan, during which he secured his career-best figures while also leading West Indies to their first-ever Test win in the Asian country in 35 years.

This is Warrican's maiden ICC Men's Player of the Month award from two other standout spinners from January's contests, Pakistan's Noman Ali



and India's Varun Chakravarthy.

The 32-year-old's exceptional month saw him take 19 wickets in two Test matches at an average of just 9.00. He became the

first West Indian to win the award since fellow spinner Gudakesh Motie back in May 2024.

In the first Test in Multan, he claimed career-best bowling fig-

ures of 10-101 and scored an unbeaten 31. However, Pakistan, led by Sajid Khan's 9-115 got the better of West Indies batters and won the game by 127 runs.

Warrican bounced back in the second Test at the same venue. He first contributed with the willow, scoring a feisty 36 at No.11. Then he struck with the ball, taking four wickets in the first innings, giving his side a slender advantage.

Contributions of 4-43 and 5-27 came either side of 18 more valuable runs in the second innings, and the spinner's all-round heroics heralded a historic 120-run victory alongside a

richly deserved Player of the Series accolade.

"It's an honour to win this award. One of my goals for this year was my first five-for in Test cricket, but I did not think that it would be this grand!"

"I promised my captain something special in this series, especially when my father, my biggest supporter, predicted a phenomenal performance for me. Multan has a special place in my heart: not only because of the historic win for the West Indies, beating Pakistan away from home, but also by earning this prestigious award," said Warrican.

Bumrah is India's Ronaldo, you don't replace him until you have to, says Harmison

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 11

Former England fast bowler Steve Harmison has drawn a striking parallel between India's ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah and football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, emphasising the irreplaceable nature of the fast bowler.

Harmison believes that if Bumrah is forced to miss the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy due to injury, it would be akin to a FIFA World Cup without Ronaldo at his peak.

Bumrah, who played a pivotal role in India's Test series against Australia, is struggling with a swelling on his back and is likely to miss the group stage of the Champions Trophy. However, Harmison insists that India should keep him in the squad until the last



possible moment in hopes of his return for the knock-out rounds.

Speaking on TalkSport Cricket, Harmison made a compelling case for India's patience with their premier fast bowler.

"He's Jasprit Bumrah. For me, you can't replace Jasprit Bumrah anytime," Harmison said. "And I mean, I would even go up to the morning of

the final to take him that far because he's Jasprit Bumrah. He's the best in the world. That would be my take from an Indian point of view."

The former England pacer likened Bumrah's potential absence to a football World Cup without one of the greatest forwards of all time.

"It's like going to a football World Cup without

your best striker, Cristiano Ronaldo. Fifteen years ago, you don't replace Ronaldo until you have to. That's what I imagine India will do with Bumrah."

Harmison even joked that India could "carry him around in a sedan chair" throughout the tournament and hope that he is available by the semi-finals or the final.

"It's a 14-man squad. That's good enough to get me through the group games. We might get him by the semifinal, more than the semifinal. If he's not fit, we'll replace him just in case we have another injury. But he's Jasprit Bumrah."

The Champions Trophy is set to begin on February 19, featuring the world's top eight ODI teams. India will play all their matches in Dubai due to their

refusal to travel to Pakistan, which prompted the ICC to approve a hybrid model.

India's group-stage campaign includes matches against Bangladesh (February 20), Pakistan (February 23), and New Zealand (March 2).

If India progresses, the semi-finals will take place on March 4 and 5, with the final set for March 9. Whether Bumrah will be ready by then remains uncertain.

Bumrah was in sensational form during India's recent five-match Test series in Australia, where he bagged 32 wickets and was named Player of the Series. However, he sat out the final day of the series in Sydney due to his back injury, as Australia claimed the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Former champ Norrie sails into Round 2 on return to Delray Beach

AGENCIES
DELRAY BEACH (USA), FEB 11

Top British singles player Cameron Norrie made a winning return to the Delray Beach Open with a hard-fought straight-sets win against qualifier Zachary Svajda to reach the second round of the ATP 250 event.

The 29-year-old Norrie notched a 7-5, 6-4 win over Svajda in his first appearance in Delray Beach since winning the title in 2022. Norrie battled through a contest that swung from one side to another like a pendulum, featuring eight breaks of serve, to eventually seal an 88-minute victory in windy conditions in Florida.

In other first round matches in the event, American sixth seed Brandon Nakashima defeated qualifier James Trotter

7-6(2), 6-1 in 98 minutes, while seventh-seed Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia beat Borna Gojo of Croatia 6-4, 6-4 in another Round of 32 match. The 25-year-old Serb, who reached the Delray Beach final in 2023, won 86 per cent (32/27) of first-serve points, according to Infosys ATP Stats.

American Ethan Quinn suffered the disappointment of falling in the final round of qualifying on Sunday. But after getting into the main draw as a lucky loser, the 20-year-old took full advantage of his opportunity.

The 2023 NCAA singles champion battled past American qualifier Tristan Boyer 6-2, 6-7(5), 7-6(2) in three hours and 12 minutes. Quinn saved 12 of the 14 break points he faced to set a showdown with fifth seed Marcos Giron.

Fellow American Michael Minoh also advanced by beating Alexander Shevchenko of Kazakhstan 7-5, 7-6(5) in a clash that lasted nearly two hours.

But the focus was on Norrie as he returned to the ATP 250 event after a couple of years.

"I'm very satisfied, it was my first match outdoors in a while," said Norrie, who improved to 9-3 in Delray Beach. "I was pretty nervous coming in, not moving my feet that well, but I'm pretty happy with how I finished both of the sets, playing my best level. That's what counted," the Briton was quoted as saying by the ATP.

Norrie is one of four former champions in the Delray Beach field this week, along with Taylor Fritz, Kei Nishikori and Reilly Opelka.

Beth Mooney claims Women's Player of the Month honour for January

AGENCIES
DUBAI, FEB 11

Australia opener Beth Mooney has been named the ICC Women's Player of the Month award for January 2025 for her dominant performance during the

multi-format Ashes series against England.

The left-hander Aussie beat out strong opposition from West Indies spinner Karishma Ramharack and India Under-19 star Trisha Gongadi to win the coveted monthly accolade.

It is the first time Mooney has ever won the monthly ICC award and the second in succession for Australian players after in-form all-rounder Anna Sutherland took home the honour in December 2024.

"January was an incredible month for the Australian Women's Cricket Team. Winning the Ashes in front of a home crowd was very special and to complete the series playing in the first ever day-night Test at the MCG in

front of a record crowd for a Women's Test is a moment that we will all never forget. This team continues to achieve amazing results, and I am so proud to be a part of it," said Mooney.

A subdued start to the

series was overturned when the opener dug deep with a battling half-century in the third ODI in Hobart.

Stuttering to 59 for four, Mooney resisted a resurgent England with 50 from 64 balls, setting the platform for the home side

to post 308 from their 50 overs and secure the ODI sweep.

In the T20I contests that followed, Mooney consolidated her position as the top-ranked batter, striking 213 runs at a blistering strike rate of 146.89.

Scores of 75 and 44 came before a stunning unbeaten 94 in 63 balls in Adelaide, her highest score in over five years in the format, to drive home Australia's dominance against their fierce rivals.

World Unani Day 2025: AYUSH hosts community awareness event at Kishtwar

J I NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 11

The Department of AYUSH observed World Unani Day 2025 in Kishtwar District great enthusiasm and community participation by organising an impressive awareness event.

This day is observed annually to commemorate the birth anniversary of the eminent Unani physician, educator, and freedom fighter Hakim Ajmal Khan and to honor India's ancient healthcare traditions.

The event was organised under the directions and guidance of the Director of AYUSH J&K, Dr. Nuzhat Bashir and Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Pawan



Kotwal was the Chief Guest.

The welcome address was delivered by Dr. Vikram Singh Jamwal, Nodal Officer AYUSH.

In his address, the Additional Deputy Commissioner emphasised the role of Unani medicine in modern healthcare and encouraged participants to incorporate Unani principles into their daily

lives. He highlighted the significance of Unani as an ancient science introduced to India centuries ago, which has now gained global recognition. He also stressed the importance of disease prevention through Unani, which focuses on addressing root causes and promoting a holistic approach to health and well-being. The District

Nodal Officer AYUSH elaborated on the contribution of AYUSH staff in promoting preventive healthcare, particularly in strengthening immunity and managing lifestyle diseases within the community. The celebration aimed to raise awareness about Unani's holistic health benefits and foster a deeper understanding of preventive healthcare rooted in this traditional system.

The event featured insightful lectures on Unani medicine, including a presentation by Dr. Shabir Ahmad Bhat and other experts.

The Department of AYUSH expressed gratitude for the community's participation and reaffirmed its commitment to promoting Unani medicine across the region.

HG, CD & SDRF rebuts news regarding Mal-treatment to its employees

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 11

Rebutting a report published in a local Urdu daily regarding the step motherly treatment with its employees, the Home Guards, Civil Defence and SDRF, J&K, has issued a clarification regarding the voluntary nature of Home Guards.

According to the rebuttal issued here today in this regard, the Jammu and Kashmir Home Guards is a voluntary force constituted under the Jammu and Kashmir Home Guards Act, Svt. 2006, and governed by the Jammu and Kashmir Home Guards Rules, 1962. As per these regula-

tions, individuals enroll as volunteers to serve the community during emergencies and assist in maintaining public order. The voluntary nature of this service implies that members are not regular government employees but are civilians who offer their services during exigencies.

Given the voluntary status of the Home Guards, members receive an honorarium or duty allowance for the days they are actively engaged. This is a fixed per-day payment and is not equivalent to a regular monthly salary. It's important to note that this honorarium is not intended to serve as a primary source of income but as a

token of appreciation for the voluntary services rendered. The Home Guards play a crucial role in supporting the regular police force and aiding the community during emergencies. Their contribution is invaluable and deeply appreciated. However, its essential to recognise the foundational principles of the Home Guards as a voluntary force with a structure and remuneration system distinct from regular government services.

The department said that, in view of above explained facts, the concerns raised in the article stem from a misunderstanding of this unique framework.

Friday reserved for labelling of artisan products at PTQCC

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 11

In a facilitative welfare move, the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir has exclusively reserved every Friday of the week for labelling of famed Kashmir Handicraft products belonging to the artisan and weaver community in its Pashmina Testing & Quality Certification Centre (PTQCC), here.

PTQCC is one-stop centre in Craft Development Institute (CDI) for branding and QR coding of O6 world-famous GI registered crafts of Kashmir Pashmina, Kani and Sozni embroidery, Khatamband Ceiling, Walnut Wood Carving and Papier Mache.

DC convenes public outreach camp at Paddar; also flags off Watershed Yatra

J I NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 11

To address public grievances and foster development at grassroots, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar Rajesh Kumar Shavan today convened a public outreach at Sub-Division Paddar. He also flagged off the Watershed Yatra and attended Bhumi Pujan and Sheela Nayas for the upcoming Watershed Project at Panchayat Affani.

The yatra, which started from Affani and concluded at Karthie, saw enthusiastic participation from students of different institutions. The DC formally inaugurated the initiative in the presence of DDC Member Paddar Hari Krishan Chowhan; SDM Dr. Amit Kumar and Project Officer IWMP, Phulail



Singh. At the outset, the project officer provided detailed insights into the status of IWMP Watershed Projects in Block Paddar.

Speaking at the outreach camp, the DC emphasized the promo-

tion of millet cultivation in Paddar as part of sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, he launched month-long district-wide sports activities under Sansad Khel Spardha, aimed at promoting physi-

cal fitness and mental wellness among youth, while encouraging a drug-free lifestyle under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan.

The DC further highlighted the novel initiative of saturating 80 plus government schemes in 13 Model Panchayat, empowering one panchayat in each block and then replicating the developmental model in rest panchayats along with the effective implementation of Nasha Mukta Panchayat initiative.

To enhance legal awareness, the DC highlighted the three new criminal laws under BNSS and informed the public about dedicated awareness programs being conducted by

resource persons from the Police, Revenue, and Rural Development Departments.

He also encouraged people to project demands for community works under MGNREGA to boost local infrastructure, besides sharing insights on the 24x7 Control Room, already established at the district headquarters, ensuring round-the-clock grievance registration by the public.

Later, the Forest Department conducted a plantation drive as part of the district's environmental initiatives.

The event witnessed the participation of the Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, local BDO and Dy SP, along with other officers, officials, and local residents.

Mission Shakti Jammu hosts awareness event on PCPNDT ACT at Bishnah

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

Reinforcing its commitment to women's empowerment and social justice, Mission Shakti SANKALP HEW Social Welfare Department Jammu on Tuesday organized a high-impact awareness programme on the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act at the Anganwadi Centre in Bishnah. The event formed part of a BBBP campaign meant to promote women's rights and gender equality.

The session, led by legal expert Advocate Meenu Padha, provided a deep insight into the provisions of the PCPNDT Act,

emphasizing its strict measures against the misuse of ultrasound technique for sex determination. She elaborated on the stringent regulations for diagnostic centers and the severe penalties for violations, driving home the critical message of preventing female foeticide.

Beyond legal awareness, Mission Shakti SANKALP HEW Jammu seized the opportunity to educate women about an extensive range of welfare schemes dedicated to their uplift. The participants were enlightened about flagship initiatives such as State Marriage Assistance Scheme (SMAS), Ladli Beti, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Old Age Pen-

sion, Widow and Disability Pensions, PMEGP, Tejaswini, and various skill development programs offered by RSETI and other training institutes.

The event was graced by key dignitaries, including District Mission Coordinator Shagun Manchanda, Sunil Kumar Specialist in Financial Literacy who reiterated Mission Shakti's unwavering commitment to empowering women at every level.

To further support and encourage maternal health, Mission Shakti SANKALP HEW Jammu distributed nutritional kits to pregnant women in the area, ensuring that both mother and child receive the necessary care for a healthy future.

Minister for Tribal Affairs reviews formulation of Tribal Sub Plan

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

Minister for Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today chaired a high level review meeting regarding formulation of Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) by all the departments at Civil Secretariat.

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Administrative Secretaries, Head of Departments and other senior officers participated in the meeting.

While addressing the meeting, the Minister stressed the need for creating a well structured TSP to ensure inclusive development with emphasis on effective monitoring and execution.

Rana asked for ensuring greater coordination among all departments for formulation of an effective plan to be submitted to the executive committee for vetting and approval.

The Minister asked all the departments to prepare a document that clearly depicts what they have done over the past few years and what are their future plans, so that the same is reflected in the budget proposals. He said that the department



should hold consultations with the stakeholders to gauge the deficiencies confronting tribal development so that corrective measures are initiated wherever required.

Pertinently, Tribal Sub Plan is a crucial initiative aimed at promoting socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes through financial assistance for activities related to education, health and livelihood.

The Minister further emphasized the importance of adhering to the NITI Aayog guidelines saying that the tribal affairs department will serve as the nodal agency to coordinate with all other line departments.

He further highlighted the reasons for underperformance of TSP funds like lack of unified planning,

implementation, monitoring mechanism and called upon the officers to iron out all these issues.

The Minister also impressed upon all the departments to earmark UT CAPEX funds proportionate to tribal population as TSP as per Niti Ayog guidelines. He said that TAD should be consulted for planning to ensure villages with substantial tribal population are covered.

He instructed for submission of a proposal for constitution of Apex Committee and holding of regular meetings of Executive Committee. He said that the Omar Abdullah government is committed towards socio-economic empowerment of tribals and has undertaken many initiatives on this account.

Regarding proper finan-

cial management, he said that the grant under Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) meant for comprehensive development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should be used properly and the schemes be implemented completely. He also asked for adopting a more proactive approach to keep track on monitoring, fund utilization and implementation of schemes.

The Minister also reviewed implementation of Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan that ensures holistic and sustainable development of tribal areas and communities. He directed the officers to effectively monitor progress on 393 villages that are to be covered under the first phase of DA-JGUA.

The Minister also discussed various aspects related to the scheme and other modalities for its successful execution to achieve the targets.

Pertinently, Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan envisions saturation of critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood.

Director Agriculture Jammu conducts field visit in Marh Sub-Division

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11

Director Agriculture Jammu S. Arvinder Singh Reen today conducted an extensive field visit of Marh Subdivision to assess the impact of the technological interventions.

The Director Agriculture had an in depth interaction with the extension functionaries involved in the technological dissemination of various farmers' welfare programmes. He also reviewed the ongoing projects under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

The Director Agriculture visited the fields of Vikrant Kaiser, a farmer from Marh Bagh village, to observe the implementation of vegetable cultivation under the Micro Irrigation Component of the Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) initiative. He explained that PDMC is a Government of India scheme aimed at enhancing water-use efficiency in agriculture. By utilizing micro-irrigation systems like drip and sprinkler, farmers are able to conserve water while increasing crop productivity.



Director A.S Reen stressed the importance of creating awareness regarding the judicious use of water, tapping perennial sources of irrigation, and introducing climate-resilient crop varieties.

Later, the Director inspected the newly established Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) under HADP at Marh. The KKG, which operates at the Panchayat level, serves as a one-stop center for farmers, offering a range of agricultural services including expert advice, access to quality

farm inputs, and information on government schemes.

The field visit also included an inspection of a Mushroom Controlled Cropping Unit under the HADP, established by beneficiary Bal Krishan of Gurha Singhu village. Director Reen praised the initiative, stressing the importance of mushroom cultivation under controlled conditions as a sustainable and profitable venture. He emphasized the role of mushroom farming in generating

entrepreneurial opportunities and providing employment in the region.

Addressing the field staff during the visit, Director Agriculture emphasized the importance of dedication and sincerity in uplifting the economic conditions of farmers. He urged them to promote the adoption of advanced agricultural technology, modern machinery, and high-quality inputs to improve the productivity and sustainability of farming practices.