

**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
- Orchralgia
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Severe ten pain or more, local or not
- Redness

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

# JINDRAH IMAGES

DAILY | JAMMU | VOL NO: 12 | ISSUE NO: 2 | PAGES: 12 | PRICE: Rs 2/- | RNI NO: JKENG/2013/49471 | POSTAL REGD. NO. L-29/JK-497/25-27 | dailyjindrahimages.com/Epaper.php | jindrahimages123@gmail.com

## Mehbooba Mufti highlights concerns over press freedom in J&K



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 1

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday raised concerns over the lack of government advertisements to 'most' of local news outlets and delays in the renewal of accreditations for senior journalists.

In a post on social media on X, Mehbooba, as per the news agency, pointed out that even after three months of the new 'popular government' taking office, the Information Department continued to withhold advertisements.

"It's been over three months since the popular government took office,"

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## Under Amit Shah's leadership MHA working hard to build 'terror-free' Bharat

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) under the leadership of Amit Shah is working hard to build "terror-free" Bharat in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

The 2024 annual report of the MHA accessed by the news agency states that the country is heading towards achieving the goal with the approach of zero tolerance

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4



Hizb-ut-Tahrir designated as terrorist organisation under UAPA

Goldy Brar & Qasim Gujjar named terrorists

9 organisations declared as unlawful organizations

Multi Agency Centre of IB to undergo major technical, operational revamp

NA gets unique Digital Criminal Case Management System

25-point integrated plan made to stop terror financing

## 4 MLAs skip meeting of House Committee on Rules of Procedure

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 01

Four MLAs on Wednesday skipped the first meeting of a committee set-up by the Speaker of Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly to frame Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the House.

The House panel, which was set-up by the Speaker last

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## STATEHOOD RESTORATION

### Two independent J&K MLAs launch signature campaign

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

Amid ongoing political debate over the demand of restoration of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir, the two independent Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Rajouri and Surankote constituencies, Wednesday launched a signature campaign.

The MLAs include Muzaffar Iqbal Khan representing Rajouri Assembly Constituency and Choudahry Muhammad Akram, representing Surankote AC.

On the occasion, Muzaffar Iqbal Khan, MLA Rajouri, as per the news agency while speaking to the media, said the initiative aims to gather one crore signatures

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## MHA report stresses on using innovative ways to crush terror in J&K



### 'People's participation in Lok Sabha, Assembly elections shows they have full faith in democracy'

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has stated that the government is committed to crushing terrorism by using innovative ways.

The 2024 annual report of the MHA accessed by the news agency states: "The government is committed to setting an example by cracking down on terrorists through innovative means. In line with Prime Minister Naren-

dra Modi's Zero Tolerance Policy against terrorism, the goal of 'terror free Jammu and Kashmir' will be achieved at the earliest."

"PM Modi led government is building a terror-free J&K. While the security forces are waging a full-blown war against terror on the ground, the MHA is empowering them by banning individuals and organizations involved in terror and anti-India activities."

The report states that due to the sustained and coordinated efforts of the Union Government, the ecosystem of terrorism in J&K has almost ended.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, according to the

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## NEWS BRIEF

### 4 JeM terrorist associates arrested in Tral: Police

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

Security forces on Wednesday claimed to have arrested four terrorist associates of proscribed terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad in Tral.

According to a statement, issued to news agency they have been identified

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### BSF opens fire after noticing suspicious movement at IB in RS Pura Sector

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 01

Border Security Force (BSF) personnel opened fire upon detecting suspicious movement at the International Border in RS Pura Sector today morning, officials said. An official told

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## USBRL project: Final CRS inspection on Katra-Reasi Rail Link on Jan 7, 8



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) is set to conduct the final inspection of the Katra-Reasi section of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link on January 7 and 8, as part of the effort to complete the rail link from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, officials said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

Jammu to get Railway Division status on Jan 6

PM Modi to inaugurate

3 new trains, including Vande Bharat, to run between SVDK to Srinagar Rly Station

## In 2024, nearly 1 cr pilgrims pay obeisance at Vaishno Devi Shrine

### Katra returns to normal after weeklong protests

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 01

Nearly one crore pilgrims paid obeisance at Shri Vaishno Devi Shrine in Katra, Reasi till December 31st 2024, said the CEO of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.

Anshul Garg, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SMVDSB, said, "94.83 lakh pilgrims pay obeisance at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in 2024, the second highest number in a decade."

Earlier on December 12, 2024, Garg stated that more than 90 lakh devotees have visited the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Jammu

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## Kashmir, Chenab suffering, Omar skiing in Gulmarg: Sunil Sharma

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 1

Senior BJP leader and Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Sunil Sharma, has strongly criticized Chief Minister

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## ERA of recommendations over in J&K: MHA

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has stated that the era of recommendations in Jammu and Kashmir is over and now all appointments are made on merit basis.

The 2024 annual report of the MHA accessed by the news agency states: "Instead of terrorism, bomb blasts, firing, stone pelting,"

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## MHA lists empowering J&K ethnic groups among major achievements

**AGENCIES**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has listed empowering Pahari

ethnic group, Padari tribes, Koli, and Gadda Brahmin in Jammu and Kashmir among the major achievements of Prime Minister

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## J&K employees struggle, await salaries for two consecutive months

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 1

Employees of various departments of Jammu and Kashmir are per-

turbed due to the non-disbursement of salaries for the second consecutive month, leaving their families in dire straits at large.

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## BOTTOM STORY

# Cancer Institute Jammu registers 1670 patients since April 2024

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 01

The Cancer Institute in Jammu has witnessed a rise in patient care, with approximately 7,000 patients treated in its outpatient department (OPD) since April 2024, and around 1,670 new cancer cases registered during the same period.

According to details obtained by the news agency, the institute conducted around 3,600 chemotherapy sessions between April 2024 and the present.

A senior official from the institute informed KNO that the Cancer Institute's outpa-

tient services for specialised departments—Medical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Surgical Oncology, Pain & Palliative Care and Preventive Oncology—commenced on February 4, 2023. During the first year of operations, approximately 8,000 patients were treated. Since April 2024, 6,682 patients have been treated in the OPD alone.

Apart from in-house services, the institute conducted 15 outreach programmes during which over 1,200 patients received care. The daycare services for chemotherapy, operational since February 20, 2023, are running smoothly,



providing essential treatment to cancer patients.

In a significant development, the National Board of Examinations (NBE) approved two seats in DNB Medical Oncology (Super Specialisation) for the institute in 2023, recognising its infrastructure and progress.

The official said that Ayushman Bharat (AB-PMJAY Sehat) services became available at the institute on June 26, 2023. Under this scheme, treatments worth crores of rupees have been provided to patients, with 5,376 patients registered for benefits at the institute.

The inpatient department

(IPD) services were launched on November 6, 2023, with operations spread across the ground, first, and second floors of the facility.

The recent installation of a PET CT Scan Imaging system has been transformative, with 432 PET scans conducted to date. A Brachytherapy machine has also been installed, and 116 sessions have already been performed.

The official said the process for installing a Linear Accelerator (LINAC)—a machine that generates high-energy X-rays or electrons to treat cancer—has been completed.

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## Weekly Block Diwas: DC convenes public outreach camp at Ghordi Jagir

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 01

Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai today convened a public outreach programme at CFC Ghordi Jagir, as part of the weekly Block Diwas initiative.

The event witnessed the participation of DDC Member Rakesh Sharma, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Ramnagar Rajinder Singh, former BDC Chairman, Aarti Sharma and officers from line departments, along with former PRI members and local residents.

During the interaction, DDC Member Rakesh Sharma, former BDC Chairman Aarti Sharma, former Sarpanches, Panches and residents of nearby Panchayats highlighted several issues and demands seeking Tehsil status to Ghordi, establishment of a Kendriya Vidyalaya in the area, ensuring sustained progress under the Jal Jeevan Mission, quality checks for works undertaken by the RDD, repair of link roads under PMGSY and PWD and resolving issues related to new rating cards, filling of vacant posts of doctors



in PHC Ghordi, addressing staff shortages in the PHE and Education sectors and mitigating the scarcity of drinking water etc.

The DC gave a patient hearing to the grievances and directed concerned officers to take immediate steps for their resolution. She emphasized the importance of proactive governance and urged officials to personally assess public issues and ensure their

timely redressal.

The DC stressed that public outreach programs are integral to effective governance, enabling direct interaction with the people to understand their needs and obtain feedback on developmental works. She encouraged officers to work with dedication, sincerity and accountability, ensuring that genuine grievances are addressed at the earliest.

## MVD organises Medical, Eye check up camp for Drivers at Pul Doda



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
DODA, JANUARY 1

The Motor Vehicle Department Doda, in collaboration with the Health Department on Wednesday organized a Medical/Eye Checkup Camp for drivers here at Pul Doda.

The camp was held under the direction of Transport Commissioner Vishesh Paul Mahajan and Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh and under the supervision of Assistant Regional Transport Officer Rajesh Gupta.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Sudar-

shan Kumar inaugurated the camp in presence of the ARTO, Doctors from the Medical and Ayush Departments and officials from Motor Vehicle and Health Departments.

A large number of drivers availed themselves of free medical and eye examinations as well as essential health screenings. The initiative emphasized the importance of regular health checkups for drivers, highlighting that good vision and overall well-being are crucial for road safety.

The team of medical professionals conducted

comprehensive eye tests, providing immediate feedback and guidance on necessary corrective measures. Drivers were also educated about the significance of maintaining clear vision while driving, as impaired eyesight can lead to accidents and compromise public safety.

In addition to eye checkups, participants were provided with free medicines and valuable tips on general health and preventive care. The camp reinforced the message that health is a key component of responsible and safe driving practices.

## Panchayat Electoral Roll revision: Disposal of claims, objections begins in Kishtwar

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 01

To ensure transparency and accuracy in the preparation of the Panchayat Electoral Roll 2025, Electoral Registration Officer Idrees Lone convened a crucial meeting, here today.

The meeting focused on reviewing and addressing claims and objections regarding the draft Panchayat electoral rolls 2025 for Kishtwar, Palmar and Trigam Blocks.

The ERO stressed the importance of maintaining inclusivity and precision in the electoral roll preparation process. He urged the officials to strictly adhere to the guidelines prescribed by the Election Commission of India and



ensure the timely resolution of all claims and objections.

The Panchayat Electoral Booth Officials (PEBOs) were instructed to conduct thorough verifications, promptly address any discrepancies highlighted by the public/Voters, if any in panchayats. He also emphasized the need for a collaborative approach to ensure that no eligible voter is left out.

Idrees Lone underlined

the importance of voter awareness initiatives, encouraging eligible citizens to actively participate in the electoral process and ensuring they are well-informed about the claims and objections mechanism.

The meeting witnessed the participation of AEROs/BDOs and PEBOs from block Kishtwar, Palmar, and Trigam, alongside election officials and other concerned staff.

## Two days orientation programme for LSUM members concludes at Srinagar

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 01

The District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) of Srinagar and Budgam successfully concluded a two-day orientation programme today conducted for the members of the Legal Services Unit for Persons with Mental Illness and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (LSUM).

The event was held under the chairmanship of Jaffer Hussain Beg, Chairman DLSA Srinagar/ Pr. District & Sessions Judge, Srinagar and Om Prakash Baghat, Chairman DLSA Budgam/ Pr. District & Sessions Judge, Budgam and under the supervision of Nusrat Ali Hakak, Civil Judge (Sr. Division)/Secretary, DLSA Srinagar/ DLSA Budgam.

The training was organized as part of the implementation of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) Scheme 2024.

The programme, which commenced on December 31, 2024, was aimed at enhancing the understanding and capabilities of the LSUM members in delivering effective legal services



to individuals with mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities.

On the second day of the programme, Secretary of DLSA Srinagar and Budgam, emphasized the critical role of the unit members in ensuring access to justice for this vulnerable section of society. She highlighted the importance of the NALSA scheme 2024 in promoting inclusivity and legal

empowerment for marginalized groups.

Masarat Shaheen, a retired judicial officer, joined virtually and shared her valuable insights. She discussed the legal and social challenges faced by persons with disabilities and provided practical strategies for addressing these issues. Her experience and expertise enriched the training sessions and inspired the par-

ticipants.

Advocates Suhaila Ali and Adv. Laila Khalid also actively contributed to the programme, emphasizing the practical application of the NALSA scheme and encouraging the participants to adopt a proactive approach in their roles.

Members of the Legal Services Unit from DLSA Budgam participated in the programme through virtual mode, ensuring comprehensive involvement despite geographical constraints. The two-day orientation programme aimed to equip the LSUM members with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement the NALSA Scheme 2024. It also sought to foster a deeper understanding of the legal rights and entitlements of persons with mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities, ensuring that they receive the support and assistance they need. This initiative reflects the commitment of the DLSAs of Srinagar and Budgam in upholding the principles of justice and equality for all, especially the most vulnerable members of society.

## MLA Saifullah reviews development profile of Trehgam constituency

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, JANUARY 01

Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Trehgam today chaired an interactive meeting with officers and people at block headquarter Kralpora to review the development scenario of Trehgam Assembly Constituency.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kupwara, M Rouf Rehman; ACD, CMO, CAO, CHO, DSHO, Dy. CEO, Executive Engineers of R&B, PMGSY, I&FC, besides, block level officers and general public were present in the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, MLA Trehgam said that the aim of holding the joint meeting of officers and the people was to bridge the gap between the people and administration for resolution of the public grievances and problems. He impressed upon the officers to work with utmost sincerity and dedication for the welfare of the common people to leave no gap for the grievances.

The MLA urged the Officers to increase their connection with the people



at grassroots level to ease their sufferings. He emphasized the need for mass awareness of various Government schemes especially pertaining to Agriculture and allied departments and directed the concerned officers to monitor their schemes at ground level so that benefits reach to the deserving people.

On the occasion, the MLA took a detailed review of all departments and assessed their performance and progress.

Reviewing PMGSY, the Executive Engineer briefed the MLA about different ongoing road projects in the area. The

MLA directed the Ex. Engineer to take up projects connecting unconnected habitations of Jumagund and Keran area which will facilitate the local population living in these pockets.

Regarding PHE, the MLA directed the AEE concerned to personally visit the areas having issues of water supply and fix responsibilities on his subordinate staff including JES and Linemen so that the people do not suffer due to non-availability of water supply.

Reviewing RDD, the ACD informed that estimates of around 1500 works pertaining to the

area have been done and progress exceeding 100% have been registered for man-days generation. The MLA asked the concerned officers to ensure the work is distributed equally so that the income status of people in large numbers is improved.

Reviewing Power sector, the MLA directed the concerned officials to ensure power supply strictly as per the curtailment schedule so that the people do not face any inconvenience in this bone chilling winter period.

The MLA also took a review of other departments including Health, Agriculture, Horticulture, Sheep Husbandry, Animal Husbandry and firewood status.

ADC Kupwara also spoke and assured all possible support from the District Administration regarding the redressal of grievances of the people.

Earlier, prominent and senior citizens of Trehgam constituency put forth various developmental issues of different villages before the chair which were heard patiently by the MLA.

## DC Kupwara reviews progress of Sheep Husbandry department

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, JANUARY 01

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today held a meeting of concerned officers to review the progress of the Sheep Husbandry department in the district.

It was informed in the meeting that 3184 applications under Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) have been approved by the Sheep Husbandry department through the HADP portal. Under DAKSH Kisan portal, 8000 registrations were made out of which 3125 farmer beneficiaries were enrolled for undergoing the learning course and 2067 farmers have completed the course so far.

It was also informed that a target of 6550 ben-



eficiaries for completion of courses under DAKSH Kisan have been given to 13 Sheep Blocks of district Kupwara which include Gulgam, Handwara, Kralgund, Kralpora, Kuligam, Kupwara, Machil/Kalaroose, Rajwar, Ramhall,

Shartpora, Sogam, Tangdar and Teetwal. On the occasion, the DC stressed upon the concerned officers to gear up the pace of enrolment of farmers to achieve the desired targets under DAKSH Kisan and HADP.

On the occasion, the DC stressed upon the concerned officers to gear up the pace of enrolment of farmers to achieve the desired targets under DAKSH Kisan and HADP.

The officers were directed to facilitate the registration and enrollment of farmers to meet the targets as early as possible. She impressed upon the officers to ensure 100% coverage of the HADP scheme adding that district Kupwara has a vast potential for agriculture and allied activities which will boost its employment generation scenario.

Meanwhile, the Officers were directed to mobilize field staff and Krishi Udayamis to achieve these targets in a time-bound manner and support farmers throughout the registration and certification process.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Kupwara, District Sheep Husbandry Officer Kupwara, Block Sheep Husbandry Officers and other concerned.

## Weather exigency: DC Pulwama reviews winter preparedness

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
PULWAMA, JANUARY 1

To assess the district's readiness for the second spell of adverse weather forecast for this winter season, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Yaqoob chaired a meeting of Officers and officials here on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the DC emphasised the need for proactive and coordinated efforts to mitigate the impact of severe weather conditions. He commended the concerned sectoral officers and their field teams for their effective response to the recent spell of snowfall and urged them to maintain similar coordination while preparing for potentially larger anticipated weather events.

Priority was given to maintaining essential services, including water and electricity supply and ensuring prompt snow clearance, particularly on critical hospital roads. Departments such as MED and R&B were directed to ensure the continuous functionality of essential services.

Additionally, officers from MED, R&B, PMGSY, ULBs and RDD were instructed to maintain seamless coordination to prevent any overlapping of jurisdictions or lapses in communication.

Dr. Basharat also focused on health sector readiness, stressing the availability of essential medicines and emergency services, particularly in remote and vulnerable areas.

## Power shutdown

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 1

Superintending Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, O&M Circle Kathua has informed that the power supply to Sarore, Industry, Gowlal and its adjoining areas will remain affected on January 03 from 9 am to 2 pm.

## Power shutdown

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 1

Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, Jammu has informed that the power supply to Bishnah, Sarore, Chak Halsal, Rehal, Pandorian, Kheri Nandpur, Ramgarh, Kamore, Rangoor, Abtal, Nanga, Apna Vihar, Kunjwani, Seora, Shahpur and adjoining areas will remain affected on January 04 from 10 am to 3 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Rajouri Town, Thanamandi, Manjakote, Koteranka will remain affected on January 02 from 8 am to 1 pm.

Likewise, the power supply to Ratnuchak, Birpur, MES, Kaluchak and its adjoining areas will remain affected on January 03 from 11 am to 2 pm.

## Chief Justice visits Muskan 'Home for Children' at Channi Rama; reviews facilities



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 1

Aiming enhanced care and protection of children residing in various Child Care Institutions across the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority, Tashi Rabstan, accompanied by Amit Kumar Gupta, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority and Anusya Jamwal, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Jammu, who also serves as Executive Secretary, District Red Cross Society, Jammu, today visited Muskan, Home for Children at Channi Rama, Jammu.

During the visit, the Chief Justice interacted with the children and distributed sweets and gifts among them. This interaction provided an oppor-

tunity to understand the children's living conditions and their specific needs.

The Chief Justice Tashi interacted with the staff members of the Children Home and issued directions for enhancing the amenities and facilities being provided to the inmates. He emphasised the importance of a supportive and nurturing environment for holistic development of the children.

The ADC Jammu assured the Chief Justice that the suggestions for improvement would be implemented promptly. She highlighted the current facilities being provided at the Children Home, which included regular medical check-ups, special education classes facilitated under Samagra Shiksha initiative and physical and motor development activities

organised by the Composite Regional Centre (CRC), Jammu. Additionally, weekly visits by physiotherapists and psychologists are being conducted to ensure the mental and physical well-being of children, reflecting a comprehensive approach towards their care and development.

The Chief Justice appreciated the efforts of the administration and staff in ensuring welfare of the children. He commended their commitment for addressing any shortcomings and called for continued efforts to uphold the dignity and rights of the children residing there.

This visit underscores the commitment of the judiciary and the J&K Legal Services Authority to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable sections of the society and ensure that their needs are met with compassion and care.

## ADC Poonch chairs meeting to verify SDRF relief cases



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, JANUARY 01

Additional Deputy Commissioner Poonch Tahir Mustafa Malik today chaired a meeting of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Committee here in the Conference Hall of the DC Office in Poonch to review relief claims under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

The meeting was attended by senior officers from the Revenue Department and other members of the Committee.

The meeting focused on the verification of relief cases under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) in accordance with the established Standard Operating Procedures

(SOP).

The Committee conducted a thorough review of 78 cases related to relief and rehabilitation. Each case was meticulously discussed and scrutinized, leading to informed recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the relief process.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner underscored the critical importance of adhering to SDRF guidelines, stressing that it is essential to ensure that genuine beneficiaries receive the necessary support in a timely manner.

He called for a collaborative approach among all stakeholders to facilitate smoother operations and faster assistance for those in need.

## Mission YUVA: Baseline Survey to identify potential entrepreneurs begins in Srinagar

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 1

With an aim to identify potential entrepreneurs and to promote entrepreneurship at grassroots level, the baseline survey under Mission YUVA, a critical exercise to gather real-time data on existing and potential entrepreneurs commenced in Srinagar District today.

The Mission YUVA initiative is aimed to foster sustainable employment by supporting the creation of new micro-enterprises, expanding existing businesses, and promoting innovative entrepreneurial ventures. The objective of Baseline Survey under the initiative is to encourage entrepreneurship culture and a desirable ecosystem for helping the youth to start new enterprises and generate job opportunities for others.

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat has urged the aspirants particularly the youth studying in different Universities/Colleges to take part in this survey for making it a meaningful exercise by providing feedback about their ambitions regarding self-employment.

He also urged the people in District to extend full support and cooperation



to the designated Baseline Survey Enumerators visiting house to house for empowering youth of District to establish income generating units to earn livelihood with dignity and honour.

The DC also asked the educated youth to take advantage of this opportunity to get support to start their business and take the benefits under the scheme which includes a 25% government subsidy, 5% interest subvention, and an additional 10% subsidy for women and physically disabled persons for setting up business.

To conduct the Baseline Survey, the District Administration Srinagar has deployed a sufficient number of Supervisors and Investigators for the month-long survey under the Mission YUVA initiative.

## CS launches YUVA survey to identify 1.37 lakh entrepreneurs

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 1

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today launched the much anticipated UT wide baseline survey under Mission YUVA (Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan).

The survey, to be done jointly by Labour & Employment (L&E) and Planning Departments, aims identification of around 1.37 lakh potential entrepreneurs besides seeking feedback from the existing enterprises.

Present on the occasion were Vice Chancellors of UT Universities, Secretary, L&E Department, DG, E&S, Director, IIM Jammu, MD, JK Bank, MD, JKRLM and representatives from IIT Jammu, NABARD, BISAG-N besides other concerned officers while Deputy Commissioners joined the event through video conferencing.

Addressing on the occasion, the Chief Secretary highlighted the significance of this survey besides the original motive of handholding the youth ready to adopt entrepreneurship and self employment as job avenues. He called upon the concerned departments to ensure accurate through regular monitoring of the whole exercise. He suggested the Vice-Chancellors of different Universities to further utilise this data in accomplishing various research papers.

Dulloo also enjoined upon the Labour & Employment department to constitute a team of experts from concerned departments with faculty members from different Universities and National Institutes. This will help in laying an analytical framework to develop a well meaning document out of these analytics at the end of this survey, he added. He



emphasised upon them to reach out to each household in every village/panchayat through their IEC activities in order to create necessary awareness among the people about the importance of this survey. He directed the Deputy Commissioners to extend full support to the teams on ground besides giving their feedback about the functioning of the online application so that, any technical glitch faced by the investigators is resolved instantly. The Chief Secretary also reviewed functioning of this survey app developed by BISAG-N in consultation with the department. He underscored the importance of control rooms in resolving the issues faced besides making the exercise smooth and seamless.

In a presentation, Secretary, L&E, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, informed the meeting that this activity has two major components aiming survey of the existing enterprises for looking into their challenges they besides identifying the potential entrepreneurs. He added that the department has already accomplished the task of training the Master Trainers at divisional level and around 1000 supervisors and nearly 17,000 investigators at district level. It was added that a pilot survey is currently going on in which nearly 90,000 entries had been made across the districts.

The roles and responsibilities of each concerned were explained during the meeting with Deputy Commissioners envisaged to monitor the whole process in their respective districts. Besides, Dos and Don'ts for investigators were discussed and the significance of Supervisors in verifying each detail entered in the application by the surveyors was deliberated upon.

It was informed that the objective of this month long exercise is to foster entrepreneurship culture and desirable ecosystem for helping those in the age group of 18-49 years to start at least 1.37 lakh new enterprises thereby generating around 4.25 lakh job opportunities in next 5 years in J&K.

## DC Jammu reviews progress of District Capex budget development works

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 1

Deputy Commissioner Sachin Kumar Vaishya today chaired a meeting to review the progress of works taken up under the District Capex Budget across various sectors.

The meeting reviewed the status of ongoing projects undertaken by the Public Works Department for departments including School Education, Health and others.

During the review, challenges in the execution of projects were discussed, with the DC emphasising the need to



adhere to timelines and ensure the timely delivery of projects. Stressing the importance of efficiency, he directed officers to overcome hurdles and maintain the highest standards in project implementation. The meeting was attended by Addi-

tional District Development Commissioner Sher Singh, SE PWD, Ex-En Jal Shakti Rajesh Sharma, Chief Planning Officer Uttam Singh, Chief Education Officer JK Padma, Chief Medical Officer Dr Harbaksh Singh, besides other district officers.

## DC Rajouri inspects development works in border areas; listens to people's issues



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJOURI, JANUARY 01

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma today conducted an extensive tour of border areas to inspect ongoing development works and address public grievances.

During the visit, he reviewed the progress of critical infrastructure projects and interacted with local stakeholders to ensure effective services delivery.

The DC inspected the development work at recently upgraded Government Middle School at LoC village Basali, started

last month on his intervention. He emphasized the need for timely completion of the project to provide a better learning environment to the students in this remote area.

Continuing the visit, the DC reviewed the electricity supply to Veer Bardeshwar Mandir, a prominent religious and tourist site in the district. He directed the concerned departments to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the Temple, recognizing its significance for devotees and visitors.

In Laam area, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with Lumberdars and Chowkidars to

understand the ground realities and assess the implementation of government schemes. He also held a grievance redressal camp and addressed the issues raised by the locals.

The DC was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Nowshera, Babu Ram Tandon; Tehsildar Nowshera and other district and sectoral officers. The visit highlighted the district administration's commitment to inclusive development and proactive resolution of public issues, especially in border areas.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**E-TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Notice No:- 770-W/169/WA-1/FZR- 280-2024-25-Sr-DEN-I-FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) with closing date 20.01.2025 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Bid System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
27.12.2024	06.01.2025	20.01.2025

S. No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender
1.	280-2024-25-Sr-DEN-I-FZR	TRR (P) 45.30 Km of existing old 52kg rails with 60 kg (90/110 UTS) new rails from DN line Km. 4.50 to Km.12.00, Km.14.00 to Km.34.30, Km.36.40 to Km.48.20, Km.53.10 to Km. 55.20 and Km.59.20 to Km.62.80 on Suchipind-Pathankot section under Sr.DEN-I-FZR.

Advertised Value (Rs.)	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion
43314062.10	60 Days	12 Months

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE** 3976/24

**Kind Attention Rail Passengers**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

It is notified for the information of all concerned that Northern Railway's new Time-Table will be effective from 01.01.2025. Some of the important Salient Features/details of new Time-Table 2025 are as under :-

- Change in Departure and Arrival time of trains at terminals. (104 trains) (Including Preponement/Postponement of time)
- Revise timings of Arrival of trains (140 trains)
- Speeding up of trains (144 trains)
- Terminal change (03 trains)
- Change in train number (Mail/Exp. trains) (34 trains)
- Change in station name (03 stations)
- Change in train name (06 trains)
- Change in days of run (01 train)
- Change in nomenclature of trains:- Super Fast to Mail (14 trains) and Mail/Express to Super Fast (08 trains)
- Route diversion of trains (04 trains)
- Raising of maximum permissible speed (03 trains)
- Introduction of new trains (28 trains)
- Extension of trains (21 trains)
- Increase in frequency (04 trains)
- Experimental stoppages (69 trains)

Passengers are advised that before commencing journey, kindly check the updated schedule through Rail Madad Helpline Number 139, NTES App, Indian Railway's Trains Enquiry website (<https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in>) or for further information please click on the below given link :- [https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/view\\_section.jsp?fontColor=black&backgroundcolor=LIGHTSTEELBLUE&lang=0&id=0,2,1706](https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/view_section.jsp?fontColor=black&backgroundcolor=LIGHTSTEELBLUE&lang=0&id=0,2,1706)

Visit RailMadad website:- [www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in)  
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**"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"**

## ONE NATION ONE SUBSCRIPTION

## Empowering India's Research Ecosystem

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 01 JAN:

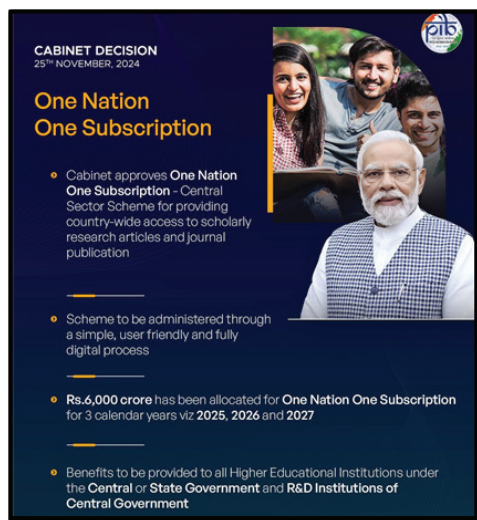
India, a land of ancient knowledge and rich tradition, has always been a beacon of innovation and discovery. From pioneering advancements in mathematics and astronomy to groundbreaking contributions in various fields of science, the country's legacy of intellectual achievement is unmatched. On August 15, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, from the ramparts of the Red Fort, reminded the nation of this proud legacy and the critical role that Research and Development (R&D) would play in shaping India's future. As he addressed the nation, he emphasized the importance of nurturing R&D capabilities, particularly during Amrit Kaal, and called for a renewed focus on innovation with the inspiring slogan, "Jai Anusandhan."

This call for a vibrant R&D ecosystem resonated with the goals outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which identifies research as a fundamental driver of educational excellence and national progress. The policy seeks to cultivate a robust research culture that not only enhances academic quality but also acceler-

ates India's growth on the global stage.

In alignment with this vision, Union Cabinet has approved the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme on 25th Nov 2024. This initiative seeks to break down barriers to knowledge by providing all students, faculty, researchers, and scientists across the nation's government higher education institutions (HEIs) and central government R&D centres with access to international scholarly journals and articles. The goal is to ensure that India's academic and research communities are equipped with the best global resources, fostering innovation and enhancing the quality of research across disciplines.

The ONOS scheme is a cornerstone of India's ambition to become a self-reliant and developed nation by 2047. This initiative is a key component of the Viksitbharat@2047 vision. This roadmap envisions India's emergence as a leading global power driven by cutting-edge research, technological advancement, and self-sustained progress. Through such initiatives, India is preparing to build on its rich legacy of



knowledge, positioning itself at the forefront of global innovation and discovery.

#### ONOS Scheme Overview:

The scheme's objective is to provide all eligible students, faculty, researchers, and scientists with access to top-tier international research articles and journals. It covers more than 6,300 government-managed higher education institutions and central government-managed research and development institutions across the country.

#### The scheme provides:

- Access to more than 13,000 scholarly journals from 30 major international publishers.
- Benefits about 1.8 crore students, faculty, and researchers across disciplines such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), Medicine, Social Sciences, Finance & Accounts, etc.
- Inclusive access to research for institutions in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, ensuring equitable access to knowledge.

#### Key Objectives and Goals:

Access to Scholarly Knowledge: The scheme provides access to high-quality scholarly journals and publications across various fields. This aims to democratise access to knowledge to enhance the research capabilities of students, faculty, and researchers.

Inclusion of Diverse Institutions: The scheme ensures that institutions, regardless of their geographic location—in urban centres or remote areas—have access to world-class research resources. This is crucial for advancing core and interdisciplinary research in the country.

Global Research Participation: It aligns with the goals of Viksitbharat@2047, helping India to emerge as a global leader in research and development by enabling its academic and research institutions to engage with international scholarly communities.

The One Nation One Subscription initiative is a game-changing scheme for India's research ecosystem. By providing digital access to over 13,000 journals from 30 international publishers, it will bridge gaps in research infrastructure across India. Through its phased implementation, the scheme will significantly contribute to enhancing India's academic and research excellence, fostering innovation, and helping the country emerge as a global hub for scientific research. By leveraging existing consortia initiatives of 10 central government Ministries and Departments as well as initiatives of government's many higher education institutions, a unifying approach through the one nation one subscription will democratise knowledge dissemination and empower a new generation of researchers and students, providing them with the resources they need to excel.

## Cabinet extends special package for affordable DAP fertilizer

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 01 JAN

affordable price.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal of the Department of Fertilizers of extension of One-time Special Package on Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) beyond the NBS subsidy @ Rs 3,500 per MT for the period from 01.01.2025 till further orders to ensure sustainable availability of DAP at affordable prices to the farmers.

#### Benefits:

Availability of DAP to farmers at subsidized, affordable and reasonable prices will be ensured.

#### Implementation

##### Strategy and targets:

The Special package on DAP @ Rs 3,500 per MT will be provided for the period 01.01.2025 till further orders over and above the approved NBS subsidy to ensure smooth availability of DAP fertilizer to the farmers at

**Background:** 28 grades of P&K fertilizers are made available to farmers at subsidized prices through fertilizer manufacturers/importers. The subsidy on P&K fertilizers is governed by NBS Scheme w.e.f 01.04.2010. Continuing top most priority in keeping farmers' welfare in firm focus, Government of India has extended a massive relief to farmers in keeping the price of Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertilizer unchanged. In spite of geo-political constraints and volatility of global market conditions, Government kept its commitment towards farmer friendly approach by ensuring availability of DAP to farmers at affordable prices for Kharif and Rabi 2024-25. Cabinet in July, 2024 had approved one-time Special Package on DAP beyond the NBS subsidy @ Rs 3,500 per MT from 01.04.2024 to 31.12.2024 with approximate financial implication of Rs 2,625 cr.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

## Under Amit Shah's...

against terror. "Under this vision, the MHA designated Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a terrorist organisation under UAPA. The MHA designated Goldy Brar & Qasim Gujjar as terrorists. Nine organisations have been declared as Unlawful organizations," it states.

"In a significant step towards the goal of terror-free Bharat, two different categories of explosive detectors indigenously manufactured by Electronics Corporation of India Limited, Department of Atomic Energy, and DRDO were handed over to the Director, IB, by the Principal Scientific Adviser to GOI for Security Forces. The indigenously developed detectors are to be handed over by IB to 12 identified security agencies for field deployment," the report states.

"Multi Agency Centre (MAC) of IB, responsible for tackling security challenges in the country, in New Delhi is poised to undergo a major technical and operational revamp to increase its reach and efficacy," the report states.

Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, according to the report, has stressed for greater synergy among all the agencies to dismantle the terror networks and their supporting ecosystems to address the evolving security threat scenario of the country.

The Union Home Minister has also laid emphasis on constituting a team of young, technically proficient, and passionate officers drawn from all agencies involved in national security to dismantle the terror ecosystem utilising big data and AI/ML-driven analytics and technological advancements," the report states.

It further states that the MHA has launched the unique Digital Criminal Case Management System (CCMS) Platform of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). "The newly developed CCMS will strengthen the NIA against terrorism and organised crime cases. It will improve coordination in the functioning of NIA, which will improve the justice system," it adds.

The report states that the policy of 'zero tolerance against terrorism' has been accepted by the whole world. "The MHA will soon formulate a National Counter-terrorism Policy & Strategy to fight the entire ecosystem of terrorism," the report states, adding, "A 25-point integrated plan was made to stop terror financing; several steps have been taken in cases ranging from Jihadi terrorism to insurgency in North-East, Left-Wing Extremism, fake currency and narcotics." KNO

## 4 MLAs skip meeting...

week, met today in Jammu and held discussions on how to proceed ahead with its task.

Sources told news agency that Mir Saifullah (MLA Trehgam), Justice (ret.) Hasnain Masoodi (MLA Pampore), Muzaffar Iqbal Khan (MLA Rajouri) and RS Pathania (MLA Udhampur East) didn't attend the meeting of the panel which was chaired by the Speaker himself.

The committee has seven members from the ruling alliance and two from BJP. No MLA from Kashmir—based opposition is part of the panel.

The committee is likely to finalise the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly prior to the commencement of the ensuing Budget session. KNO

## Two independent J&amp;K...

over the next three months to present before the assembly. He said that there was a discontent in the region regarding the changes implemented after August 5, 2019.

The independent MLA said their campaign stands of democratic nature, stating, "This campaign marks the beginning of our demand that we want to present our request to the Union Government in a constitutional and democratic way," Khan said.

He also criticized claims that certain individuals who, according to him, have misled people into believing that they were happy with the current circumstances in the region.

The MLA further stated, "We want the Union Government to understand that no one in Jammu and Kashmir is satisfied with snatching of statehood and the changes imposed after August 5, 2019."

Khan said the campaign would take the form of a constitutional movement, and that would reach every corner

of Jammu and Kashmir. "We will take this campaign to the people throughout Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Khan highlighted the importance of the initiative, noting that it was a way to show that the people of the region are not happy with the changes brought after the August 5, 2019, decision.

"This is an indication that what happened to us on that day was wrong, and we are not happy with it," he said. KNO

## MHA report stresses...

report, has directed agencies to replicate the successes achieved in Kashmir through the "Area Domination Plan and Zero Terror Plan" in the Jammu division.

"The government is committed to setting an example by cracking down on terrorists through innovative means. In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Zero Tolerance Policy against terrorism, the goal of 'terror free Jammu and Kashmir' will be achieved at the earliest," the report states.

Referring to the successful back-to-back elections held in J&K in 2024 without any boycott call or fear of separatists and terrorists, the MHA report states: "Unprecedented participation of the J&K people in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections shows that they have full faith in democracy."

"In the 2024 Lok Sabha election, J&K secured 35-year-high voter turnout at 58.46%. In the 2024 assembly election, J&K witnessed a meteoric 63.88% voter turnout," it added. KNO

## USBRL project: Final...

Speaking with the news agency, Northern Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyaya said the CRS (Northern Circle) is expected to inspect the 16.501 km Katra-Reasi section under the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla New BG Rail Link Project before January 15.

The chief PRO said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate the Jammu Railway Division from New Delhi on January 6.

Sources in Northern Railways told KNO that after the inauguration of the Jammu Railway Division, the CRS will conduct the final inspection on January 7 and 8. Senior officials, including the CAO/USBRL, CBE, CSE, COM-G, CECE from HQ, DRM/FZR, and other officers, will accompany the CRS during the inspection.

Indian Railways is set to introduce a new Vande Bharat train and two Mail/Express trains for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. These trains will operate between Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra (SVDK) and Srinagar railway stations and will be maintained by the Northern Railway zone.

As per a communication from Northern Railways Vande Bharat Train will depart from Katra (SVDK) at 8:10 am. and arrive at Srinagar Railway Station at 11:20 am.; Mail/Express Train 1 will depart from Katra at 9:50 am. and arrive at Srinagar Railway Station at 1:10 pm. and Mail/Express Train 2 will depart from Katra at 3:00 pm. and arrive at Srinagar Railway Station at 6:20 pm.

The 17-km Katra-Reasi section's final phase, including the challenging T-33 tunnel, has been completed. The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail project, initiated in 2005-06, includes several sections: the 118 km Qazigund-Baramulla section (2009), the 18 km Banihal-Qazigund (2013), and the 25 km Udhampur-Katra (2014). In February, a successful electric train trial run was held on the 40 km Banihal-Sangaldan track, and normal train operations are currently running on this section.

The railway line features 38 tunnels, including the T-49, India's longest at 12.75 km, and 927 bridges, including the world's highest railway arch bridge over the Chenab River and the only cable-stayed rail bridge in India over the Anji River in Reasi. KNO

## In 2024, nearly 1 cr...

and Kashmir for the third consecutive year. "For the third consecutive year, the number of devotees (arriving at the Shrine) has crossed 90 lakh. Last year, we crossed 95 lakh. This year's yatra is following almost the same trend," Garg said.

He added that efforts are underway to provide more facilities for the devotees and that the footfall in Katra will increase with the improvement in connectivity. The CEO also said that

the Board's ongoing infrastructure initiatives to improve the pilgrimage experience.

Moreover, normalcy has returned to Katra, the base camp for Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrims, as business activity resumed, following a week-long shutdown over a controversial ropeway project in Reasi district. The protest had brought all activities to a halt in the bustling pilgrimage town.

Police released eighteen detainees, leading to overnight celebrations. All shops, restaurants, and business establishments reopened, much to the relief of the pilgrims, as traffic movement was restored. Hundreds of devotees thronged Katra on the year's first day to pay homage at the temple, marking the end of the shutdown.

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sangharsh Samiti started the protest on December 25, opposing the proposed ropeway project, which aims to connect Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat to ease access for senior citizens and children. The Samiti's week-long stir was aimed at derailing the project, which they felt threatened the town's traditions. KNO

## Kashmir, Chenab suffering...

Omar Abdullah for his "lackadaisical approach" in addressing the aftermath of heavy snowfall across the region.

According to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), taking to his official account on X (formerly Twitter), Sharma condemned the Chief Minister's handling of the situation.

"Appalling dereliction of duty by CM Abdullah. As Kashmir Valley, Kishtwar & Doda struggle with harsh winter, isolation & lack of basic amenities, our Chief Minister Mr. Omar Abdullah indulges in skiing in Gulmarg, enjoying his ministerial perks while J&K is suffering," Sharma wrote—(KNO)

## MHA lists empowering...

Narendra Modi led government.

The 2024 annual report of the MHA accessed by the news agency states: "Peace in Jammu and Kashmir has been a priority of the PM Modi led government. Under the vision of the Prime Minister, the MHA undertook a slew of measures to enshrine peace, equality, and justice at the center of J&K's governance and society."

"Under the aegis of this broad vision, the Parliament passed the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, a historic bill aimed at empowering the Pahari ethnic group, Padari tribes, Koli, and Gadda Brahmin," reads the report.

"The bill directly pivots the essence of social equity to the hills and valleys of Jammu and Kashmir by providing for reservations for deserving communities. The bill heralds a new sense of belonging and unity among the people," it added.

The inclusion of these communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir, according to the MHA report, will have absolutely no impact on the current level of reservations available to the existing Scheduled Tribe communities such as Gujjars and Bakarwals. They will continue to get reservations like before. KNO

## J&amp;K employees struggle...

As per the reports received by the news agency, there are thousands of employees, who have not been paid their salaries for the past two months as the funds allocation has been halted by the finance department.

A senior official told KNO that there are various departments especially the PWD department and its allied wings that have not received the salaries for the months of November as well as December so far. "The departments have forwarded the requirements but the finance department is yet to allocate the funds. There are no reasons being provided for this so far," said the official.

Various employees told KNO that there is no official word coming from the concerned quarters about when their salaries will be released. This, according to them, has left their families including their children to suffer.

"We have home loans and when we do not pay the installments, we have to pay the increased interest against the non-payment. We have kids whose results are awaited as we couldn't clear the school fee. This has happened for the first time that such a financial situation has emerged in the departments like PWD. This has never happened before," an

official pleading anonymity said. KNO

## ERA of recommendations...

and strikes, now education, technical institutions, industries, and infrastructure are being seen in Jammu & Kashmir."

The MHA report stated that the recruitment processes in J&K have become transparent and clean. "The Union Home Minister distributed more than 1000 appointment letters for J&K Combined Examination-2024 and compassionate appointments through video conferencing from New Delhi," the report states.

Referring to the launch of e-buses the report states that to make commuting easy Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched 100 air-conditioned eco-friendly buses in Jammu region.

The report states that in pursuit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to build a developed and prosperous Ladakh, MHA decided to create 5 new districts in the Union Territory.

The new districts, namely Zanskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra, and Changthang, will take the benefits meant for the people to their doorsteps by bolstering governance in every nook and cranny.

"There will now be a total of seven districts in Ladakh, including Leh and Kargil. Being extremely difficult and inaccessible, at present district administration is facing many difficulties in reaching the grassroots level," the report states, adding, "After the formation of these districts more and more people have been able to take advantage of all the public welfare schemes of the Central Government and Ladakh Administration." KNO

## Cancer Institute Jammu...

"The installation is expected shortly, marking another milestone for the institute," he said. KNO

## 4 JeM terrorist associates...

as Mudasir Ahmad Naik, Umar Nazir Sheikh, Inayat Firdous Rather, and Salman Nazir Lone—all residents of Tral

The statement reads that incriminating material was also recovered from their possession. "They were involved in providing logistics support and transportation of arms & ammunition to the active terrorists of Jaish-e-Mohammad in Tral and Awantipora areas," it reads.

It added that a case under relevant sections of law has been registered at police station Tral and further investigation is going on. KNO

## BSF opens fire...

news agency that the incident occurred when the BSF sentry observed movement originating from the Pakistani side, prompting immediate action.

He said that over a dozen rounds were fired to deter any potential intrusion.

Following the incident, a search operation was launched in the forward areas," he added. KNO

## Mehbooba Mufti...

yet the information department continues to withhold advertisements to most news outlets," she wrote on X. She also highlighted the pending accreditation renewals for senior journalists.

Urging CM Omar Abdullah to intervene and address the issue, Mehbooba Mufti said, "I urge Omer Sb to intervene and address these pressing issues so that the press can operate freely and without undue influence."

Notably, in December last year, CM Abdullah reviewed a meeting of the Information Department where detailed discussions were held on the advertisement policy for newspapers and media houses.

The Chief Minister had stressed the importance of ensuring fairness and transparency in issuing advertisements based on circulation. He had urged the department to examine the Bureau of Outreach and Communication (formerly DAVP) criteria for advertisement rates and circulation assessments to develop a robust mechanism. KNO

## RAM NATH MANHAS REMEMBERED ON DEATH ANNIVERSARY Sat Sharma, Dr. Nirmal Singh, Mahant Rameshwar Dass pay tributes

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 1

On the death anniversary of Ram Nath Manhas, a prominent leader of Praja Parishad, Jana Sangh and BJP, rich tributes were paid to him in a programme held at village Indri (Sujwal) in Jourian tehsil of Akhnor assembly constituency.

It was organized by Sarpanch Bhopinder Singh, grandson of Ram Nath Manhas.

Sat Sharma (CA), Jammu and Kashmir BJP president, Dr. Nirmal Singh, former deputy chief minister, Mahant Rameshwar Dass, led hundreds of people to pay tributes to Manhas.

Sat Sharma, while speaking on the occasion, said that Ram Nath Manhas was one of the tallest and



most respected leader of his times, who had the distinction of having worked in different agitations of Praja Parishad, Jana Sangh and BJP. As elected MLA, he was always at the beck and call of the people and was indeed the torch bearer of nationalist ideology. People still remem-

ber his role in historic ek vidhan, ek nishan, ek pradhan agitation. He devoted his entire life for the cause of the nation in Jammu and Kashmir and had developed the faith of the people as son of the soil, who worked to strengthen nationalist forces. "Ram Nath Manhas

struggled hard to connect Indri village to main main-land and a bridge is being constructed to connect it with Pargwal", Sat said, adding that his dream is going to come true and the people will get proper road connectivity soon.

Dr. Nirmal Singh, while paying tributes, described Ram Nath Manhas as a mass leader, who left marks in the political and social fields of Jammu and Kashmir and would continue to inspire the young generations to devote life for the nation and the party. He informed that it was during the coalition government in J&K that he, being deputy chief minister, got approval for rupees 206 crore for construction of Indri-Pargwal bridge. The bridge will connect Pargwal island with main-land, which will provide

big relief to the people of the area. Mahant Rameshwar Dass said that persons like Ram Nath Manhas are very rare, who create space in the hearts of the people through their work and willingness to remain connected with masses. The real tribute to such a person would be to make people aware about his nationalist principles.

A resolution to dedicate and name the upcoming Indri-Pargwal Bridge as Ram Nath Bridge was also passed in the programme.

Mohan Lal Bhagat, MLA, Rajeev Sharma, former MLA, Suraj Singh, DDC vice chairman, Daljit Singh Chib, senior leader, Suresh Sharma, DDC member, Chaman Lal Kanathia, Jagdish Bhagat, Sukhdev Singh, Ashok Singh, Ram Sarup Sharma and others also paid their tributes.

## Jammu Sanskriti School student wins "Best Actor Female" at Film Youth Festival, Chandigarh

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 1

Krishnay, a 9th grader from Jammu Sanskriti School, Jammu, has won the prestigious "Best Actor Female" award at the Film Youth Festival in Chandigarh. Her stellar performance captivated the judges, marking a significant milestone in her acting career. Krishnay has also been selected to star in an upcoming movie by the Institute of Moving Images (IMI), which will be released on major OTT platforms, offering her a global platform to showcase her talent. This exciting opportunity promises to elevate her career and bring her one step closer to achieving her dreams in the film industry.

This remarkable success is a result of the dedicated mentorship of Arun Sala-



ria, Incharge of the Theatre Club at Jammu Sanskriti School. His guidance and expertise have played a pivotal role in helping Krishnay hone her craft.

Being selected for the IMI movie is a huge leap forward in her career, and

we are confident she will continue to inspire and excel. At Jammu Sanskriti School, we strive to provide our students with opportunities to pursue their passions, and Krishnay's success is a reflection of that commitment to excellence.

## Modi Govt drives revolutionary devp in J&K: Arvind

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 1

Arvind Gupta, senior BJP leader and MLA Jammu West, today emphasized the unprecedented development initiatives undertaken by the Modi government in Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the transformative changes that have reshaped the region's infrastructure, economy, and social fabric under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The senior BJP leader was speaking after inaugurating a newly constructed deep drain (mallah) project at Ward No. 32, Himmat Colony. The development work will be completed with an estimated cost of Rs. 44 lakhs, aiming to tackle the long-standing issue of waterlogging and improve sanitation in the area. The inauguration ceremony was attended by prominent leaders, including BJP JKUT Secretary Ayodhya Gupta, Mandal President Keshav



Chopra, Ex Deputy Mayor Dharamveer Singh Jamwal, and other local representatives such as Rajesh Saini, Anil Angral, Raj Kumar, Vikram Sharma, and Happy Singh. MLA Arvind Gupta extended New Year greetings to the people of Jammu West and J&K, wishing them prosperity, peace, and progress in the coming year, and expressing hope that 2025 would bring continued growth and opportunities for all.

Arvind emphasized that the abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent policy shifts have opened doors for rapid progress and have

brought J&K on the path of inclusive growth. "The Modi government has ensured that every corner of Jammu and Kashmir witnesses progress. From improved road connectivity to the expansion of educational and healthcare facilities, the region is seeing the fruits of a visionary leadership that is committed to uplifting the common man," he said.

The MLA further outlined the numerous developmental projects that have been launched, including the construction of world-class highways, bridges, and industrial corridors that are creating jobs and driving economic growth. "The push for infra-

structural development in Jammu and Kashmir has been unmatched. We are witnessing projects that were once deemed impossible coming to life, bringing prosperity and opportunity to the people of the region," he added. The senior BJP leader also praised the Modi government's welfare schemes, such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and the Ujjwala Yojana, which have significantly improved the lives of the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society in Jammu and Kashmir.

"In the past few years, Jammu and Kashmir has undergone a radical transformation, with the people now enjoying access to basic amenities that were once a distant dream. This is a result of the vision and policies of Prime Minister Modi, who believes in empowering the citizens of this region and ensuring that Jammu and Kashmir progresses in tandem with the rest of India," he added.

## Movement Kalki's protest for declaring Cow as 'Mother of Nation' entered in 73 Day

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 1

Movement Kalki's ongoing protest demanding the declaration of the cow as the 'Mother of the Nation' entered its 73rd day today. On the occasion of New Year, the members organized a havan to pray for the fulfillment of their demands, including strict laws for cow protection, the construction of new cow shelters, and the establishment of a Sanatan Dharma Board.

Movement Kalki members extended their support to the ongoing rope-way protest in Katra yes-

terday. They demanded the immediate halt of the ropeway construction and the release of the detained protest committee members. Following their intervention, the administration took significant steps, halting the construction and releasing all those detained.

Advisory Board Member Pritam Sharma stated that the New Year symbolizes progress and prosperity for all, and Movement Kalki remains committed to justice and public welfare. He urged the Shrine Board and the government to refrain from making decisions that force citizens to pro-

test. Highlighting past instances, he remarked that public resistance has often compelled the administration to reverse its decisions.

Advocate Sumeshwar Kohli emphasized that the government and Shrine Board must avoid infringing on the livelihoods of the common people. He highlighted the constitutional right to livelihood and criticized the ropeway project for threatening the means of income for many locals.

Pritam Sharma shared that the havan was organized to seek divine blessings for the welfare of the state and to inspire law-

makers to honor and protect the cow. The event is part of Movement Kalki's ongoing efforts to raise awareness about the need for a Sanatan Dharma Board and the recognition of the cow as the 'Mother of the Nation.'

Prominent members present included Karnail Chand, Neha Malhotra, Sapna Hindu, Advocate Raghav Kohli, Advocate Mohammed Bilal, and others.

Movement Kalki remains dedicated to protecting religious and cultural values and hopes that the New Year will bring success to their ongoing struggle.

## Project Sampark celebrates Golden Jubilee with release of Special Cover

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU : 01 JAN 2025

Project Sampark was carved out of Project Beacon on 01 Jan 1975 for maintenance and construction of all roads South of Pir Panjal ranges in Northern Command with approximately 500 Kms of road network and Rs. 3.4 Crores as initial outlay. The Project was christened 'Sampark' which signified its commitment to reach out and maintain harmonious relations with stakeholders and diverse agencies associated with road development work in its area of responsibility. In a nutshell the Golden Arc of Developmental Responsibility envelopes areas South of Pir Panjal range in J & K and contiguous areas of the states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh for constructing, improving and maintaining strategic road networks in the border Districts of Jammu, Kathua, Doda, Udhampur, Rajouri, Reasi and Poonch. Presently Project Sampark commands the responsibility for maintaining approximately 3000 Kms of road network with yearly financially outlay of approximately Rs 1400 Crores.

Today Project Sampark is completing 50 glori-



ous years of dedicated service to the nation. To commemorate the special event Maj Gen. MK Khan, VSM, ADG Army Postal Service (APS) personally presented the Special Cover in a solemn ceremony to DG Border Roads Lt Gen Raghu Srinivasan, VSM which was released by DGBR, in the presence of Brig Neeraj Madan, Chief Engineer Project Sampark and senior officers of HQ DGBR.

In addition to release of the Special Cover, a "Bridge Compendium" of Project Sampark was released by the DG. The Bridge Compendium showcases stellar Bridging Achievements of the Project spanning last 50 Years. The Compendium will serve as a glowing beacon to the effort put in by all ranks and file

of Project Sampark, past and present and future, in the role of BRO towards improving infrastructure in the UT of J&K. A Bridge by definition is a mechanical construct to span gaps/obstacles, across water bodies or ravines. Project Sampark is bridging and connecting the hearts, minds, hopes and aspirations of the local populace as it tames the mountains and associated terrain. It has achieved inroads by opening new trade routes and joining the remote and inhospitable areas with the rest of the country due to its personnel working relentlessly under extreme climatic and hostile conditions with utmost enthusiasm, courage and dedication. Consequently, the Project goal congruent to the

ethos of BRO of Connecting, Caring and Contributing has been a Growth Engine spearheading gargantuan socio-economic development given its reach, spread, and depth to enhance grassroots communication and incidental Ribbon Development along areas its roads course through. With 50 Years of glorious and stellar performance in the firmament of BRO with rich history behind, DGBR highly appreciated the work done by the rank and file encouraged them to trail blaze in the same fervour and Josh in the future too. At this poignant and historic occasion Project Sampark rededicates its strength, energy and vigour to the nation true to its motto of Sadaiv Agrasar 24x7x365.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

### ANIMAL HUSBANDRY DEPARTMENT JAMMU

#### PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO DEAL WITH COLD WAVE IN ANIMALS

To Minimize The Impact Of Cold Wave & To Prevent Serious Ailments And Deaths in Animals In This Inclement Weather The Following Measures Are Advised:

**DO'S**

1. Cover The Animal Sheds From All Sides During Night To Avoid Direct Exposure Of Animals To Cold Breeze & Frost.
2. Weak, Sick & Young Animals Should Be Covered With Sack Cloth During Night To Protect Them From Cold.
3. Ensure Good Bedding With Materials Like Straw & Also Change It Frequently So That Bedding Remains Dry Throughout.
4. Avoid Keeping Animals In Damp Areas As Well As Protect Them From Smoke And Fires That Are lit To Produce Warmth.
5. To Maintain Body Temperatures Of Animals They Should Be Fed With A Mixture Of Oil Cakes Like Groundnut Cake, Mustard Cake, Soyabean Cake etc. & Jaggery (Gur).
6. Ensure Adequate Feed & Fodder Storage Along With Use of Good Quality Forage.
7. Deworm The Animals.
8. Ensure Vaccinations Against FMD, Haemorrhagic Septicaemia, Black Quarter etc. Diseases.
9. Sheds Of Birds Should Have Temperature Control Systems In Place.
10. The Water Troughs Should Be Kept Clean And Animals Should Be Provided Luke Warm Water At Least Four Times A Day.

**DON'TS**

1. Do Not Leave Animals Tied/ Roam In Open During Cold Hours.
2. Avoid Animal Fares (Pashumelas), Mandis etc. During Cold Wave.
3. Avoid Giving Cold Water, Feed And Forage To The Animals.
4. Avoid Dampness And Smoke Inside Animal Shelter/Sheds.
5. Do Not Keep Animals In Open During Night.

**Extension & Publicity Wing**  
Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Jammu  
Gole Pully, Talab Tillo, Jammu (J&K)

DIP/J-8822/24  
Date: 1-1-24

## EDITORIAL

## Tough road ahead for NC govt

The year 2024 was nothing short of a political rollercoaster for Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, whose dramatic comeback to governance in Jammu and Kashmir has set the stage for a challenging 2025. As his administration steps into the new year, the pressing need to address public expectations and deliver on bold electoral promises looms large. The National Conference's ambitious manifesto for the 2024 Assembly elections outlined transformative goals, including the restoration of J&K's full statehood, the reversal of post-August 5, 2019, changes, and the implementation of the Autonomy Resolution of 2000. However, tangible progress on these promises has been limited, and public patience is wearing thin. Key demands such as the release of political prisoners and ensuring economic relief measures, like 200 units of free electricity for all households and 12 free LPG cylinders annually for the economically weaker sections, remain unfulfilled. These pledges, though laudable, present formidable financial and political challenges for the government. One of the thorniest issues for the Abdullah administration is the simmering discontent over the existing reservation policy. The recent participation of NC Lok Sabha MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi in student protests highlights internal divisions within the party. Managing these rifts while maintaining party unity will be a significant test for Omar Abdullah, who must also fend off opposition attacks. The financial constraints of the Union Territory exacerbate these challenges. With power liabilities exceeding Rs 35,000 crore and a debt-to-GDP ratio projected to hit 51% by 2024-25, fulfilling promises like free electricity and reinstating the old pension scheme for government employees appears daunting. Additionally, commitments to increase allocations of food grains, kerosene, and sugar echo similar challenges faced by other states but carry significant fiscal implications for J&K. Omar Abdullah has also sought to restore J&K's statehood and secure developmental funds during his meetings with Union Home Minister Amit Shah. While these initiatives signal a proactive approach, a lack of clear commitments from the Centre underscores the uphill battle ahead. The restoration of Articles 370 and 35A and the modification of post-2019 laws—key points of the NC manifesto—face resistance from the Centre, leaving the party with little to show beyond symbolic resolutions in the Legislative Assembly. The broader economic and social landscape in Jammu and Kashmir presents its own set of challenges. The region's power deficit and financial instability hinder the government's ability to implement policies effectively. Economic reforms are essential to ensure fiscal stability, yet these must be balanced with public welfare initiatives to meet the expectations of a politically charged electorate. As the National Conference government charts its path forward, transparent communication with the public and consistent engagement with the Centre will be crucial. Prioritizing policies that deliver tangible benefits while addressing the financial realities of the Union Territory can help build public trust. Additionally, fostering unity within the party and engaging with opposition voices constructively will be critical for long-term stability. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's ability to navigate these challenges will define not only his government's success but also the future of the National Conference in a politically volatile region. The stakes are high, and the coming year will reveal whether his administration can turn its promises into reality while navigating the political and economic tightrope of Jammu and Kashmir.

RACHNA LAKHPATI

The global economy is currently rife with discussions surrounding a potential 'de-dollarisation,' which pertains to the anticipated transition away from the supremacy of the US dollar in international trade and finance.

Advocates argue that it could stabilise economies, reduce inflation, and ultimately relieve financial pressure on everyday individuals. However, is this change truly the solution to the world's economic problems, or does it introduce a new set of challenges?

De-dollarisation refers to the reduction of dependence on the US dollar in the realms of global trade, investments, and reserves. For many years, the dollar has held its position as the leading reserve currency globally, influencing markets

and moulding economic strategies across nations. Nevertheless, numerous countries have begun to challenge this reliance on the dollar. The drive towards de-dollarization arises from a combination of elements: an increasing yearning for financial independence, the unpredictability of US policies, and the necessity for a different system that is more resilient against sanctions and market instability. Several nations, particularly those within economic alliances like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), have put forth the concept of establishing a new shared currency to facilitate trade and lessen their dependence on the dollar.

Undoubtedly, a significant appeal of a unified currency lies in its potential to mitigate inflation. By minimising the volatility of exchange rates

UTTAM GUPTA

Releasing a report the 'Trade Watch', on December 25, 2024, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam has suggested that trade policies under US President-elect Donald Trump could result in a potential economic boom for India, driven by significant trade diversion in global trade. He said 'Whatever Trump has announced so far, which is likely to come up... there are opportunities. We are the man at first slip. The ball is coming in our direction. Whether we hold the catch or drop it is for us to decide. There will be huge disruption, and if we prepare for it, there will be a massive boom due to trade diversion.'

This comes after Trump announced additional tariffs on imports from its biggest trading partners - 25 per cent on Canada and Mexico if they fail to check illegal immigration and drug trade. He also announced a general 10 per cent tariff by the US on all imports and a 60 per cent tariff on imports from China. Meanwhile, the US has also announced restrictions on the export of computer chip-making equipment, software, and high-bandwidth memory chips to China. Trump has also threatened to impose 100 per cent tariffs on BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) countries if they try to undermine the US dollar. The US is the

biggest importer in the world with a mammoth import valued at US\$ 3200 billion during CY 2022. During that year, its import from China alone was US\$536.3 billion which works out to 16.7 per cent of total goods imports. US goods imports from Canada and Mexico were US\$436.6 billion and US\$454.8 billion or 13.6 per cent and 14.2 per cent respectively. In sharp contrast, US goods imports from India during 2022 were US\$85.5 billion or a meagre 2.6 per cent of its total goods import. Now, if Trump executes his threat of imposing a 60 per cent additional tariff on imports from China, this will lead to an exorbitant increase in the cost of the latter's goods to American consumers thereby rendering them uncompetitive vis-à-vis similar goods coming from other exporting countries such as India. This should help India capture a big slice of the US import basket currently served by China. This should be possible even if Trump imposes a 10 per cent additional tariff on all its imports including from India. As for Trump's threat to impose 100 per cent tariffs on BRICS countries (India is one of them) in the event of the latter putting into action their so-called 'de-dollarization' plan (De-dollarization is a process of moving away from the world's reliance on the U.S. dollar as the chief reserve currency), this is theoretical.

At the 16th summit held on 22-24 October 2024 in Kazan, BRICS leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, publicly voiced their commitment to jointly introduce an alternative payment system that wouldn't be dependent on the U.S. dollar. The feasibility of implementing this idea anytime soon is suspect. Second, the US is also hell-bent on taking measures that will undermine the capabilities of China to boost the production of its goods such as electronics (including smartphones), automobiles etc in which it has a comparative advantage. So, it has imposed restrictions on the export of computer chip-making equipment, software, and high-bandwidth memory chips to China.

As a result, China not have much surplus to send to the US (and other countries), and India will have more space to boost its export of electronics, automobiles etc. Third, European Union (EU) countries have also imposed tariffs on Chinese EVs (electric vehicles) and solar equipment. Moreover, the multinational companies (MNCs) headquartered in the US and EU countries are shifting their factories away from China, thanks to growing geopolitical uncertainties, the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, cyber-security, and rule-of-law concerns, rising

labour costs in China etc. This opens up opportunities as these MNCs can relocate their production bases to India. All of this reinforces a case for 'China Plus One', a potent business strategy that involves diversifying manufacturing and sourcing away from China aimed at reducing the risk of over-reliance on China for manufacturing and sourcing.

## Is India ready to capitalise?

None other than NITI Aayog's 'Trade Watch' report says that even as many Asian countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia have emerged as bigger beneficiaries of the 'China Plus One' strategy - enabled by factors such as cheaper labour, simplified tax laws, lower tariffs, signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) - leading to substantial surge in their exports especially in high-growth sectors, India has lagged. Although India has achieved production gains, they have not significantly contributed to domestic value addition, unlike its peer economies.

In India's high-tech sector, while exports surged by 350 per cent between 2017 and 2023, domestic value-added output fell by 18 per cent. In manufacturing, by contrast, during this period, even as domestic value-added grew at 26 per cent, it still trailed behind merchandise export growth of 44 per cent. In

electronics, India's share in US imports has grown from 0.2 per cent in 2017 to 2.1 per cent in 2023, courtesy of, the government's push toward high-tech exports. However, competitors like Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand dominate, with each holding a substantially higher market share in US electronics imports.

An overarching reason behind India 'dropping the catch despite the man at first slip and the ball coming in our direction' is a high-cost domestic environment (this is despite a host of incentives given under the Production Linked Incentive or PLI schemes to industries) which makes our products uncompetitive in the export as well as domestic market. It also explains why our industries demand high protective tariffs and government yields; for instance, it has on the table a proposal for a 25 per cent hike in steel import duties. It is also a major factor behind India's reluctance to join major multilateral trade agreements, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) etc which help the country to better integrate into the global economy and benefit from expanded trade opportunities by facilitating access to markets of their member countries duty-free or

at close to zero tariffs. Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute nearly 40 per cent of exports. But, India not being a part of such trade alliances, they are denied an opportunity to boost exports. At the same time, they suffer due to high protective tariffs on the import of basic materials such as steel. A 25 per cent hike in import duties on steel products - asked by the Ministry of Steel - will impart a deadly blow to the MSMEs.

There are four major reasons as to why costs in India are high. First, businesses in basic materials and feedstock such as copper, zinc, aluminium, oil and gas, chemicals, petrochemicals etc are natural monopolies enabling them to set high prices. Second, tax rates are pretty high particularly when it comes to petroleum products which are still taxed under the pre-GST regime. By increasing movement costs, these increase the cost of all goods across the board. Third, power tariffs are exorbitant thanks to excessive State controls on power distribution companies. Finally, industries operate in highly interest-rate environments. India can catapult itself to the position of fully leveraging the 'China Plus One' strategy only if it effectively addresses the present high-cost syndrome.

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

## Empowering Adolescents WITH Spiritual Guidance

RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI

We all know that as per the laws of nature, we live our lives through various stages such as infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Of these life stages, the most adventurous and interesting stage is adolescence which represents an inner emotional upheaval, a struggle between the eternal human wish to cling to the past and the equally powerful wish to get on with the future. It's indeed a very critical phase in the life of every human being because, in this phase, there is intense growth not only physically but also morally, cognitively, emotionally and

intellectually.

Hence, in this stage of life, parents elders or peers must provide adolescents with proper guidance, and support and create an environment to facilitate their holistic development. The primary goal of every adolescent is to achieve complete independence, for which they often seek a lot of space and freedom. They start to think more rationally and abstractly as they form their moral code. In the process, they may often become assertive, rebellious, non-conformist, self-opinionated and aloof. Therefore, they need to be guided and supported with great sensitivity and maturity.

To attain a well-integrated maturity, a series

of factors need to be addressed for adolescents, like they need to acquire self-certainty, be ready to try out new roles, strive for achievement, acquire a self-identity, balance their rights with responsibilities and identify personal goals and ideals. One should understand that while dealing with the problems of adolescents, one should try and step into the young person's world and treat them with discerning respect rather than suspicion. It always helps when we share their joys and sorrows and genuinely address their questions whilst engaging them in moral and spiritual discipline.

It is so unfortunate that in the formative stage of adolescence when chil-

dren need a strong sense of direction & guidance, there is no source for them to get it. The family is no longer the strong institution it used to be. Hence, under this scenario, adolescents try to find support from other means such as their peer group, TV, internet, books etc.

Tempted by the glamour and gloss that is promoted by the media, there is a constant conflict that adolescents go through to measure up to their peer group's values and to cope with the ideals and the reality of life. Unfortunately, in the absence of proper guidance, it is natural that many adolescents are pulled into crime, abuse and drug addiction. While family, educational institutions

and social groups do have a major role to play in guiding and supporting adolescents, spirituality lends a deeper and stronger basis for forming a clear identity and value system upon which the edifice of a strong character can be raised.

Since spirituality touches on the core goodness of every human being, it is the most potent tool for guiding all sections of society. The process of empowering adolescents begins with the practice of treating them with respect and facilitating their growth in such a way that they can realise their hidden potential. So, instead of looking at them as helpless or ignorant beings who need to be chastised and controlled,

spiritual treatment calls for accepting them as potential carriers of higher wisdom, pure values, fresh ideas and skills that need to be channelled in the proper direction. Such a growth process is driven by their inner self, gently guided by wisdom and love rather than a forced development compelled by insecurity, fear and false expectations. Remember! If adolescents are motivated to explore spirituality at their age they will be equipped with excellent powers to cope with any life situation and excel in their chosen roles, thereby living a quality life.

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

## De-dollarisation: A bold step toward economic equity or a path fraught with uncertainty

RACHNA LAKHPATI

The global economy is currently rife with discussions surrounding a potential 'de-dollarisation,' which pertains to the anticipated transition away from the supremacy of the US dollar in international trade and finance.

Advocates argue that it could stabilise economies, reduce inflation, and ultimately relieve financial pressure on everyday individuals. However, is this change truly the solution to the world's economic problems, or does it introduce a new set of challenges?

De-dollarisation refers to the reduction of dependence on the US dollar in the realms of global trade, investments, and reserves. For many years, the dollar has held its position as the leading reserve currency globally, influencing markets

and moulding economic strategies across nations. Nevertheless, numerous countries have begun to challenge this reliance on the dollar. The drive towards de-dollarization arises from a combination of elements: an increasing yearning for financial independence, the unpredictability of US policies, and the necessity for a different system that is more resilient against sanctions and market instability. Several nations, particularly those within economic alliances like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), have put forth the concept of establishing a new shared currency to facilitate trade and lessen their dependence on the dollar.

Undoubtedly, a significant appeal of a unified currency lies in its potential to mitigate inflation. By minimising the volatility of exchange rates



and reducing reliance on fluctuations in the dollar, it could offer a pathway to stabilise prices for traded goods through a singular global currency unit.

Countries that rely on importing oil or other essential items ought to engage in negotiations for fixed prices, free from

the influence of market fluctuations driven by the volatility of the dollar rate. Inflation, frequently influenced by fluctuations in local currency, could, in principle, be mitigated within a cohesive framework. The reasoning is straightforward: when trade and pricing frame-

works are synchronised with a single currency, fluctuations in the dollar will likely exert a diminished impact from external shocks.

Having more stable prices for essential items would alleviate the financial strain on families. A unified currency could

simplify many aspects of daily life for the average person. Crossing border lines may appear quite effortless, as there will be no need for currency exchange. Global enterprises will thrive in an environment where stable financial conditions enable them to provide

savings to their customers. Nevertheless, the transition to a unified currency faces several challenges. A cohesive monetary system requires exceptional coordination among countries with diverse economic priorities, growth rates, and fiscal strategies.

Creating confidence and setting up governance frameworks for the currency would present a significant challenge.

Critics contend that a unified currency could unfairly benefit more robust economies, putting smaller or developing countries at risk. Without the ability to modify their currency values, nations may find it challenging to address specific economic crises effectively. In the immediate term, this may unsettle global financial systems, leading to instability as markets adjust. Although the dollar's strength might not be flawless, it serves as a sta-

bilising force in a tumultuous global economy.

The ideas of de-dollarisation and the potential rise of a unified currency represent daring approaches to addressing enduring economic challenges. The outcome of lower inflation and an improved quality of life hinges on the ability of nations to collaborate effectively and create frameworks that prioritise fairness and stability. However, the journey towards this transformation is set to be long and complex. The discussions it has ignited suggest a more equitable economic future. Whether they evolve into genuine transformation is something only time will reveal—or if the world navigates towards fresh financial horizons is yet to be determined.

(The writer is a freelance writer; views are personal)

## EXPERTS UNDERSCORE NEED FOR PREVENTIVE HEALTHCARE

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, JAN 1

As we step into 2025, the New Year brings not only celebrations but also a moment to reflect on the most valuable asset we possess—our health. Buy vitamins and supplements

At a time when stress, poor diets, and sedentary lifestyles have become the norm, leading medical professionals are sounding the alarm on the pressing need for preventive healthcare.

Neglecting our health doesn't just take a physical toll; it also brings financial, emotional, and psychological burdens, leaving families vulnerable to preventable crises.

Hyderabad's renowned healthcare leaders have come together to share their insights on how people can safeguard their well-being and lead healthier lives. From managing stress and staying physically active to securing financial protection through health insurance, these experts provide actionable advice for individuals of all ages. Their collective message is clear: taking small, consistent steps towards better health today can



prevent larger problems tomorrow.

Dr B. Bhaskar Rao, Chairman and Managing Director of KIMS Hospitals and a distinguished Cardiothoracic Surgeon, highlighted the importance of stress management and active living for heart health.

"Stress and obesity are among the greatest threats to heart health," he said, emphasising simple lifestyle changes such as reducing screen time and incorporating physical activity to mitigate these risks. "Let's work together

to make every heartbeat count," Dr Rao added, urging individuals to prioritise their heart health with nutritious food, exercise, and a stress-free lifestyle.

Dr Gayatri Kamineni, Chief Operating Officer and Orthopedic Surgeon at Kamineni Hospitals advocated for everyday physical activities like gardening, household chores, and walking to simultaneously enhance joint and heart health. She called for collective efforts to break stereotypes about household tasks and encouraged

both men and women to actively participate in such activities. Buy vitamins and supplements

Dr B. Kishore Reddy, Managing Director of Amor Hospitals and Chief Ortho Oncologist, underscored the importance of medical insurance in an era of escalating healthcare costs. "Cancer and lifestyle diseases like hypertension and diabetes are on the rise," Dr Reddy noted, urging everyone above 40 to undergo preventive screenings. He emphasized the dual strategy of adopting a healthy lifestyle

and securing comprehensive medical insurance to protect against unforeseen health challenges.

Dr C. Mallikarjuna, Managing Director and Chief Consultant Urologist at the Asian Institute of Nephrology and Urology (AINU), addressed the alarming rise of health issues in younger individuals.

He pointed out how lifestyle changes and stress contribute to conditions like kidney stones and fertility issues.

Dr Mallikarjuna advised young people to embrace preventive measures such as staying hydrated, maintaining a balanced diet, and reducing stress to avoid long-term complications.

Dr Devanand Kolothodi, Regional CEO of Aster DM Healthcare for the Telangana-Andhra Pradesh Cluster said neglecting health comes with a high price.

He urged people to avoid preventable health crises through regular check-ups, mindful eating, exercise, and mental well-being. "Let 2025 be the year we invest in our health for a more secure future," Dr Kolothodi emphasised.

## Health alert issued over deadly mosquito-borne virus in southeast Australia

AGENCIES  
SYDNEY, JAN 1

Health authorities in Victoria, Australia's second-most populous state, on Tuesday issued a high-risk warning after identifying a human case of a deadly mosquito-borne virus.

The Department of Health in Victoria announced that a probable human case of Japanese encephalitis (JE) virus has been identified in a resident of the state's north.

It is the first human case of JE virus -- a potentially deadly flavivirus related to dengue and yellow fever -- in Victoria during the current summer and has prompted a warning for people to take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

"The risk of mosquito-borne diseases remains high in the coming weeks. Taking measures to avoid mosquito bites is critical to protect against infections," the alert issued by Victoria's Acting Chief Health Officer Christian McGrath said. Buy vitamins and supplements

According to the World Health Organization, one in 250 human infections with JE virus results in severe clinical illness. The virus can cause a rare infection of the brain that



can lead to seizures, hearing or vision loss, paralysis or even death.

The Victorian Department of Health alert said that residents of, and visitors to, communities along the Murray River in the state's north are potentially at higher risk of infection, Xinhua news agency reported.

It said that children aged five years and younger and the elderly are at higher risk of developing severe illness if they are infected with the JE virus. Meanwhile, Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has used his New Year's message to declare that the country can become stronger in 2025.

In the short video message released on Tuesday, Albanese described Australia as the greatest country in the world.

"And in the year ahead,

with new determination and renewed optimism, we can build an even stronger Australia together," he said.

He thanked Australians who have worked through the holiday period, including defence force personnel, emergency service and health workers and people in hospitality and retail, for their sacrifice and said he hoped everyone has had time to relax and celebrate.

Albanese will face a general election in 2025 where his Labour Party aims to win a second term in power. Buy vitamins and supplements

The election must be held by May. In his own New Year's message, Peter Dutton, leader of the opposition Coalition, said that 2025 was an opportunity for Australia to get 'back on track.'

## Researchers find vital link between inflammation and depression

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

Researchers have unveiled transformative insights into the relationship between inflammation and depression, a finding that can fundamentally change our understanding of depression's biological underpinnings.

The research by neuroscientist Professor Raz Yirmiya from Hebrew University of Jerusalem extends far beyond the laboratory.

His discoveries about the role of microglia cells and interleukin-1 in stress-induced depression raise intriguing questions about therapeutic interventions:

How might understanding inflammatory processes lead to more targeted treatments? What role do different types of immune responses play in various forms of depression?

"Most depressed patients do not have any overt inflammatory disease. However, we and others found that exposure to stress, which is the most significant trigger of depression in humans and animals, also activates inflammatory processes, particularly in the brain," Yirmiya explained in a comprehensive Genomic Press Interview published in the journal Brain Medicine.

Through innovative

approaches combining molecular techniques with behavioural studies, Yirmiya's team identified several promising therapeutic targets.

Their work on microglial checkpoint mechanisms and stress resilience opens new avenues for understanding how the immune system influences mental health. These findings suggest potential for developing personalised treatments based on individual inflammatory profiles.

"My overarching aim is to harness the extensive knowledge from my research and others to accelerate the development of novel antidepressant therapeutics targeting

inflammatory processes," said Yirmiya.

His work suggests that both activation and suppression of the immune system can trigger depressive symptoms, highlighting the need for personalised treatment approaches.

Yirmiya's Genomic Press interview is part of a larger series that highlights the people behind today's most influential scientific ideas.

Each interview in the series offers a blend of cutting-edge research and personal reflections, providing readers with a comprehensive view of the scientists shaping the future, said authors.

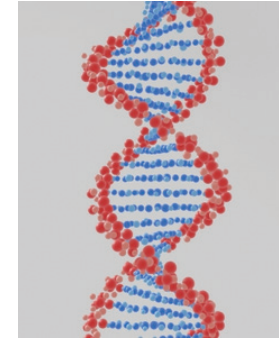
## Scientists unravel how early life experiences reshape our genes, brain health

AGENCIES  
TORONTO, JAN 1

A team of researchers has provided crucial insights into how early-life experiences become biologically embedded, affecting long-term health outcomes by reshaping our genes and brain health.

In a comprehensive Genomic Press Interview published in the journal Genomic Psychiatry, renowned neuroscientist Dr Michael Meaney from McGill University in Canada revealed pivotal discoveries about the intricate relationship between genes and environment in shaping brain health.

"I have always been genuinely fascinated by



the search for the developmental origins of individual differences in brain development and function," said Dr Meaney, whose work has earned him election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Order of Canada.

Dr Meaney's research journey began with a

simple question: what makes individuals different from one another?

This curiosity led him to groundbreaking discoveries in epigenetics -- the study of how environmental factors can influence gene expression without changing DNA sequences.

"We too readily embrace narratives and technology that appeal to the general public, achieve headlines, and attract venture capital, but are far too simplistic to capture the complex reality of brain health truly," observed Dr Meaney.

The findings raise intriguing questions about how society might better support child development: How can we translate these scien-

tific insights into practical interventions? What role do different types of early experiences play in shaping resilience?

The Genomic Press interview is part of a larger series that highlights the people behind today's most influential scientific ideas. Each interview in the series offers a blend of cutting-edge research and personal reflections, providing readers with a comprehensive view of the scientists shaping the future.

This format provides an ideal starting point for profiles that delve into the scientist's impact on the field, while also touching on broader human themes, said study authors.

## South Korea reports new avian influenza case at egg farm in central region

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, DEC 31

South Korea has confirmed its 19th case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (AI) at an egg farm in the country's central region of North Chungcheong Province, authorities said on Tuesday.

The latest case was detected at a layer hen farm in Eumseong county, about 90 kilometers south-east of Seoul, the authorities said.

The owner of the farm made the initial report on an increase in deaths among the livestock, reports Yonhap news agency.

This raises the number



of such AI cases to 19 for the winter season this year.

Authorities have contained the area and decided to cull some 44,000 chickens raised at the farm.

They also plan to carry

out inspections at eight other farms owned by the same agricultural company, and some 55 other poultry farms within the affected farm's quarantine zone.

Meanwhile, California's battle against avian influ-

enza A (H5N1) intensified amid spreading infections across dairy farms and a growing number of human infection, including two newly confirmed cases in Stanislaus and Los Angeles counties.

The virus, commonly known as bird flu, has infected 659 of California's 984 dairy operations since August, with one-quarter of these cases emerging in the past month alone, according to California authorities.

The rapid spread through the state's dairy industry prompted Governor Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency last week to protect agricultural workers

and public health, Xinhua news agency reported.

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

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

## Bangladesh records 575 dengue deaths in 2024

AGENCIES  
DHAKA, JAN 1

Bangladesh witnessed another deadly year of dengue outbreak as it recorded more than 100,000 cases and 575 deaths in 2024. Of the total, 9,745 cases were reported in December after 29,652 in November, the official data of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) showed here Tuesday.

After reporting an additional 1,185 dengue as of 8:00 a.m. local time Tuesday, the dengue tally in Bangladesh has reached



101,214 this year since January.

Two dengue-related deaths were reported across the country in the past 24 hours till Tuesday morning, raising the death toll to 575, said the DGHS.

Dengue fever is a

viral disease transmitted through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes. The disease causes an acute illness with symptoms such as headache, high fever, exhaustion, severe muscle and joint pain, swollen glands, vomiting and rash.

## WHO seeks more funding for mpox response in Uganda

AGENCIES  
KAMPALA, DEC 31

The World Health Organization (WHO) said Monday it is facing a critical funding gap of 11.1 million U.S. dollars to scale up the mpox response in Uganda where over 1,000 confirmed cases and six deaths have been registered.

Out of the 12.9 million

dollars of the total budget required to support the mpox outbreak response in the east African country, only 1.8 million U.S. dollars has been secured, said WHO in an intervention report issued in Kampala, the capital of Uganda.

More funds are needed to bridge the funding gap given the high utilization rate of available funds and

needs on the ground, the WHO noted, calling on all partners to "urgently support the Government of Uganda through increasing their financial contributions towards the mpox response."

In August, the WHO declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern, highlighting its potential for further global trans-

mission.

The Ugandan Ministry of Health, with support from WHO and other partners, has intensified preventive measures, including enhanced surveillance, case management, risk communication and community engagement, and public awareness campaigns to curb the spread of the virus, according to health authorities.

## China made largest contribution to COVID-19 origin studies: FM

AGENCIES  
BEIJING, JAN 1

China has provided the most data on the origins of COVID-19, making the most significant contribution to global research on the pandemic, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Tuesday after the World Health Organisation called on Beijing to share more

data. "Since the outbreak of COVID-19 five years ago, China has shared information on the outbreak and genome sequence of the virus with WHO and the international community at the earliest time possible, and has shared with others our control and clinical experience without reservation, making great contribution to the global effort of fighting against COVID-19,"

Mao told a news briefing. She spoke a day after the UN health agency released a statement marking the fifth anniversary of the first media report on respiratory infection cases in the Chinese city of Wuhan. The WHO said that there was "a moral and scientific imperative" for China to share whatever it had on the origins of COVID-19.

Mao said that after the

outbreak of the novel coronavirus infection China immediately shared information about the epidemic and the virus' genome with the WHO & the international community. She added that China had also unconditionally shared its experience in prevention and control, diagnosis & treatment, thereby making a major contribution to the global fight against the epidemic.

# Over 24.77 lakh rural artisans listed for benefits under PM Vishwakarma scheme in 2024: Govt report

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 1

The government has successfully registered over 24.77 lakh applications from village artisans such as carpenters, porters and masons for benefits under the PM Vishwakarma scheme and formalised 5.70 crore MSMEs during 2024, according to an official year-end review released on Wednesday.

As many as 15.05 lakh beneficiaries have completed basic skill training under the scheme and credit support to the tune of Rs 2,197.72 crore sanctioned to 2.54 lakh beneficiaries in the form of collateral-free loans at a concessional rate of interest, the review stated.

As many as 6.58 lakh beneficiaries are digitally enabled and marketing support was extended through 75 trade fairs and exhibitions organised across the country to promote artisans and their crafts & skills during the year.

To commemorate the successful completion of one year of the Scheme, the Prime Minister himself attended a national event held in September at Wardha in Maharashtra.

A major thrust of the government has been on formalisation of enterprises, which is an important enabler for providing an identity to MSME enterprises and ease of doing business.

As on December 26, 2024, as many as 5.70 crore MSMEs, with an employment of 24.14 crore are registered on Udyam Registration Portal and Udyam Assist Platform (UAP), according to the review.

The Ministry of MSME, through its Development and Facilitation Offices (DFOs) and in coordination with the state governments and other stakeholders, has promoted special registration drives across the country.

This effort has yielded significant results, which is evident from the accelerated growth in the number of registered enterprises.

The Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and

Small Enterprises is one of the flagship schemes of the Ministry of MSME for providing collateral-free loans to Micro and Small Enterprises.

This scheme was revamped in the year 2023, wherein the ceiling limit of guarantee coverage was enhanced from Rs 2 crore to Rs 5 crore; the annual guarantee fees reduced; and threshold limit for waiver of legal action was increased.

As many as 19.90 lakh guarantees have been approved, amounting to Rs 2.44 lakh crore during the period 1st January to 30th December, 2024.

In addition, a Special Scheme for Micro Enterprises, which are exempt from GST regime and

are registered on Udyam Assist Platform, was launched on 14th February 2024 in which loans up to Rs 20 lakh guaranteed without any Primary Security are provided to Informal Micro Enterprises and the Guarantee coverage is 85 per cent, the statement said.

Further, recognising the importance of women entrepreneurs in the economic growth of the country, the guarantee coverage has been enhanced for women-owned enterprises from existing 85 per cent to 90 per cent vis-a-vis 75 per cent coverage for others with effect from April 1, 2024, it added.

There has also been a 4-fold increase in Khadi

and Village Industries (KVI) sales in the last 10 years, which is to the tune of Rs 1,55,673.13 crore in FY 2023-24 as compared to Rs 33,135.90 crore in FY 2014-15 which has helped to increase employment and rural incomes.

In the current FY till November 30, KVI sales to the tune of Rs 1,10,747.40 crore have been recorded.

Besides, to provide assured market support to the Micro and Small Enterprises in the country, the Ministry of MSME, government of India notified the Public Procurement Policy which mandates 25 per cent annual procurement from MSEs by Union Ministries and Public Sector Enterprises.

## Focus on approving 10 lakh pending houses in January: Union Minister

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 1

The government this month will focus on approving 10 lakh pending houses against the target allocated earlier in the financial year 2024-25 and the first installment will also be released to the beneficiaries, Union Agriculture and Rural Development Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said on Wednesday.

By properly implementing all the schemes being run under the Rural Development Ministry on time, poverty-free villages will be created in the country, said the Union Minister.

"In future, targets will be set on a monthly basis for the work of the ministry and efforts will continue to achieve those targets," he said while

reviewing various works of his ministry on the occasion of New Year in the national capital.

This effort will play a major role in realising the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of a poverty-free India.

Along with this, while reviewing the works of MNREGA, PMGSY, PM-Awas, NRLM, DAY-NRLM, NSAP, Disha etc., Chouhan told the department officials that everyone will have to work to achieve the set target within the next one month.

He said that once the target is set, the path to achieving it becomes easy.

The Rural Development Ministry is doing a good job in achieving various targets and "we will work hard to achieve the set targets," said the minister.

## Cabinet approves extension of Rs 69,515.71cr worth crop insurance schemes for farmers

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 1

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme till 2025-26 with an overall outlay of Rs 69,515.71 crore from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The decision will help with risk coverage of crops from non-preventable natural calamities for farmers across the country till 2025-26, according to an official statement issued after the Cabinet meeting.

The Cabinet has also approved the creation of a Fund for Innovation and Technology (FIAT) with a corpus of Rs 824.77 crore for large-scale technology infusion in the implementation of the scheme, leading to increasing transparency and claim calculation and settlement, the statement said.

The fund will be utilised towards funding technological initiatives under the scheme, namely,



YES-TECH, WINDS, etc., as well as Research and Development studies.

Yield Estimation System using Technology (YES-TECH) uses Remote Sensing Technology for yield estimation with minimum 30 per cent weightage to Technology-based yield estimates.

As many as nine major states, including AP, Assam, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, MP, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are implementing the scheme. Andhra Pradesh tourism guide

Other states are also being on-boarded expeditiously.

With wider implementation of YES-TECH, Crop Cutting Experiments and

related issues will be gradually phased out. Under YES-TECH, claim calculation and settlement has been done for 2023-24.

Madhya Pradesh has adopted 100 per cent technology-based yield estimation.

Weather Information and Network Data Systems (WINDS) envisages setting up Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) at block level and Automatic Rain Gauges (ARGs) at panchayat level.

Under WINDS, a five-time increase in current network density is envisaged to develop hyper-local weather data.

Under the initiative, only data rental costs are payable by Central and state governments.

Nine major states are in the process of implementing WINDS (namely Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, Assam, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand & Rajasthan are in progress), while other states have also expressed willingness to implement the scheme.

## Finance Ministry enhanced India's global integration, ease of doing business in 2024: Govt report

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 1

The Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), spearheaded successful initiatives to enhance India's economic resilience and global integration in 2024, according to a year-end review released on Wednesday.

Notably, the Union Cabinet approved the new Framework on Currency Swap Arrangements for SAARC Countries (2024-27), fostering financial cooperation and regional integration.

This framework introduced an INR Swap Window worth Rs 25,000 crore, supplementing the USD/Euro Swap Window, and aimed to promote the internationalisation of the Indian Rupee.

These measures underscore India's commitment to strengthening ties with SAARC nations and providing financial stability in the region.

Further solidifying India's international part-

nerships, the signing and enforcement of the India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) marked a new chapter in fostering investor confidence and economic collaboration, while the India-Uzbekistan BIT emphasised investor protection and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Additionally, the constitution of the Joint Task Force on Investment between India and Qatar facilitated deeper cooperation, and India's proactive role in Sri Lanka's economic stabilisation highlighted its leadership in addressing regional financial challenges. These initiatives reflect India's dedication to fostering global economic partnerships and supporting sustainable development.

The DEA introduced many Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) reforms to enhance infrastructure and simplify investment regulations. The launch of the National Infrastructure Readiness Index (NIRI) promoted cooperative and

competitive federalism by evaluating and encouraging infrastructure development across states and central ministries.

Simultaneously, amendments to foreign investment rules, including the Overseas Direct Investment Regulation and the Foreign Exchange Management Rules, streamlined processes and facilitated cross-border investments. These initiatives collectively enhanced India's investment climate, enabling global expansion for Indian companies and boosting financial inclusion nationwide.

India's extensive work as co-chair paved the way for approval of third disbursement from IMF, ensuring Sri Lanka's return to a sustainable economic recovery.

India has retained their commitment to the stabilisation, recovery and growth of the Sri Lankan economy by adopting a proactive approach towards facilitating the debt resolution.

Launched in September 2024, National Infrastructure Readiness Index (NIRI) is developed to further the ideas of cooperative and competitive federalism. This was aimed at encouraging competition among states/UTs and identified central infrastructure Ministries/Departments to improve their respective performance and further enhance the infra-development climate.

This helped to pave way for infrastructure development and its enabling environment.

The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, also took several initiatives to simplify rules related to foreign and cross-border investments and anchor reforms for pro-investment climate.

Amendment in Rule 19(3) and insertion of new Rule 19(4) was introduced to facilitate ease of doing in overseas investment/Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) (Fourth

Amendment) Rules, 2024, were introduced to enable cross-border share swaps. This facilitates the global expansion of Indian companies through mergers, acquisitions, and other strategic initiatives.

Besides, it enables Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in White Label ATMs to boost financial inclusion nationwide.

Foreign Exchange (Compounding Proceedings) Rules were also introduced to streamline the processing of compounding applications, introduction of digital payment options for application fees and compounding amounts

Securities Contracts (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024 were introduced in August, 2024, for facilitating direct listing of securities by public Indian companies on International Exchanges of GIFT IFSC.

This facilitates easier access to global capital for Indian start-ups and companies in sunrise and technology sectors.

## Assam Police working with NIA, IB to bust terror modules: CM Sarma

AGENCIES

GUWAHATI, JAN 1

Assam Police is closely working with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) to bust terror modules in the state, said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday.

Sarma told reporters here, "Assam Police has collaborated with central agencies like NIA and IB to bust terror modules in the state with significant success. In the last few months, 23 operatives of different terror outfits were arrested from different corners of the state."

Some of the operatives of extremist organisations were nabbed from other states also.

"We have arrested people with terror links from West Bengal and Kerala also during joint operations of the Assam



Police and NIA," he said.

Meanwhile, the CM also refuted the claims of influx of Hindus from Bangladesh due to unrest in the neighbouring country saying that the security forces in the state could not detect any Hindu Bangladeshi infiltrator in the last five months.

Sarma said, "We have put the security forces on

high alert at the International Border following the unrest in Bangladesh to check infiltration. The police have detected a good number of illegal immigrants on a daily basis along the International Border.

However, no Hindu infiltrator from Bangladesh was arrested in the last five months."

The Chief Minister argued that the Hindu community people immigrated from Bangladesh 30 to 40 years ago and the rest of the people have been living in the neighbouring country for different reasons.

"Most of the Hindu community people who had the desire to cross the border and come to India had come here 30 or 40 years ago.

The rest of the minority people have been living in Bangladesh despite facing large-scale atrocities in the neighbouring country. I guess they have their own reasons for staying there, maybe a love for the soil or patriotism towards Bangladesh," he said.

Sarma also stated that Bangladeshi infiltration spiked up in the last few months due to the collapse of the textile industry in the neighbouring coun-

try, leaving many jobless there.

He stated that the economy of Bangladesh has collapsed due to unrest and the majority community people were more affected than the minority section.

"So far, we have arrested around 1,000 Bangladeshi people in the last few months. They were pushed back immediately after their arrest," the CM mentioned.

He also attributed the illegal infiltration to incentives offered by a few textile industry owners in India.

Sarma also said that he took up the issue of Bangladeshi infiltration with Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the meeting of the North Eastern Council (NEC).

"I have discussed these things with other Chief Ministers of northeastern states," he added.

## Himachal Institute of Public Administration renamed after late former PM Manmohan Singh

AGENCIES

SHIMLA, JAN 1

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu on Wednesday announced the Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA) would be renamed after late former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in a tribute.

He praised Dr Singh's policies that helped the development of India and Himachal Pradesh and said that his efforts brought many benefits and recognition to the state.

Dr Singh passed away on December 26, 2024, at the age of 92. Born on September 26, 1932, in Gah in Punjab, now in Pakistan, he was a distinguished economist and politician who served as Prime Min-

ister from 2004 to 2014.

Presiding over the 50th anniversary celebrations of the HIPA, the Chief Minister unveiled its coffee table book. He also inaugurated the training programme for special educators at the institute in which 80 teachers would take part and would continue till January 3.

He said this programme would equip teachers with modern techniques for educating children with special needs and would offer an alternative to the traditional Braille method. As a part of inclusive development, the Chief Minister announced an increase in the monthly pension for visually impaired children rising from Rs 1,500 to Rs 4,000 per month until the age of 27.

He said this change would be incorporated

into the upcoming budget. He said the government was taking this significant step to make the visually impaired self-reliant.

Sukhu said Himachal Pradesh annually generates an income of Rs 16,000 crore, while the expenditure on salaries and pensions amounts to Rs 27,000 crore. He emphasised the need for a sustainable financial roadmap and called for collective efforts and support from all sections of society so as to increase the state's income and secure a prosperous future.

He said that over the past two years, the present government has worked diligently to stabilise the derailed financial condition for which employees and officials have provided their support to the government.

## African swine fever: Mizoram suffered Rs 336.49 cr loss in 2024; over 39,200 pigs died or culled

AGENCIES

AIZAWL, JAN 1

Mizoram suffered a loss of Rs 336.49 crore due to the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF), which left 15,000 pigs dead while around 24,200 pigs culled to prevent the spread of the disease in 2024, officials said on Wednesday.

An official from Mizoram's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department said that over 15,000 pigs died while over 24,200 pigs were culled till December 31 after the outbreak of the ASF on February 9 last year.

The officials said that the outbreak of the contagious disease started in

mid-March 2021 and since then the ASF caused huge losses to the farmers and government farms.

In 2021, 33,417 pigs and piglets died and 12,568 were culled due to infectious disease while 12,795 pigs and piglets died and 11,686 were culled in 2022 and 1139 pigs and piglets died and 980 were culled

in 2023.

In 2024, the first ASF case was reported on February 9 in Leithum village in Champhai district, which shares unfenced borders with Myanmar.

According to the official, the state, which shares unfenced borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, has incurred financial

losses of Rs 896.69 crore due to the disease since 2021.

"In view of the death and culling of pigs and piglets due to the ASF outbreak, Mizoram suffered a loss of Rs 334.14 crore in 2021, Rs 210.32 crore in 2022 and Rs 15.77 crore in 2023," the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary

Department official told IANS.

The government has provided compensation to several hundred families for the loss of pigs due to the highly communicable disease, she said.

The official said that the outbreak of ASF has declining fatalities with less number of pig deaths

and culling reported since mid last month (December 2024).

According to the official, the deaths of pigs recently occurred in two districts -- Kolasib district along Assam and Lunglei district bordering Bangladesh.

The AHV Department official said that though the ratio of pig deaths due

to ASF and culling has reduced after the summer season was over, the outbreak of the disease continued in a few districts with lesser numbers.

The pigs both in government and private farms and homes in around 260 villages in seven districts have been infected by the ASF outbreak.

# Peace agreement signed between Shia-Sunni tribes in Pakistan's Kurram

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD, JAN 1

After weeks of intense negotiations, a 14-point peace agreement was signed between the rival tribal groups from different sects in Kohat city of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province on Wednesday, paving way for a ceasefire and the reopening of blocked routes and supplies to the district which has been devastated by violence and remained completely cut off from the rest of the country for over 80 days.

As per details, the agreement was signed by at least 45 members of each tribe following the Kurram Grand Jirga, or tribal court, with an agenda of establishing a long-lasting and sustainable peace in the district.

"The two warring tribes in Kurram have signed a peace agreement containing 14 points aimed at establishing peace in the area as violence has plagued the restive territory for several weeks now," said Malik Sawad Khan, member of the Grand



Jirga, who was involved in negotiating the peace agreement.

"Both sides have agreed to hand over their weapons to the government. All bunkers will be dismantled and if anyone refuses to hand over their illegal arms and weapons, the government will take action against them," he added.

It has also been agreed between the two tribes that passenger convoys in

each other's territories will not be attacked. The maintenance of law and order in the district will be done jointly by the Frontier Corps and the local tribes who will also be responsible for jointly handling any terror threat on the restive border with Afghanistan.

A committee will also be constituted to implement the agreed 14-points of the agreement with immediate effect which will work towards opening of

blocked routes to Kurram and Parachinar region for food supplies, medical aid and trade in a bid to push normalcy in the region.

Shia-dominated Parachinar has been severely affected with almost no availability of food and medical supplies for over 80 days, resulting in the death of more than 65 people, including children and women due to shortage of medicines.

Majlis Wahdat Musli-

meen (MWM), the largest political party representing Shia Muslims in the country, has staged multiple protests in Karachi, demanding peace and an end to the decades-long bloodshed and killing of Shia Muslims in Kurram.

"We will end our protest after all roads towards Kurram are opened. We do not want anything from the government. We demand the right to live for our people. The situation in Kurram has turned into a catastrophe and we all need to stand in solidarity with the people of the region," said Allama Raja Nasir, head of MWM.

It was in Kurram district in the last week of November that a passenger bus convoy was ambushed and attacked, leaving at least 42 Shia Muslims dead.

The attack sparked a wave of sectarian violence between Shiite and Sunni communities, with multiple retaliatory assaults over the following days, raising the death toll to over 150.

"Many claim that the Kurram issue is a territorial fight between two

tribes. But the fact is that it is a pure sectarian rivalry between Shia and Sunni tribes, who have been killing each other for decades and have been trying to gain control of territories," said Syed Yasir Shah, a local journalist from Kohat.

"We will have to see how fruitful this latest peace agreement turns out to be. In the past, many peace truces have happened but the issue has remained unresolved," he stated.

The current crisis was, in particular, one of the worst ever as it led to blockade of routes that resulted in the death of over 100 children, who could not get basic medicines.

"Now that they have signed an agreement, the immediate step should be to start the process of relief and rehabilitation of the affected people. But, I fear that both tribes would first be looking at each other's steps and checking if the weapons are surrendered or not. Asking them to do so and join the security forces will not be an easy step at all," said Shah.

## Cambodia seized 14.7 tonnes of narcotics in 2024

AGENCIES  
PHNOM PENH, JAN 1

Cambodia has recorded a sharp increase in both the number of drug-related suspects arrested and the amount of narcotics seized last year, according to an Anti-Drug Department's report released on Wednesday.

The authorities had detained 26,033 drug-related suspects in 2024, up 30.5 per cent from 19,940 in the year before, the report said, adding that 954 suspects were foreigners of 20 nationalities.

"A total of 14.7 tonnes of illicit drugs had been confiscated from those suspects' possession from January 1 to December 31, 2024," the report said.

According to the report, only 2.97 tonnes of narcotics had been seized in the entirety of 2023.

Most of the confiscated drugs were ketamine, crystal methamphetamine, methamphetamine tablets, heroin, ecstasy, and cocaine, Xinhua news agency reported.

In September, a Cambodian court had sentenced two Thai men to life in prison for traf-

ficking a large amount of illicit drugs.

Saehoe Somchai, 33, and Saehoe Thanat, 30, were both arrested in the capital Phnom Penh on August 21, 2023, with 118 kg of methamphetamine and ketamine.

"The duo was charged with possessing, transporting and trafficking illicit drugs," said the verdict pronounced by Theam Chan Piseth, presiding judge of Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

"The court decided to sentence each of them to life in prison," the verdict said, adding that the court also fined each of them 80 million riel (20,000 US dollars).

Cambodia has ramped up efforts in combating illicit drugs since August 2023 when Prime Minister Hun Manet took office.

Hun Manet said in a message to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in June that combating illicit drugs was a top priority of the government.

He ordered provincial and local authorities to stamp out drug distribution and usage at nightclubs and other entertainment facilities across the kingdom.

## Lankan President launches 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative to heal environment and society

AGENCIES  
COLOMBO, JAN 1

Fresh off his last month's India visit, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Wednesday launched the 'Clean Sri Lanka' national programme, which aims to create a morally and environmentally sustainable nation.

As he inaugurated the 'Clean Sri Lanka' programme at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo, Dissanayake stated that 2025 marks the start of a new "political culture" in the island nation.

"Our primary developmental goals include eradicating rural poverty, implementing the 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative, and building a digital economy. The 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative, launched alongside the New Year, aims to uplift society to greater heights through social, environmental, and ethical revival," he said.

Dissanayake stated at the event - attended by members of the Maha Sangha,



The 'Clean Sri Lanka' project, said the Lankan President, goes beyond merely cleaning up the environment.

"It is essential to heal our society and introduce a new system of values and principles. Under the 'Clean Sri Lanka' Initiative, we aim to establish these new values and systems... It aspires to restore the deeply eroded and deteriorated social and environmental fabric of our motherland. We aim to create cleanliness and rejuvenation across all sectors of society," Dissanayake stated.

The other two top priorities of the Lankan President include initiating economic reforms and embracing digital transformation.

"The first priority is to rescue our country and its people. Economic reforms are being formulated to ensure that economic benefits reach rural communities, as an economy concentrated in the hands of a small group can never bring stability to society.

religious leaders, ministers, ambassadors, athletes, representatives from various sectors, and government officials - that the success of the 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative depends solely on the active participation of the public.

Sri Lanka, he highlighted, faces "grave challenges" in spite of having been endowed with an exceptionally beautiful and vital environment and strategic geographic location.

"Restoring our environmental system must become a core focus of the 'Clean Sri Lanka' programme. Our nation and its people need a new value system. We have mistakenly elevated incorrect values to positions of importance, embedding them as the fundamental ethos of our society. It is crucial to establish a new framework of values.

## FLIGHT DATA RECORDER FROM CRASHED JEJU AIR PLANE TO BE SENT TO US FOR ANALYSIS

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 1

The South Korean government said Wednesday it will send the flight data recorder from the crashed Jeju Air plane to the United States for analysis.

The exact timeline for the transferring of the flight recorder will be decided in consultation with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport said in a briefing.

The flight recorder, retrieved earlier from the wreckage of the Jeju Air B737-800 aircraft at Muan International Airport, reportedly sustained some external damage, missing a connector that links its data storage unit to the power supply.

"We have determined that extracting data from the damaged flight data recorder here is not possible," said Joo Jong-wan, director of the aviation



policy division at the ministry. "And so we have agreed with the NTSB to send it to the US and analyze it there."

South Korean experts will participate in the analysis process in the US, he added.

However, the authorities have completed extracting data from the cockpit voice data recorder, found in a relatively better condition, and started converting it into

voice files, the ministry said earlier.

Meanwhile, two additional investigators from aviation manufacturer Boeing Co. have joined the on-site probe into the Jeju Air crash at Muan International Airport, government sources said.

With these additions, the number of the US team members increased to 10, including six from Boeing and three from the US National Transportation

Safety Board. According to the sources, the US team expanded its presence to ensure a thorough examination of the accident.

The US team arrived in South Korea on Monday and traveled directly to Muan, where it commenced its joint investigation with the Korean team led by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport the following day.

During their initial

joint on-site investigation, investigators focused on a navigation system that assists in aircraft landings, known as a localizer.

The localizer, installed on a concrete structure, at Muan International Airport has been blamed for exacerbating the severity of casualties in the Jeju Air crash. On the second day of their investigation of the accident site on Wednesday, the US officials were seen examining airplane debris scattered around the runway, including engine parts, Yonhap news agency reported.

Some were observed picking up debris, inspecting the undersides and taking photos, while others made a call with a stern expression or pointed to damaged areas, calling others over to inspect.

The Jeju Air B737-800 aircraft belly-landed at the airport and exploded Sunday as it crashed into the structure, claiming 179 lives out of 181 passengers on board.

## NORTH KOREA'S KIM ATTENDS NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS IN PYONGYANG

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 1

North Korea held a large-scale performance celebrating New Year in Pyongyang, with leader Kim Jong-un in attendance, state media reported Wednesday.

The art performance was given with "splendour" on Tuesday night at the May Day Stadium to usher "in the hopeful new year 2025, which will be a watershed for steady success and progress," the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

Figure skaters and schoolchildren danced on the ice to the tune of "Dear Father," a song praising Kim, to kick off the performance, which was attended by the leader, top government and party cadres and military commanders, according to the



KCNA.

When Kim appeared in the auditorium, the audience broke into "stormy cheers," paying "the highest glory and tribute," while the leader extended his "greeting of best wishes" to all people across the country, the report said.

"When the performance ended, loud cheers of 'Hurrah!' for Kim Jong-un rocked the venue and

fireworks were let off to gorgeously decorate the nocturnal sky," the KCNA noted.

Photos of the performance, released by North Korea, showed Kim's daughter, believed to be named Ju-ae, and Premier Pak Thae-song sitting next to Kim. However, Kim's wife was not seen, nor was she listed among those in attendance.

In separate dispatches,

the KCNA reported that students in Pyongyang gathered at Kim Il Sung Square on Tuesday night to hoist the national flag and launch fireworks in celebration of New Year, indicating that North Korea ushered in the New Year with events similar to those in the past.

A video of the New Year performance, aired by Korean Central Television, showed Kim Yo-jong - the North Korean leader's sister who serves as vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea - walking outside the event venue, holding the hand of a boy, with a girl next to her, Yonhap news agency reported.

In April 2015, South Korea's spy agency reported that Kim was presumed to be giving birth the following month.

## South Korean Prez Yoon's senior aides offer to resign after acting president appoints key justices

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 1

Senior aides of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, including his chief of staff, offered to resign Wednesday, a day after acting President Choi Sang-mok appointed two justices to the Constitutional Court.

Those who expressed their intents to resign include Chung Jin-suk, the presidential chief of staff; National Security Adviser Shin Won-sik; Sung Taeyoon, chief of staff for policy; and Chang Ho-jin, foreign policy adviser to Yoon, according to the presidential office.

Choi on Tuesday appointed two justices to the Constitutional Court, partially meeting the opposition's demand to fill three vacancies on the nine-member bench before a ruling on Presi-



dent Yoon's impeachment, Yonhap news agency reported.

The presidential office voiced regret over Choi's appointments, saying that he has gone beyond his authority as an interim leader.

By law, at least six votes are required to uphold an impeachment motion, which means the appointment of three additional justices could improve chances of Yoon's

impeachment being upheld. The court has up to six months to decide whether to remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

Yoon, impeached by the National Assembly last month, is also facing a criminal investigation over his failed martial law declaration on December 3.

The resignation offers by Yoon's top aides also come after a Seoul court issued a warrant to detain

Yoon on Tuesday, making him the first sitting South Korean president to face arrest. Yoon is suspected of masterminding the martial law declaration, orchestrating an insurrection and abusing power.

Earlier on Tuesday, Yoon's legal defence team plans to seek an injunction to suspend a detention warrant issued against the impeached president over his failed martial law bid, one of his lawyers said on Tuesday, while criticising the warrant as 'illegal.'

The Seoul Western District Court approved a request from the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) to issue the warrant for Yoon on charges of masterminding the botched December 3 martial law declaration, orchestrating the insurrection and abusing power, according to the CIO.

## India's car sales end year on a high, Maruti Suzuki records 30 pc jump to cross 1.78 lakh units

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

India's car sales ended the year on a high with market leader Maruti Suzuki India recording a 30 per cent jump in sales to 1,78,248 units in December 2024 from 1,37,551 units in the same month last year.

Maruti Suzuki's arch-rival Hyundai, SUV maker Mahindra & Mahindra and Kia Motors also reported a surge in sales as the market moved into top gear.

Maruti Suzuki's overall domestic sales, including that of light commercial vehicles and supplies to Toyota Kirloskar Motor, were at 1,32,523 units in December as against 1,06,492 units in the same month of the previous year, up 24.44 per cent, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said in a regulatory filing on Wednesday.

Total domestic passenger vehicle (PV) sales were at 1,30,117 units in December 2024 as compared to 1,04,778 units in the same month a year ago, up 24.18 per cent.

Sales of mini cars Alto and S-Presso went up to 7,418 units during the



month as compared to 2,557 units in the year-ago period.

Similarly, sales of compact cars such as Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift and WagonR were up at 54,906 units from 45,741 units in December 2023.

The company's SUVs, including Brezza, Ertiga, Fronx, Grand Vitara, Invicto, Jimny, and XL6 clocked sales of 55,651 units in December 2024, up from 45,957 units in the same month last year, the company said.

MSI said its exports in

December were higher at 37,419 units as compared to 26,884 units in the same month a year ago.

Similarly, automaker Kia India on Wednesday reported a 6 per cent rise in total sales at 2,55,038 units in 2024 compared to the previous year, recording its highest-ever annual sales. The company had sold 2,40,919 units in 2023, Kia India said in a statement.

Kia India Senior Vice-President and Head of Sales and Marketing Hardeep Singh Brar said, "As we move into 2025, we are

excited about the upcoming launch of the Syros, which promises to redefine the Indian automotive landscape."

Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) on Wednesday said it has registered the highest-ever yearly domestic sales of 6,05,433 units in 2024.

The company achieved total sales of 7,64,119 units (including domestic and export) last year.

In the month of December, HMIL reported total monthly sales of 55,078 units (domestic at 42,208

units and export at 12,870 units).

According to Tarun Garg, full-time director and Chief Operating Officer, HMIL, the company managed to sustain sales momentum in 2024, despite strong headwinds faced by the industry at large.

By achieving the highest-ever yearly domestic sales of 1,86,919 units, the Hyundai Creta model continued to strengthen the company's position as an SUV leader.

"We are confident that the upcoming CRETA Electric will further expand the appeal of this Undisputed, Ultimate SUV," Garg noted.

Meanwhile, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd on Wednesday said its overall auto sales for the month of December stood at 69,768 vehicles, a growth of 16 per cent, including exports.

In the sports utility vehicle (SUV) segment, Mahindra sold 41,424 units in the domestic market, a growth of 18 per cent and overall, 42,958 vehicles, including exports.

The domestic sales for commercial vehicles stood at 19,502.

## Space economy to grow nearly 5 times to \$44 billion in next decade: Minister

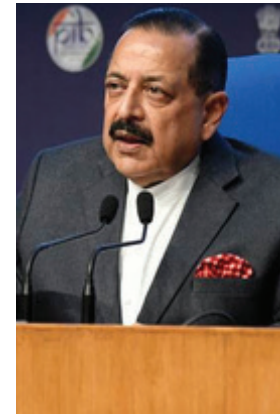
AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

The Indian space economy is set to grow nearly 5 times from \$8.4 billion to around \$44 billion in the next decade, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, has stressed.

Investments in the sector reached Rs 1,000 crore in 2023 alone, placing India as a frontline player globally. India's space sector has also emerged as a significant foreign exchange earner.

Of the 220 million euros earned through launching foreign satellites, 187 million euros was generated in the last eight years. Countries benefiting from ISRO's services include the US, France, Japan and others.

Hailing ISRO's Space Docking Experiment (SPADEX) mission, Dr Singh said that this achievement places India on par with global leaders in space docking technology. The SPADEX mission is a pivotal project by ISRO aimed at developing and demonstrating technologies for spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and



undocking using two small satellites.

"These capabilities are critical for future missions, including satellite servicing, space station operations, and interplanetary exploration," the minister told reporters in the national capital.

The primary objectives of SPADEX, said the Minister, include Demonstrating technology for spacecraft rendezvous and docking, Showcasing controllability in docked conditions to extend the life of target spacecraft and Testing power transfer between docked satellites.

The mission also includes post-docking activities, with spacecraft conducting independent

payload operations. According to Dr Singh the docking is expected to occur on January 7, 2025, at noon.

The minister also highlighted a significant collaboration between the Department of Biotechnology and ISRO to explore the application of biology in Space.

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India will lead in 'Space-Biology' by studying physiological changes in space environments," he stated.

The 2023 New Space Policy allowed private sector participation in ISRO's activities. This policy has led to a surge in space startups, growing from a single-digit count in 2021 to nearly 300 in 2023.

Notable startups include AgniKul Cosmos, which established a private launchpad on ISRO premises, and Skyroot, which executed India's first private sub-orbital launch.

"These startups are reinforcing ISRO's infrastructure and attracting global attention from companies like SpaceX," Dr Singh remarked.

## India's coffee exports surge past record \$1 billion mark in April-November

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

India's coffee exports have surged during April-November of the current financial year, shooting past a record \$1 billion during the 8-month period, according to figures compiled by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

The jump in the value of exports is due to the sharp increase in prices of Robusta coffee and stocking ahead of the European Union's new deforestation regulation that is expected to increase the cost of coffee as well as several other agricultural exports to the EU.

India's coffee exports rose by 12.22 per cent to \$1.28 billion for the full year in 2023-24 on higher demand for Robusta coffee in the global markets, according to the Commerce Ministry data. The country exported



coffee worth \$1.14 billion in 2022-23.

Italy, Russia, the UAE, Germany, and Turkey are the major markets for India's coffee exports.

India became the world's eighth-largest coffee grower during 2022-2023. Indian coffee is one of the best coffees in the world owing to its high quality and commands a premium in the international markets. India produces two types of coffee: Arabica and Robusta.

Arabica has a higher market value than Robusta coffee due to its mild

aromatic flavour. Robusta coffee is used in making various blends due to its strong flavour.

Robusta is a majorly manufactured coffee with a share of 72 per cent of the total production of Indian coffee. India is considered the fifth largest producer of Robusta coffee globally.

The industry provides direct employment to more than 2 million people in India. Since coffee is an export commodity for India, domestic demand and consumption do not drastically impact

the prices of coffee.

Coffee is produced mainly in India's southern states with Karnataka being the largest producer accounting for as much as 71 per cent of the total production of the crop. Kerala is the second-largest producer of coffee but accounts only for about 20 per cent of the total production.

Tamil Nadu is the third-largest producer with 5 per cent of India's total coffee production. Half of Tamil Nadu's coffee is made in the Nilgiri district, a major Arabica growing region. Orissa and the north-eastern areas have a smaller proportion of production.

India's combined Arabica and Robusta harvest was estimated at around 3.74 lakh tonnes for the 2023-24 crop year. While Arabica's production is a little over 1 lakh tonnes, Robusta's output is around 2.6 lakh tonnes.

## India's coal production posts 5.3 per cent growth to 97.94 million tonnes in Dec 2024

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

India's total coal production recorded a growth rate of 5.33 per cent during December 2024 to touch 97.94 million tonnes (MT) compared to the corresponding figure of 92.98 MT for the same month in the previous year, the Coal Ministry said on Wednesday.

Captive and other mines produced 18.95 MT, reflecting a significant growth of 29.61 per cent compared to 14.62 MT in the corresponding period of the last year.

The cumulative coal production up to December 24 also witnessed substantial growth, reaching 726.29 MT in FY 2024-25, compared to 684.45 MT during the corresponding period of FY 2023-24, reflecting an increase of 6.11, the statement said.

In terms of coal dispatch, the figures for



December 24 surged to 92.59 MT, compared to 87.06 MT in December 2023, achieving a growth rate of 6.36 per cent.

Dispatch from captive and other mines stood at 18.13 MT, marking a growth of 31.83 per cent compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Additionally, the cumulative coal dispatch up to December 2024 reached 750.75 MT in FY 2024-25, compared to 711.07 MT in

FY 2023-24, recording an impressive growth of 5.58 per cent.

The Ministry of Coal said that it was continuing with initiatives aimed at enhancing production, ensuring seamless dispatch, and catering to the growing energy demands of the nation.

The consistent growth in coal production and dispatch would help to achieve self-reliance in coal and fulfilling the vision of Atmanirbhar

Bharat.

India's coal imports declined by 3.1 per cent to 149.39 million tonnes (MT) during April-October period of FY 2024-25 from 154.17 MT in the same period of the previous year due to the increase in domestic production.

Additionally, the Non-Regulated Sector (other than power) witnessed a more significant drop of 8.8 per cent, during April-October 2024 as compared to the same period of last year.

Despite possessing the fifth-largest coal reserves globally, India faces a significant shortfall in certain coal types, particularly coking coal and high-grade thermal coal, which are not adequately available from domestic sources.

This gap in supply necessitates coal imports to sustain key industries, including steel production, and to meet the growing energy demand.

## M&M 11th most valuable automobile manufacturer in world: Anand Mahindra

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 1

Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) is the 11th most valuable automobile manufacturer in the world, leaping over many competitors and erstwhile technology collaborators, its Chairman Anand Mahindra said on Wednesday.

In a New Year address to the employees of Mahindra Group, he said that among companies that were part of the NIFTY50 in 2002, M&M has had the highest compounded annual share price growth rate till date, and in just the past year, has soared 77 per cent.

"For the fourth straight year, we were included in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index's World Index as the highest-ranked automotive OEM," Anand Mahindra wrote.

Most notable among other businesses, Mahindra Susten exceeded its plans for the year, with a



cumulative win pipeline of 3.3GWp, over 60 per cent of its targeted capacity.

"Last Mile Mobility continued its leadership position in the electrification of India's 3W market, Mahindra Finance's loan book swelled to over Rs 1.1 lakh crore and tractor business expanded its dominant position in India amid tough competition," the company's Chairman informed.

On the EV business, he said that it takes audacity for a traditional SUV company to make a big bet on the future of electric vehicles in an uncertain world.

"And it takes a deep commitment to innovation to forge cutting-edge technology, design, and performance into vehicles

that have unique offerings. I hope this will be a portent for the future of every company within the Group," said Anand Mahindra.

He further stated that India is well positioned to more than fend for itself.

"It is no longer the 99-pound lightweight on the beach. It can demonstrate military might. It can boast of political stability, anchored by its raucous and robust democracy that was on full display in the central elections, when a nation of over a billion people voted seamlessly, peaceably, and effectively," he noted.

India can enhance its economic potential, by seizing the opportunity offered by shifting affinities and alliances to become a keystone in the global supply chain system.

"We will be less affected by capricious global winds than many other countries.

## Audi India sells 5,816 units in 2024, reaches 1 lakh milestone

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 1

German luxury carmaker Audi on Wednesday said it sold 5,816 units in India this year, along with clocking the sale of 1,927 retail units alone in the fourth quarter (Q4).

Moreover, the automaker reached the milestone of selling 100,000 units in the country to date.

The 'Audi Approved: plus', the brand's pre-owned car business, registered a strong 32 per cent growth in 2024 compared to the previous year, informed the company.

"The first half of 2024 brought supply-related challenges for Audi India, yet the continued demand for our products reflects the enduring trust our customers place in the brand," said Balbir Singh Dhillon, Head of Audi India.

With improved supplies in the second half of 2024, the volumes improved by



36 per cent in the fourth quarter compared to the previous quarter.

"This year also marked a major milestone of 100,000 cars sold in India. With the introduction of the new Audi Q8 and new Audi Q7, along with a robust portfolio, we are finishing the year strongly in quarter four and anticipate sales to grow hereon," said Dhillon.

The automaker inaugurated its largest luxury used car showroom in the north-east region in Guwahati, followed by a new facility in Mangalore.

With 26 facilities across major hubs in India currently, the brand plans

to expand this network further to meet the rising demand for pre-owned luxury cars.

"We remain optimistic about the long-term potential of the Indian luxury car market and are committed to delivering exceptional experiences to our customers," Dhillon added.

The launch of new Audi Q8 and Audi Q7 models bolstered the brand's Q range and reinforced its leadership in the luxury SUV segment, driving substantial customer enthusiasm.

According to industry data, the sale of luxury cars are experiencing robust demand in the domestic market.

As per the latest wealth report by Knight Frank, India is likely to see more ultra-wealthy individuals, with those possessing a net worth exceeding \$30 million to reach 19,908 by 2028 - up from 13,263 in 2023.

## Internet subscribers in India rise to 971.50 million in July-Sep quarter: TRAI

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

Internet subscribers in India went up from 969.60 million at the end of June to 971.50 million at the end of September, registering a quarterly rate of growth 0.20 per cent, the government said on Wednesday.

Out of 971.50 million internet subscribers, the number of wired internet subscribers are 43.64 million and wireless internet subscribers are 927.86 million, according to the data by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

In the same quarter, the broadband Internet subscriber base increased by 0.39 per cent from 940.75 million at the end of June to 944.39 million at the end of September.

Meanwhile, wireline subscribers increased from 35.11 million at the end of June to 36.93 mil-



lion at the end of September, with a quarterly rate of growth at 5.20 per cent.

Wireline tele-density increased from 2.50 per cent at the end of June to 2.63 per cent at the end of September, with quarterly rate of growth 4.96 per cent.

Monthly average revenue per user (ARPU) for wireless service increased by 9.60 per cent, from Rs 157.45 to Rs 172.57. On an annual basis, monthly ARPU for wireless service increased by 15.31 per cent in the quarter, according to TRAI data.

"The ARPU per month for the pre-paid segment is Rs 171 and for the post-paid segment is Rs 190.67 in Q.E. Sep-2024," it added.

# BGT: Clarke backs 'genius' all-rounder Reddy for promotion in Sydney Test

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

Former Australia captain Michael Clarke has called for a batting promotion for India's rising all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy in the fifth and final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at Sydney Cricket Ground, set to kick off on Friday.

Reddy, currently batting at No. 8, has amassed 294 runs across seven innings in the series, making him the third-highest run-scorer so far. His remarkable average of 49 has been bolstered by a scintillating maiden Test century in Melbourne, where he scored 114 runs off 189 balls. The knock, laced

with 11 boundaries and a six, has earned him widespread recognition and Clarke's admiration.

Speaking on the Beyond 23 Cricket Podcast, Clarke lavished praise on the 21-year-old, who has been one of India's standout performers in the series against Australia. Clarke described Reddy as a "genius," and suggested that the young all-rounder should move up the order for the upcoming Sydney Test.

"Reddy, this young kid batting at number eight, is a genius. I think he has definitely got to bat seven if not six. He has been India's leading run-scorer, 21 years of age, unbeliev-



able. He has been underrated in the entire series. I think he is good enough to bat at number six. So, what a great option for India going into the last Test match," said Clarke.

The former Australian skipper further highlighted Reddy's adaptability and fearlessness against

a formidable Australian bowling attack.

"He has impressed everyone. He has not feared any Australian bowler. He has been patient when he has needed to be patient. He has batted with the tail extremely well. He has shown his intent. He bats, bowls, and fields," Clarke added.

Reddy's performances have been a bright spot in an otherwise challenging series for India. His ability to contribute crucial runs down the order has provided much-needed depth to the Indian batting lineup. Reddy's promotion to No. 6 could also allow India to include an

additional bowling option, a move that might address their struggles in maintaining control during Australia's long batting innings.

In addition to his batting prowess, Reddy's all-around skills as a bowler and fielder make him a valuable asset. His inclusion higher up the order could bolster India's chances of leveling the series in Sydney and retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

As the series stands, Australia leads 2-1 after a dominant victory in the Boxing Day Test. India faces the daunting task of winning the Sydney Test to level the series and retain the coveted trophy.

# Marcus Rashford disregards 'ridiculous' reports surrounding Man Utd exit

AGENCIES  
MANCHESTER, JAN 1



With Marcus Rashford's Manchester United career hanging by a thread, the English forward had disregarded 'ridiculous' reports that have surrounded him in recent weeks. Rashford has not featured for the Premier League side since December 1 when he scored a brace in the 4-0 win against Everton, which was Amorim's first league win at the club.

Rashford, 27, has been at Manchester United since the beginning of his career but amidst rumours of a falling out with the new head coach stated that he felt it was time for a 'new challenge.' Reports suggest that the Englishman could be on his way out of his

a photo of the article on his Instagram, as he stated he has not contacted any agency and neither does he plan to. "Been a lot of false stories written in the past few weeks, but guys this is getting ridiculous - never met with any agency and don't have any plans to..." read the post by Rashford.

Amorim has remained adamant and claimed he has no problem with Rashford and has left him out of United's squad due to low efforts in training. The head coach also went on to state that the situation will remain the same until he feels it is the 'right moment'. The 27-year-old returned to Manchester United's bench for the 0-2 loss against Newcastle United but did not feature in the game.

This was disputed by Rashford, after he posted

# Tennis: China's Yuan Yue beats ninth seed Kostyuk into third round at Brisbane International

AGENCIES  
SYDNEY, JAN 1

China's Yuan Yue beat ninth seed Marta Kostyuk on Wednesday night to advance to the third round of the Brisbane International tennis tournament. Yuan beat Kostyuk, the world number 18, 6-4, 6-3 in their second-round match at the key Australian Open warm-up event. The Chinese world number 49 won 65.5 percent of points on her own serve, compared to Kostyuk's 54.8 percent, despite making fewer first serves than the Ukrainian. "I'm very excited to win this match, my first of 2025," Yuan said on court following the victory.

She said that the large contingent of Chinese fans in the crowd supporting her gave her the energy to win the match. Yuan will play another Ukrainian, Anhelina Kalinina, in the

round of 16 on Thursday afternoon. On the centre court in Wednesday's afternoon session, men's second seed and reigning champion Grigor Dimitrov beat Australia's Aleksandar Vukic 6-2 7-6 to advance to the quarterfinals. It marks the eighth time in nine appearances at the tournament that Dimitrov has reached the quarterfinals.

The second seed in the women's draw, Emma Navarro, is out of the tournament after being beaten by local hope Kimberly Birrell 7-5, 7-5 in a major upset. It was Birrell's second career win over a top-10-ranked opponent and first since 2019. The top seeds in the men's and women's singles draw, Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka, will be in action on center court on Thursday night against Gael Monfils and 15th seed Yulia Putintseva, respectively.

# United Cup: Fritz serves past Zhang, seals semifinals spot for USA

AGENCIES  
PERTH, JAN 1

Taylor Fritz and Coco Gauff won their respective singles matches in straight sets as the United States of America (USA) dominated China 2-0 in the quarterfinals of the United Cup, making a perfect start to the year 2025 and made it to the semifinals of the mixed-gender team competition here on Wednesday. Fritz defeated Zhang Zhizhen 6-4, 6-4 at the RAC Arena while Gauff defeated China's Shuai Zhang 7-6(4), 6-2 to clinch victory for USA.

Taylor, who is ranked No. 4 in the ATP Rankings, produced a serving clinic to defeat Zhang Zhizhen 6-4, 6-4 and moved Team USA to an unassailable 2-0 lead against China. Fritz offered no let-up throughout the one-hour, 19-minute match, during which he dropped just four points behind his serve.

"Coco did such a good job putting us ahead and giving me the chance to come out and put us through," said Fritz, who levelled the pair's Lexus ATP Head2Head record at 1-1. "There was a little bit of pressure because I didn't want to be the one who lost it for the team after Coco won all her matches this week. I played a really solid match. Really happy with it.

"...I felt like I've gotten better with each of the matches I've played and this match tonight definitely felt like I was back in the flow of how things were feeling at the end of the year," he added.

Fritz's victory, his seventh at the event, backed up Coco Gauff's straight-sets triumph over Zhang Shuai. Champions of the United Cup two years ago, USA has joined Kazakhstan on the cross-country flight to compete in the semifinals in Sydney, where it will face Italy or Czechia.



It wasn't just Fritz's vastly improved serve that was causing Fritz damage.

The reigning US Open and Nitto ATP Finals runner-up carved out nine break points with his relentless ball-striking, converting on two occasions to seal a comprehensive quarter-final tie in USA's favour.

"Towards the end of last year, I made a lot of improvements to my game and I started to believe that the average level I felt I could produce every day was enough to beat a lot of the higher-ranked guys

who before I thought I had to play incredible to beat," Fritz said.

Earlier, World No.3 Gauff was made to work by China's Zhang Shuai but the 20-year-old American prevailed 7-6(4), 6-2 to give USA an early lead.

"Against Shuai, I had to hit an ace to win the point," Gauff said. "She was playing amazing tennis out there. Dennis [Kudla] was saying I dug it out and that's what it felt like. I was literally on the ground for most of the match."

"The harder I hit, the harder she was hit-

ting," Gauff said. "I felt like I couldn't get her on defense. She was playing so aggressive on me and I felt like I had to go more on my second serves, which brought in more double faults, but if I just put it in it was a return winner. So I had to take my chances," she said.

Gauff extended her perfect United Cup debut with a gritty effort in the first set to come from a break-down three times to upend Zhang's inspired play.

The 35-year-old veteran stepped into singles after China's surprise hero during the group stage, Gao Xinyu, was forced to stand down due to injury.

With her flat ground-strokes and aggressive baseline positioning, Zhang kept Gauff pinned behind the baseline with her depth of shot.

She confidently broke Gauff in the first game of the match but, as would be her undoing in the

opening set, failed to consolidate her break. Zhang broke Gauff's three ties in the opening set but was broken back each time, including as she served for the set at 6-5.

Having reeled Zhang in, Gauff played an outstanding tiebreak to seal the set after 59 minutes, striking a perfect lob winner to set up her set points. Gauff took her momentum into the second set, racing out to a 3-0 lead and protecting her serve to close out the hard-fought win after 1 hour and 34 minutes. With the victory, Gauff improved her record against Zhang to 3-0.

In her third appearance in the USA United Cup team, Desirae Krawczyk teamed up with debutant Robert Galloway to play her first match in the event. The American duo overcame Zhang and Sun Fajing 6-3, 6-7(0), 10-3 to make it a 3-0 sweep in the quarter-final tie before they head to Sydney.

# Australia executed their disciplined plan of dismissing Kohli: Clarke

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

Former Australia captain Michael Clarke has lauded the Pat Cummins-led side for executing their "disciplined plans" of dismissing the talismanic Virat Kohli in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

Despite making an unbeaten century in the second innings during India's 295-run win in Perth, Kohli hasn't done anything substantial, as seen from his scores of 7, 11, 3, 36 and 5 in the next five innings in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne. What's been more worrying is, all six of Kohli's dismissals in the current series have been to chasing balls outside the off stump.

"I think Australia bowled well with a disciplined plan, and they have executed it. I think Virat's



the type of player, though, in any format, he really thrives on with bat on ball, and that gives him confidence. He wants to hit the ball. He's never been a big leaver, and there's always been that error outside off stump that a lot of teams have targeted, because he's such a good player.

"You get too straight, and he scores runs for fun on that leg side. So the Aussies have executed very well. Virat's found it hard

not to push at that delivery. I think there's been different forms of nicking outside off - sometimes back foot, sometimes front foot. I think Starc provides a great weapon, that left arm across, and I think Pat Cummins has used him very well. But Virat will be disappointed.

"He got 100 in the second innings of the first Test, and he looks in good form, even in the first innings, before

that run out. I thought he was really disciplined and made Australia come to him. That run out happened, and then lapse in concentration. So I want to give credit to the Aussie bowlers. But I think Virat will be disappointed because I think he's in good nick," said Clarke on ESPN's Around The Wicket show.

In Melbourne, Kohli was also fined 20 per cent of his match fee and given a demerit point for his shoulder collision with debutant Sam Konstas on day one's play. Former Australia white-ball skipper Aaron Finch believes Kohli is just picking up fights on his own in this series.

"I think Virat's always someone who's thrived on pressure, and he's thrived when his back's against the wall and it just feels at this stage he's trying to

put his own back against the wall. He's trying to be antagonistic. He's trying to almost try to pick a fight because that's when he plays at his best, when he feels that someone's coming at him.

"That's when he puts all his skill on show. Just feels like he's almost pushing other people to make him feel like that.

And we haven't seen the best of him yet in this series. But like Pup said, he looked beautiful in that first innings in Melbourne, and looked like he wasn't going to get out. But Australia bowled well," said Finch.

With India being 2-1 behind in the five-match series, the visitors' will be wishing Kohli discovers his old self ahead of the fifth and final Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground, starting on January 3.

# HIL 2024-25: Soorma Hockey Club gear up for tactical test against UP Rudras

AGENCIES  
ROURKELA, JAN 1

After fighting back from a goal deficit to claim two points in their opening match, the Soorma Hockey Club are set to take on the UP Rudras in their second match of the Hockey India League (HIL) 2024-25 at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Thursday, hoping to ride the momentum and gain full points with an outright win.

Soorma Club get into their next game on the back of a bonus point earned in a shootout, following a 1-1 draw against the Tamil Nadu Dragons in their opener. In contrast, the UP Rudras secured three points in their first match with a commanding 3-1 victory over the Kalinga Lancers.

Soorma Hockey Club

dominated key metrics in their first match, including possession, shots, and circle entries.

Reflecting on their first match, head coach Jeroen Baart said, "I think the first half was a bit of a chess game, whereas the third quarter saw both teams pick up momentum. The first goal opened up the game a bit, and we started creating more chances after that." "When you look back at it, the statistics and the footage, we should have come out with all three points. But when you are losing 1-0 with seven minutes to go, you have to be satisfied with a draw and a bonus point from the shootout," Baart added.

Looking ahead to the match against the UP Rudras, Baart acknowledged the competitive

nature of the tournament. "As we have already seen in the first few games of the HIL, it is going to be close. It's nice that it's always exciting until the end, and each game will be a tight contest. It's going to be an interesting tactical puzzle," he said. Belgian midfielder Victor Wegnez, a key figure in Soorma's midfield, shared his perspective on the game plan for the Rudras, emphasising the importance of solid defensive work and making the most of penalty corner opportunities. "I think for us the key will be to defend first and try to get as many penalty corners as we can. We have very good defenders and a strong team for penalty corners with the likes of Harmanpreet, Jeremy Hayward, and Nicolas Della Torre," opined the 29-year-old.

# PL mid-season report: Liverpool with one hand on title, Arsenal's diminishing hopes & Man Utd 'relegation battle'

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 1

With the 2024-25 Premier League season having crossed the halfway mark and the January transfer window having opened, teams will scramble over the course of the next month to try and apply the finishing touches to their squad in hopes of flying through the upcoming congested fixture schedule.

Is the title race already sealed?

With Manchester City going through what has been their

worst season under Pep Guardiola, the league is in unprecedented territory. In recent years the Mancunian side has been within touching distance of the league leaders, if not at the top themselves, but with their injury crisis, the four-time defending champions are 14 points behind league leaders Liverpool.

Heading into the season, Liverpool were expected to enter into the transition period under new head coach Arne Slot, but the Dutch coach has so far passed his trial through fire, having lost only one of their first 18 games so far. It's impor-

tant to point out that Liverpool have been the luckiest of the title contenders when it comes to injuries. The two vital cogs of the side in Mohamed Salah and club captain Virgil van Dijk have made it through unscathed when compared to Arsenal, who were without Martin Odegaard for a long period and Bukayo Saka, who has recently suffered a torn hamstring, and Manchester City, whose midfield was left tattered with injuries to Rodri and Kevin de Bruyne.

With Chelsea head coach Enzo Maresca remaining adamant that his side is not in the

title race, and having dropped points in their last three league outings, the Italian head coach's comments may be springing to life. Realistically speaking, that leaves the Gunners as the only side who can potentially chase down the Reds.

Does Arsenal have the potential to end their title drought?

The Gunners, who fell agonisingly short by one point last season, have been title contenders for the third straight year now. They have a mammoth task ahead of them as they sit in third place, having played one game less than second-placed

Nottingham Forest, nine points behind Liverpool. The Gunners struggled seriously without Odegaard's creativity and scraped through during his absence with their relentless set-piece routines. Out of the eight games that the Gunners have dropped points in, four came during Odegaard's absence.

There is no doubt that a fully fit Arsenal side is one of the best in the league, which was evident during their 5-1 routing against Crystal Palace, and a player of Odegaard's profile is hard to replace, but the question remains: Will Mikel Arteta

be able to adapt his side to play without their most lethal attacking outlet?

Saka has so far provided 15 g/a in 16 games this season and was leading the league in assists before his injury. Although the Gunners still possess one of the best defenses in the league.

Will Gabriel Martinelli or someone like Gabriel Jesus be able to fill the void, or will Arteta be looking to bring in reinforcements during the upcoming window?

Manchester United's relegation battle: A cause of INEOS' making?

Let's backtrack to the 2023-24 season when Manchester United's majority stakeholders in INEOS were chasing the appointment of Dan Ashworth for the club's sporting director, and despite Newcastle United's resistance, succeeded in bringing him to Old Trafford. The Red Devils, who finished the 2023-24 season in eighth place, were on the brink of sacking Erik Ten Hag over the summer, but the side defeated Manchester City in the FA Cup final, and according to reports, it was Ashworth who backed the Dutch head coach and extended his contract.

## GMC Srinagar launches QR-based Feedback System to enhance patient care service delivery

JNEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 1

In a significant step towards improving the quality of healthcare and administrative services, Govt Medical College (GMC) Srinagar today launched a QR-based feedback system in Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital.

The initiative aims to provide patients and their attendants an easy, efficient and transparent platform to share their experiences and suggestions for the hospital's overall development.

The innovative system was launched by the Principal/Dean of GMC Srinagar, Prof. Dr. Iffat Hassan, who emphasized the importance of feedback in driving institutional improvement.

Others present at the event included Administrator, Mohammad Ashraf Hakak; HOD Urology deptt. Prof. Dr. Sajad Nazir; Medical Superintendent, Dr. Tasneem; Deputy Medical Superintendent, Casualty Medical Officers (CMOs), Resident Medical Officers (RMOs), nursing staff, and



key stakeholders of the hospital.

Prof. Dr. Iffat highlighted the hospital's commitment to leveraging technology to ensure patient satisfaction and operational efficiency. She stated, "The QR-based feedback system is a milestone in our continuous efforts to provide patient-centered care. This initiative will help us

to understand the needs of the patients better and address their concerns effectively."

Administrator praised the collaborative efforts of the GMC IT Section in designing and implementing this user-friendly system. "The feedback platform is simple to use and will act as a direct communication channel

between patients and hospital administration. We believe this will greatly enhance transparency and accountability."

HOD Urology said that the initiative aligns with the vision of improving healthcare delivery by incorporating patient feedback into decision-making processes. The system is designed to address both positive and constructive feedback in a time-bound manner.

Patients and attendants can now scan QR codes displayed at various key locations in the hospital, such as reception areas, outpatient departments, and wards, to submit their feedback anonymously or with their contact details. This data will be reviewed regularly to identify areas of improvement and ensure timely redressal of grievances.

The launch of service is a commitment from the hospital administration to continuously adapt and innovate for better healthcare delivery, ensuring that SMHS Hospital remains at the forefront of patient care excellence.

## DC B'la chairs DLC, reviews verification of beneficiaries in PDS database

JNEWS SERVICE

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 1

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, convened a meeting of the District Level Committee (DLC) today at DC office meeting hall to review the verification process of beneficiaries listed in the Public Distribution System (PDS) database for the district.

The committee is tasked with verifying the eligibility of all beneficiaries enrolled in the Public Distribution System (PDS) database, in accordance

with the applicable rules, and ensuring the removal of ineligible beneficiaries.

On the occasion, the DC instructed the officers to expedite the re-verification process for all beneficiaries, particularly those under the AAY and PHH categories. He urged a thorough review of their current income status to ensure the accuracy of the PDS database.

Minga Sherpa also directed the Officers to ensure 100% completion of e-KYC for all beneficiaries and to incorporate any eligible beneficiaries

who may have been left out into the system.

Meanwhile, to expedite the re-verification and updating process in the PDS, the DC directed the formation of committees at the Block and Panchayat levels which will conduct extensive surveys to streamline and update the database efficiently.

The meeting was attended by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Assistant Commissioner Development, Assistant Director FCS&CA and other officers and officials.

## 4-Day orientation/ Training programme for implementation of NALSA Scheme 2024 commences at Bandipora

JNEWS SERVICE

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 01

The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Bandipora on Wednesday inaugurated a four days Orientation Training Programme for the implementation of the NALSA Scheme 2024.

The event was held under the Chairmanship of Khalil Ahmad Choudhary, Chairman DLSA Bandipora/Pr. District & Sessions Judge, Bandipora and under the supervision of Iqbal Ahmad Akhoun, Chief Judicial Magistrate/Secretary, DLSA Bandipora.

The four days Orientation Training Programme is being organized for the members of the Legal Service Unit for Persons with Mental Illness and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (LSUM) and Legal Services Unit for Children (LSUC), aimed to enhance the understanding and implementation of the NALSA Scheme 2024.

The programme was inaugurated at the Conference Hall of ADR Centre, DLSA Bandipora by Khalil Ahmad Choudhary Chairman DLSA Bandipora / Pr. District & Sessions Judge, Bandipora, in presence of Sushil Singh (Additional District & Sessions Judge) Bandipora, Iqbal Ahmad Akhoun (CJM/Secretary DLSA Bandipora, Amandeep Singh (Munsiff Bandipora) and LSUM members. The inaugural session highlighted the importance of the scheme



in ensuring access to justice for individuals with mental and intellectual disabilities.

Mehraj-ud-din Sofi, a retired judicial officer advisor/mentor of the committee, addressed the participants virtually. He emphasized the need for effective implementation of the scheme and provided valuable insights on the role of LSUM and LSUC in bridging the gap between the legal system and vulnerable individuals.

The Secretary, DLSA Bandipora, further elabo-

rated on the objectives of the orientation programme, underscoring its importance in equipping the participants with the necessary knowledge and tools to implement the scheme effectively.

Asif Iqbal, a member of Persons with Mental Illness and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (LSUM) and Legal Services Unit for Children (LSUC) for implementation of the NALSA Scheme 2024, shared his practical experiences in the field, providing the participants with

a firsthand perspective on handling cases related to mental and intellectual disabilities.

The programme facilitated interactive discussions, enabling participants to exchange ideas and explore effective ways to achieve the goals of the NALSA Scheme 2024. The training session concluded on a productive note, with participants expressing confidence in their ability to implement the scheme in their respective jurisdictions.

## Srinagar Admin gears up resources to deal with winter challenges

JNEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 1

In order to gear up the District Administration and machinery to deal with winter challenges particularly with regard to current weather advisory, necessary preparations and arrangements were reviewed in Srinagar for ensuring prompt snow clearance and unhindered supply of essential services and supplies in the District.

On the directions of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, senior Officers of District Administration Srinagar under the supervision of Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Khalid Hussain Malik today inspected their respective jurisdictions and took stock of the arrangements made by the line Departments for prompt snow clearance and ensuring unhindered supply of essential services and supplies to the people.

During their visit, Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) West, Muzamil Maqbool and Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Srinagar Aijaz Ahmad Shah stressed the line Departments on readying men and machinery to ensure timely redressal of weather vagaries and subsequent interruptions of power & water supply and road closure due to snowfall.

They also asked the Officers to keep men and machinery ready for ensuring proper functioning of all essential supplies and services during snowfall, particularly timely snow clearance from roads leading to hospitals, Government offices, fire & emergency, power stations, WSSs and other vital installations.

## New Year's Day: TB Awareness camp organized at Ganta Ghar Lal Chowk Srinagar

JNEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 1

In a significant move toward achieving the goal of a TB-free India, a TB awareness camp was held on New Year's Day, today at Clock Tower Lal Chowk, Srinagar.

The camp was organized by the District TB Control Society Srinagar under the 100 Days TB Intensified Campaign (Nikshay Shivir), and focused on promoting public awareness about tuberculosis (TB) and strengthening community participation (Janbhagdari) in TB prevention and care.

The event was attended by officials from Health Services Kashmir, including Dr. Adhfar Yasein, State TB Officer Kashmir and Dr. Abdul Roof, District TB Officer Srinagar. They were supported by teams from the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP) and the Urban Health Center (UHC) Maisuma Srinagar.

The initiative involved community-centric activities and featured targeted awareness sessions for police personnel, traffic police, and members of the local community.

These sessions empha-



sized early detection and treatment of TB, prevention strategies to stop the spread of the disease.

On the occasion, informational pamphlets were distributed to pedestrians, providing vital details about TB symptoms, free diagnostic facilities and available treatment options.

A special meeting was also convened with representatives from the Lal Chowk Trade Association, highlighting their role in disseminating information

and fostering a TB-free environment.

It is worth mentioning that this initiative is part of the government's 'Nikshay Shivir Initiative' which prioritizes accessible healthcare services and active community engagement to combat TB.

With optimism and determination, the campaign concluded with New Year wishes from the health team, reflecting the shared commitment to eliminating TB and building a healthier future.

## DC reviews implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission in Kishtwar

JNEWS SERVICE

KISHTWAR, JANUARY 01

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan on Wednesday conducted a comprehensive review of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) implementation in the district while chairing a multi department meeting.

The Chief Executive Officer Kishtwar Development Authority, ACD and Executive Engineer PWD were directed to install male and female toilets, benches, and a kiosk near the FCI Store in Kuleed under the Town Beautification initiative.

Additionally, the DC discussed the action plan for maintaining clean, hygien-

ic and plastic-free conditions in townships and rural areas. He directed the EO Municipality, NHIDCL, GREF, and Rural Development Department to carry out the immediate desilting of drains in the town and surrounding areas, stressing the need for a modular and proactive approach while encouraging full community cooperation in rural areas.

The ACD and Municipality authorities were instructed to submit a list of both functional and non-functional toilets along with a list of Non-Functioning street lights both in the towns and rural areas.

NHIDCL was directed to inspect the working



of streetlights from Hasti to Malipeth and repair any non-functional units. Furthermore, they were

instructed to construct drains from Thathri to Sinthan Top to prevent water stagnation on roads, while

GREF was instructed to construct drains from Kuleed to Sansari Nallah.

The DC also emphasized

the aesthetic beautification of public spaces and key crossings across the district, such as Hidayal Chowk, Viewpoint Malipeth and Bindraban. The meeting decided to create Selfie points at these sites.

A committee headed by ACR and comprising GREF officials was formed to oversee removal of encroachments obstructing drainage from Kuleed Chowk to 5RR.

To enforce SBM guidelines, the DC set a target of achieving 100% whitewashing in the district. He also called for imposing fine on shops, establishments and dhabas that fail to whitewash their shutters.

NHIDCL and GREF were directed to ensure uniform drain lengths and to repair potholes after completing drain cleaning in a time bound manner. The discussion also included operation of community toilets in the town, removal of illegal and outdated hoardings, and overall sanitation improvements.

The meeting was attended by ADC Pawan Kotwal, CEO KDA Rishi Kumar Sharma, ACR Idrees Lone, ACD Phulail Singh, EO Municipality/Deputy Registrar Cooperative Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal, BDOs, Executive Engineers of PMGSY, PWD and representatives from FSSAI, Health, GREF and NHIDCL.