

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
- Severe stomach pain
- Persistent vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool
- Redness

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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After Kashmir, LG Sinha reviews Jammu security scenario



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEB 13 (KNO)

A day after reviewing Kashmir security, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday chaired another high level meeting here to assess the security scenario of the Jammu region.

“Chaired a high-level security review meeting for Jammu Division earlier today. Directed the officials for effective steps to wipe-out terrorism in Jammu

region and complete dismantling of the infrastructure and local support of terrorism,” LG Sinha, according to the news agency, wrote on X.

“Every perpetrator & supporter of terrorism must pay the price. We need to equip ourselves with credible intelligence & act more effectively to neutralise the terrorists and ensure the security of citizens. We must be prepared for conventional as well as non-conventional threats,” he wrote,

adding, “We need to take strongest possible action against those providing logistical and financial support to terrorism. Make sure that acts of individuals or groups trying to create fear in the society are termed as terrorist action and they should be punished as per the law.”

Pertinently, the security review meetings in Kashmir and Jammu came a week after Union Home Minister Amit Shah

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LG greets the people on the occasion of Shab-e-Baraat

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha has extended his greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Shab-e-Baraat.

In a message, the Lieutenant Governor said: “On this sacred occasion of Shab-e-Baraat, I convey my greetings and best wishes to all. The auspicious night provides opportunity to the devotees to seek forgiveness and blessings from the almighty. The holy night reminds us to follow the path of truth, humility, compassion and righteousness. It is also a sacred occasion to reaffirm our responsibility towards the underprivileged sections of the society. I pray for peace, happiness and joy for everyone.”

CM concludes pre-budget consultation in Kashmir



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 13

Concluding the pre-budget consultations in Kashmir for the forthcoming Budget (2025-26), Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today held meetings with public representatives from Shopian and Kupwara districts here at the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar. The Chief Minister chaired pre-budget consultation with the chairpersons of District Development Councils (DDCs) and the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from the districts of Shopian and Kupwara,

who participated both in person and through virtual mode.

The meeting was also attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Dheeraj Gupta and Principal Secretary Finance Santosh D Vaidya. While the Deputy Commissioners of Shopian and Kupwara Districts attended the meeting through video conference.

Addressing the meetings, the Chief Minister maintained that when proposing works in the district capex

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CM Omar Abdullah extends greetings on Shab-e-Baraat

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has extended his warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Shab-e-Baraat, the sacred night dedicated to seeking forgiveness, mercy and blessings from Almighty Allah.

In his message, the Chief Minister highlighted the spiritual significance of Shab-e-Baraat, emphasizing that it

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Spearhead campaign against drug abuse: LG Sinha to J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU FEB 13 (KNO)

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday called on the Jammu and Kashmir Bharat Scouts & Guides to spearhead a campaign against drug abuse and create a network of young leaders across the Union Territory.

The Lieutenant Governor, while speaking at the Rajya Puraskar Ceremony of J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides here said, “You have to build a network of youth leaders across vari-

ous sectors to promote leadership and dedication.”

“A dedicated team of Bharat Scouts & Guides can play a significant role in leading the fight against drug abuse and creating awareness about the perils of substance addiction.”

LG Sinha, according to the news agency, said, “The Scouts & Guides movement was founded in 1907. It has served as a vital platform for the younger generation since its inception.”

The Lieutenant Governor extended his felici-

tations to all the recipients J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides Rajya Puraskar Certificates. “These certificates are recognition of your dedication, selfless service, hard work, and discipline,” he said.

LG Sinha said, “If we look into history, the Scouts & Guides have always played a pivotal role in shaping responsible citizens. It has taught the youth how to develop a sense of duty and commitment towards society.”

The Lieutenant Governor lauded the

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LG inaugurates Jashn-e-Jammu Kashmir, a celebration of new hope in Naya J&K



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today inaugurated Jashn-e-Jammu Kashmir, a celebration of new hope in Naya J&K, at Abhinav Theatre.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor appreciated the collaborative endeavour of J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages and Jammu Kashmir Artists Association.

“Jashn-e-Jammu Kashmir is an occasion to

recall our rich folk culture, which is a source of pride for the nation and strengthens the ideals of Unity in Diversity. Around 350 artists participating in this event represent different arts, variety of folk dances and expressions which reflect the soft power of India and its ancient civilization,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

Speaking on the extraordinary journey of Jammu Kashmir over the past few years, the Lieutenant Governor said

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J&K yet to frame rules, constitute tribunals under Waqf Law

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (KNO)

Despite the Waqf Act of 1995 becoming applicable to Jammu & Kashmir in 2019, the Union Territory government has neither framed rules under the law nor constituted tribunals under it. This disclosure was made by the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill-2024.

According to the report of the JPC, which was tabled in the Parliament on Thursday and accessed by the news agency, Jammu & Kashmir is yet to frame rules under the existing Waqf Act, which became applicable to J&K from October 31, 2019.

“.....07 States/UTs are yet to make rules (namely Dadra & Nagar Haveli (UT), Delhi (UT), Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand,

Lakshadweep (UT), Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh),” reads the report.

The report also reveals that Jammu & Kashmir has not constituted Waqf Tribunals for resolving disputes related to Waqf properties. “The primary purpose of the Tribunal is to resolve disputes related to Waqf properties and administration. The parties need not be Muslims alone. As per information received from the States/UTs Waqf Boards (as on 9th Sept. 2024), 25 States/UTs have constituted Waqf Tribunals while 3 States/UTs (Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Jammu & Kashmir, and Manipur) have not constituted Tribunals,” the report states.

The Central Waqf Act became applicable to J&K UT after two state laws governing the management of Waqf

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Ceasefire along LoC in J&K remains intact, says Army

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (KNO)

The Indian Army Thursday confirmed that the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir remains intact and continues to be observed as per the mutual understanding with the Pakistan Army.

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Vice-Prez Dhankhar to visit Jammu on Saturday

JI NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEB 13 (KNO)

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, will visit Jammu on February 15 (Saturday).

According to the details available with the news agency, during his one-day tour, the Vice-President will preside as chief guest at the 10th convocation of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University at Matrika Auditorium SMVDU Campus.

The Vice-President will also visit Mata Vaishno Devi Shine and Bhairon ji Temple. KNO

ACB arrests Patwari in Kathua for accepting bribe

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (KNO)

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday said to have trapped and arrested Patwari of Halqa Khanpur in Tehsil Marheen, Kathua for demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 15000.

A spokesman in a statement issued to

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As mystery continues, Govt discharges all quarantined people from Badhaal

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (KNO)

While the mystery over the deaths in Badhaal area of Rajouri continue to remain unsolved, the government has discharged all the quarantined people from the village and allowed them to proceed to their homes after remaining in isolation for nearly one month.

Since December 7, 2024, a total of 17 people—including 13 children—have died due to an unidentified illness.

While no new cases have been reported in almost one month, all the previously admitted patients have recovered and no one has shown any symptoms since then, said the officials.

Speaking to the news agency, an official said that experts from prestigious institutes of India had recommended keeping all close contacts and patients in proper monitoring and if they won't show any symptoms for 21 consecutive days, then they can be allowed to

return to their home.

He said that following their advice and recommendations, all close contacts of the deceased were kept in proper surveillance and none among them showed any symptoms for more than 21 days following which they were discharged.

Speaking to the media, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma while sharing the details regarding the measures taken to contain the mysterious

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79% of J&K's rural households have access to tap water connections: Centre

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (KNO)

The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched in 2019 to provide tap water connections to all rural households in India, has made significant progress in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, the government of India said on Thursday.

According to the data presented by Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil in the Lok Sabha, a copy of which lies with the news agency, over 80% of rural households in J&K and 96% in Ladakh now have functional tap water connections.

“At the start of the mission in August 2019, only 5.75 lakh (29.92%) rural households in Jammu & Kashmir had access to tap water. Over the past five years, 9.80 lakh additional households have been connected, bringing the total to 15.55 lakh, covering 80.87% of the rural population.”

In Ladakh, the coverage was even lower in 2019, with just 1% of rural households (4,100) having tap water. Since then, 38,000 more households have been connected, increasing the total coverage to 96.05%, the

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In 5-years, Centre spent Rs 29,903 cr on J&K national highways, built 1003 km of roads

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (KNO)

The Centre has spent Rs 29,903 crore on the development and maintenance of national highways and has constructed 1,003 km of roads in Jammu and Kashmir during the past five years.

In response to a question Union Minister

Toll tax revenue surges to Rs 436.86 cr in 2023-24 in J&K: GoI

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (KNO)

Jammu and Kashmir's toll tax revenue has witnessed a significant increase over the past five years, rising from Rs 130.07 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 436.86 crore in 2023-24, according to data presented in the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

However, despite this growth, J&K

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Income Tax Department, Department of Registration J&K organise Outreach Programme

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Directorate of Income Tax (I&CI), Jammu, in collaboration with Inspector General Registration, J&K, organized a training cum awareness programme on third party compliance management and filing of SFT-012. SFT - 12 stands for Statement of Financial Transactions and capsizing the details of sale and purchase of Immovable property filed by SROs. The idea for the joint training programme was conceived in the last outreach programme held in Srinagar on 7th of November 2024 between Anshuman Sharma, IRS, Director of Income Tax, I&CI, Chandigarh, and Bashir Ahmad Bhat, IRS, Inspector General of



Registration, J&K. The genesis being, frequent and repetitive errors that occurred in filing of SFTs by the respective SROs. These errors not only increased the compliance burden for the SROs but also burdened the IT systems of the Income Tax Department. The quality of data filed left a lot to be desired. G.J.Singh, Registrar

Udhampur, delivered the welcome address and exhorted the officials present to imbibe the finer points and nuances critical to filing of complete, accurate and error free SFTs. Parvesh Khajuria, ITO (I&CI), Jammu made a detailed presentation and apprised about the requirements of third party compliance. He highlighted the

importance in collection of financial intelligence and its role in national development. He also clarified the doubts raised by the participants. With respect to SFT filing, Jatin Malhotra, CA, the resource person explained in detail the process of filing SFT-012. He also addressed the practical issues faced by SRO during the filing of

SFTs. He stressed on the important role that reporting entities, especially the SROs, play in collecting data of financial transactions. G.J.Singh proposed a formal vote of thanks and expressed his gratitude to the Directorate of Income Tax (I&CI), Chandigarh for organizing this programme. IG registration Bashir Ahmad Bhat requested to continue this collaboration so as to improve the skill set of the officers.

Jasmeet Singh, Principal Revenue Training Institute, Rajeev Magotra, Additional DC Rajouri and SROs of Jammu province, staff of IG (Registration), J&K participated in the program.

Haj Pilgrims orientated about essential procedures at Poonch

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, FEBRUARY 13

The District Administration Poonch organized the first phase of an orientation and training program for intending Haj pilgrims at the Auditorium Hall of SKC Degree College Poonch.

The session was presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner Tahir Mustafa Malik.

A total of 73 male and female pilgrims received valuable training on essential procedures for their pilgrimage, including boarding and lodging, immigration, and flight protocols.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner congratulated the pilgrims, extending best wishes for their journey and advising them on travel safety measures. He



advised them to follow the basic precautions. They were also given knowledge about the things to do while traveling in the flight.

The Haj trainers provided them knowledge about the basic procedures of boarding and lodging during the holy pilgrim-

age. Haj pilgrims were told about the immigration and boarding procedure.

Participants expressed gratitude to the district administration for facilitating the informative program, which aims to prepare them for a successful pilgrimage.

DC Budgam Reviews Progress of 125 Bedded New District Hospital, 100 Bedded Critical Care Unit in Budgam

J1 NEWS SERVICE
BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 13

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Akshay Labroo, today conducted field visit to the under-construction 125-bedded state of art District Hospital and the 100-bedded Critical Care Unit, both located in the Reshipora area of Budgam.

During the site inspection, the DC emphasised the importance of expediting the ongoing construction work to ensure the timely completion of these crucial healthcare projects.

He highlighted that these facilities will significantly enhance the district's healthcare infrastructure and provide advanced medical services



to the residents. Speaking on the occasion, the DC stated that the work on ground is happening at a the rapid pace along with the necessary good quality of work being undertaken at these healthcare facilities. These 2 crucial healthcare projects will play a pivotal role in providing advanced medical services to the entire district."

He further said the projects are progressing on schedule and are

expected to significantly enhance healthcare delivery in the region by offering advanced patient care and critical services.

The District Administration along with department of R&B and department of Health is working in a focused manner to ensure that both these key projects of the district are completed at the earliest, paving the way for their dedication to the public ahead of its scheduled timeline", he added.

The completion of the hospital and critical care unit will play a pivotal role in addressing healthcare needs in Budgam, particularly in providing specialized care and critical medical facilities to patients within the district, the DC added.

He said that regular and consistent monitoring of the projects is being conducted to ensure that any teething issues, if any, are addressed real time with Multi departmental coordination to achieve before schedule completion & seamless progress.

Besides, CPO budgam, CMO Budgam, MS District Hospital, Budgam, Executive Engineers R&B, AEE R&B and representatives of executing agencies accompanied DC budgam.

Training Programme on Geo-Spatial Techniques for Soil Survey & Mapping concludes at Kisan Kendra

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Three-Day Officers Training Programme on Geo-Spatial Techniques for Soil Survey & Mapping Concluded today at Kisan Kendra, Jammu.

The three-day programme featured expert sessions by distinguished professionals from SLUSI, New Delhi, including Dr. A.K. Yadav, Dr. Saumen Saha, N.S. Gahalod (ASSO, SLUSI New Delhi) and Mahendra Singh (ASSO, SLUSI Noida). The training combined theoretical knowledge with practical demonstrations, covering various aspects of geo-spatial applications in soil survey, mapping,

and soil profile study for sustainable agricultural planning.

Director of Agriculture Jammu, S. Arvinder Singh Reen, presided over the valedictory session of the three-day training programme. The programme, conducted by the Soil & Land Use Survey of India (SLUSI), New Delhi, aimed to equip 20 officers from the Soil Survey and Soil Testing wings of the Agriculture Department with advanced technical expertise in modern soil mapping methodologies.

The Divisional Soil Survey Scheme, Directorate of Agriculture Jammu, led by Suresh Kumar Khajuria (DSSO

Jammu), organized the programme. The initiative focused on aligning with the latest technological advancements while emphasizing the critical role of geo-spatial techniques in achieving precision in soil survey and land-use planning.

During the valedictory function, Director Agriculture Jammu honoured Dr. Khazan Singh, the octogenarian founding father of the Divisional Soil Survey Scheme, Jammu, and former Divisional Soil Survey Officer (born in 1940 AD). He commended Dr. Singh's invaluable contributions in establishing a strong foundation for future

agricultural endeavours in Jammu.

Speaking at the event, Director Agriculture Jammu highlighted that this capacity-building initiative would help develop soil survey maps on a 1:10,000 scale, thereby enabling more precise planning at the Panchayat and village levels. The programme concluded with the recognition of resource persons from the Soil and Land Use Survey of India and the distribution of certificates to 20 participating officers from across the Jammu Division. Sh. Rajeev Katoch, Programme Officer from the office of JDAE, conducted the proceedings of the programme.

Deputy CM asks to expedite implementation of schemes aiming infrastructural development of Jammu

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today directed the officers for expediting implementation of various schemes meant for upgrading the basic infrastructure of Jammu district, so that the people get benefitted and it comes up as one of the most developed cities of the country replete with all basic and modern amenities.

The Deputy Chief Minister was addressing the officers during a review meeting held for Jammu district.

Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Satish Sharma, was also present in the meeting. Chairman District Development Council, Bharat Bhushan; Vice Chairman, District Development Council, Suraj Singh; legislators of Jammu district, Sham Lal Sharma, Vikram Randhawa, Mohan Lal Bhagat, Atul Gupta, Rajeev Kumar, Gharu Ram Bhagat, Narinder Singh Raina, Arvind Gupta and Surinder Kumar besides District Development Commissioner, Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Heads of

Departments and sectoral officers also attended the meeting in person and virtually.

The Deputy Chief Minister directed the officers to involve the elected representatives in formulating schemes, their monitoring and implementation as well. He said that we have to ensure that the people at grassroot levels are also involved at all levels of governance. "The officers should be quick to respond to the issues and problems projected by the elected representatives as it forms the basis of a democratic set up. We have to ensure that the sanctity of the institutions is maintained", he added.

While responding to the demands projected by the legislators, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the officers for fast pacing the already undertaken initiatives so that they are completed within the stipulated time frame. He said that due consultation with the elected representatives should also be done so that the bottlenecks, if any, are removed and the developmental initiatives are in consonance with local demands and needs. The Deputy Chief Minister also called for close



coordination between public representatives and the executing agencies. He said that this would speed up the implementation and also make the initiatives broad based.

While referring to the historical importance of Jammu, the Deputy Chief Minister said that we all should collectively work for ensuring that the area comes up as one of the most preferred destinations in the country. "We should consolidate all our efforts for furthering developmental agenda of the government so that Jammu becomes one of the most developed and sought after regions of the country and people are benefitted by the developmental schemes", he asserted.

Earlier, the District Development Commissioner, Jammu, gave a brief overview of various developmental initiatives undertaken under different sectors.

The meeting was told that Jammu district has an approved outlay of Rs 127.76 crore under CAPEX. Besides, 3891 works have been taken up, of which, 2261 stand completed under UT component. Similarly, 3646 works have been undertaken under the district CAPEX budget, of which, 2046 stand completed.

The meeting was also informed that the labour budget under MGNREGA is 32.22 crore, of which, 32.04 crore stand expended registering an expenditure of 99.44 per cent.

Besides, 86 thousand job cards have been issued and 14737 works have been taken up, of which, 3931 works have been completed.

Under PMAY-G sector, the district has recorded a percentage completion of 99.59 percent wherein Rs 12.04 crore have been recorded as expenditure out of available Rs 12.09 crore.

Under IWMP, a total number of 60 works have been approved, 55 taken up and 30 have been completed.

Under Swachh Bharat Mission, works have been started on 48 sanitary complexes, out of which, 18 stand completed. Besides, work has also been started on 222 community composed pits,

of which, 74 stand completed. Additionally, 14927 IHHLs have been completed out of approved 17179 units.

Similarly, 1805 AIP IHHLs stand completed, out of the target of 1900, registering 95 percent achievement.

Under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), a total of 283 water supply schemes have been taken up, 78 stand completed and 177 are nearing completion. Similarly, a total number of 121781 households have been provided tap water connections, out of a target of 173857, registering an achievement of 70 percent.

Under PMGSY, road length of 828.89 kms has been completed out of sanctioned road length of 868.51 kms and all the sanctioned 98 habitations have been connected.

The DDC Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and the legislators raised several issues related to their constituencies and sought immediate redressal of the same. He also demanded augmentation of already undertaken projects besides taking up of new projects under PHE, R&B, PDD, Health, RDD and other related sectors.

Mission Shakti Sankalp Hub Team conducts awareness program for women at Doda



J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, FEBRUARY 13

Mission Shakti Sankalp Hub for empowerment of women today conducted an awareness program here at Anganwadi Centre (AWC) Akramabad-C.

The initiative, undertaken on the direction of District Social Welfare Officer Tariq Qazi, aimed to strengthen grassroots-level programs and services that cater to women's socio-economic development. The awareness session was part of the ongoing celebration of the 10th anniversary of BBBP.

The Mission Shakti team engaged with the local community, particularly women and children, to understand their challenges and explore opportunities for their holistic

development. The team conducted interactive sessions focusing on key areas, including women's rights, financial independence, health, nutrition and skill development.

The visit also highlighted the crucial role of Anganwadi Centres in empowering women and ensuring the well-being of children. The team encouraged women to actively participate in self-help groups, take advantage of government schemes, and utilize the resources provided by Mission Shakti for their economic and social growth. This visit is part of Mission Shakti Sankalp Hub's ongoing efforts to create a supportive ecosystem for women at the grassroots level and promote gender equality across the district.

Ensure conducive environment for students in and around exam centres: Education Minister to DCs

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Minister for Education, Social Welfare, and Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, today chaired a meeting at Civil Secretariat here to finalise the arrangements for forthcoming Board examinations for 10th, 11th and 12th classes.

Additional Chief Secretary, Education, Shantamanu; Chairman JKBOSE; Directors of School Education, Kashmir/Jammu; Deputy Commissioners and SSPs of all districts; Project Director Samagra Shiksha; Special Secretary School Education department; Secretary JKBOSE, SSP Traffic Rural/National Highway; SSP Traffic city Srinagar/Jammu; CEOs and other concerned officers attended the meeting, either in person or through video conferencing.

Addressing the officers



during the meeting, the Minister directed all the Deputy Commissioners to ensure conducive environment for students in and around the examination centres. She asked them to establish all essential amenities like proper lighting, seating arrangements and heating facilities at the examination centres for facilitation of students.

“Our primary objective is to facilitate a smooth and fair examination process. The department, district administrations and other stakeholders need to work

in tandem to ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place for best interests of our young students”, the Minister maintained.

The Minister further called upon the Deputy Commissioners and SSPs to ensure that strict security protocols are established in and around the examination centres to maintain the integrity of the examination process. She asked them to deploy adequate personnel at examination centers and ensure no one except stu-

dents and staff are allowed inside examination centres. She also asked the SSPs for formation of mobile flying squads to ensure proper implementation of security measures for preventing any kind of malpractice.

While reviewing other measures for smooth conduct of examination process, the Minister called upon the Deputy Commissioners and CEOs to establish joint control rooms in their respective districts for proper monitoring of examination process.

She directed the CEOs to remain in constant touch with their ground staff during the entire process.

The Minister also asked the Deputy Commissioners and SSPs to ensure that students are facilitated along the highways during security forces convoy movement. She advised them to coordinate with concerned security agencies and ensure that the admit cards of students are treated as passes during this convoy movement.

The Minister, during the meeting, also directed the officers of SED to form inspection squads at divisional and district levels to ensure smooth conduct of examinations.

Chairperson JKBOSE informed the Minister about the preparations in place for the examinations as well as status of material dispatched for smooth conduct of these board exams.

Holistic Agriculture Development Programme DC reviews working of Kisan Khidmat Ghars, implementation of key initiatives in district Doda

JI NEWS SERVICE
DODA, FEBRUARY 13

Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh presided over a review meeting to assess progress achieved in saturation of key initiatives of Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

The meeting, held in the VC room of DC's Office, was attended by Chief Planning Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, Assistant Director Fisheries, District Sericulture Officer, Assistant Floriculture Officer, and the Zonal Manager of J&K Bank.

The meeting discussed the status of fund utilization, with the Deputy Commissioner directing the departmental functionaries to immediately furnish expenditure details.

A comprehensive review was conducted regarding the decisions taken in the previous meeting and the functioning of P1 Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs), particularly in terms of daily transactions, revenue generation and input services.

Officials also provided updates on the establishment of P2 KKGs, the finalization of tenders (NITs), quoted rates, fund utilization and financial requirements.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of maintaining transparency in fund allocation and ensuring the timely execution of planned activities. He also reviewed the progress made by different departments under the HADP initiative, analyzing the targets achieved so far. The number of applications received by the concerned departments under the HADP initiative was also

assessed. The DC Doda directed the officers to encourage more farmers to register for the program and instructed them to expedite the approval process for these applications.

The meeting also included a detailed review of the HADP applications, the Skilling Daksh Kissan initiative, and the establishment of new units under the scheme. The Deputy Commissioner issued key directions to ensure effective credit disbursement and to track project-wise progress. He instructed the officers to improve interdepartmental coordination to maximize the program's benefits for the farming community.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on additional issues with the permission of the chair, ensuring a thorough review of all ongoing and planned activities under the HADP initiative.



DLSA B'la to hold Lok Adalat on March 03

JI NEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA FEBRUARY 13

District Legal Services Authority, Baramulla in collaboration with Tehsil Legal Services Committees of District Baramulla is going to hold 1st National Lok Adalat, 2025 on March 03.

The said Lok Adalat will be held at District Court Complex Baramulla as well as at all the Tehsil Headquarters of District Baramulla.

During the Lok Adalat, Pre-Litigation including NI act Under section 138, Bank Recovery matters, Labour Disputes, Electricity, Water Bills and Cases pending in courts like Criminal Compound Offence, MACT cases, Land Acquisition cases will be taken for amicable resolution.

DLSA Baramulla has asked all concerned parties /advocates who desire to get their cases of aforementioned nature settled through the said Lok Adalat, may approach District Legal Services Authority Baramulla / Tehsil Legal Services Committees of District Baramulla by or before 1st March, 2025.

District Administration Rajouri facilitates return of 62 families of Badhaal Village

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, FEBRUARY 13

The District Administration Rajouri, under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma, has facilitated the return of 62 families comprising 330 individuals (152 males and 178 females) back to their homes at Badhaal village after a stay of 22 day at lodgment centers established at BHSS and Nursing College.

The DC appreciated the coordinated efforts of all departments in ensuring the well-being of these families during their stay. He also thanked the affected persons for their cooperation and patience throughout the period.

To ensure a safe and smooth transition, all departments created awareness among the families regarding necessary precautions post-departure. Additionally, the ration already available at their houses will be sealed and shifted to a secure location under the supervision of ADC Kotranka. The administration has also provided ration kits for immediate use, and routine ration distribution will continue in their respective villages.

As a welfare measure, DC Rajouri handed over labour cards to eligible



beneficiaries among these families. Furthermore, 10 cases under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) were registered during their stay at the lodgment centres and the same will be processed on priority.

In terms of health and safety, the Food Safety Inspector was directed to maintain records of collected samples and ensure follow-ups until the results are received. The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) was instructed to deploy a dedicated health

team at Badhaal for regular medical check-ups.

To facilitate the return of livestock, officials of the Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department were stationed at Badhaal to ensure the smooth handover of domestic animals to their owners.

Infrastructure and essential services were also prioritized. The PHE Department has been directed to continue tanker services, ensure the cleaning of storage tanks and operationalize the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) scheme within a

week. The Power Development Department (PDD) was instructed to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply.

To maintain security and monitoring, ADC Kotranka and SP Kotranka were directed to keep records of vehicles entering and leaving Badhaal village. Meanwhile, the District Information Officer (DIO) was tasked with preserving CCTV footage of food preparation and distribution at the lodgment centres.

During their stay, teachers and Anganwadi workers were deployed to provide education to children, while doctors ensured healthcare services. The departing families expressed their gratitude to the District Administration, especially DC Rajouri, for their support and care. They also acknowledged the dedication of Animal and Sheep Husbandry employees who looked after their livestock in Badhaal.

The occasion was attended by ADCC Rajouri Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa, PO ICDS Mohd Fareed Kohli, ACP Sheraz Chouhan, DSEO Sandeep Sharma, Dy DEO Shakeel Ahmed, Ex En PDD Mohd Rasheed, CMO Manohar Rana, AD FCS & CA, ALC, and other district and sectoral officers.

Handicrafts Department's Inspection Team recovers Rs 25500 from erring dealers at Katra

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI, FEBRUARY 13

A special enforcement drive was today conducted by the Handicraft Department and Quality Control wing in Katra to curb the sale of fake handicrafts in place of genuine art and craft.

The inspection, conducted on the directions of Director H&H Jammu Suraj Parkash Rukwal, was aimed to reinforce the implementation of the Jammu & Kashmir Tourist Trade Act 1978, Jammu & Kashmir Handicrafts Quality Control Act.

During the course of inspection by a team headed by Assistant Director Ujwal Sambyal handicraft, the dealers were found violating the prescribed norms by selling fake handicrafts in place of the genuine art and craft.

The team recovered Rs 25500/- (Rupees Forty Three Thousands Only) as fine from the erring dealers. The dealers were strictly warned to desist from the sale of fake machine made lookalikes of Jammu & Kashmir art products and advised to affix tags depicting price and composition on each



item displayed for sale. The dealers were also apprised about the benefits of the GI tagging on the notified Crafts.

Also, the inspection team interacted with the visiting tourists who were informed to ensure purchase of only genuine handicraft items especially GI tagged notified Art products from such handicrafts business establishments which are registered with Directorate of Handicrafts & Handloom. They were further advised to seek cash memos from the dealer for every purchase and retain/preserve the copy of the same for any future use.

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DDC B'la Reviews Physical, Financial Progress Under District Capex

JI NEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA, FEBRUARY 13

District Development Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today chaired a review meeting at Dak Bungalow, Baramulla, to assess the physical and financial progress of projects under the District Capex Budget 2024-25.

The meeting focused on evaluating fund utilization, project execution, and resolving bottlenecks affecting development works.

During the session, Joint Director Planning Baramulla, Javed Ahmad, delivered a sector-wise presentation detailing financial expenditures, physical targets achieved.



The presentation provided key insights into fund allocations, utilization rates and the overall progress of ongoing projects.

DDC Minga Sherpa directed all departments to accelerate project implementation, ensure the optimal use of funds, and uphold quality standards. He emphasized

the importance of inter-departmental coordination and instructed officers to promptly address issues delaying project completion.

Additionally, he directed concerned officials to expedite the clearance of pending bills to prevent financial delays in project execution.

Stressing the need for faster progress in the next two weeks, the DDC instructed all executing agencies to intensify efforts, increase workforce deployment, and ensure that pending targets are met within the stipulated timeframe.

He further directed that regular progress reports be submitted and that any persisting issues be flagged for immediate resolution.

Officers from various departments, including Roads & Buildings, Rural Development, Hydraulic, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited, Jal Shakti Department, Integrated Child Development Services, Education and others, pre-

sented updates on their respective projects. The DDC instructed officers to enhance monitoring mechanisms to maintain transparency, accountability, and efficiency in developmental works.

Concluding the meeting, DDC Minga Sherpa issued clear directions to all concerned departments to ramp up execution efforts over the next two weeks, ensuring visible progress on the ground. He reiterated the administration's commitment to timely and effective development, ensuring that the benefits of various projects reach the people of Baramulla without delay.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-AUCTION NOTICE		
The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/FS, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division.		
Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFZR-SLR25-25	26/02/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 12014/F1, 14634/R1, 12238/F2, 14633/R1, 14654/R1, 14634/F1, 14633/F1, 14633/F2, 12030/F1 & 14634/F2.
EAFZR-SLR25-26	27/02/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 12470/F1, 12752/F1, 22430/F1, 15532/F1, 19028/F1, 12476/F1, 14654/F1, 12266/F1, 12446/F1 & 14612/F1.
For other details and registration, please visit Railway website www.ireps.gov.in .		
503/2025 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

FROM THE PAGE 1...

After Kashmir, LG Sinha...

chaired back-to-back J&K security review meetings in New Delhi with the top brass of Army, Intelligence Bureau, J&K administration and paramilitary forces.

Today's meeting was attended by Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat; ADGP Armed, Anand Jain; ADGP Hqrs, MK Sinha; ADGP CID, Nitish Kumar; Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor, Dr Mandeeep K. Bhandari; IGP Jammu, Bhim Sen Tuti; IGP Crime, Dr Sunil Gupta; IGP Security, Sujit Kumar; IGP Railways, Vivek Gupta; IG Traffic, M. Suleman Choudhary; Range DIGs, SSPs, and other senior officers of various wings of J&K Police.

At the outset, the DGP J&K and IGP Jammu briefed the chair on the future action plan and the proposed measures to tackle the security challenges to ensure a safe and secure environment for the common citizen.

The IGP Railways gave a detailed presentation on the security architecture of railways, and the roadmap put in place to strengthen the security of stations and the tracks.

ENSURE NO REMNANT OF TERRORISM IS LEFT IN JAMMU REGION

The Lieutenant Governor said that our focus should be on complete wipe-out of terrorism from Jammu Division. "We should not even have remnant of terrorism in Jammu region. Take effective steps to wipe-out terrorism and ensure complete dismantling of the infrastructure and local support of terrorism," LG said.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the J&K Police officials to take strongest possible action against those providing logistical and financial support to terrorism.

"Make sure that acts of individuals or groups trying to create fear in the society are termed as terrorist action and they should be punished as per the law," the Lieutenant Governor directed the police officials.

DISCUSSES ROADMAP FOR TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN POLICING

The Lieutenant Governor also discussed roadmap for technology driven policing, area domination plan, inter-agency coordination, action against narco-terrorism, capacity building of police force and innovative strategies to improve cyber patrolling and monitoring capabilities.

He stressed on credible intelligence gathering, sharing of real time operational intelligence and anti-terror operations based on precise inputs.

"Every perpetrator and supporter of terrorism must pay the price. We need to equip ourselves with credible intelligence and act more effectively to neutralise the terrorists and ensure the security of citizens. We must be prepared for conventional as well as non-conventional threats," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor directed for stronger measures to protect our borders.

"We must strengthen border security against asymmetric threats due to porous border with riverines and difficult mountain range and all the security agencies must work together to provide necessary back-up support," the Lieutenant Governor observed.

The Lieutenant Governor also called for strengthening the legal framework to deal with terror propagandists and strengthening of police establishment at local level for modern and efficient policing. KNO

CM concludes pre-budget...

budget, focus should be given to projects which can be completed within a reasonable time frame of two to three years with clear deliverables that fit within the allocated funds.

He stressed on prioritizing projects with achievable targets within stipulated deadlines that align with the budget cycle and fulfill public needs and their aspirations.

The CM also said that purpose of holding pre-budget consultation was to obtain useful feedback from the stakeholders and public representatives who are aware of ground realities and propose works which are important and for overall public welfare.

Earlier, during the discussions, the MLAs of Shopian presented various development proposals and infrastructure development plans for their respective constituencies, particularly focusing on augmentation of infrastructure under education, health, sports, R&B, PDD, PHE.

They stressed on allocation of adequate funding for irrigation purposes in the budget 2025-26. To create employment avenues they also demanded for exploring the tourism potential in the districts. Similarly, in another pre-budget consultation meeting, the Chief Minister discussed developmental priorities with the chairperson of the District Development Council (DDC) and MLAs of Kupwara District.

During the consultation, the DDC Chairperson and MLAs of Karnah, Trehgam, Kupwara, Lolab and Langate Constituencies underlined the developmental priorities covering a wide range of demands of local population viz upgradation and widening of roads, up-gradation of health & education infrastructure, augmentation of PHE sector.

During the discussions, the public representatives also stressed on incorporating plans for boosting tourism in the district particularly at Bangus, Lolab and other areas of Kupwara.

Advisor to the CM, Nasir Aslam Wani endorsed the demands of MLAs from Kupwara district and said that North campus of university be made fully functional with introduction of more courses.

He called for proper garbage disposal mechanism from Kupwara town, rain water harvesting to overcome water deficit, desilting of irrigation khuls, clampdown on Kupwara becoming drug trafficking route which was also pointed out by MLA Karnah saying that drug menace be eradicated from the area.

The finalization of site for medical college was also emphasized so that it is established without further delay and SDH is upgraded to District Hospital status.

The MLAs also emphasized on taking up Kupwara to Bandipora road, Kupwara bypass road and construction of mini-secretariat at Kupwara.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioners from Shopian and Kupwara Districts gave detailed presentations outlining the district profiles, demographics, and existing infrastructure in key sectors, including health, education, roads, drainage, public health engineering (PHE), and power sector.

The presentations also provided insights into the Dis-

trict Capex, Centrally Sponsored Schemes and ongoing projects under the current plan.

All MLAs expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister for involving them in the pre-budget consultations and acknowledged the inclusive approach of the government with regard to ongoing preparations for the Budget 2025-26.

In the course of the in-person meetings, the Chief Minister held pre budget consultations with chairpersons of District Development Councils (DDCs), Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and representatives of stakeholder groups including, trade unions, industrialists, entrepreneurs, experts from education, agriculture, horticulture, economics and other sectors & services across the Kashmir to take appraisal of local demands to ensure budget is tailored to achieve public good.

CM Omar Abdullah...

is a night of introspection and prayer when Muslims seek divine pardon and guidance.

He urged people to embrace the spiritual essence of the occasion and pray for the well-being of all humanity.

The Chief Minister also prayed for peace, prosperity and progress to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Spearhead campaign...

growing participation of youth in the Scouts & Guides activities, noting that the number of members in Jammu and Kashmir has risen to 14,000. "This increase in numbers shows that the youth of J&K are coming forward to build their lives and become an inspiration for others," he remarked.

Encouraging young people to strive for positive change, he emphasized that the spirit of the youth is always inclined toward transformation and progress. "A young mind never remains satisfied with the status quo; it constantly seeks change. Scouts & Guides activities provide an excellent way to learn and evolve."

Referring to the teachings of Emperor Ashoka, the Lieutenant Governor reiterated the importance of providing equal opportunities to all. "Ashoka had written that all humans are his children, and he (Ashoka) wanted them to receive equal facilities and opportunities. Likewise, we must ensure that our youth get the best resources for their growth and development."

LG Sinha stressed the importance of environmental conservation, urging Scouts & Guides to prioritize efforts in safeguarding nature.

He also highlighted the remarkable progress witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir over the past five years, with youth playing a crucial role in the transformation. "Youth clubs have emerged as a bridge between the administration and the people, ensuring better governance and outreach. With the government's hand-holding, J&K's youth have started new chapters in their lives."

Additionally, he urged them to work towards preserving the region's rich cultural heritage and promoting its historical significance.

LAUDS EXEMPLARY CONTRIBUTION BHARAT SCOUTS AND GUIDES

The Lieutenant Governor lauded the exemplary contribution of everyone associated with the Bharat Scouts and Guides movement towards community services and nation building. "J&K Bharat Scouts and Guides is on the mission to ensure that service to others is a motto of society before the self. With this vision J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides are doing commendable work in fostering the spirit of national integration and working selflessly for betterment of society," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon the Scouts & Guides to act as the 'Agents of Change' at the grassroots level and inspire the youth to dedicate themselves towards constructive transformation of the society and the nation.

"Youth is the only power that we have today to develop a progressive society and a prosperous nation. Through youth we can ignite the flame of transformation. It is important to task Scouts and Guides to tackle socio-economic challenges because they have the potential to provide innovative solutions," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor, also the Chief Patron of Jammu & Kashmir Bharat Scouts & Guides, reiterated his commitment to facilitate the smooth operations of J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides. Along with the Annual Grant-in-Aid, whatever kind of support and financial help they require will definitely be provided, he said.

He also assured every possible support from the government for the smooth conduct of upcoming National Integration Camp.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also felicitated the Scout Masters and Guide Captains.

Satish Sharma, Minister for Youth Services and Sports; Dr Mandeeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Wg. Cdr MM Joshi, National Commissioner, Bharat Scouts & Guides; Rajinder Singh Tara, Director General, Youth Services and Sports; Administrators, Guide Captains, Instructors, Principals, teachers & students from various schools were present. KNO

LG inaugurates...

the UT Government, under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister, is working with the resolve of 'Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi'.

It is a matter of pride that on one hand industries and infrastructural development have reached new heights, while on the other J&K has witnessed the revival of art and culture, he said.

The Lieutenant Governor underlined that the artists of Jammu Kashmir have strengthened the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' through various forms of art, folk music, theatre, cinema, literature.

"I want our gifted artists to play a leading role in nurturing the society. The artists provide new perspective to the citizens and energises the social progress. In order to maintain the pace of development, it is necessary that teachers, scientists and artists must work together and serve the nation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also reiterated the commitment of the administration towards the welfare of artists and their families.

He commended the contribution of J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in transforming Abhinav theatre into a center of cultural and artistic activities.

Speaking on the peaceful conduct of Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly elections in J&K, the Lieutenant Governor said there was no rigging or repolling during the recent elections.

Many anticipated violence, loss of lives but not even a single stone-pelting incident was reported, he said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor felicitated various artists for their valuable contribution in the field of art and culture.

Sh K. Ramesh Kumar, Commissioner Secretary Culture Department; Sh Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Deputy Commissioner Jammu; Ms Harvinder Kour, Secretary JKAACL; Sh Gulzar Ahmed Bhat, Chairman, J&K Artists Association, senior officials, artists, youth and prominent citizens from all walks of life were present.

J&K yet to frame...

properties were abolished by the Parliament. The Jammu & Kashmir Wakf Act-2001 and The Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Specified Wakfs and Specified Wakaf Properties (Management and Regulation) Act 2004 governed the management of Muslim Shrines and properties in the erstwhile state of J&K. KNO

As mystery continues...

illness, said that they followed all the recommendations of experts, especially from AIIMS Delhi and now the patients and quarantined people have been discharged.

He, however, said that the government will continue to provide them all eatables and other items till SIT constituted to probe the deaths will submit its report.

The deputy Commissioner said that the whole village will continue to remain under proper surveillance and monitoring and all the support will be provided to them.

Notably, A Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the police has questioned multiple individuals but has not uncovered any leads.

Meanwhile, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has ruled out infectious agents as the cause and is focusing on the possibility of toxic substances.

Experts from AIIMS Delhi and PGIMER Chandigarh have visited the affected village, collected samples, and are currently analysing them for possible toxins.

Moreover, the district administration continues to monitor the situation closely, and the village remains under strict surveillance to prevent any further incidents. KNO

79% of J&K's rural...

data reads.

Despite the progress, officials have identified several challenges in implementing the mission, especially in remote and high-altitude areas. The lack of dependable water sources, difficult terrain, harsh weather conditions, and the presence of geo-genic contaminants in groundwater have slowed implementation in some regions, it added.

Additionally, delays in securing statutory clearances and technical capacity gaps at the local level have posed hurdles.

To overcome these issues, the government has launched multiple initiatives, including financial assistance under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure program, setting up State and District Programme Management Units (SPMUs and DPMUs), and training local personnel through the "Nal Jal Mitra Programme." The Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain campaign has also been implemented to encourage rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge, with a special emphasis on the role of women in water conservation, the data added.

With just a few months left for the mission's 2024-25 deadline, both J&K and Ladakh are on track to achieve full rural tap water coverage. While Ladakh has already surpassed 96%, efforts are being intensified in J&K to bridge the remaining gap. KNO

In 5-years, Centre...

for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, according to the news agency informed the parliament that several ambitious projects, including the four-laning of highways and construction of many tunnels are part of this ongoing push to modernize road networks in both Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

The Minister provided a state-wise breakdown of the expenditure incurred and the length of national highways constructed over the past five years.

"Improved highways are expected to reduce travel time, ensure year-round connectivity, and strengthen security infrastructure in the region," the minister said.

"With continued investments in infrastructure, the central government is set to accelerate highway construction in J&K and Ladakh. The focus remains on making travel safer and more efficient, while also supporting economic growth and regional development," he said.

Meanwhile, Gadkari said that Ladakh received Rs 1,608 crore, leading to the construction of 143 km of road length in the Union Territory. KNO

Toll tax revenue surges...

remains among the states with the lowest toll collection in the country.

Compared to states like Uttar Pradesh (Rs 6,695.40 crore in 2023-24) and Rajasthan (Rs 5,549.48 crore), J&K's revenue is relatively modest.

Even neighboring Punjab, which recorded a dip in toll collection in 2020-21 (282.15 crore), saw a sharp rise to Rs 1,491.94 crore in 2023-24—more than three times that of J&K.

The data also reveals a steady year-on-year increase in toll collection in J&K. In 2020-21, revenue dropped slightly to Rs 108.75 crore but rebounded to Rs 194.81 crore in 2021-22.

The following years saw even stronger growth, reaching 409.96 crore in 2022-23 before hitting Rs 436.86 crore in 2023-24. KNO

Ceasefire along LoC...

"While tensions have arisen due to stray incidents of cross-LoC firing and a suspected IED blast targeting an Indian patrol, these are being addressed through the established mechanism," the Army said.

Impression World Pre School celebrates Annual Sports Day



JI NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, FEB 13

On Wednesday, 12th February 2025, Impression World Pre School, Sainik Colony, Jammu, celebrated its annual Sports Day with great enthusiasm and energy. Every year, the school adopts an innovative and creative theme for the event, and this year's theme, "Race at Your Own Pace," carried a powerful message about recognizing and embracing every-

one's unique potential. The races were thoughtfully designed to enhance essential developmental skills, including gross motor skills, fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, bilateral coordination, and balancing.

The event was graced by Chief Guest Mr. Khalid Jahangir, MD JKTP, along with Guest of Honor Mr. Rajat Vohra, Bureau Head of Zee News J&K, and Mr. Umesh Rekhi, General Secretary of J&K Karate Federation of India. They were warmly welcomed and felicitated by the Principal, Mrs. Shivani Sharma.

In his address, Mr. Khalid Jahangir applauded the school's efforts in nurturing young minds and emphasized the crucial role of preschools in

laying a strong foundation for children's growth and learning. Mr. Rajat Vohra also shared his appreciation for the significance of sports in a child's development.

The event witnessed active participation from students of Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Junior KG, and Senior KG, who showcased their enthusiasm and discipline while competing in various races. Parents, too, joined in the fun with specially organized races such as "Mom and Me," "My Daddy Strongest," and the "Three-Legged Race." Their participation and encouragement added to the vibrant atmosphere of the day.

Winners among both children and parents were honored with mementos and medals, recognizing their sportsmanship and effort. The dedicated team of Impression World Pre School ensured smooth execution of the event, making it a delightful and hiccup-free experience for all.

The celebration concluded with a heartfelt thank-you note by Principal Mrs. Shivani Sharma, followed by the rendition of the Indian National Anthem, marking the end of a memorable and inspiring day.

Clarifying that no recent exchange of heavy-calibre weapon fire has occurred along the LoC, the Army said that minor incidents are not unprecedented.

"Concerns have been raised with the Pakistan Army at the appropriate level," the Army said, adding that the situation remains stable and under close monitoring, with the Indian Army maintaining a high state of alertness and dominating the LoC.

Since the reaffirmation of the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan in February 2021, the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir has experienced a significant reduction in hostilities.

According to official reports, accessed by the news agency, only three minor incidents of ceasefire violations were recorded along the LoC after the agreement.

Overall, the situation along the LoC has remained relatively stable, with only minor incidents reported since the 2021 agreement. KNO

ACB arrests Patwari...

the news agency said that Jammu and Kashmir ACB received a complaint, alleging therein that public servant namely Sudershan Khajuria, Patwari Halqa Khanpur Tehsil Marheen District Kathua demanded illegal gratification for correction of Girdawari entry in revenue record from the complainant.

The accused had initially demanded a bribe of Rs 30,000 from the complainant for correction of Girdawari entry in revenue records and in case, the complainant failed to provide the bribe amount, the said Patwari intimidated the complainant to tamper his revenue record and will change the entries of his name, reads the statement. "Under compelling circumstances, the complainant had given Rs 5000 to the said Patwari. After negotiation, the accused has agreed to take bribe amount of Rs 15000 instead of agreed Rs 25000 from the complainant for doing the needful."

Since, the complainant didn't want to pay bribe and he approached Anti Corruption Bureau for taking legal action against the accused public servant under law, the statement added.

"On receipt of the complaint, a discreet verification was conducted, which confirms the demand of bribe by the public servant concerned and accordingly, a case FIR No. 01/2025 U/S 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 was registered in Police Station ACB Jammu and investigation taken up," it reads.

"During the course of investigation, a trap team headed by was constituted. The team laid a successful trap and accused public servant was caught red-handed while demanding and accepting bribe amount of Rs 15,000 from the complainant in the presence of independent witnesses. The accused was arrested on the spot by the ACB team after following due process of law. The bribe money was also recovered from his possession in presence of independent witnesses associated with the trap team. Moreover, searches were also conducted in the residential house/office premises of the accused in presence of independent witness and Magistrate," the statement reads, adding that further investigation of the instant case is going on. KNO

Divya Kala Mela to begin in Jammu from Feb 14

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

A unique exhibition showcasing the talents and craftsmanship of Divyang entrepreneurs and artisans from across the country, Divya Kala Mela, will commence in Jammu on February 14. The event, organised by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, through the National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation, will continue till February 24.

Addressing a press conference today, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of NDFDC, Naveen Shah



announced the details of the event, emphasising its role in economically empowering persons with disabilities (PwDs). Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Sachin Kumar Vaishya, who was also present, encouraged citizens to participate and support the initiative.

The 11-day fair will feature products from around 100 Divyang artisans and entrepreneurs represent-

ing nearly 20 states and Union Territories. The exhibition will include handicrafts, handlooms, embroidery, home décor, eco-friendly goods, clothing, stationery, toys, gifts, personal accessories, jewellery, packaged food and organic products.

Visitors can experience cultural performances by Divyang artists and well-known professionals, with a special program, Divya

Kala Shakti, scheduled for February 24. A variety of regional cuisines will also be available at the venue.

The Divya Kala Mela will be open daily from am to 9:00 pm and the inaugural ceremony on February 14 at 4:00 pm will be graced by the Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment alongside other dignitaries.

CMD NDFDC, Naveen Shah highlighted that the event aligns with the 'Vocal for Local' initiative, providing a national platform for Divyang artisans to market their products. Deputy Commissioner Sachin Kumar reiterated the importance of public participation in fostering an inclusive and empowered society.

SHEW, Forest Department Shopian conduct Plantation Drive at Deegam



JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 13

In a remarkable initiative promoting environmental conservation and the empowerment of girls, Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Shopian, in collaboration with the Department of Forest, organized a Plantation Drive at KGBV School, Deegam Shopian, under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign.

This initiative aimed to raise awareness about the significance of the girl child and her invaluable role in society. Each sapling planted symbolized a girl's growth, strength, and potential, reinforcing the message that nurturing and educating girls leads

to a brighter, more prosperous future.

Speaking at the event, officials from Sankalp Hub emphasized the deep connection between environmental sustainability and gender equality. They stated, "Just as a tree flourishes with care and nourishment, every girl deserves support and opportunities to thrive."

Students and faculty were also guided on the ecological importance of trees and were encouraged to care for the newly planted saplings.

The participants pledged to nurture the plants, symbolizing their commitment to both environmental conservation and the empowerment of young girls.

DC reviews implementation of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna in Poonch

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, FEBRUARY 13

The Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal reviewed the progress achieved in the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY) scheme. The meeting included key stakeholders, including Area Sale Manager from HPCL and representatives from BPCL and IOCL, who participated virtually.

At the outset, AD FCS & CA Adil Shabir briefed the Deputy Commissioner about the progress of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY) in the district. The District Nodal Officer and LPG Field Officers outlined the procedures mandated by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) for managing PMUY connections, emphasizing that no refills will be provided beyond initial installations.



The Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of activating inactive connections and urged the team to complete the e-KYC process within a week. He also directed the AD FCS&CA to ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive the benefits of the PMUY scheme promptly.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of providing maximum access to cooking gas to eligible beneficiaries from underprivileged households. This initiative aims to improve their quality of life and promote cleaner energy solutions.

Training Programme held for Hajj Pilgrims at Ramban



JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, FEBRUARY 13

The District Administration Ramban today conducted a day-long training programme for selected Hajj pilgrims here at Jamia Masjid Qadeem, providing them with essential guidance on Manasik-e-Haj and logistics.

A total of 37 Hajj pilgrims received practical training and detailed information about the pilgrimage, including boarding, lodging, accommodation, cur-

rency exchange, and other necessary procedures. The master trainer provided comprehensive information to ensure a smooth and well-prepared spiritual journey.

Pilgrims were also briefed on important documents, luggage requirements, and other essential aspects of their travel. The attendees expressed gratitude to the district administration for their cooperation and effective management, ensuring a hassle-free pilgrimage experience.

DC reviews functioning of Eklavya Model Residential School Mendhar



JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, FEBRUARY 13

The Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal, convened a meeting today at the DC Office Complex to assess the operations of the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) in Mendhar.

During the meeting, the Principal of the school provided an overview of the current facilities and highlighted additional requirements for the institution. Currently, 180 students are enrolled, with an expected increase of 60 students this year.

DC Vikas Kundal directed the Tehsildar Mendhar to demarcate the land for the EMRS and prepare the relevant revenue records. He approved additional funding for the construction of a girls' hostel to enhance accommodation facilities.

To streamline the academic activities, the DC instructed the chairman to constitute two Committees, one for paper setting

and another for conducting the examination.

Emphasizing the importance of quality education for tribal students, DC Kundal stressed the necessity of ensuring that students have access to essential resources and opportunities for extracurricular engagement. He also called for regular monitoring of students' academic progress and the availability of requisite facilities at the residential school. The Eklavya Model Residential School is a significant initiative by the Government of India aimed at providing tribal students with quality education, empowering them to compete on par with their peers nationwide.

The meeting was attended by several officials, including the Additional Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Chief Planning Officer Poonch, PO ICDS, Principal of EMRS Mendhar, Executive Engineer PDD, Executive Engineer Jal Shakti, and other relevant officers.

Progress of District Capex Works reviewed in Rajouri

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, FEBRUARY 13

Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa today chaired a review meeting in the Conference Hall Dak Bungalow to assess the physical and financial progress of works under the District Capex Budget.

It was informed that out of 3,717 allotted works, 3,255 have been initiated, while 1,015 have been successfully completed across 19 blocks of the district.

Emphasizing the need for timely execution, the ADDC directed the concerned officers to

expedite the completion of pending works at the earliest. He also instructed that expenditures for completed works be made only after fulfilling all codal formalities.

Stressing the importance of quality assurance, ADDC Rajouri directed the officers to ensure strict adherence to prescribed standards in all developmental works.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) Rajouri Vijay Kumar Verma, Executive Engineer REW Zaheer Ahmed, and all Block Development Officers (BDOs) of the district.

Entrepreneurship Development Program concludes at SBI RSETI Ramban



JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, FEBRUARY 13

The State Bank of India Rural Self Employment Training Institute (SBI RSETI) Ramban successfully concluded the Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) under the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Program (JKREGP) today. A batch of 10 aspiring entrepreneurs completed the training aimed at equipping them with essential entrepreneurial skills to establish and sustain their businesses.

At the valedictory session, Director SBI RSETI S Harvinder Singh, awarded certificates of completion to the trainees and encouraged them to take full advantage of

the skills acquired during the program. Speaking at the event, he said, "This training is a crucial step in empowering rural entrepreneurs. We are committed to providing skill-based training and facilitating government support through schemes like JKREGP to help trainees turn their business ideas into reality."

The Entrepreneurship Development Program focused on business planning, financial management, market strategies, and legal formalities, ensuring that the participants are well-prepared to launch their enterprises. The initiative aligns with the government's vision of promoting self-employment and rural economic growth.

Minister Javed Dar extends greetings on Shab-i-Barat

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

The Minister for Agriculture Production and Rural Development, Javed Ahmad Dar, today extended his hearty greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Shab-i-Barat.

The Minister highlighted the importance of this sacred night observed with prayers and devotion.

He urged people to seek forgiveness, pray for peace and promote har-

mony among all communities.

"Shab-i-Barat is a night of blessings and mercy. It is a time to reflect, seek forgiveness, and pray for everyone's well-being," he said. He also emphasized unity and kindness, encouraging people to help those in need.

He called upon citizens to pray for the prosperity and progress of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister urged everyone to observe the occasion with sincerity while embracing the true values of Islam.

Carpet weavers to be given modified steel looms with comfort seating

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 13

In order to provide comfortable seating arrangement and improve the quality of hand-knotted carpets, the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT) is going to distribute Modified Modern Steel Carpet Looms to active weavers registered with the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir.

The Draw of Lots for selecting 100 carpet weavers from amongst the intended beneficiaries shall be held at IICT, Nowshera Srinagar on February 18.

Sharing details through a press statement issued here today, Director IICT, Srinagar, Zubair Ahmad, said the Central Wool Development Board, Union Ministry of Textiles, has sanctioned distribution of 100 Modified Modern Steel Looms amongst active carpet weavers at a total cost of Rs 43.70 lakh under

its 'Wool Processing Scheme' for the current financial year 2024-25. "The looms have been designed and modified by IICT, keeping in view the health safety of the weavers, who sit for hours together for weaving of the world-famous hand-knotted Kashmir carpets," he said, adding that the department intends to provide such modified looms to all active carpet weavers in a phased manner.

The new modified looms are set to replace the traditional wooden carpet looms, which resulted in many health-related issues particularly acute back pain to weavers due to uncomfortable posturing.

Director IICT further advised all concerned beneficiaries to report in IICT premises at Nowshera for participation in the Draw of Lots, scheduled at 11.00 am on February 18, so that 100 beneficiaries are selected in a fair and transparent manner.

Div Com discusses zonal master plans for Eco sensitive zones of Surinsar-Mansar wildlife sanctuary

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar, who is the chairman of the Divisional Level Committee for monitoring Eco sensitive zones, on Thursday chaired a meeting to discuss formulation of the Zonal master plan for Surinsar-Mansar wildlife sanctuary.

The meeting, attended by Deputy Commissioners of Samba, Udhampur, Regional Wildlife Warden, Regional Director Ecology and Remote Sensing, DFOs, besides officers from Agriculture and allied departments, discussed the action plan for conservation of Eco sensitive zone within 10 km from the periphery of the wildlife sanctuary.

It was stressed that the purpose of the develop-

ment of eco sensitive zone is to protect the flora and fauna of the wildlife sanctuary.

The meeting held detailed discussion on the activities that are to be prohibited, regulated and to be promoted in the eco sensitive zones by the concerned departments.

The Divisional Commissioner directed the Regional Wildlife Warden and Divisional Forest Officers to share the list of activities to the District Administrations for maintaining the Eco sensitive zones.

He further directed the Chief Agriculture officers to prepare an action plan for promoting organic farming and plantation drives.

The meeting decided to review the action taken on the decisions and directions in the next meeting.

Sakeena Itoo extends Shab-e-Baraat greetings to the people of J&K

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 13

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo extended her hearty greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Shab-e-Baraat. In her greetings message, the Minister underlined that this sacred occasion is an opportunity to seek mercy from Almighty Allah and pray for the wellbeing of entire humanity.

The Minister further said that during this holy night of prayers, we should pray for strengthening the bonds of brotherhood, love and amity among the people.

The Minister also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of entire Jammu and Kashmir.

Power Shutdown

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 13

According to Chief Engineer, KPDCI in view of shifting of electrical utilities along the road, the power supply from 33kv Badampora-Wangipora Tap line to receiving stations including Batwina, Wangipora, Nowgam and feeding areas including Batwina, Nowgam, Wangipora, Zazna, Ahan, Waskura, Kharbagh, Guzham, Sumbal, Nesbal shall remain affected on February 17 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM

EDITORIAL

The MBA dilemma: Why degrees alone no longer guarantee success

Clamour for liquor prohibition

The rising number of liquor vends in Jammu and Kashmir over the past few years has ignited a fresh debate on the social and cultural implications of alcohol consumption. As concerns mount over its adverse effects, the demand for a complete ban on liquor in the region has gained significant momentum. Reflecting this sentiment, three Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) have now submitted private members' bills seeking to prohibit liquor sales in J&K. This development is set to be a focal point in the upcoming legislative assembly session scheduled to begin next month. The legislators championing this cause include People's Democratic Party (PDP) MLA from Kupwara, Mir Mohammad Fayaz; Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) MLA from Langate, Sheikh Khursheed Ahmad; and National Conference (NC) MLA from Lal Chowk, Ahsan Pardesi. Their efforts have sparked discussions on both moral and economic fronts, as the government has thus far prioritized revenue generation through liquor sales while seemingly overlooking its social repercussions. PDP leader and Mehbooba Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti has strongly backed the initiative, emphasizing the detrimental impact of alcohol consumption on society. She asserted that since 2019, the issue has worsened due to the exponential rise in liquor outlets, making alcohol more accessible than ever before. NC legislator Ahsan Pardesi, too, highlighted the contradiction between alcohol sales and Kashmir's cultural and religious ethos, arguing that its proliferation disregards the Valley's long-standing opposition to intoxicants. He warned that unchecked alcohol consumption fuels crime, moral degradation, and addiction, particularly among the youth. The AIP MLA Sheikh Khursheed has taken pride in being the first to submit the bill for a liquor ban, underscoring his commitment to addressing pressing social issues. Additionally, he has introduced a bill seeking a complete ban on online gaming and fantasy leagues in J&K, citing their potential to harm public welfare. His party has urged widespread support for these measures, positioning them as pivotal to societal well-being. The proposal has also found resonance among leaders outside the legislative sphere. BJP leader and Chairperson of the J&K Waqf Board, Dr. Darakhshan Andrabi, echoed concerns over youth vulnerability to substance abuse. She remarked that if the bill is formally introduced and debated in the assembly, it would be a welcome step in safeguarding the younger generation from addiction and its associated pitfalls. While the calls for prohibition gain traction, the government must carefully weigh the economic implications against the moral and social costs of alcohol consumption. A ban, if enforced, would require a comprehensive strategy, including rehabilitation programs, alternative revenue sources, and stringent law enforcement measures to prevent illicit trade. Moreover, there is a need for extensive public awareness campaigns to ensure that prohibition policies are effectively implemented and widely supported. As the legislative assembly prepares to deliberate on these bills, the debate over liquor prohibition in Jammu and Kashmir is bound to intensify. The final decision will not only reflect the region's socio-cultural priorities but will also determine the future course of action in tackling substance abuse and its far-reaching consequences.

DINESH SOOD

The job market for MBA graduates has reached a critical juncture, sparking conversations that resonate with a growing number of aspirants and professionals grappling with the changing realities of employment. Once seen as a surefire ticket to high-paying corporate roles, the MBA degree is scrutinised for relevance in an evolving economic landscape. This issue is not confined to India alone; even graduates from elite institutions like Harvard, Stanford, and Wharton feel the squeeze. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that in 2024, 23 per cent of Harvard Business School's MBA graduates were jobless. Other top-tier business schools like Stanford and Wharton have seen similar dips, with unemployment rates hovering around 20 per cent.

The problem is not just limited to the United States. According to the International Labour Organisation's Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024, 13 per cent of the global youth labour force was unemployed in 2023—a staggering figure representing nearly 65 million people. This unsettling trend makes traditional, generalist MBA degrees less appealing than targeted skill certifications. A recent Forbes report high-

lighted how some MBA graduates have succeeded by lowering their expectations and opting for less conventional roles. In an era where industries are shifting dynamically, the rigid, cookie-cutter MBA model is struggling to keep pace. The need for a 360-degree reimagining of this degree has never been more pressing.

Degrees Alone Won't Cut It Anymore

One fundamental truth is becoming evident: degrees alone no longer guarantee job or entrepreneurship security. The future belongs to professionals who continuously upskill and adapt to meet the ever-changing demands of the workforce. What used to be a clear, structured career trajectory for MBA graduates—typically leading to consulting, finance, or management roles—is now blurred. The stark reality is that a prestigious qualification, while valuable, no longer provides immunity against unemployment or underemployment. Even more telling is the global shift in job seekers' mindsets. While travelling to Canada, I recently observed an MBA graduate running a salon branded "MBA Barber Shop." This reflects an important reality—many skilled gig jobs are vital for holistic growth, but traditional academic pathways have

often dismissed such careers as unworthy. Yet, most developed nations respect one's skills rather than qualifications or family background. We must ask: Why doesn't Indian society do the same?

Skill Respect Over Degree Prestige

The changing job landscape demands a fundamental shift in how we perceive employment, education, and career success. Skill acquisition is about individuals learning new competencies and families being sensitised to alternative career paths. It is about communities understanding the implications of an evolving job market. It is about cities and regions acknowledging and respecting those who possess the skills necessary to sustain a livelihood, irrespective of whether they hold an MBA or a B.Tech degree.

The MBA has been a gateway to professional and financial success for decades. However, the economy's evolution demands a departure from this narrow thinking. In India and many other countries, social conditioning has led to an unspoken hierarchy of professions. White-collar corporate roles are celebrated, while vocational or blue-collar jobs are often overlooked. This mindset is outdated and damaging in a world where adaptability and skills matter more than mere

academic credentials.

A 360-Degree Skills Revolution

What we need now is a complete rethinking of education and skill development. The traditional MBA must evolve from a broad-spectrum business degree into a dynamic, skills-focused program that integrates emerging industry trends. A 360-degree approach should include everything from finance to marketing and HR.

MBA programmes must incorporate niche skills such as data analytics, digital transformation, sustainability management and entrepreneurship in beauty-wellness, the most emerging sector. Instead of theoretical coursework, there should be a stronger focus on apprenticeships, live projects and problem-solving in real-world business scenarios.

Understanding AI, automation, and emerging technologies should be a core part of the curriculum to prepare graduates for future-ready roles. Rather than treating entrepreneurship as an alternative, business schools should actively promote and equip students with the skills to start and sustain their ventures. Business schools must recognise the gig economy's rise and train students to navigate freelance and contract-based work models.

Beyond Livelihood—Dignity in

Work

Redefining career success means placing equal value on all forms of work. Whether a person is an MBA graduate managing a corporate division, an AI consultant, a skilled tradesperson, or a self-employed barber, their ability to contribute meaningfully to society matters. The prestige of a job should be measured not by its title but by its impact and sustainability.

Parents, educators, and policymakers have a role in fostering this change. We must instil in young minds that success is not confined to traditional white-collar professions. Regardless of their chosen field, a skilled individual should be celebrated just as much as a corporate executive. If an MBA graduate decides to become an artisan, a chef, a salon owner or a renewable energy technician, they should be seen as pioneers, not failures.

The Need for Institutional Change

Educational institutions must move beyond outdated frameworks and align themselves with industry demands. Business schools should foster adaptive thinking, preparing students for unconventional but lucrative career paths. The focus should be on problem-solving, digital proficiency, and entrepreneurial agility rather

than rigid academic theories.

Governments and industries should also contribute by incentivising skill-based education. Scholarships, subsidies, and awareness campaigns can help shift societal perspectives on what constitutes a respectable and rewarding career.

Conclusion: A Future Built on Skills Once a golden ticket to corporate success, the MBA faces an existential crisis. If it is to remain relevant, it must undergo radical transformation. A degree is no longer a guarantee; what truly matters is an individual's ability to adapt, innovate, and deliver value in an ever-changing world.

As a society, we need to support and encourage young professionals in their quest to discover their true potential—even in jobs that were once considered "odd." In reality, no job is odd; what matters is its necessity and impact. By embracing a 360-degree perspective on skills and careers, we can build a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready workforce. The time for change is now.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation, and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres. View express are personal)

One Faith One World

RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI

All of us have heard the famous phrase "United We Stand, Divided We Fall" during our school days through the simple story of an old farmer who, on his deathbed, taught the importance of unity to his disunited sons through a bundle of sticks. That story still holds an important place in our society and has even gained popularity because discord, disunity, strife and warfare have assumed unprecedented proportions in the modern world. Today, one of the most arduous challenges that face humanity is to establish harmony among people of different religions.

There is no doubt that political and religious leaders have time and again endeavoured to bring

people onto a common platform and find ways and means to forge better understanding and acceptance of each faith. But despite their hard efforts, not much has changed. Hence, the greatest question of all at present is whether can the diverse religions and faiths ever be united. If so, then how? If we walk down history lane, we would find that one of the important reasons why the need for religious harmony originated is that the most violent wars and conflicts in human history were based on religious intolerance and hatred. It might be a shocking statement, but it's the harsh reality that religions, which are supposed to make people more peaceful and loving, have today become the biggest cause of discord and bloodshed in the world. It's so appalling to see



organized groups across the globe sworn to spread terror in the name of religion and carry out ethnic cleansing in the name of removing evil from the world.

If we closely examine the growth of each faith through the centuries, it reveals an interesting pattern. Even though there are some common values and tenets in all faiths, there are far too many miscon-

ceptions and conflicting beliefs that have continually fanned mistrust and hostility among the masses. It's quite imperative to know that, at the time of their inception, every religion had the power of purity, truth, and unity.

Gradually, cracks, factionalism, shallowness, delusion, deception and ritualistic adherence devoid of spiritual significance began to appear.

Hence, instead of empowering spiritual values, religions perpetuated dogmas, disciplines, and barriers that segregate people on many lines.

Many fall prey to the very evils they preach against, such as the lust for power, pleasure and money. There can be better understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of each faith, but there cannot be unity unless there is a single or common belief. So, what's the best way to reach a common solution acceptable to all faiths? According to divine knowledge imparted by the Supreme Almighty, everything in the eternal cycle of the human world drama goes through a change, which means that everything degrades from a perfect state to an imperfect, fragmented state. Be it human souls, nature, religions, or civilisations, almost everything

passes through the sato (pure), rajo (mixed) and tamo (impure) stages as the time cycle spins from the Golden Age to the Iron Age.

As of today, we are witnessing the tamo-pradhan (most degraded) stage of all aspects of human existence, and religions are no exception to this process of change. Hence, we can envisage a unified faith only in terms of the spirituality inherent in all faiths. It is said that God is Truth, and true religion embodies that truth. Hence, when humans embrace that truth in their hearts, there will be a unified world. So, let us all stand united with one unified faith to welcome the new world where truth, peace and harmony will prevail.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

Ethics-driven AI in predictive healthcare: Building a foundation of trust and accountability

GERALD JAIDEEP

In today's rapidly advancing healthcare landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a transformative role, particularly in predictive healthcare. AI's ability to analyse vast datasets enables early disease detection, personalised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes.

The global AI in healthcare market, valued at approximately \$15.4 billion in 2022, is projected to surge to \$187.95 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 37 per cent.

Yet, with this potential comes a responsibility to ensure that AI is used responsibly, ethically, and equitably. Establishing a framework that prioritises privacy, fairness, transparency and accountability is essential to protect patient

rights and maintain public trust.

The Power of AI in Predictive Healthcare AI's role in predictive healthcare is primarily driven by machine learning and data analytics, empowering it to forecast diseases, assess risk factors, and recommend preventive measures. By examining patterns in comprehensive datasets, such as medical histories, genetic profiles, lifestyle information and real-time health data, AI can predict the likelihood of conditions ranging from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases to complex ailments like cancer and Alzheimer's.

This shift from reactive to preventive care can ease the burden on healthcare systems and improve patient quality of life. For example, AI-based diagnostics for diabetic retinopathy have shown an

accuracy rate of over 87 per cent, enabling early detection and timely intervention. Similarly, IBM Watson's Oncology AI has achieved 90 per cent accuracy in cancer treatment recommendations that align with those of human oncologists. However, to harness AI's potential responsibly, it's crucial to address the ethical challenges it introduces.

Safeguarding Data Privacy and Security

The ethical use of AI in healthcare hinges on the responsible management of patient data. Predictive healthcare AI relies heavily on sensitive information, including medical, genetic, and behavioural data. Yet, the need for privacy is ever more pressing—72 per cent of Americans express significant concerns about



data privacy in AI applications, particularly in healthcare.

In 2022, nearly 50 million healthcare records were exposed to data breaches in the United States, underscoring the need for strong data security protocols. To protect this information, AI systems must prioritise rigorous security measures

such as encryption, anonymisation and regular audits.

Patients should also provide informed consent, clearly explaining how their data will be used and stored. By centring data protection in AI development, healthcare can ensure patient confidentiality and foster the trust necessary for AI's

continued adoption.

Addressing Bias for Fair and Equitable Predictions

AI's reliance on historical data introduces the risk of bias, which can lead to predictions that disproportionately impact certain demographic groups. Research has shown that AI models trained on biased data result in 35 per cent more misdiagnoses for Black and Hispanic patients compared to white patients. In healthcare, such biases could exacerbate disparities for marginalised populations.

Ensuring fairness requires AI systems trained on diverse, representative datasets, as well as continuous monitoring and adjustments to detect and correct biases. A study published in Nature Medi-

cine found that AI systems trained on inclusive datasets significantly reduce diagnostic discrepancies, underscoring the importance of inclusivity in training data. Collaboration with healthcare professionals and ethicists is also vital to developing AI solutions that are equitable and serve all patients effectively.

Promoting Transparency and Explainability in AI Models

The complexity of AI algorithms often results in "black box" decision-making, where the reasoning behind predictions is not fully understood by users or developers. In predictive healthcare, this lack of transparency can hinder trust and adoption among patients and healthcare providers alike. In a survey by the American Medical Association, 67 per cent

of healthcare providers expressed reservations about using "black-box" AI systems, highlighting the need for explainable AI. Currently, only 23 per cent of AI-based diagnostic tools meet explainability standards to ensure transparency. By developing interpretable models, researchers can make AI's decision-making processes accessible to healthcare providers, enabling them to communicate AI-driven recommendations clearly and fostering patient involvement in care decisions.

As AI continues to advance, a strong ethical framework will be essential to uphold public trust and ensure that AI-driven healthcare remains a force for good.

(The writer is CEO, Medvarsity; views are personal)

Air pollution, vitamin B12 deficiency major culprits behind rising anaemia in India: Experts

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

While anaemia is long known to be caused by iron deficiency, experts on Thursday noted that air pollution and vitamin B12 deficiency have emerged as major culprits behind its increasing prevalence in the country.

Anaemia occurs when there isn't enough haemoglobin in the body to carry oxygen to the organs and tissues.

The condition, which mainly affects women and children, leads to the lower count of red blood cells or the haemoglobin. In severe cases, anaemia can cause poor cognitive and motor development in children.

"Emerging research has suggested that anaemia in India is not solely due to iron deficiency. Two additional factors warrant attention: air pollution and vitamin B12 deficiency," Dr K Madan Gopal, a public health expert working at the National Health Systems Resource Center, a premier think tank of



the Health Ministry, New Delhi, told IANS.

A recent study led by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), published in the peer-reviewed European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, found that iron deficiency contributes only marginally to its prevalence, with the other two factors playing a much larger role in the widespread occurrence of anaemia in the country.

Gopal explained that exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) can lead to systemic inflam-

ation. This inflammation interferes with the production and survival of red blood cells, exacerbating anaemia.

"Efforts to improve air quality at the community level -- such as local monitoring of pollution sources and public education on pollution mitigation -- can positively impact overall health and, by extension, reduce inflammation-induced anaemia," the expert said.

"Long-term PM2.5 exposure lowers haemoglobin levels by 2-3 per cent, increasing anaemia

risk by 12-15 per cent," Dr. Sabine Kapasi, advisor, United Nations Covid-19 Task Force, told IANS.

In addition, vitamin B12 is also crucial for properly forming red blood cells. In populations with predominantly vegetarian diets, inadequate vitamin B12 intake is common. "Over 50 per cent of Indians lack vitamin B12 due to poor diets, leading to megaloblastic anaemia -- marked by weakness, dizziness, and cognitive issues," Kapasi said.

Anaemia remains a significant public health challenge in India. The recent data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) indicate that approximately 57 per cent of women of reproductive age and 67 per cent of children aged 6-59 months are affected by anaemia.

To fight the condition, the government has rolled out Anemia Mukh Bharat which focuses on supplementing diets with iron and folic acid, fortifying staple foods, and strengthening primary healthcare delivery.

However, Gopal noted that addressing anaemia requires more than top-down approaches.

"At the community level, we must empower local health workers, community leaders, and non-governmental organisations to take ownership of anaemia as a critical health concern. By integrating nutritional education into local outreach programmes, communities can be encouraged to adopt diversified diets and better hygiene practices. Anaemia must become a 'felt need' at the grassroots level," he told IANS.

Alongside iron supplementation, the experts also suggested educating communities on the importance of a balanced diet that includes B12-rich foods or fortified alternatives; and early screening for B12 levels.

They also urged a holistic approach with the fortification of staples like rice and wheat, targeted nutrition awareness, and tackling environmental triggers like air pollution to fight anaemia.

STUDY LINKS DNA TRAITS TO RISK LEVEL FOR SMOKING-RELATED CANCER

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM, FEB 13

A team of Israeli researchers has identified how the structure and chemical changes in the DNA influence the risk of developing lung cancer from smoking.

The team from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem focused on benzo(a) pyrene, a toxic chemical in cigarette smoke, which binds to DNA when processed by the body, disrupts its normal function, and causes damage to cells, Xinhua news agency reported.

The study, published in Nucleic Acids Research, found that the way DNA is organised and chemically altered can affect how smoking damages it, how well the body cells repair the damage, and how many mutations result from it.

It discovered that certain regions of DNA, particularly those that are more open and active, are more vulnerable to damage but also better at repairing them-



selves, and tend to have fewer mutations over time, whereas regions less efficiently repaired may accumulate mutations, increasing the risk of cancer.

The study also found that proteins regulating gene activity can sometimes protect DNA from harm, but in other cases, they can make it more vulnerable to damage, the researchers said.

The body's ability to repair DNA damage plays a more significant role in determining whether mutations occur, rather than just the amount of damage itself, they added. The study offers new insights into how smoking leads to

lung cancer by damaging DNA and causing mutation and could help shape future strategies for cancer prevention and treatment.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco use accounts for 25 per cent of all cancer deaths globally and is the primary cause of lung cancer. It remains a public health issue of the utmost importance in the Region, where an estimated 186 million people (or 26 per cent of the adult population) currently use tobacco. Smokers are up to 22 times more likely to develop lung cancer in their lifetime compared to non-smokers.

Ayush Ministry's tie-up with Indonesia to boost quality of traditional meds: Prataprao Jadhav

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

The recent collaboration between Ministry of Ayush and Indonesia's Food and Drug Authority will boost the quality of traditional medicines, said Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Ayush on Thursday.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Ayush Ministry's Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine and Homeopathy, was part of several MoUs exchanged between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on January 25, at Hyderabad House, in New Delhi.

The MoU signed in the field of traditional medicine quality assurance is set to elevate global standards, said Jadhav said.

"This collaboration will



play a crucial role in ensuring the safety, efficacy, and quality of traditional medicines, setting the stage for a more integrated and scientifically regulated approach to this valuable healthcare system," he added.

Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, said that the strategic collaboration will

"foster greater knowledge exchange, capacity building, and strengthening the role of traditional medicine in global healthcare".

Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine and Homeopathy is an IS/ISO 9001:2015 certified institution for Quality Management Systems (QMS) dedicated to establishing and maintaining standards for Indian medicine and homeopathy.

The key provisions of the MoU include the exchange of information and expertise on regulatory provisions for traditional medicine; capacity-building initiatives such as seminars, workshops,

and training programmes aimed at enhancing professional knowledge and skills.

It also includes technical visits to facilitate familiarisation with the regulatory processes of both countries; joint participation in international events related to traditional medicine; collaboration on joint training programmes for industries or entities involved in the traditional medicine sector; and expansion of cooperation into other mutually agreed areas.

The MoU also signifies a shared vision for ensuring the safety, efficacy, and accessibility of traditional medicine, paving the way for further collaboration between India and Indonesia and setting an example for other nations in embracing the integration of traditional systems of medicine within modern healthcare frameworks.

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Nasscom Foundation, MathCo launch AI training programme for 'neurodivergent' youth

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

Nasscom Foundation on Thursday, in partnership with MathCo, launched a special skill development programme to train "neurodivergent" youth in data annotation.

Generally, a "neurodivergent" person refers to someone on the autism spectrum, whose brain processes information in a way that is not typical of most individuals.

The initiative aims to enhance employment opportunities for them in the growing field of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML).

The programme will train 50 neurodivergent individuals with a focus on both technical and soft skills. The training will be conducted in two phases, with 25 participants in each batch.

Participants will not



only learn data annotation, a crucial skill for AI models, but will also receive mentorship and confidence-building support to help them succeed in the workplace.

"We believe that a truly inclusive India begins with creating accessible and empowering environments," said Jyoti Sharma, CEO, Nasscom Foundation.

"Learning is the first

step toward empowerment, and continuous learning is key to staying ahead in an evolving world," added Aditya Kumbakonam, COO and Cofounder, MathCo.

He added that these young individuals will not only make the most of this opportunity but will also continue to grow and adapt as they build their careers.

Nasscom Foundation

will provide ongoing mentorship and conduct sensitisation sessions for employers to ensure a supportive environment for neurodivergent employees.

The goal is to place at least 60 per cent of participants in internships and jobs in the IT and IT-enabled services (ITES) sectors.

Data annotation, which involves labelling and tagging data to train AI models, is a skill in high demand as AI applications continue to grow across industries.

By equipping "neurodivergent" youth with this skill, the programme aims to open new career opportunities and foster a more inclusive workforce.

Recently, Nasscom Foundation, in partnership with NITI Aayog, said it is digitally empowering one lakh lives in India's Aspirational Blocks.

TN govt launches door-to-door leprosy detection campaign

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, FEB 13

The Tamil Nadu Health Department on Thursday commenced a statewide leprosy case detection campaign to screen suspected cases. The campaign will continue until February 28 with over 20,000 volunteers conducting intensive door-to-door screenings.

The initiative aims to cover 133 rural blocks and 27 urban areas across 37 districts.

According to Tamil Nadu Director of Health Services, Dr T.S. Selvavinayagan, 18192 searchers will screen residents in rural blocks, while 4,332 searchers will conduct screenings in urban areas over the next two weeks.

The campaign will extend its outreach to schools, colleges, Mahat-



ma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) workers, self-help group (SHG) members, voluntary organisations, and government offices.

Leprosy, a communicable disease caused by Mycobacterium leprae bacteria, spreads through droplets from coughing or sneezing by untreated individuals. The disease has an incubation period of 5-7 years.

Dr Selvavinayagan

stated: "Leprosy manifests when the infected person's immunity declines. The initial symptom is a hypo-pigmented patch with a loss of sensation on the skin. With early detection, leprosy can be fully cured through multi-drug therapy (MDT)."

He warned that untreated leprosy could lead to complications such as peripheral nerve damage, resulting in deformities of the eyes, hands, and feet. The Leprosy Case Detec-

tion Campaign (LCDC) 2025 aims to identify cases early, including hidden cases, and provide prompt treatment.

Dr Selvavinayagan urged the public to cooperate with searchers visiting their homes and to volunteer for screenings. He emphasised Tamil Nadu's potential to eliminate leprosy by 2025. "Elimination does not mean total eradication. It means reducing the disease to a level where it is no longer a public health problem. There should be no new deformity cases or childhood cases. Rehabilitation for individuals with leprosy-related deformities will continue," he said.

He said that as a preventive measure, post-exposure prophylaxis with a single dose of rifampicin will be provided where necessary. Additionally,

all school children will be screened by public health teams.

The health department advises the public to report any of the following symptoms to searchers for further evaluation and follow-up at Primary Health Centres (PHCs). The likely symptoms are hypo-pigmented skin patches with loss of sensation, inability to close eyes, thickening of earlobes and nodules, weakness or numbness in hands and feet, clawing of fingers and toes, muscle wasting in hands and feet, difficulty holding objects, non-healing ulcers on hands and feet.

The Tamil Nadu Health Department encourages public participation and cooperation to ensure the campaign's success and help eliminate leprosy as a public health concern in the state.

Kenya ramps up measures to curb viral disease spread

AGENCIES
NAIROBI, FEB 13

Kenya's health authorities said that robust measures are underway to mitigate the risks of viral diseases such as Marburg, mpox, and Ebola across the country.

Cabinet Secretary for Health Deborah Barasa said that although the Marburg virus outbreak remains confined to Tanzania's Kagera region, Kenya's geographical proximity and high cross-border interactions pose a significant risk of imported cases.

Barasa said the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners, has heightened sur-

veillance and response measures to ensure continuous preparedness.

"Additionally, infection prevention and control training for healthcare workers has been prioritised, with facilities being equipped with protective gear to ensure safety and continuous readiness," she said at a weekly media briefing in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

According to a statement from the ministry, key preparedness measures include activating the Marburg Contingency Plan, enhancing screening at points of entry, activating laboratory networks, and developing case management guidelines to contain the disease.

Barasa emphasised Kenya's strong regional coordination, working closely with Tanzanian health authorities and the international medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres to strengthen disease surveillance and technical support.

Meanwhile, Patrick Amoth, director-general for health in the Ministry of Health, called for heightened vigilance and strict adherence to infection prevention protocols to minimise the risk of Marburg transmission.

"By sustaining these measures and fostering ongoing collaboration, Kenya aims to mitigate the risk of Marburg virus spread and safeguard public health effectively," Amoth said.

WHO faces communication challenges on bird flu after US withdrawal

AGENCIES
GENEVA, FEB 13

Communication with the US regarding the ongoing bird flu outbreak has become increas-

ingly difficult because of the country's withdrawal from the UN health agency, said the World Health Organization (WHO). Christian Lindmeier, a WHO spokesperson, addressed

the issue at a press briefing in Geneva late on Tuesday, explaining, "Communication is a challenge indeed. The traditional ways of contact have been cut", Xinhua news agency

reported. However, he declined to elaborate.

Since the outbreak of H5N1 bird flu in the US in April 2024, nearly 70 people, primarily farm workers have been infected. The

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that while there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission and the public health risk remains low, individ-

uals with prolonged exposure to birds, poultry, or livestock are at higher risks of infection.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of the US withdrawal from the WHO, par-

ticularly regarding the sharing of critical information. On his inauguration day on January 20, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to pull the US out of the organisation.

WORKING AS A TOOL FOR ANTI-NATIONAL ACTIVITIES: NADDA ON OPPN WALKOUT

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

As the Opposition staged a walkout in protest against the JPC report on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, Leader of the House J.P. Nadda demanded action against the members who walked out and termed it as a "tool and motivation for anti-national activities."

Nadda strongly criticised the Opposition for the walkout, arguing that the Chairman had given them ample opportunity to express their views. "All their points were presented properly," he said.

Slamming the Opposition's conduct, Nadda alleged that their objective was not discussion but political gain.

"The Parliamentary Affairs Minister has clearly stated that nothing has been deleted and everything is included in the annexure. The Opposition's behaviour was highly irresponsible and condemnable. This is appeasement politics," he asserted.

Nadda went further,



claiming that certain forces were conspiring against the Indian state. "This Opposition walkout should be noted as a tool and motivation for anti-national activities. The Opposition is working to strengthen anti-national forces," he alleged.

Demanding strict action, Nadda urged the Chairman to suspend the Opposition MPs who had walked out of the proceedings.

Earlier, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar expressed disappointment, stating that there was no justification for members to abandon their constitutional duty.

"What really hurts me

chaos, and a motion was introduced to record evidence related to it.

Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, had strongly opposed the report, calling it "unconstitutional" and "fake." He argued that several members had submitted dissent notes, but the majority opinion had been imposed without fair consideration.

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju countered the allegations, accusing the Opposition of misleading the debate. He maintained that no part of the report had been deleted or altered.

"Some concerns raised by the Opposition were verified, and I found that no section of the report was removed. Everything has been tabled before the House.

On what basis are these allegations being made? Do not mislead the issue," Rijju said, dismissing the claims as baseless.

He also pointed out that the Opposition had actively participated in drafting the report over the past six

months.

Jagdambika Pal, BJP MP and Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, had earlier stated that the committee was presenting its report after extensive consultations.

Pal emphasised that differences of opinion were a natural part of the legislative process. He added that even after the report's finalisation, dissenting members were invited to submit their notes of dissent, which were included in the final document along with stakeholder feedback.

The Waqf Act of 1995, enacted to regulate Waqf properties, has long been criticised for mismanagement, corruption, and illegal encroachments. The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, seeks to address these concerns through reforms such as digitisation of records, enhanced auditing mechanisms, greater transparency, and legal measures to reclaim illegally occupied properties.

RG Kar scam: Preparations start for framing charges, trial process

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, FEB 13

Initial preparations are underway to begin framing of charges and subsequent trial processes at a special court in Kolkata in the case of financial irregularities at state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has completed handing over all case-related documents to the counsels of the five accused individuals in the case for being studied by the latter.

The process of handing over all case-related documents by CBI to the counsels of the individuals was completed on Wednesday and the latter will study and update the special court about their observations in the matter on February 15.

Thereafter the counsels for both CBI and the accused individual will update a division bench of the Calcutta High Court on the entire progress in the matter, the hearing for which is scheduled on



February 18.

Based on the proceedings at the division bench, the final date for the charge-framing process in the matter at the special court might be fixed and once that is completed the trial process will start.

The division bench of the Calcutta High Court has already observed that they do not want any unnecessary delay in the beginning of the charge-framing and trial process, since the delay might impact the faith of the common people in the judicial system.

Earlier this week, the Calcutta High Court observed that the nature of the scam in the 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.

The division bench of Justice Joymalya 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 five main accused in the case, as mentioned in the charge sheet filed by the CBI are Sandip Ghosh - the former and controversial R.G. Kar Principal, his assistant-cum- bodyguard Afsar Ali, private contractors Biplab Sinha and Suman Hazra and a junior doctor Ashish Pandey. All of them are in judicial custody now.

Madrasas in Bengal propagating anti-national ideology, alleges MP Minister Vijayvargiya

AGENCIES
NAGPUR, FEB 13

Madhya Pradesh Cabinet Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya has alleged that some madrasas in West Bengal are imparting anti-national ideology. He stated that Intelligence agencies are actively investigating the matter.

Speaking to media persons here on Thursday, Vijayvargiya asserted, "Anti-national education is being imparted in Bengal's madrasas. Intelligence agencies are investigating the matter. Evidence has been found at some places, though some madrasas are also functioning properly."

The BJP leader, who was previously the state incharge of West Bengal, added, "I have been in Bengal, and I am aware that several madrasas have been involved in propagating anti-national ideology."

The issue of alleged anti-national activities in educational institutions



was further amplified by Maharashtra Minister and BJP leader Nitesh Rane, who on Wednesday alleged that a minority institute in Nandurbar district had provided shelter to a Yemeni national. He wrote to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to set up an Special Investigation Team to probe the matter.

Reacting to Rane's statement, Vijayvargiya said, "I do not fully endorse Nitesh Rane's statement. While some madrasas may be engaging in such activities, others are functioning

This 'sweet talk and bitter spit' approach is unacceptable. Rahul Gandhi should act like a serious politician. If he has proof, he should present it to the Election Commission instead of making baseless accusations that undermine democratic institutions and public confidence," Vijayvargiya said.

When asked about allegations from Maharashtra's Opposition leaders that the BJP had transported voters from neighbouring states during the Assembly elections, Vijayvargiya dismissed the claims as unfounded.

"If they had such concerns, what were they doing at that time? If they have video evidence, they should present it. CCTV cameras are installed everywhere. Simply making baseless allegations has become a habit of the Congress. This kind of political behaviour should be condemned," he asserted.

well. However, a thorough investigation is needed to ascertain the truth."

Vijayvargiya also criticised senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of making baseless allegations against constitutional institutions whenever his party loses elections.

"In a democracy, winning and losing are part of the game. But when the Congress loses, they blame voters lists, EVM manipulation, and the Election Commission. However, if they win, everything is deemed fair.

Kharge calls Waqf JPC report 'unconstitutional'; Centre says Opposition misleading issue

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on Waqf (Amendment) bill tabled its report in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday amidst uproar by the members of the Opposition members. As the chaos prevailed, the House was adjourned for 10 minutes and convened again with both sides engaging in discussion on the bill.

Leader of the House J.P. Nadda also condemned the Opposition for creat-

ing a ruckus during the reading of the President's note.

Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, called the report "unconstitutional" and "fake." He claimed that multiple members had submitted dissent notes, but the majority view was forced through without due consideration.

"The JPC report on Waqf had dissenting views from several members, but they were bulldozed. This is not right. It is condem-

nable and an anti-democratic act," Kharge stated. Expressing "shock," he said, "The dissenting views were deleted, and the report is being tabled. I condemn this, and the House will never accept this fake report."

He demanded that if dissenting views were excluded, the report should be withdrawn and reviewed again. He urged Leader of the House J.P. Nadda to take back the "unconstitutional" JPC report. Following the uproar, Nadda hit back at

the Opposition, slamming their conduct. "Debates and discussions are necessary in Parliament. In a democracy, we agree to disagree. But we must uphold traditions and conduct proceedings in a constitutional manner," he asserted. Expressing disappointment, he added, "Despite repeated requests from the Chair, the Opposition disrupted the House even during the President's message. This behaviour is highly irresponsible and deserves strong condemnation."

Timeless lifeline, powerful medium, says PM Modi on World Radio Day

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his wishes on World Radio Day on Thursday, highlighting the enduring significance of radio as a "powerful medium" that connects people across the world.

Taking to X, PM Modi posted, "Happy World Radio Day! Radio has been a timeless lifeline for several people - informing, inspiring, and connecting people. From news and culture to music and storytelling, it is a powerful medium that celebrates creativity." He also expressed his appreciation for those working in the radio industry, saying, "I compliment all those associated with the world of radio." The Prime Minister further invited citizens to share their ideas and inputs for his monthly radio program, Mann Ki Baat, which is scheduled for February 23.

First aired on October 3, 2014, Mann Ki Baat is



a widely followed program on All India Radio where the Prime Minister addresses the nation, discussing various topics of social and national importance.

World Radio Day was proclaimed by UNESCO Member States in 2011 and was later adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 as an International Day.

The first celebration of the day took place on February 13, recognising the role of radio as a crucial platform for information, culture, and public discourse.

Despite the rise of television and smartphones, radio continues to hold a unique place in mass com-

Telangana minister asks BRS leaders to participate in caste survey

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, FEB 13

Telangana Backward Classes Welfare and Transport Minister Ponnampati Prabhakar on Thursday asked the leaders of the main opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) to prove their sincerity by participating in the caste survey.

He told media persons in Karimnagar that since some people did not share their details during the survey conducted in November-December 2024, the government has decided to give them an opportunity from February 16 to February 28.

The minister said this was not a re-survey as BRS leaders claimed. He said the BRS leaders, who did not participate in the survey, were making baseless allegations.

"If top BRS leaders have faith in democracy, they should prove this by participating in the survey," he said.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL DIVISION JAMMU**

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Short Term)**

MHDJ/e-NIT 217 of 2024-25 **Dated: 11.02.2025**
Due : 17.02.2025

On behalf of the President of India, e-tenders in two cover system on turnkey basis are invited from registered/reputed firms having sufficient relevant experience for the work mentioned below:

S. No	Description of work	Project Authority	Estt	Earnest Money Deposit	Cost of tender document	Time of completion	Eligibility Criterion of Bidder
1	COMPLETE SERVICING /MAINTAINANCE AND REPAIRS TO 350 KW ELECTRICALLY OPERATED HOT WATER GENERATER (FOR UPCOMING WINTER SEASON) INSTALLED AT MAIN CHILLAR PLANT OF GMCH JAMMU.	Principal GMC & Associated Hospital Jammu	2.31 LACS	Rs.5000.00 in the Shape of EDR/ FDR/ TDR valid for 12 months pledged to the Executive Engineer MH Division Jammu	Rs 200.00 in the shape of Challan through J&K Govt. Treasury indicating Treasury Voucher No. & date and also indicating the name of work duly credited to 0059-PWD (Revenue) and uploading a copy of treasury challan / receipt on e-tendering portal. OR The bidder may deposit tender fee in the shape of e-Challan through Account no. 0097010100002163 in the name of Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospital Division Jammu Name of Bank: J&K Bank Town Hall Jammu Branch Code:0097 IFSC code: JAKA0TNHALL MICR CODE: 180051025	10 days	Registered & Reputed firms having sufficient experience as per Annexure "C" Similar nature of work

THE NIT CONSISTING OF Qualifying INFORMATION, ELGIBILITY CRITERIA, BILL OF QUANTITIES (BOQ) SETS OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT & OTHER DETAILS CAN BE VIEWED / DOWNLOADED FROM THE WEBSITE www.jktenders.gov.in.

**Sd/-
(Er. Vishal Mahajan)
Executive Engineer
Mechanical & Hospital Division
Jammu**

**DIP/J-10114/24
Date: 13-2-25**

PM Modi meets US Intelligence chief Gabbard, discusses 'India-US friendship'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, FEB 13

In what was his first formal official meeting after arriving here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Tulsi Gabbard fresh off from her Senate victory confirming her as the Director of National Intelligence.

Following the meeting on Wednesday night, PM Modi posted X: "Congratulations her on her confirmation. Discussed various aspects of the India-USA friendship, of which she's always been a strong votary." Gabbard overcame strong opposition and scepticism to win the Senate vote on Wednesday for her confirmation for the nation's top intelligence job and was sworn in just hours before meeting PM Modi.

She received 52 votes to 48, with only one Republican, Senator Mitch McConnell, joining the Democrats to vote against her.

She is an American Hindu with parents who have embraced the faith.

Some of those opposed



to her used her religion in their campaign against her.

During her 11 years in the House of Representatives, she was a strong supporter of India.

She was the co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans. She also served on the House Intelligence Subcommittee and the Armed Forces Committee.

A former Vice President of the Democratic Party, she left the party and joined the Republican

Party and campaigned for Trump last year.

Attorney General Pam Bondi administered the oath of office to Gabbard, who Trump called "an American of extraordinary courage and patriotism".

He noted that she was deployed three times in the Army National Guard and that she is a former Democratic Congresswoman, riffing, "Can you believe that?"

Gabbard, 43, a former Democratic Congresswoman from Hawaii, had

faced bipartisan scepticism about her suitability for overseeing the spy agencies.

Gabbard thanked the President for his trust in her and vowed to "refocus our intelligence community" after she was sworn in.

"Unfortunately, the American people have very little trust in the intelligence community, largely because they've seen the weaponisation and politicisation of an entity that is supposed to be purely focused on ensuring our national security," the new Intelligence Chief said.

She has met PM Modi several times in the past, and after a meeting in 2019, she said, "India is the world's largest democracy and one of the United States most important partners in the Asia-Pacific region."

"It is important that we continue to strengthen this partnership between our two nations that has long had support from both Democrat and Republican leaders," she said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of External Affairs

(MEA) stated in a post on X that discussions during Wednesday's meeting also focused on enhancing intelligence cooperation in counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, and emerging threats.

"PM Narendra Modi held a productive meeting with US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard in Washington DC today. Discussions focused on enhancing intelligence cooperation in counter-terrorism, cybersecurity and emerging threats," the post said.

PM Modi arrived in the US capital on Wednesday around 5.30 p.m. (Thursday, 4 a.m. IST) after a visit to France, where he had co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron.

PM Modi and Trump will hold bilateral discussions in the White House on Thursday.

"Our nations will keep working closely for the benefit of our people and for a better future for our planet," PM Modi said on X.

S. KOREA CALLS ON DOCTORS' GROUPS TO RESUME TALKS WITH GOVERNMENT

AGENCIES
SEOUL, FEB 13

South Korea's Second Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo called on the medical community on Thursday to resume talks with the government to resolve the prolonged deadlock over medical reform.

"It is very disappointing and regretful that the government and the medical community are holding no discussion at all at the moment," Min-soo said during a government meeting, urging the doctors' groups to return to the negotiation table, Yonhap news agency reported.

Thousands of trainee doctors have been absent from their workplaces in the form of a mass resignation since February last year, as the medical community continued to urge the government to reconsider its planned increase of medical school students.

Earlier, the government announced plans to increase medical school



admissions by 1,500 students for 2025, as part of a broader initiative to raise the total by approximately 10,000 over the next five years to address a shortage of doctors.

Min-soo said the government has been working to normalise the medical system and resolve difficulties for junior doctors.

"Some raise concerns the medical community, trainee doctors and medical school students are not returning to talks with the government or their jobs in order to disrupt the country's educa-

tion of medical workers and treatment of patients in a move to put the government in a tough spot and force it into accepting their request," Min-soo said.

"I hope the concerns are not true and will make sure that such actions are unacceptable."

Last month, acting President Choi Sang-mok said the government is open to readjusting the country's medical school admissions quota for next year from scratch, raising hopes for a breakthrough in the prolonged walkout by trainee doctors.

Bangladesh: Experts slam Yunus-led govt's 'wrong' economic policies

AGENCIES
DHAKA, FEB 13

The economic policies of the current Bangladesh interim government led by Muhammad Yunus have come under criticism from its own stakeholders.

The Director General of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies and former economist at Bangladesh Bank, Mustafa K Mujeri, has stated that the current interim government is adopting the wrong policies at the wrong times.

"It has been six months since the interim government took over. Unfortunately, there has been almost no success in the financial sector of the country at this time. The economy has largely stag-

nated due to some core problems, such as a high inflation rate and a slow pace of financial growth. There has not been much success in terms of other problems we have. As a result, the economy is yet to bounce back," stated a report published in leading Bangladesh daily Prothom Alo.

The report further quoted Mujeri as saying, "There is a common pattern of the economic policies adopted so far by the interim government. And that is adopting the wrong policies at the wrong time. The consequences won't be good in the coming days."

According to another report by Bangladesh's leading business daily, The Financial Express,

the interim government of Bangladesh is facing formidable macroeconomic challenges, in particular, reining in inflation. The country grapples with slowing GDP growth, currency devaluation, financial crisis, and looming debt.

Mustafizur Rahman, an economist who has closely followed Bangladesh's economy for decades, said, "It appears that the economy has fallen into a vicious cycle."

He cited the authorities' pursuit of a contractionary monetary policy, which has increased the cost of funds, inhibiting private investment, according to a leading Bangladesh newspaper, The Daily Star.

"The government's decision to raise value-added

tax (VAT) on nearly 100 goods and services has stoked inflation and further eroded the purchasing power of ordinary citizens.

Meanwhile, in the financial sector, default loans have continued to pile up," he further added.

The economy of Bangladesh has been facing severe challenges amidst the huge unrest in the country since August 2024.

The business sector in the country is facing a huge liquidity crunch, with numerous commercial and industrial establishments shutting down. The entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are facing difficulties in importing raw materials to sustain their businesses.

UN welcomes efforts to resolve Ukraine conflict following Trump-Putin phone call

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS, FEB 13

The United Nations welcomes all efforts to resolve the Ukraine-Russia conflict and sees the phone call between the US and Russian leaders as a "positive thing," a UN spokesman said.

"What we would appreciate is any efforts to resolve the war in Ukraine that would involve the Russian and Ukrainian sides. And so obviously, if both of them are willing to be involved in a process, that would be a welcome development," said Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on Wednesday, speaking of the phone conversation.

"Given the importance



of the United States and the Russian Federation, the UN welcomes any efforts to resolve issues through regular contact," the spokesman said at a daily press briefing, calling the conversation between the two leaders "a positive thing."

The White House and the Kremlin announced separately on Wednesday that US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin held

a phone conversation, reports Xinhua news agency.

After his first official phone call with Russia's President Vladimir Putin after he became President, Trump posted on Truth Social, "We both agreed, we want to stop the millions of deaths taking place in the War with Russia/Ukraine."

After his call with Zelensky, he said, "A meeting is being set up on Friday in

Munich, where Vice President J.D. Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio will lead the Delegation."

They will be there to participate in the Munich Security Conference where foreign affairs, defence and security officials from many countries will participate.

Trump said Zelensky, "like President Putin, wants to make PEACE. We discussed a variety of topics related to the War."

When asked whether the UN will be part of the negotiations, Haq said, "We would have to see what role we would have to play. Obviously, as we've said many times over the last three years, the United Nations is willing to play a good office role if asked to by the parties."

Pressing ahead with Ukraine War diplomacy, Trump to meet Putin in Saudi Arabia

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, FEB 13

On a mission to end the Ukraine War, US President Donald Trump has said that he is planning to meet with Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Saudi Arabia.

After a phone call with Putin on Wednesday morning, he told reporters in Washington that they will have several meetings, and "the first time we'll meet in Saudi Arabia".

In addition, he said, "We expect that he'll come here, and I'll go there (Russia)."

Trump's long call with Putin was their first official conversation since he started his second term, and he also spoke with Ukraine's

President Volodymyr Zelensky.

In posts on Truth Social, he said that the US will foster negotiations for ending the war and was appointing a negotiating team that includes Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Central Intelligence Agency Director John Ratcliffe. He said that a meeting is being set up on Friday in Munich, where Vice President J.D. Vance and Marco Rubio will lead the US delegation.

They will be there to participate in the Munich Security Conference where foreign affairs, defence and security officials from many countries will participate.

Trump talks to Putin, Zelensky; says US to start negotiations to end Ukraine war

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, FEB 13

US President Donald Trump spoke to Presidents Vladimir Putin of Russia and Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine on Wednesday and said that negotiations will begin on Friday to end the Ukraine war.

After his first official phone call with Russia's President Vladimir Putin after he became President, Trump posted on Truth Social, "We both agreed, we want to stop the millions of deaths taking place in the War with Russia/Ukraine."

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Trump said Zelensky, "like President Putin, wants to make PEACE. We discussed a variety of topics related to the War."

Before Trump's talks with the two leaders, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth ruled out going back to the borders in 2014 when Russia began its incursions into Ukraine.

Russian news agency RIA Novosti quoted Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov as saying, "Trump called for a quick end to the fighting and a peaceful solution to the problem."

"Putin, for his part, mentioned the need to



address the root causes of the conflict and agreed with Trump that a long-term settlement could be achieved through peaceful negotiations."

Trump had said during his election campaign that he would end the Ukraine War within 24 hours of becoming President, but reality was more complicated and this was the first

belated step towards that goal.

On Tuesday, Russia released an American school teacher Marc Fogel who had been sentenced to a 14-year prison term on charges of possessing marijuana and held since 2021. He said that he was using for medical reasons.

In exchange, the US

released a Russian held in the US.

Setting the terms for a possible end to the Ukraine War, Hegseth said it was "unrealistic" to return to the borders before 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea.

Speaking at a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group in Brussels, he said Kyiv should not get NATO membership as part of any deal.

He said the US would not send troops for a peacekeeping operation in Ukraine and should not be under the NATO umbrella.

In his Truth Social post, Trump said during the "highly productive phone call" that they "discussed Ukraine, the Middle East, Energy, Artificial Intelligence, the power of the Dollar, and various other

subjects"

The reference to the Dollar was probably about his opposition to a currency like the one from BRICS becoming an alternative to the Dollar for international transactions. (India has ruled out a BRICS currency)

Trump's post talked of the close cooperation between the US and Russia during World War II and said, "We each talked about the strengths of our respective Nations and the great benefit that we will someday have in working together."

Close ties between Russia and China strengthened by Moscow's isolation after its invasion of Ukraine have been worrisome to the US and Trump would like to weaken that.

AUSTRIAN COALITION TALKS LED BY FREEDOM PARTY FAIL

AGENCIES
VIENNA, FEB 13

Efforts to form a coalition government in Austria collapsed after negotiations between the far-right Freedom Party and the conservative People's Party broke down. The Freedom Party had been in talks with the People's Party since January,

aiming to establish Austria's first government led by the far-right.

In the Austrian parliamentary elections last September, the Freedom Party emerged as the leading party with approximately 29 per cent of the vote, followed by the People's Party with 26.3 per cent and the Social Democratic Party with 21.1 per cent. The liberal NEOS party

secured fourth place, reports Xinhua news agency.

On Wednesday, Freedom Party leader Herbert Kickl announced in a press release that he had returned the mandate to form a government to President Alexander Van der Bellen. Kickl attributed the failure of the coalition talks to the People's Party, stating that his

party had made significant concessions during negotiations.

However, People's Party leader Christian Stocker placed the blame on the Freedom Party, telling Austrian news agency APA that "it became clear during the talks that no agreement could be reached on the core principles the People's Party had established

before negotiations began."

Following the September elections, the Freedom Party was initially excluded from coalition discussions by all major parties. As a result, Van der Bellen first tasked the People's Party with forming a new government in October. However, three-party coalition talks involving the People's Party, the Social Demo-

cratic Party, and the NEOS party collapsed in early January. Subsequent two-party negotiations between the People's Party and the Social Democrats also failed. In mid-January, Van der Bellen granted Kickl the mandate to form a government.

Van der Bellen said on Wednesday night that he would hold talks with leaders of politi-

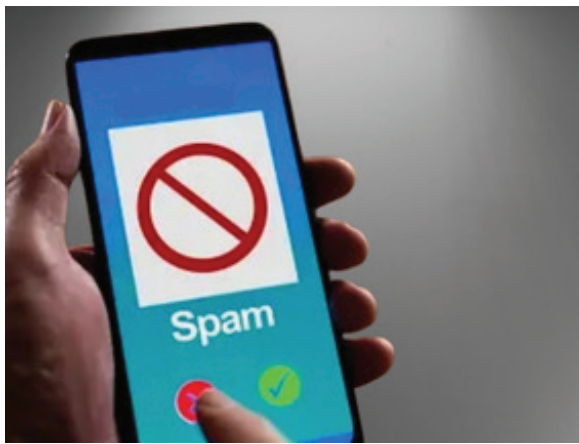
cal parties in the coming days on the formation of a new government. The Austrian president laid out four options for the way forward: a snap election; a minority government; a temporary government of experts; or new attempts to form a majority coalition government. He also called for compromises from all sides.

Centre warns telcos of fine up to Rs 10 lakh over failure to curb spam

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

In order to further strengthen consumer protection, the government has warned telecom services providers of fine up to Rs 10 lakh over failure to implement revised regulations dealing with unsolicited commercial communication (UCC) and SMSes.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has introduced amendments to the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations (TCCPCR), 2018 that aim to deal with evolving methods of misuse of telecom resource and promote a more transparent commercial communication ecosystem for consumers. "A financial disincentive (FD) of Rs 2 lakh for first instance of violation, Rs 5 lakh for second instance of violation and Rs 10 lakh per instance for subse-



quent instances of violation, shall be imposed on access providers in case of misreporting of the count of UCC," said TRAI.

These FDs shall be imposed separately for registered and unregistered senders. Moreover, these FDs will be in addition to the FD imposed on access providers against invalid closure of complaints, and not fulfilling their obligations in respect of registration of Message

Headers and Content Templates, said the telecom regulator.

The amendments aim that the legitimate commercial communication occur through registered entities, based on the preference and consent of the customers, thereby, balancing the interests of consumers with the need for supporting legitimate economic activities in the country, according to the Ministry of Telecommuni-

cations. Consumers will now be able to make complaint against spam (UCC) calls and messages sent by unregistered senders without the need of first registering their preferences for blocking or receiving commercial communications.

"To make the complaint process simpler and more effective, it has been mandated that if a complaint made by a customer contains bare minimum essential data such as number of the complainant, number of Sender from which the Spam/UCC has been received, date on which spam is received and a brief about the UCC Voice Call/Message, the complaint shall be treated as a valid complaint," according to revised norms.

Further, a customer can now make a complaint about spam/ UCC within 7 days of receiving spam as compared to earlier 3-day

time limit. "Time limit for taking action by the access providers against the UCC from unregistered senders has been reduced from 30 days to 5 days. To ensure prompt action against the senders of UCC, the criterion for taking action against them has been revised and made more stringent," said TRAI.

As compared to earlier criterion of 'having 10 complaints against the sender in last 7 days' to trigger action, it has been modified to "having 5 complaints against the sender in last 10 days".

This would enable faster action and at the same time, covering more number of spammers, according to the regulator.

The revised regulations will enable TRAI in safeguarding consumer interests while promoting a more secure and trusted digital communication environment.

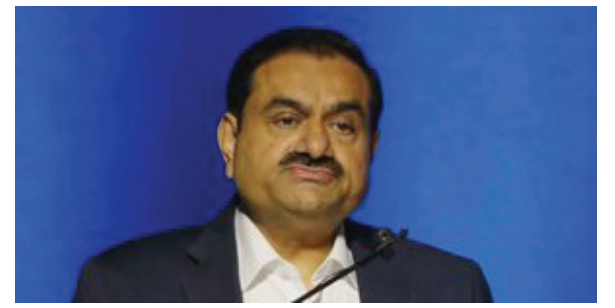
Sonu Sood lauds Gautam Adani's pioneering initiative to boost skill development in India

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, FEB 13

Actor Sonu Sood applauded Gautam Adani's skill development programme, terming it a 'great initiative'.

Taking to his X account on Wednesday, Sonu Sood wrote: "Great initiative by @gautam_adani. Many at the grassroots lack access to quality education and skill development. This effort empowers them to rise above their circumstances and build a better future. #Educationforall #Empowerment #Seavoursel." Earlier in the day, Gautam Adani, founder and chairman of the Adani Group, had announced one of India's largest skill development programs.

To share the news, Gautam Adani took to his social media and wrote: "Delighted to announce one of India's largest Skill & Employment initiatives! In partnership with Singapore's ITEES, the global leader in technical training, the Adani Group is



launching the world's largest finishing school in Mundra.

This state-of-the-art facility will blend AI-driven immersive learning with cutting-edge innovation centres and annually train over 25,000 learners to help accelerate the Make in India movement."

On February 10, Gautam Adani announced Adani health city in partnership with Mayo Clinic.

Sharing the news on social media, Adani wrote "Proud to launch Adani Health City in partnership with Mayo Clinic, pioneering world-class medical research, affordable healthcare & education. Starting with two 1000-bed hospitals and medical

colleges in Ahmedabad & 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!"

Recently Gautam Adani's son Jeet Adani got married to Diva Jaimin Shah in a private and traditional ceremony. The wedding took place at Shantigram, the Adani township in the city.

In a remarkable display of philanthropy, Gautam Adani opted for a simple wedding ceremony and instead donated 10,000 crore to various social causes, supporting healthcare, education, and skill development.

Govt not to extend duty-free import of yellow peas beyond Feb: Joshi

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 12

The government will not extend duty-free import of yellow peas beyond February, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

The matter will be discussed in a Group of Ministers (GoM) meeting headed by Union Minister Amit Shah scheduled on Thursday. "We are stopping the duty-free import of yellow peas," Joshi told reporters on the sidelines of The Pulses Conclave 2025.

The government had allowed the duty-free import of yellow peas in December 2023 and subsequently extended it thrice till February 28.

The food ministry has given its comments and a



India's yellow peas import stood at 30 lakh tonnes out of 67 lakh tonnes of overall pulses import during the 2024 calendar year, he added.

"Our pulses production was badly hit last year and the prices were high so we had to import. But I don't think this year we are going to import similar quantity, it will be much less."

With likely curbs on the import of yellow peas, Kothari said the country's overall pulses import may decline in the 2025-26 fiscal from the estimated 5.5 million tonnes in the current year due to higher domestic production.

The industry expects the government may impose a 15-20 per cent import duty on yellow peas.

Meanwhile, India Pulses and Grain Association (IPGA) Chairman Bimal Kothari said the government may impose restrictions on yellow peas import in the interest of farmers.

"We expect that this (duty-free import of yellow peas) may not be extended or there might be some restrictions on import," he said at a press conference organised on the sidelines of The Pulses Conclave.

The government may impose a 15-20 per cent import duty on yellow peas.

FEBRUARY 13: INDIAN STOCK MARKET OPENS HIGHER, NIFTY ABOVE 23,120

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, FEB 13

The Indian benchmark indices opened higher on Thursday amid mixed global clues as buying was seen in the PSU bank and financial service sectors.

At around 9.45 am, the Sensex was trading 244.25 points or 0.32 per cent up at 76,415.33 while the Nifty climbed 79.25 points or 0.34 per cent at 23,124.50.

On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 1,528 stocks were trading in green, while 781 stocks were in red.

Nifty Bank was up 85.65 points or 0.17 per cent at 49,565.10. Nifty Midcap 100 index was trading at 50,791.95 after climbing 35.55 points or 0.07 per



cent. Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 15,995.25 after dropping 37.75 points or 0.24 per cent.

Meanwhile, in the Sensex pack, Zomato, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Sun Pharma, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finserv, M&M, Bajaj Finance, ITC, Infosys, Tata Steel, SBI and ICICI Bank were the top gainers. Titan, Tech Mahin-

dra, Hindustan Unilever, IndusInd Bank and NTPC were the top losers.

Dow Jones declined 0.50 per cent to close at 44,368.56. The S&P 500 dropped 0.27 per cent to 6,051.97 and the Nasdaq climbed 0.03 per cent to close at 19,649.95 in the last trading session.

In the Asian markets, Jakarta and China were

trading in red. Whereas Seoul, Bangkok, Japan and Hong Kong were trading in green.

In terms of institutional activity, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) continued their selling equities on February 12, offloading equities worth Rs 4,969.30 crore, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) provided support by purchasing equities worth Rs 5,929.24 crore on the same day.

On Wednesday, the Indian equity markets experienced a turbulent session marked by high volatility.

However, a strong rebound from the intraday low of 22798 pared down the initial losses, leading to a modest recovery and

a subdued close for the Nifty.

"On the technical front, 22900-22800 seems to act as a support zone, while any further correction is likely to disrupt the short-term technical structure. Conversely, 23250-23350 is likely to be seen as an intermediate resistance zone, followed by significant obstacles around the 23400-23500 subzones," said Sameet Chavan, Head Research, Technical and Derivative - Angel One.

Given the current market dynamics, traders are advised to exercise caution and await confirmation of price action at key levels before initiating fresh positions, said Aakash Shah of Choice Broking.

India's white-collar hiring grows by 32 pc in January: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 12

Hiring for white-collar jobs witnessed a 32 per cent year-on-year surge in January, driven by industries such as semiconductors, energy, waste management and manufacturing in India, a report said on Thursday.

The growth in hiring is attributed to surging consumer demand, strategic incentives outlined in the Union Budget 2025-26 and an increased focus on sustainability initiatives, according to foundit Insights Tracker.

There was a 32 per

cent year-on-year jump in hiring for January 2025, signalling renewed confidence in the market, it said.

The report revealed that green jobs stood out in January, witnessing a 41 per cent increase over the last two years led by expanding clean energy initiatives.

Sectors like semiconductors, energy, and waste management are leading this growth, fuelled by global net-zero emission targets, the report said.

Bengaluru, Delhi and Pune are emerging as key hubs for these roles, which

demand specialised skills in areas like energy auditing and sustainability strategy, it added.

Demand for green jobs is projected to rise another 11 per cent in 2025, driven by renewable energy, EVs, and green hydrogen initiatives.

"India's job market continues to grow at a strong pace, with hiring surging across key industries. Sectors like travel, retail, and green jobs are seeing sustained momentum, reflecting business confidence and evolving industry priorities," foundit Chief Revenue and Growth Officer Pranay Kale said.

Further, the report added that the travel and tourism sector recorded a 17 per cent increase in hiring growth in January 2025, driven by strong consumer demand and

Government policies, including key budget provisions, are accelerating this shift - especially in renewable energy, EVs, and sustainability-focused industries.

"As hiring expands beyond metro cities, Tier II hubs are also emerging as key employment centres, reinforcing India's transition to a future-ready, greener economy," Kale said.

Consequently, demand for skilled professionals in supply chain management, customer experience, and AI-driven retail analytics is rising, according to the report.

favourable government initiatives.

This trend is evident across aviation, luxury, and eco-tourism segments, and new roles emerging in travel technology that leverage AI and data analytics, the report said.

Similarly, the retail sector saw a 24 per cent year-on-year surge, driven by rising consumer spending and digital transformation, it added.

Consequently, demand for skilled professionals in supply chain management, customer experience, and AI-driven retail analytics is rising, according to the report.

NATCO Pharma shares tumble 20 pc after Q3 earnings

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 12

Shares of NATCO Pharma Ltd on Thursday slumped 20 per cent after the firm reported a 37.75 per cent decline in consolidated net profit in the December quarter.

The stock tanked 19.86 per cent to Rs 975 on the BSE. At the NSE, it cracked 19.99 per cent to Rs 975.05.

NATCO Pharma Ltd on Wednesday reported a 37.75 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 132.4 crore in the



December quarter, hit by a drop in formulations exports.

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 212.7 crore in the third quarter of the previous fiscal year, NATCO Pharma said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated revenue

from operations in the quarter under review stood at Rs 474.8 crore as compared to Rs 758.6 crore in the same period a year ago, it added.

Formulation exports in the third quarter were lower at Rs 285.8 crore as compared to Rs 605.6 crore in the same period of the last fiscal year.

Formulation sales in the domestic market stood at Rs 96.1 crore, down from Rs 99.4 crore in the year-ago period, NATCO Pharma said in an investor presentation.

EQUITY MUTUAL FUNDS SEE RS 39,688 CRORE INFLOW IN JANUARY

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 12

Investors' confidence in equity mutual funds remains strong with the segment attracting Rs 39,688 Crore in January, driven by sharp inflow in small cap and flexi-cap schemes, even as market volatilities continued.

However, this was 3.56 per cent lower than the net inflow of Rs 41,156 Crore registered in December. The latest fund infusion by investors also marks the 47th consecutive month of inflows into the segment, according to data released

by Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Wednesday.

Moreover, inflows into systematic investment plans (SIP) came at Rs 26,400 Crore, a tad lower from December's Rs 26,459 Crore. The SIP assets under management stood at Rs 13.2 Lakh Crore, which is around a fifth of the overall pie.

"Despite market volatility, SIP contributions remained robust, totalling Rs 26,400 Crore for the month.

We will continue to educate investors to stay invested through phases

of volatility with a focus on disciplined, long-term approach to wealth creation," Venkat Chalasani, Chief Executive, Amfi, said.

The decline in equity fund inflows occurred amid sluggish equity markets, with the BSE Sensex dropping by 1.28 per cent in January.

The investors' focus towards making the most of the market fall in January can also be gauged from the fact that around 30.7 Lakh new folios were added in January, Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-



ager research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Further, volatility in the Indian equity mar-

kets, combined with geopolitical uncertainties and anticipation of the Union Budget, led to a decline in equity mutual fund AUM,

Jatinder Pal Singh, CEO, ITI Mutual Fund, said.

The assets under management (AUM) for equity-oriented mutual funds dropped by 4 per cent in January to Rs 29.46 Lakh Crore from Rs 30.57 Lakh Crore in December.

Within the equity schemes, sectoral or thematic category attracted investors with the highest net inflow at Rs 9,016 Crore, which is way lower than Rs 15,331 Crore inflow in December.

The midcap category saw inflows of Rs 5,148 Crore in January 2025, while the smallcap cat-

egory witnessed infusion of Rs 5,721 Crore, the data showed.

The small and midcap schemes of mutual funds continued to attract investors with inflows highlighting their preference for these segments largely driven by the high returns that they have generated over the last few years, Srivastava said.

The large schemes, which are being recommended by a slew of experts as a safer bet, saw inflows rising to Rs 3,063 Crore in January from Rs 2,010 Crore in December, while inflow in

flexi-cap category grew to Rs 5,697 Crore from Rs 4,731 Crore.

Apart from equities, debt funds registered an inflow of Rs 1.28 Lakh Crore in the month of January, against an outflow of Rs 1.27 Lakh Crore in December.

The inflow in debt funds was primarily in the overnight, ultra-short duration, low duration and money market funds along with liquid funds which offset the outflows in debt funds with a maturity of over one year, Sanjay Agarwal, senior director, CareEdge Ratings, said.

Harmanpreet credits WPL for the improved strike rate of all batters in domestic season

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

Ahead of the start of the third edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL), Mumbai Indians skipper Harmanpreet Kaur believes the five-team tournament has been a big reason behind the strike rate of all batters becoming better in the ongoing 2024/25 domestic season. As the five teams gear up for a brand new season of the WPL running from February 14 to March 15, it comes behind the backdrop of a domestic season where the batters have been expressive at the crease, leading to more attacking strokeplay being seen in the matches. It's also helped that



the WPL franchises have been holding off-season and pre-season camps for Indian players which work mainly on enhancing the players' skillsets, as well as work on their fitness and nutrition levels. "One thing was very clear - if we talk about

our domestic cricket this season, the strike rate of all the batters was much better.

That (WPL) was the only reason. There were more than 300 runs in domestic (games) and everyone was batting with a very good approach. So I think

the domestic cricketers saw one thing from WPL if they want to participate in this competition, they really need to work hard on their strike rate and power-hitting ability."

Harmanpreet's point is further justified through the Senior Women's One-Day Trophy quarter-final between Bengal and Haryana in Rajkot. In that match, Shafali Verma smashed a 115-ball 197 for Haryana, but Bengal pulled off the chase with five wickets in hand and five balls to spare.

Tanusree Sarkar led the way for Bengal chasing a mammoth total with 113 off 83 balls, while Priyanka Bala, Dhara Gujjar and Sasthi Mondal scored half-centuries as Bengal

clinched the record for highest successful chase in women's List A cricket.

"I think that (effect of WPL on batters' strike rates) we have seen in our domestic cricket and that's also the biggest positive that we have taken from WPL and our cricketers are working on that. Power-hitting ability and fielding, I think there are a lot of areas they are trying to improve every season, so that is a very good thing," added Harmanpreet.

MI, the WPL 2023 winners, will begin their 2025 season against the Delhi Capitals at the BCA Stadium in Vadodara on February 15. After Vadodara, MI will play its games in Bengaluru, Lucknow and home venue Mumbai.

Relying on pace may work in few games but line & length are key: Nahid Rana

AGENCIES
DHAKA, FEB 13

Bangladesh's pace sensation Nahid Rana said he is unfazed by the 150 kmph tag and opined that relying solely on pace may work for a couple of matches, but the line and length are crucial in the long run.

The right-arm pacer had become the first Bangladeshi bowler to clock 150 kmph, when he rocked Pakistan with his pace and bounce during a 2-0 Test series win in Rawalpindi last September.

"I'm not thinking about the tag (150 kmph). My focus is on maintaining myself and bowling with the right line and length. Relying only on pace might work for one or two matches, but not for the remain-

ing eight out of ten, so line and length are crucial.

"In cricket, if your line and length are right, you can prove yourself on any wicket, in any situation. I'm focusing on making the most of the opportunities ahead of me and trying to contribute to my country," Rana told Cricbuzz.

The 22-year-old is expected to play a lead in Bangladesh's pace attack in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy with his raw pace.

"Personally, I've been preparing well for the Champions Trophy. I'm working on improving my weaknesses so I can perform better. There is no end to learning. I can make mistakes and still learn during the Champions Trophy. Our goal

will be to take it match by match, focusing on team performance. Hopefully, we will do well as a unit," he added.

Rana believes the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) was an excellent preparatory platform for the Champions trophy, especially with its batting-friendly surfaces.

"As a bowler, I think I should be ready to play on any wicket because, in international cricket, you never know what kind of pitch you'll get - batting or bowling-friendly. Since there were batting wickets in the BPL, we had to take on the challenge.

"If we can bowl well on batting wickets, we'll do even better when the conditions favour bowlers.

India go down fighting 2-3 against South Korea in Badminton Asia Mixed Team C'ships

AGENCIES
QINGDAO (CHINA), FEB 13

Men's singles player Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and women's doubles pairing of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly fought back from two matches down to keep the team in the hunt, but that did not prove enough as India went down 2-3 against South Korea in their second Group D clash in the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship 2025 on Thursday. Having already qualified for the knockout stage, India and South Korea faced off to determine the group winner.

It wasn't an ideal start for India as the mixed doubles combination of Dhruv Kapil and Tanisha Crasto and women's singles player Malvika Bansod lost their respective matches.

National Games double gold medalist Sathish brought India back into the contest, keeping his nerves under pressure to beat



Cho Geonyeop 17-21, 21-18, 21-19.

World No. 9 combination of Gayatri and Treesa then raised hope of an Indian win by getting the better of Kim Min Ji and Kim Yu Jung 19-21, 21-16, 21-11 to make the tie score 2-2.

Indian once again tweaked their men's doubles combination, this time fielding Satwiksairaj Rankireddy with MR Arjun against Jin Yong and Na Sung Seung. Satwik and Arjun struggled to find the rhythm in the opening game but gave their opponents a tough fight in the second, eventually going down 25-23.

India's campaign in the

last edition of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship ended with a 2-3 loss to China in the semi-finals and they returned home with a first-ever medal - a bronze - from the continental tournament.

Result: India lost to South Korea 2-3 (Dhruv Kapil/Tanisha Crasto lost to Ki Dong Ju/Jeong Na Eun 21-11, 12-21, 15-21; Malvika Bansod lost to Sim Yu Jin 9-21, 10-21; Sathish Karunakaran beat Cho Geonyeop 17-21, 21-18, 21-19; Gayatri Gopichand/Treesa Jolly beat Kim Min Ji/Kim Yu Jung 19-21, 21-16, 21-11; MR Arjun/Satwiksairaj Rankireddy lost to Jin Yong/Na Sung Seung 14-21, 23-25).

RAJAT PATIDAR TO LEAD RCB IN IPL 2025

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, FEB 13

India batter Rajat Patidar has been appointed captain of the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) for the upcoming IPL 2025, starting on March 21.

RCB made this announcement at an event in Bengaluru on Thursday, with Patidar, director of cricket Mo Bobat, and head coach Andy Flower in attendance.

Patidar will replace former South African batter Faf du Plessis, who captained the side from 2022 to 2024 but was not retained in last year's IPL mega auction.

The right-hander was one of the three players retained by the franchise along with former India captain Virat Kohli and pacer Yash Dayal. It will be his first leadership role in the IPL while on the domestic level, he captained his state Madhya Pradesh in the 2024-25 seasons of the 20-over

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy.

The 31-year-old has played three seasons for the franchise since joining RCB in 2021 and has become a vital player for the side. He has scored 799 runs in 28 matches at a strike rate of 158.85.

On Patidar's appointment as RCB, Kohli congratulated him, saying, "Rajat, firstly I want to congratulate you and wish you all the very best. I want to tell you that the way you have grown in this franchise and the way you have performed, you have really made a place in the hearts of all the fans of RCB all over India. They get really excited to watch you play, so this is very well deserved. I want to tell you that I and the other team members will be right behind you and you'll have all our support to grow into this role.

"Of course, it's a big responsibility. I've done this for many years and



Faf's done it for the last few years. To be seen as the guy who will take this franchise forward, I'm sure it's a huge honour for you and I'm very, very happy for you. You have earned the right to be in this position and I'm sure you will grow from strength to strength," he added.

Patidar was the second-highest run-scorer in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, amassing 428 runs in nine innings at an impressive average of 61.14 and a strike rate of 186.08. In

the Vijay Hazare Trophy, he scored 226 runs, maintaining an average of 56.50 and a strike rate of 107.10.

"I've seen Rajat evolve in the last couple of years as a player. He's got the chance to play for India. His game has improved many levels in the last couple of years - the way he has led his state team as well and the responsibility that he's taken and shown everyone that he has what it takes to lead this amazing franchise," Kohli said.

"I just wish him all the very best and I would request all the fans to show him absolute support, get right behind him and know that he will always and always do what's best for the team, what's best for this franchise.

"We must all get together and support him because regardless of what happens, who does what the most important thing is the team and the franchise. We all have a responsibility to work

towards the growth of this amazing team and franchise. Sending my best wishes to him and sending all the fans lots of love and looking forward to see you all soon and have Rajat start off the season with a bang," the former RCB captain signed off.

Despite being finalists three times, RCB are yet to win the IPL title, with their last appearance in the final coming in 2016. They've reached the play-offs in four of the last five seasons, including in 2024, when they secured a spot in the top four by winning their last six league matches, only to lose in the eliminator.

With Patidar's appointment, Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals remain the only teams yet to announce their captains for the upcoming season.

Shreyas Iyer, who captained KKR last year, will now lead Punjab Kings, while former DC captain Rishabh Pant will captain Lucknow Super Giants.

Indian women's team banks on home support ahead of the FIH Pro League matches

AGENCIES
BHUBANESWAR, FEB 13

After the remarkable Women's Asian Champions Trophy title win in November last year, the Indian team is all set to continue its run of form into the FIH Pro League matches at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar from February 15 to 25.

India will kickstart their campaign with two matches against England on February 15 and 16 followed by clashes against Spain on February 18 and 19. The side will also face challenging opponents in World No. 4 Germany and World No. 1 Netherlands on February 21, 22 and February 24, 25, respec-



tively.

India are led by Arjuna Awardee Salima Tete with deputy Navneet Kaur by her side. With a blend of experienced players of the likes of Savita, Sushila

Chanu, Nikki Pradhan, Vandana Katariya, Uditia, Lalremsiami and Sharmila Devi alongside star youngsters like Deepika, Sunelita Toppo and Jyoti in the ranks, India have a well-

balanced squad.

The Indian players are heading into the tournament after their recent performances in the Women's Hockey India League, which followed their iconic Women's ACT win in Rajgir. Last season, India had a disappointing campaign, finishing eighth with only eight points in 16 games and could only score 16 goals over the course of the prestigious Pro League and will be eyeing to put up an improved show backed by the home crowd.

Ahead of the India leg, captain Salima Tete stated, "We can't wait to play at the Kalinga Stadium again and win as many points as we can. We are facing

challenging opponents, but I am confident that the girls are ready to take on the challenge and do their best on the field. We had a disappointing season last time, but I feel we are well-trained and prepared to do better this time around."

Head coach Harendra Singh commented on India's preparation ahead of the crucial matches and said, "The girls have worked extremely hard in the camp, and I am confident that we have a squad that is good enough to play on par with all our opponents. With the support of the home crowd behind us, we have crucial matches coming up, and we need to focus on winning maximum points."

WPL: Gujarat Giants' Kashvee Gautam aiming to be back in national reckoning

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

The upcoming third edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL), starting from Friday, serves as a key platform for Indian players aiming for national team selection.

Gujarat Giants' (GG) fast-bowling all-rounder Kashvee Gautam is sure to attract the attention of onlookers in the Indian cricket ecosystem. She first came into limelight by picking up ten wickets in an innings, including a hat-trick, for Chandigarh in an Under-19 one-day game in 2020.

In December 2023, she became the most expensive uncapped Indian cricketer in WPL's his-

tory with a pay cheque of Rs 2 crore in the auction ahead of 2024 WPL. But Kashvee never set foot on the field due to a stress fracture in the toe of her left foot, ruling her out of WPL 2024.

Eventually, Kashvee made a comeback in the 2024/25 Senior Women's One-Day Trophy, where she picked seven wickets in six games for Chandigarh. Ahead of GG set to open their WPL 2025 campaign against defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) in Vadodara, Kashvee's ability to hit the deck hard at a high speed and be a quality finisher is something the side will benefit hugely from this season.

"Last year, I was with the team in Bangalore for some time. I saw what I was missing out on, and also realized what I could add up. After recovery, I worked on my range hitting. I looked for areas for scoring shots - not only in front but also behind the wicket. I developed variations in bowling, as there is very little margin of error in WPL.

"My domestic season went well, my economy was good and I am confident that I will do my best in the coming matches. I want to take as many wickets as I can in powerplay and keep the economy down. I want to take the game to the end and finish matches in my role as a finisher," said Kashvee to IANS.

Labuschagne's form 'alarming sign' for Australia ahead of WTC final, opines Finch

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, FEB 13

Former captain Aaron Finch opined that Australia should consider dropping Marnus Labuschagne for the World Test Championship final against South Africa at Lord's in June, citing his extended lean form as a reason he should no longer be included.

With recent successful debuts from Sam Konstas, Beau Webster and

Josh Inglis, Australia face tough selection decisions for the final as competition for batting spots intensifies.

Travis Head, who opened in Sri Lanka, mentioned that he expects Konstas to reclaim his spot at the top of the order against South Africa, while Cameron Green is also in contention to play as a specialist batter as he recovers from the back surgery that sidelined him this season.

This puts Labuschagne under significant pressure for his place, having managed just one century in his last 51 Test innings and averaging 31.54 since the start of 2023. It's the first time since establishing himself in 2019 that he faces such scrutiny. "I've gone with Cameron Green or Josh Inglis. They're at No. 3," Finch said on ESPN's Around The Wicket when the panel was asked to pick their XIs for the WTC final.

'It never goes away': Botha on Kuhnemann's suspect bowling action

AGENCIES
BRISBANE, FEB 13

Former South Africa offspinner and current Queensland and Brisbane Heat coach Johan Botha claimed that Matthew Kuhnemann will always carry the stigma of having his action reported, regardless of the outcome of his upcoming testing in the next few weeks.

Kuhnemann, who plays under Botha at Heat, was reported for a suspected illegal bowling action during the second Test against Sri Lanka in Galle.

Botha said it's a long road ahead for Kuhnemann to come out clean, and if he is cleared, the tag will always stick with him.

"It is a long process, and unfortunately, either way, if you get cleared or not, it will always be there. Guys think it's a one-off and you get rid of it. That is not how it is. It is a bit of a process. For now, he will have to bowl at a very similar speed and revolutions as he did in the Tests. Nothing gets changed now.

"He needs to try and prove himself not guilty, and from there on, if it is a



ball or so over 15 degrees, he will obviously have some work to do, and then a long process starts. It never goes away because there is always someone in the crowd, someone in the opposition, or a match referee who wants to have

a say or wants to feel a part of it. "Unfortunately, this will be part of it now. It is never the guy who gets 0 for 100. It is the guys who get wickets and affect games. They are the ones under scrutiny. Guys want to have a look at it and try and find fault," he added.

Kuhnemann has never had his action reported in his eight-year professional career, including during his ODI debut for Australia in Sri Lanka in 2022 and his Test debut, along with the three Tests he played on the 2023 tour of India.

Botha also suggested

that fatigue may have led to his action being questioned towards the end of the second Test.

"He bowled quite a lot of balls in the Test series. As you get tired, your action gets put under pressure," Botha said. "I know he likes to bowl. He bowled quite a lot during the Big Bash. He went to Australia training when they were at the Gabba during the Big Bash.

"I'd be interested to see when the umpires or the match referee thought it was not as clean as they would have liked it.

Sansad Khel Spardha 2025: Sports Activities in full gear in Kishtwar

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 13

The Sansad Khel Spardha 2025 is witnessing an overwhelming response with sports activities in full swing across the District Kishtwar. The month-long sports event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan at Paddar two days ago.

The event is being organized by the District Administration Kishtwar in collaboration with District Youth Services & Sports, under the close supervision of Deputy Commissioner.

The sports activities will be held from February 11, 2025, to March 8, 2025 featuring contests across a diverse range of sports disciplines, includ-



ing Volleyball, Kabaddi, Cricket, Badminton, Kho-Kho, Futsal, Table Tennis, Chess, and Carrom.

On the first day, Chess and Carrom (Open Category) competitions were successfully conducted at BVM Paddar, where young players exhibited outstanding skills and sportsmanship. A total of 70 participants—38 girls and 32 boys—competed in these intellectual games, demonstrating strategic acumen and determination.

The second day of the

event was particularly significant, with officials from Zone Paddar present to oversee the smooth execution of the competitions.

Athletes have also been competing fiercely in various track and field events, testing their endurance, strength, and agility.

Track events include 100m, 200m, 400m, and 800m races, along with relay races. Besides these, field events such as long jump, high jump, shot put, and discus throw have showcased remarkable athletic prowess.

The participants have demonstrated exceptional passion and discipline, leaving the audience enthralled with their performances.

The sport activities are being organized under the close guidance of DYSSO Kishtwar, Jaffer Haider Sheikh.

The Sansad Khel Spardha 2025 is a significant initiative aimed at identifying and promoting grassroots-level sports talent. It offers a valuable platform for young athletes to showcase their potential and compete in a professional setting.

Events like these play a crucial role in fostering a sports culture and promoting fitness, teamwork, and healthy competition among the youth.

DLSA Srinagar, DLSA Budgam organize awareness prog on Legal Rights at Central Jail Srinagar

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 13

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar, in collaboration with DLSA Budgam, under the aegis of the J&K Legal Services Authority, conducted an awareness programme on Legal Rights at Central Jail Srinagar.

The programme aimed at educating inmates on their legal rights, including access to free legal aid, the right to a fair trial, and legal provisions under the Criminal Justice Act and the Indian Constitution.

The programme was held under the guidance of Jaffer Hussain Beg, Chairman of the DLSA/Principal District & Sessions Judge Srinagar, & Om Prakash Baghat, Chairman DLSA



Budgam/Pr. District & Sessions Judge Budgam and under the supervision of Nusrat Ali Hakak, Sub-Judge/Secretary of DLSA Srinagar/Budgam.

The prog focused on raising awareness about critical legal rights such as the right to legal representation, the right to be informed about charges, and protection from inhuman or degrading treatment. These fundamental rights are enshrined in the Indian Constitution and are pivotal to ensuring a just

criminal justice process for all individuals, especially vulnerable sections of society.

Tasneem Kausar, Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel, and Abdul Rouf Parray, Assistant Legal Aid Defense Counsel, served as the resource persons for the programme.

They engaged the inmates with informative discussions and emphasized the importance of knowing and exercising their legal rights. They highlighted practical

steps to access free legal aid and underscored the significance of seeking timely legal assistance for ensuring a fair trial.

The programme was also attended by Prison para-legal volunteers and Para Legal Volunteers from both DLSA Srinagar and Budgam, who contributed to the interactive sessions and ensured the information was effectively communicated to all attendees.

This initiative reflects the commitment of the DLSAs to promoting legal literacy and ensuring access to justice for all individuals, particularly those in custody. Through such awareness programmes, the DLSAs aim to empower inmates by equipping them with the knowledge to navigate the legal system effectively.

Watershed Yatra Campaign 2025 launched in Ramban to promote Water Conservation

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, FEBRUARY 13

The Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, organized an Integrated Watershed Management Programme at New Bus Stand, Ukhral, marking the arrival of the Watershed Yatra Campaign 2025 in district under WDC PMKSY 2.0.

The Yatra Vehicle was flagged in by District Development Council Chairperson Dr. Shamshad Shan in presence of MLA Arjun Singh Raju. ADDC Roshan Lal, Project Manager IWMP (ACP) Mohammad Ashfaq, DSEO Ganesh Kumar, Tehsildar Nasir Javed, BDO Shahid Saleem and other officials and civil society representatives were also



present.

The campaign aims to enhance water conservation, promote sustainable land management and empower local communities through effective watershed development strategies.

Addressing the gathering, the DDC Chairperson emphasized the importance of integrated watershed management in improving soil moisture, enhancing agricultural

productivity and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for rural communities.

The MLA Ramban lauded the initiative, highlighting that watershed development is crucial for tackling water scarcity and mitigating environmental challenges in the region.

Other speakers stressed the role of community participation in the successful implementation of watershed projects and urged local stakeholders

to actively engage in the program.

Providing insights into WDC PMKSY 2.0, the Project Manager IWMP outlined the initiative's focus on rainwater harvesting, afforestation, and soil conservation. He informed that seven panchayats of Block Ukhral have been included under the ongoing watershed plan, aiming to treat 3,300 hectares of land to improve ecological balance and water retention.

The event featured a range of awareness sessions, technical demonstrations, and interactive discussions to build the capacity of local communities in sustainable watershed practices. The main attractions of the Yatra included administered of pledge, Bhumi Pujan, Paani Ki Patshala, Shram

Daan, Lok Arpan, Selfie point Screening of informative videos, Plantation drives, Debate competition, Cultural programs, and Poetry recitations on the importance of watershed conservation. Various departments also set up information stalls to educate the public about government schemes related to water conservation and sustainable agriculture.

Later, the Chief Guest felicitated participants and contributors for their efforts in advancing watershed management and rural development. The Watershed Yatra Campaign 2025 is a significant step towards water security, ecological balance, and rural prosperity, reinforcing the administration's commitment to holistic and sustainable development.

Agriculture Department Kishtwar hosts 2 Day Seminar-Cum-Awareness Program on Beekeeping

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 13

The Department of Agriculture Production & Farmers Welfare today hosted a two-day Seminar-Cum-Awareness Program on Beekeeping here in the Auditorium, Government Degree College (GDC), under the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM).

The program, being conducted under the close supervision of Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Kumar Shavan, aims to promote beekeeping as a viable avenue for livelihood generation and agricultural enhancement.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Pawan Kotwal, inaugurated the program as the Chief Guest.

In his address, he emphasized the importance of beekeeping in

boosting agricultural productivity, biodiversity, and rural entrepreneurship.

Chief Agriculture Officer (CAO) Amjad Hussain



Malik, along with experts in apiculture, provided insights into modern beekeeping techniques, government schemes and financial assistance available under NBHM.

Incharge KVK, along with various resource persons and Krishi Udyamis, delivered expert lectures on bee-keeping.

Farmers, entrepreneurs and aspiring beekeepers from across the district, especially from Block Drabshalla, actively participated in the program, sharing valuable knowledge on scientific beekeeping, honey production, value addition and lauded the efforts of Agriculture Department Kishtwar in providing various schemes

related to Bee-keeping and other schemes in the District.

The seminar aims to create awareness about the crucial role of bees in pollination and ecological balance while encouraging farmers to adopt beekeeping as an additional source of income.

The program will continue on February 14, 2025, featuring interactive sessions, live demonstrations, and expert guidance.

The event was attended by CHO Kishtwar Sajid Mustafa, DSHO Kishtwar Dr. Jameel Nasir, LDM Kishtwar Harsh Rawal, DAO Kishtwar, and staff from the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments, among others.

Foreign Athletes Hail Gulmarg as World-Class Winter Sports Destination

Praise Local Hospitality at First-Ever Himalayan Freeride Event

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 13

The breathtaking slopes of Gulmarg came alive as foreign skiers from the United States, England, Australia, New Zealand, France, Japan, Hong Kong, Russia and Nepal participated in the first-of-its-kind Himalayan Freeride Event, organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council.

The event was meticulously planned to provide participants with an unparalleled skiing experience on Gulmarg's world-class slopes, renowned for their pristine powder snow and challenging alpine terrain. Skiers from different nationalities explored the diverse landscape, showcasing their expertise while embracing the unique adventure and challenges that make Gulmarg a premier winter sports destination.

In the male category, Sam (Australia), Roro (France), and François Mortier (United States) secured the first, second, and third positions,



respectively. In the female category, Virginia Michele Winstone (New Zealand), Laura (United States), and Melanie Anderson (Hong Kong) claimed the top three spots.

A key highlight of the event was an interactive session with international athletes and experts, where valuable insights were shared on Gulmarg's growing stature as a global winter sports hub. Discussions focused on infrastructure development, safety protocols, environmental sustainability, and strategies to attract more

professional athletes and skiing enthusiasts to the region.

Foreign athletes were particularly captivated by Gulmarg's unmatched skiing experience. Rebecca, an American skier, remarked, "The powder snow here, combined with the breathtaking backdrop of the Himalayas, is unmatched. Nowhere else in the world offers such a unique and exhilarating experience."

Beyond the world-class skiing, international participants were deeply touched by the warm

hospitality of the local people. Many athletes praised the friendliness and generosity of the local community, expressing gratitude for the way they were welcomed and hosted. "The people of Gulmarg have been incredibly kind and hospitable. Their warmth made this experience even more special," said Vermeil Sebastian, a skier from France.

Many participants also thanked the J&K Government for organizing such a prestigious event. They pledged to act as ambassadors for Gulmarg upon returning to their home countries, hoping that next year's Himalayan Freeride Event would witness even greater international participation.

Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services and Sports, Sarmad Hafeez, speaking at the felicitation ceremony, expressed pride in hearing foreign athletes speak so highly of Gulmarg. He congratulated the winners and emphasized that this event marks the first step

toward hosting major international winter sports competitions in the region. He reiterated the government's commitment to transforming Gulmarg into a world-class winter sports destination.

Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council, extended her gratitude to all international participants who traveled from across the globe for the event. She highlighted Gulmarg's unique slopes as a top-tier winter sports attraction and noted that the presence of professional athletes from different countries would significantly boost Gulmarg's global reputation.

She also thanked the J&K Government for its unwavering support in strengthening the sports ecosystem in the region.

With the overwhelming success of the inaugural Himalayan Freeride Event and glowing endorsements from international skiers, Gulmarg is set to establish itself as a premier destination for winter sports on the global map.

Wall painting competition on Voter awareness held at Udhampur



JI NEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, FEBRUARY 13

To promote voter awareness and encourage active participation in the electoral process, the District Election Cell Udhampur, organized a Wall Painting competition on the theme "Nothing like voting I vote for sure" with participation from students of various educational institutions.

Deputy Commissioner Saloni Rai was the chief guest. Deputy District Election Officer, Dr. Malvika Sharma, along with officers and officials of the Election

Department, staff members and students, were also present.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students who showcased their creativity through impactful wall paintings, aiming to inspire citizens to exercise their right to vote.

While interacting with the students, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of voting in strengthening democracy and urged young voters to take an active role in the electoral process. She commended the students

for using art as a powerful medium to spread awareness and encouraged them to continue being responsible citizens.

In the competition, APS Udhampur secured the first position, while Bhartiya College of Education and Government Degree College, Neeli Nallah, bagged the second and third positions, respectively. Additionally, Government PG Boys Degree College and Government College for Women Udhampur received consolation prizes for their commendable efforts.