

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Severe and continuous headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Diarrhea
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool, urine or vomit
- Redness on the face

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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Kashmir land of Kashyap Rishi: Amit Shah

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 02

Terming Kashmir as the land of Kashyap Rishi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that it's an inseparable part of India's soul. Shah while addressing a gathering here after launching a book "Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh: Through the Ages", according to the news agency said, "There is every possibility about Kashmir being named after Kashyap Rishi."



Kashyap Rishi, according to the historians, is said to have drained the Kashmir Valley to make it habitable. "The Valley is named after him, and the word Kashmir is an ancient Sanskrit word that

literally translates to Land of Kashyap Rishi," historians claim. Referring to the contributions of the historians like Abhinav Gupta, and Pandit Kalhan, the Union Home Minister said, "These historians presented Kashmir before the world in a right perspective." Shah said, "As far as the trade is concerned one can easily find the evidence about Kashmir serving as a focal point for trade and commerce

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Restoration of J&K statehood biggest challenge: CM Omar Abdullah

JINNEWSERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 2

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah on Thursday said that the restoration of J&K statehood is the biggest challenge and that the dual power system is not to anyone's advantage. Addressing his first news conference after assuming charge as J&K Chief Minister, ast SKICC here, Omar, according to the news agency said, "The authority should be with one person only. You will never find the dual power system in offices



or elsewhere as the things work smoothly in a single power system," he said. He added that the business rules would be framed after proper

consultations and sent to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, adding that these rules will bring clarity soon. Replying to a query,

the Chief Minister stated that there are no boundaries for the general public as they can go to anyone for getting their issues resolved, adding that the people have their own choice to go to the MLAs, Ministers or the Raj Bhawan to get their issues resolved. The Chief Minister said that the biggest challenge is to get back the Statehood as J&K is facing multiple challenges including day-to-day governance, deficit budget as we spend more but earn less due to which we are

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We strongly condemn New Orleans terror attack: PM Modi



AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (UNI)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India strongly condemns the cowardly terrorist attack in New Orleans in which 15 people were killed and several wounded when a man, inspired by the Islamic

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Terrorism under control in J&K: HM

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 02

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that government has not only gained control over terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir but has also succeeded in stopping it. Speaking after releasing the book, 'Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh: Through the Ages' Shah, according to the news agency said, "We have not only gained control over terrorism, but we have also succeeded in stopping it. The Narendra Modi led government has also worked to eliminate the ecosystem of terrorism from the Valley." "In 2024, there have been no incidents of

stone-pelting in Jammu and Kashmir. Democracy has deepened at the grassroots level. J&K recently recorded the highest voter turnout in the assembly and parliamentary elections in the past 33 years," he said. In a veiled reference to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), Shah said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government has not only eliminated the ecosystem of terrorism from Kashmir but is determined to reclaim what has been lost." He said that Jammu and Kashmir has made a significant contribution to the civilisations of the country and the world. "The scholars of Kashmir have

enriched our country's languages, grammar, and various forms of knowledge," he added. Referring to Article 370, Shah said, "The Article was an attempt to separate Kashmir from the nation. It was pulled down. In the Constituent Assembly, the majority did not want Article 370 to be a part of the Constitution. However, it became a part. But there were some people who, when it became a part, felt that it was necessary to write it as a temporary provision." "It was with the strong determination of PM Modi that on August 5, 2019, Article 370 was abrogated. It ended a tainted

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Events like Pahalgam winter carnival keep Kashmir vibrant: Omar

JINNEWSERVICE
PAHALGAM, JAN 02

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said that events like Pahalgam winter carnival keep Kashmir vibrant round the year. Speaking to reporters here in South Kashmir, Omar, according to the news agency, said that such kinds of festivals are a must to keep Kashmir vibrant as a tourist destination. He said that the beginning has been made from Pahalgam and the suit will follow in Gulmarg,

Sonamarg and other places. He added that efforts are being made for tourism enhancement along with infrastructure development and cultural initiatives across all tourist destinations of Jammu and Kashmir. When asked about the MP Aga Ruhullah Mehdi's statement about restoring Article 370 is more important than restoration of statehood, Omar said that he is working for the welfare of the people and he hasn't seen his statement yet.

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No auctions, Govt to resolve lease woes in Gulmarg, Pahalgam: CM

JINNEWSERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 02

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah clarified on Thursday that there were proposals currently for auctioning properties in Gulmarg and that they are in the process of formulating a policy for lease renewals. During an interaction with the media persons at Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) here in Srinagar, CM Omar as per the news agency, said that authorities were instead focused on addressing the chal-

lenges posed by expired leases. "There is no proposal at the moment for auctioning of properties in Gulmarg. There is a genuine problem with regard to leases. And we are in the process of formulating a policy for lease renewal," Omar said. According to the hoteliers in the region, the delay in the renewal of leases was affecting many hotels and properties in popular tourist destinations like Gulmarg and Pahalgam. Responding to the question over

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Three youth found dead at Bharderwah Hotel room

JINNEWSERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 02

Three youth were found dead inside a room at a hotel in Bharderwah area of Doda district, officials said on Thursday. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Doda, Sandeep Mehta said that the preliminary inquiry suggest it as a case of "asphyxiation". Giving details, the SSP as per the news agency, said that police received a call from the brother of one of the deceased persons, stating that there was no response to the repeated phone calls. Subsequently, he said,

location of the phone was traced. In the meantime, he said, one of the several teams constituted for the purpose, traced the vehicle in which the brother of the caller traveled to Bharderwah from Jammu. Upon further investigation, he said, it came to the fore that three persons had booked room at Royal Inn Guest House. "There was no response after the room was knocked repeatedly and subsequently the door was broken and police found three persons in unconscious state with two of them lying on bed and another inside

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CBI books own DySP for allegedly taking 'undue advantage' from people he probed

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

The CBI has booked one of its own deputy SPs posted in the Bank Security and Frauds branch in Mumbai for allegedly taking "undue advantage" from people probed by him, officials said Thursday. The FIR registered by the agency against Meena alleges he was utilising the services of middlemen for transacting the bribe money through a web of accounts and hawala channel,

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Dr Jitendra reviews 'aspirational district' parameters, calls for targeted interventions

AGENCIES
ANDHRA PRADESH, JAN 2

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology; Earth Sciences and Minister of State for PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Dr. Jitendra Singh conducted a comprehensive review of developmental initiatives in Kadapa district during his visit as part of the "Aspirational Districts Programme" (ADP). The review showcased remarkable achievements in health, education, agri-



culture, infrastructure, and financial inclusion, establishing YSR Kadapa as a model district under the initiative launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018. Dr. Jitendra Singh, appreciated the district's exceptional prog-

ress in improving socio-economic indicators. The Minister emphasized the importance of targeted interventions and collaborative governance, which have been pivotal in transforming YSR Kadapa into one of

the top-performing districts in Andhra Pradesh. The district has achieved a 100% rate of institutional deliveries, surpassing both state and national averages, and reduced Severe Acute Malnutrition

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JK faces AT&C losses of over 50%: Omar

JINNEWSERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 02

Chief Minister (CM) Omar Abdullah Thursday said that Jammu and Kashmir was facing AT&C losses of more than 50 percent. However, the national average of the Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses is nearly 15 percent. Omar as per the news agency in a media interaction session with media said, "This year we are providing more electricity to the people in comparison to the previous years." "As of now we are

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Rajnath calls upon DRDO to keep coming out with niche products

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (UNI)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday called upon DRDO to continue moving ahead in sync with the rapidly evolving technological ecosystem and keep coming out with products that are relevant to the changing times. He urged the scientists to keep an eye on the products and processes being adopted by the technologically advanced countries and develop niche technologies with the aim of making DRDO one of the strongest R&D organisations in the world.



The Defence Minister visited DRDO Headquarters here and interacted with senior scientists and officials to mark the 67th Foundation Day of the organisation. Minister

of State Sanjay Seth also attended the meeting, an official statement said. He commended DRDO for developing the indigenous capabilities of

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Border areas, remote villages in Ladakh digitally connected: Army

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Sustained efforts by the Army, in collaboration with telecom service providers, in the past five months has brought border areas and remote villages in Ladakh, including remote locations of Kargil and Siachen, on the digital connectivity map. In a post on X on Thursday, the Indian Army also shared a video of this journey and glimpses of the change it has brought to the lives of local people in the region. In its post captioned 'Indian Army for India's



First Villages: Bringing Connectivity & Hope to Remote Areas', the Army said the border areas and remote villages in Ladakh were "devoid of 4G mobile connectivity" until June 2024. "This was depriving

the local communities from being connected to the digital revolution in the nation. The Indian Army in collaboration with Bharti Airtel set out to ensure connectivity in these First Villages

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MeT issues 'yellow alert' for Jan 5, 6

JINNEWSERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 02

The local Meteorological department here has issued a 'yellow alert' for January 5 and January 6,

saying that heavy rain and snowfall is expected at the isolated places during the period. According to the news agency, the MeT

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DLSA Srinagar & Budgam organise training prog for Legal Service Unit for Children (LSUC)

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 02

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar, in collaboration with DLSA Budgam, organized a two-day orientation training programme for the members of the Legal Service Unit for Children (LSUC) for the implementation of the NALSA Child-Friendly Legal Services for Children Scheme 2024.

The event, held under the chairmanship of Jaffer Hussain Beg, Chairman DLSA Srinagar/Principal District & Sessions Judge, Srinagar, and Om Prakash Baghat, Chairman DLSA Budgam/Principal District & Sessions Judge, Budgam, aimed to enhance the understanding and execution of the NALSA Scheme 2024.

The training programme was inaugurated at the ADR Centre, District



Court Complex, Budgam, by Om Prakash Baghat in the presence of officials and members of the Legal Services Unit of DLSA Budgam.

The inaugural session underscored the scheme's significance in ensuring access to justice for children.

Masarat Shaheen, a retired judicial officer and mentor of the committee, addressed the participants virtually, emphasizing the pivotal role of the scheme in creating child-friendly legal services.

She highlighted the need for a compassionate approach in addressing

practical experiences in the field.

They discussed real-world challenges and best practices to address the legal needs of children effectively.

Members of the Legal Services Unit for Children from both DLSA Srinagar and Budgam actively participated in the discussions, sharing insights and experiences. The virtual participation of Budgam LSUC members enriched the discourse, contributing to a broader understanding of the scheme's objectives and strategies for its successful implementation.

This collaborative initiative reflects the commitment of DLSA Srinagar and Budgam to building a robust legal framework for the protection of children's rights, in alignment with the NALSA Scheme 2024.

the legal needs of children. Nusrat Ali Hakak, Civil Judge (Sr. Division) and Secretary DLSA Srinagar/DLSA Budgam, elaborated on the objectives of the orientation programme.

She stressed the importance of equipping participants with the knowledge and tools required for effective implementation of the scheme, ensuring justice reaches the most vulnerable sections of society.

Advocate Gazala Mumtaz and Mr. Sharooq Ahmad Bhat, members of the LSUC for the implementation of the NALSA Scheme 2024, shared their

MLA Gulabgarh reviews development, governance scenario in Sub Division Dharmari



J1 NEWS SERVICE
REASI, JANUARY 2

Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) Gulabgarh, Er. Khurshied Ahmed today chaired an introductory meeting with local administration here at Dakbanglow, Sub Division Dharmari.

The primary focus of the meeting was to enhance governance and accelerate service delivery for the public in Sub Division Dharmari.

The meeting saw the participation of key officials, including Tariq Aziz, SDM Dharmari, Tehsildar Thuroo, BDO Thuroo, XENS, PDD, PMGSY, PWD, DFO, ZEO, BMO, DAEO,

Livestock development officer, SDAO, HDO, VAS Sheep Husbandary, TSO, Tehsil Social welfare officer, AEEs, JEs, Bank Manager, and various sectoral officers.

MLA, Er. Khurshied Ahmed urged all departments to work in harmony, address public grievances promptly, and ensure the effective implementation of development projects. The participants pledged to strengthen coordination and uphold accountability to deliver better services to the people.

This initiative marks a significant step towards improving governance and fostering development in the region.

Div Com, ADGP Jammu review arrangements for celebration of Republic Day-2025



J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 02

Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar and Additional Director General of Police Anand Jain today chaired a meeting to review the preparations for UT level celebration of Republic Day-2025.

The meeting was attended by IGP Crime, DG Youth Services and Sports, senior officers from Police and HODs of different departments including Culture, Science and Technology, Health, Co-operative, Traffic and Security.

The meeting focused on finalizing the Tableaux to be made by different departments. The theme based Tableaux of each department will promote the respective initiatives and schemes launched by the government for the welfare of the people.

The Divisional Commissioner directed the departments to appoint nodal officers to coordinate the arrangements with different departments. He

stressed seamless execution of the themes and concepts approved for the respective departments.

It was informed that the Tableaux of Jammu Kashmir Police will showcase the unrelenting efforts against Drug abuse and Narcotics. The Health department will display its efforts towards implementation of TB Mukta Bharat in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Culture department will promote the cultural diversity and folk culture of Jammu Kashmir. The Tableaux based on PM Suryaghar Yojna, Fit India movement, Swachh Bharat Mission, Cooperative Credit Societies shall be other features of the celebration of Republic Day 2025. The Divisional Commissioner directed the departments to complete their respective Tableaux by 20th of January. He further issued necessary directions with regards to preparations and arrangements of the UT level celebration of the National festival.

Kishtwar Administration hosts Mega Healthy Baby Competition



J1 NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 02

To promote child health, the District Administration has launched a mass campaign to select healthy babies and extend medical facilities to the pregnant ladies, lactating mothers and newly born babies across the district.

In this regard, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan chaired a meeting of the stakeholder departments to reinforce the schedule for organizing the events across the district.

The competition, which began on 1st January 2025, has generated significant enthusiasm among mothers, who care for the health and well-being of their babies despite all challenges.

The healthy baby shows for male and female children (6 months to 6 years),

started at the Panchayat level would proceed to the Block level and culminate at the District level. The winners will be felicitated on the occasion of Republic Day 2025, with citation certificates and incentives.

A committee consisting of AWWs, AWHs, members of the Village Monitoring Committee, and women members of the Pani Samiti will conduct a preliminary survey of healthy babies from 1st to 5th January 2025 in each Panchayat based on specific criteria. The Village/Panchayat level committee will submit the selected list of 06 healthy babies (3 Male 3 Female) to the Block Level Committee along with documentation of all events.

The Block Level Committee consisting of BDO, CDPO, BMO, TSWO TSO will organize an inter-Panchayat competition from 7th to 9th January

2025 and select 06 healthy babies (03 male 03 female) for the District Level Competition.

The District Level Committee consisting of PO ICDS Kishtwar, ACD Kishtwar, CMO Kishtwar, DSWO Kishtwar, and AD FCS&CA Kishtwar will organize an inter-block competition from 14th to 18th January 2025 and select 02 healthy babies per block (01 male and 01 Female) and those will be the winners of the Competition.

This competition will be closely monitored by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and the Block Medical Officers (BMOs) concerned, with thorough screening of the newborn children.

The main objective of the competition is to promote the health and well-being of newborns and to ensure proper care for their mothers also.

DDC launches Baseline Survey under Mission Yuva in Baramulla

J1 NEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA, JANUARY 02

District Development Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa today launched the baseline survey under Mission Yuva at Dakbanglow Baramulla, a key initiative aimed at empowering youth and fostering entrepreneurship across the district.

The survey will identify unemployed, underemployed, and aspiring entrepreneurs, providing valuable data to frame interventions such as loans, skill development programs, and other support mechanisms.

The survey to be conducted through a door-to-door approach, will cover all Panchayats, Blocks, and Villages in Baramulla. A team of 75 supervisors and 1,500 investigators will be working to gather real-time data on the needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by the youth. Speaking at the launch, the DDC emphasized the importance of the baseline survey in shaping the future of youth empowerment in the district. "This survey will help us understand the specific needs and potential of our youth. Based on the data collected, we will provide them with tailored support through Mission Yuva, ensuring that every aspiring individual has the opportunity to succeed," the DC stated. Mission Yuva is structured around four strategic pillars Cul-



ture, Capital, Capacity, and Connectivity to provide a holistic framework for youth empowerment and entrepreneurship. These pillars are designed to create an ecosystem where youth can access financial resources, enhance their skills, preserve their cultural identity, and connect with relevant networks to fuel their success.

In addition, the District Development Commissioner directed all officers to gear up for an extensive IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) campaign, ensuring that the public is well-informed and engaged in the mission.

This campaign will play a key role in raising awareness about the opportunities available under Mission Yuva and encouraging active participation from the community. The DDC

also directed all officers to ensure close monitoring of the survey's progress and to guarantee its successful implementation.

Residents are encouraged to cooperate with the survey teams and ensure their participation, helping to build a stronger, more self-reliant Baramulla.

Among others Additional Deputy Commissioner Sopore SA.Raina, Additional Deputy Commissioner Baramulla Dr Zahoor Ahmad Raina, Chief Planning Officer Baramulla Javed Ahmad, General Manager District Industry Center Baramulla, Night Alam, SDM Pattan, Gulzar Ahmad, SDM Gulmarg, Syed Altaf Hussain Musvi, Assistant Director Employment Department, Employment officer and other officers were attended the function.

DC reviews establishment, working of Kisan Khidmat Ghars in Jammu district

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 2

Deputy Commissioner Sachin Kumar Vaishya today chaired a meeting to review the progress of Kisan Khidmat Ghars in the district.

The meeting focused on issues related to the issuance of licenses and the overall functioning of the KKGs. Discussions also encompassed their transactions and earnings, aiming to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to farmers.

In the first phase of the initiative, 100 KKGs have been made functional, serving as one-stop service centers for agriculture and allied services at the panchayat level.



The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Sher Singh, Chief Planning Officer Uttam Singh, Chief Agriculture Officer Vinod Kundal, Assistant Director Fisheries Munish Sharma and other officers.

Later, the DC chaired the District Level Committee meeting on the Holistic Agriculture Development Program. The committee scrutinized applications seeking benefits offered under HADP in agriculture and allied sectors. After thorough verification of documents and

emphasising the timely delivery of benefits to beneficiaries, the Deputy Commissioner asked stakeholder departments to encourage a maximum number of farmers to take advantage of the program for diversifying their farm activities.

The meeting for HADP was attended by ADDC Sher Singh; Chief Planning Officer Uttam Singh; AGM NABARD Jammu Sonika Rana; Chief Agriculture Officer Vinod Kundal; Lead District Manager Romesh Chander, Assistant Director Fisheries and other officers.

Sakeena Itoo conducts surprise inspection of LD Hospital, assesses healthcare facilities

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 02

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today conducted surprise inspection of LD Hospital to review healthcare facilities being extended to the patients there.

The Minister visited various sections of the hospital including emergency ward, outpatient department (OPD), inpatient wards, operation theatres, NICU and PICU wards and reviewed their functioning.

Interacting with the doctors and paramedics on the occasion, Sakee-

na Itoo impressed upon them for timely medical intervention of referral patients owing to criticality of expecting mothers. She also stressed for optimal utilisation of available resources at this premiere maternity health facility to ensure that patients receive best possible care.

"It is crucial for healthcare facilities to operate with highest standards of medical care and hygiene, especially in government hospitals that serve the majority of population", Sakeena maintained. She added 'our government is committed to ensure that medical services are efficient, well-managed and patient-centric across all

peripheral and tertiary care hospitals as well as other institutions. During the inspection, the Minister also took note of several critical areas where improvements are needed. She assured the hospital administration that immediate corrective measures would be taken up to address these issues.

Sakeena Itoo also interacted with the patients and their attendants to seek feedback on the condition of facilities and medical care being provided at the facility. She assured them the present government led by Omar Abdullah is determined to strengthen the healthcare system in the region.

DC conducts surprise inspection of PHC Kallar Chatyar



J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, JANUARY 2

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma conducted a surprise inspection of the Primary Health Center (PHC) Kallar Chatyar, which serves dozens of villages near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Keri Doongi area.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the attendance of the staff, emphasizing

strict adherence to duty rosters. Highlighting the importance of accountability, he directed the hospital administration to address identified shortcomings and implement necessary improvements within a few days.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed the staff to ensure that all available healthcare services are delivered seamlessly and without hindrance to the public. He interacted with locals visiting the health facility to gather feedback on the quality of services, assuring them of the administration's commitment to upgrading healthcare facilities in the region.

The surprise inspection reflects the district administration's dedication to providing accessible and efficient healthcare to residents, particularly in remote areas near the LoC.

Power shutdown
J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 2

Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, Jammu has informed that the power supply to Upper Barnai, Lower Muthi, Paloura, JK Colony, Chandan Vihar, Muthi, Matador Stand, PHE, Roop Nagar, BSF Paloura and adjoining areas will remain affected on January 03 from 8 pm to 1 pm.

Similarly, Superintending Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, O&M Circle Kathua has informed that the power supply to Rajpura, Lala Chack, Old Mawa, BSF and its adjoining areas will remain affected on January 03 and 07 from 1 pm to 4 pm.

DC Bandipora conducts comprehensive visit to Bandipora town, remote areas

JI NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, JANUARY 02

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri along with Additional Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Zaffar Husson Shawl on Thursday conducted a comprehensive visit to Bandipora town besides other remote areas to evaluate snow clearance operations and assess the overall post-snowfall situation in the district.

During the visit, the DC assessed the snow clearance operations, reviewed progress, and urged the concerned agencies to accelerate the process.

He said that the district administration is fully prepared to address the challenges brought by the snowfall.

M.A. Qadri reviewed the restoration of essential services, including power supply, water supply and healthcare facilities. On the occasion, he emphasized the importance of swift and efficient restoration to minimize disruption



tions for residents.

He focused on ensuring uninterrupted electricity, availability of clean drinking water, and the readiness of healthcare centres to handle emergencies.

While assessing the efforts of different departments involved in snow clearance operations, the DC emphasised respective departments to prioritize critical areas and address any bottlenecks promptly.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner paid a visit to District Hospital Bandipora to assess the quality of patient care services.

During his visit, he interacted with the staff and patients to gain firsthand insights into their experiences and concerns.

Medical Superintendent Bandipora briefed

the Deputy Commissioner about the range of medical services being provided and the current status of healthcare delivery.

On the occasion, the DC inspected various wards to assess the condition of facilities and took stock of the availability of essential medicines. He emphasized the need for maintaining adequate stock levels and ensuring seamless healthcare services, particularly during adverse weather conditions.

During the visit, the DC was accompanied by AD FCS&CA Dr. Naseer Ahmad, CMO Dr. Rafi Ahmad Salathi, Executive Engineer R&B/PMGSY Mohammad Hussain, Executive Engineer PHE/I&FC Mutayib Bashir and other concerned.

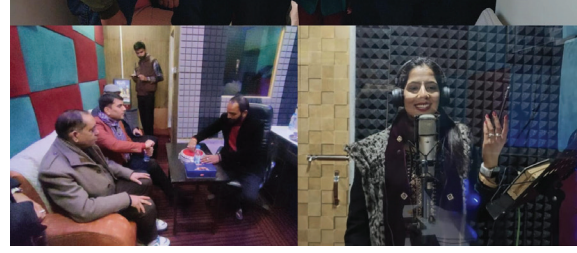
MLA Ramban calls for promotion of local art and culture

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, JANUARY 02

Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) Ramban, Arjun Singh Raju today called for promotion of cultural activities by providing local artists a platform to eke out their potential.

Inaugurating a private music recording facility, "Pahari Saga Studio," here at Maitra, the MLA highlighted the importance of such initiatives in preserving and promoting the local art and music. He emphasized that in today's digital age, music videos can play a pivotal role in showcasing Ramban's rich cultural heritage and scenic tourist destinations, contributing to the local economy.

Encouraging local artists, including Music



Director Ashh-k, Ronak Thakur, Abdul Majid Malik, Jeevan Pahar, Mohan Lal and Sangita Rajput, the MLA assured full support from his end and the government to foster growth in tourism and cultural activities besides providing oppor-

tunities for talent development.

The establishment of "Pahari Saga Studio" is expected to inspire local artists and enhance Ramban's cultural landscape while attracting more visitors to explore its natural beauty and traditions.

DC Udhampur pays tribute to martyr Raj Kumar

JI NEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 2

Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Saloni Rai paid heartfelt tributes to Martyr Raj Kumar Shaurya Chakra Awardee on the solemn occasion of his martyrdom anniversary. The Shradhanjali ceremony was organized at the Police Martyr Memorial, Domaal Chowk, Udhampur, to honor the supreme sacrifice of

the brave heart who laid down his life in service to the nation on January 2, 2004.

During the ceremony, DC along with the parents of the martyr offered floral tributes and lit candles to commemorate his valiant contribution. DC lauded the supreme sacrifice made by Martyr Raj Kumar, emphasizing that his valor and dedication continue to inspire generations.



RSETI concludes 30-day training programme for women at Ramban

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, JANUARY 2

Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) of the State Bank of India successfully conducted its 30-day Tailor Training Program for Women here today.

Organised under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Ramban, the training aimed at empowering women through skill development and promoting self-employment.

The valedictory ceremony was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Roshan Lal as the Chief Guest.

In his address, the ADDC shared his personal experiences of perseverance during challenging times, inspiring the trainees to embrace self-employment opportunities. He encouraged participants to leverage government schemes such as PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme), Mudra and HADP (Holistic Agriculture Development Program) for their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Director RSETI Ramban Harvinder Singh briefed the Chief Guest on the institute's mission and its pivotal role in fostering self-employment across the region. The program concluded with a vote of thanks by Senior Faculty Member, marking the culmination of the event.

Expressing their gratitude, the trainees thanked RSETI Ramban for providing them with the opportunity to acquire valuable skills and boost their confidence to pursue tailoring as a livelihood.

During the one month training, the trainees were imparted different skills including Entrepreneurship Competencies, Effective Communication Skills, Marketing Management, Problem Solving Time Management, Banking, Government Schemes, Behavioral Game, Introduction of Dress Designing Basic of stitching & measurement, Saree skills vertices of frill theory paper cutting & practical, stitching of Nighties, Night Suits, Night Gowns, Fancy Nighties theory & practical, School



Uniforms for girls blouse & skirts theory & practical, Baby Frock, Saree Zigzag, Chudidhar, Punjabi, Patiyala, Arabic, Rajasthani Pushup, Anarkali Top, Apple Cut Top, Sahraw theory & practical and Basics of Sewing Machine Repairs etc.

RSETI Ramban continues to play a crucial

role in empowering rural communities, particularly women, through comprehensive training programs, aligning with national and regional initiatives to create sustainable livelihoods.

At the end, Senior Faculty Amrik Singh Raju concluded the program with a vote of thanks.

DC Shopian takes stock of arrangements for Winter Carnival Dubjan



JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, JANUARY 01

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar, today visited Dubjan along the Mughal Road to oversee preparations for the Winter Carnival, scheduled to be held on January 11th & 12th.

This event aims to promote tourism, culture, and community engagement in the district.

The Winter Carnival, named "NAGRAI HEEMAL," is set to feature a variety of activities, including snow crafts, snow igloos, ice sports, competitions for children, and exhibitions of local cuisine and arts.

The district administration is coordinating efforts across various departments to ensure the event's suc-

cess. During his visit, DC emphasized the importance of effective planning and collaboration among departments to provide a memorable experience for participants and to showcase the unique cultural and natural attractions of Shopian.

The district administration invites locals and tourists to participate in the Winter Carnival and experience the diverse activities planned, aiming to make it a significant annual event in Shopian's cultural calendar.

Additional District Development Commissioner, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone, ADC, Dr. Zakir Husain Faaz, ACR, Shakoor Ahmed Dar and other concerned accompanied

the Deputy Commissioner.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum for attached documents through E-Procurement system

Dy. Chief Materials Manager, NRI, Store Depot Mech. Workshop, AMRITSAR for and on behalf of President of India, Invited tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items:-

| S. No. | Tender No. | Corrigendum Eligibility Criteria | Due Date |
|--------|------------|--|------------|
| 1. | 62245349 | In keeping with the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order, 2017 as amended and in terms of Clause 2.4.2 of instructions to tenderers for e-Tender, Rev. 1.21 of April-2024 (along with all correction slips), Public Procurement of this item is restricted to Class-I & Class-II local suppliers only. Thus, only Class-I & Class-II local supplier as defined under the Public Procurement (preference to Make in India) Order, 2017, as amended shall be eligible to bid in this tender. | 09.01.2025 |

NOTE- Above tenders with detailed description are uploaded on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. The firm, who desires to participate against e-tenders, is advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would require to have a class III digital certificate from certifying Agencies authorized under IT Act 2000 by Govt. of India. Manual offers against e-tenders will not be accepted.

Tender Notice No.: 19A/2024-2025 Dated: 02.01.2025 16/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

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

| S. No. | Tender Notice No. | Name of work | Approx Cost. (Rs.) | Earnest Money (Rs.) | Date of opening | Bidding start date on IREPS | Cost of tender form Rs. | Completion period of work |
|--------|-------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | OT-26-JRC-2024 | Painting work of steel bridges (plate girder & flooring system of O.W.G girders) & concrete girders' steel components (Handrailing's, TR, Ladders pathway etc.) in JAT-SVDK section over FZR division. | 83,27,721.13 | 1,66,600.00 | 23.01.2025 | 09.01.2025 to 23.01.2025 | 0 | 10 Months |

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

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

No. 80-W/30/Bridges/ Invitation Dated: 01.01.2025 18/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Auction Notice

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:

| Catalogue No. | Auction Start | Name of work |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--|
| EAFZR-PACKING24 | 13.01.2025 at 11:00 Hrs. | Allotment of contract for packing of two wheelers and other parcel packages at PTKC, JUC & JRC. |
| EAFZR-SLR24-92 | 16.01.2025 at 11:00 Hrs. | Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 15212/F1, 14630/F1, 14504/F1, 19614/F1, 19416/F1, 19226/R1, 12414/R1, 13152/F1, 14630/R1 & 19226/F1. |
| EAFZR-SLR24-93 | 17.01.2025 at 11:00 Hrs. | Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 14036/F2, 14036/R1, 22424/F1, 14674/F1, 19108/F1, 22432/F1, 20986/F1, 22402/F1, 22942/F1 & 14616/F1. |

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website www.ireps.gov.in

No. 179-C/E-auction/FZR/24 Date: 01.01.2025 06/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Auction Notice

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:-

| Catalogue No. | Auction Start | Name of work |
|----------------|------------------------|---|
| EAFZR-PRK24-11 | 15.01.25 at 12:30 Hrs. | Allotment of Parking lot on contract at Baramulla, Sopore, Awantipura, Bijbiara, Anantnag & Qazigund Railway Station. |
| EAFZR-MPS24-9 | 15.01.25 at 12:30 Hrs. | Allotment of Multi-Purpose stall (MPS) at Kathua & Faridkot Railway Station. |
| EAFZR-OH25-1 | 16.01.25 at 11:00 Hrs. | Allotment of contract for Commercial Advertisement rights: 1) On exterior of Overhead of Water Tanks at Sujanpur, Sahnewal, Bari Brahmana, Jammu Tawi, Pathankot, Amritsar, Jalandhar City, Baramulla, Sopur, Budgam, Srinagar, Anantnag, Qazigund & Banihal Railway Station. 2) Through static media at Level crossings adjoining to China, Verka, Jaintipura, Batala, Bhagatwala & Patti Railway Station. |
| EAFZR-OH25-2 | 17.01.25 at 11:00 Hrs. | Allotment of contract for Commercial Advertisement rights: 1) Through static media at Goraya, Madhopur Punjab, Lohian Khas, & Bhogpur Sirwal Railway Station. 2) Through static media/overhead of water tank at Makhu, Nakodar & Samba Railway Station. |
| EAFZR-MIS25-1 | 17.01.25 at 12:30 Hrs. | Allotment of contract for Peaceful/ Relaxed Zone by installation, operation and maintenance of Body Relief chairs at Railway station Jalandhar City & Pathankot Cantt. |

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website www.ireps.gov.in

No.: MC/38015/Pub/E-Auction/FZR/22 Date: 02.01.2025 20/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS
AGROSTOLOGY WING, FOREST DEPARTMENT, SIDHRA

Contact:- 0191-2662672
Email:- dcfagrostology@gmail.com

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS

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

| S. No | E-NIT No. and date | Name of work | Advertised cost (in Rs.) | Cost of document (in Rs.) | Earnest money (in Rs.) | Bid start Date | Bid end date | Bid opening date |
|-------|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 11 of 2024-25 Dt. 31-12-2024 | Development of infrastructure for plant production by way of development of irrigation infrastructure in Central Nursery Sidhra Part - II, Agrostology Wing, Forest Department Jammu. | 30000 | 500 | 600 | 01-01-2025 at 01:00 pm | 15-01-2025 at 10:00 am | 15-01-2025 12:00 Noon |

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

Sd/
(Suresh Kumar Sharma)JKFS
Deputy Conservator of Forests
Agrostology Wing, Forest Deptt;
Jammu.

No: Ag/J/Tender/950-53 Dated: - 01 -01 -2025

DIP/J-8841/24
Date: 2-1-24

Kashmir land...

through the Silk Route to Central Asia and from Shangkara-Acharya temple to Hemis Mutt.”

He said, “Kashmir from the very beginning has remained an abode of harmony and has accommodated people having different views.”

The Union Home Minister said that historians have established that the “Meetings of the advisory council of King Kanishka were held in Kashmir.”

The Union Home Minister also accused a few historians of distorting facts and said, “A few historians did what they did but now who can stop us? The nation is free and there is a government that is running according to the country’s views. It is our work now to represent the nation with facts and proof and from our point of view.”

KASHMIR HAS ALWAYS REMAINED INDIA’S INTEGRAL PART

He reiterated that Kashmir has always remained an integral part of India’s identity. “To understand Bharat, the facts connecting our country need to be understood. To analyse where Kashmir and Ladakh were by twisting the facts on the basis of who ruled it, who lived here, and what agreements were signed, is pointless and only historians with a crooked vision of history can do this. The 10,000-year-old culture of India spread in all areas was also present in Kashmir. When 8000-year-old books mention Kashmir and Jhelum, then no one can comment on to whom Kashmir belongs,” he said.

“Kashmir is and has always been an inseparable part of India. No one can separate it using sections of law. Attempts were made to separate it using law but those sections were abrogated in the flow of time and all obstacles were removed,” the Union Home Minister said. He said, “The history of all corners of our country is thousands of years old where activities were done to give something to the civilisations of the world. During the time of dependence, attempts were made to make us forget this. A myth was propagated that this nation was never united and the idea of independence was redundant. A lot of people also accepted this falsehood.”

Referring to British rule, he said, “The definition of our country written in history during British rule was wrong because of their lack of knowledge. The existence of all nations of the world is geopolitical. They are formed by boundaries, as a result of either a war or an agreement.”

“India is the only nation in the world which is a ‘Geo-cultural’ country and the boundaries are defined because of culture. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Gandhar to Odisha and Bengal to Assam, we are connected because of our culture. Those who define a country as something geopolitical, cannot define our country,” Shah said.

J&K AND LADAKH THROUGH THE AGES

Referring to the book J&K and Ladakh Through the Ages, Shah said, “This book presents all factors in detail. The art in the ruins of old temples proves that Kashmir is a part of India only... Kashmir is also an integrated part of the Buddhist journey that went from Nepal to Afghanistan. All the history from Buddhism, to demolished temples, to the use of Sanskrit, to the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, to Dogra reign, to the mistakes made after 1947 and to their rectification, all the 8000 years of history are included in this book.” KNO

Restoration of J&K...

dependent on the centre.

“Going to the court to seek statehood would have been the fight, which should have been the last option. The government has already promised the restoration of statehood. We have to give them an opportunity to restore it, and knocking the doors of court would be our last option,” he added.

The Chief Minister also said, “I have been here for the last over two months and no one from the BJP leadership or the LG administration has forced us to change our stance, or dictate us. We have been told that the people have given their mandate to NC and you have got a chance to serve. The Prime Minister and Union Home Minister have assured us that ‘nobody will try to destabilize the government and you have every support like Lt Governor was getting from us’.”

About the promises done by the National Conference, Omar said that the party manifesto was based on a five year term of government. “We are aware and are doing work in a certain time-frame. However, some issues we have promised can be resolved only after the restoration of Statehood. Since we took over, we have started with the resolution of special status, reversal of school sessions,” he said.

Furthermore, he said that the decision on free units was not done as it was decided to increase the supply in the first instance for the wellbeing of the people. “We will come up with the 100 days report card after the period is over,” he added.

Also, the Chief Minister said that as promised, the accountability will be ensured in all the departments. “The Ministers have been asked to ensure accountability and whatever wrong is done, will be corrected,” he said.

Replying to a query, the Chief Minister said that the people are enough to reply to the scuttlebutt like they recently showed the entire world that how the humanity is alive in Kashmir, saying that the people welcomed the guests from outside Jammu and Kashmir after the snowfall occurred and led to the closure of roads. “There were forceful directions from anyone to the people, but the people showed humanity to the world by welcoming the guests in their homes irrespective of their religion and caste,” he said.

Responding to a query on holidays on the late Sheikh Abdullah’s birthday on December 5 and Martyrs Day on July 13, the Chief Minister said that the holidays are part of J&K history. “Everything we do is a continuation of remembering sacrifices. The people are bearing the fruit of Sheikh Abdullah’s legacy, he said.

Reacting to the termination of a few government employees, Omar said that “more can be done for these employees when we are a state and less can be done as UT.”

“A militant’s son is not a militant; it is unlawful to punish anyone on the basis of the family members. We cannot instruct an order, but we have already taken up the issue in this regard and are expecting an ease as

well,” he said when asked about the people don’t get the positive verification if their relatives are involved in any anti-national activities. KNO

We strongly condemn...

State, drove his pick-up truck into large crowds celebrating New Year’s Day.

In a post on X, the PM said:

“We strongly condemn the cowardly terrorist attack in New Orleans. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. May they find strength and solace as they heal from this tragedy.”

The FBI has said the New Orleans attack is being treated as an act of terrorism after an Islamic State group flag was found attached to the truck.

The driver of a pick-up truck that sped into large crowds in New Orleans’ French Quarter has been identified as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old US Army veteran from Texas, who was killed in a shootout with police

President Joe Biden said the attacker was inspired by the Islamic State group.

Authorities are investigating whether there is a link between the New Orleans’ attack and a separate incident involving a Tesla Cybertruck explosion outside the Trump Hotel in Las Vegas that killed the driver and injured seven others.

Terrorism under...

chapter of our post-Independence history. And from there, a new chapter of Kashmir’s development alongside the rest of India began,” he said. KNO

Events like Pahalgam...

While replying to allegations of BJP that NC government has failed to keep their promises, the Chief Minister said that BJP has failed in recent elections and they must accept their failure before framing a report card from our government. KNO

No auctions, Govt...

the non-renewal of leases of hotels, CM Omar highlighted the widespread problem of expired leases in the region, stating that a ‘lot’ of hotels in Gulmarg and properties in Pahalgam were currently without valid leases.

CM Omar said that confusion was exacerbated by the striking down of the Roshni scheme by the courts. Under the now-defunct scheme, many leaseholders had opted to convert their leased properties to freehold ownership.

“With the court’s decision to nullify the Roshni Act, these individuals now lack both freehold and leasehold rights. So this is something the government is aware of,” the Omar added. Meanwhile, reacting to the statement of CM Omar, chairman J&K hoteliers club Mushtaq Chahya, while welcoming the statement, expressed optimism on resolving lease issues for hoteliers and other businesses in the region.

Chahya said the move would be a progressive step towards boosting investment and safeguarding local interests, noting its alignment with practices in places like Maharashtra, Haryana, and Chandigarh.

“This is a very good thing, as it aligns with the national policy,” he said, adding that the transition to freehold would provide much-needed relief to business owners, specially those in key tourism hubs like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Srinagar.

He said their sector has long faced challenges due to expiring leases and uncertainty around renewals, stating that in Gulmarg alone, there were maximum properties whose leases were expired.

“Resolving these issues would not only stabilize our operations but will also generate significant revenue for the government,” Chahya said.

Gowhar Maqbool, a top functionary at hoteliers association too, welcomed the statement, stating that there should be a policy that balances economic growth with the preservation of local interests. KNO

Three youth found...

washroom,” he said, adding, “Teams of doctors and forensics were called in and doctors declared them as dead.”

He said that while investigations are underway, preliminary inquiry suggests it to be case of asphyxiation. “A charcoal heater was found inside the room and it appears to be case of asphyxiation but reports from forensic is awaited and further investigations are underway.”

The deceased were identified as Mukesh Singh son of Kuldeep Singh, resident of Domana in Jammu; Ashutosh Singh Rana son of Daleep Singh Rana, resident of Bhela, Doda, at present Purkhoo in Jammu and Sunny Choudhary. KNO

CBI books own...

they said.

Deputy SP BM Meena was booked for allegedly obtaining undue advantage from different individuals who were within the ambit of the investigation being conducted by him.

The CBI follows a zero tolerance policy to corruption and other misdemeanour, and takes action against erring officers immediately, they said.

The message from Director Praveen Sood is clear that internal vigilance is prerequisite to external action, they said.

The agency has dismissed three officers under Article 311 of the Constitution without enquiry, while five were given compulsory retirement under the Fundamental Rule (FR) 56(J) of the Department of Personnel and Training service rules.

In Meena’s case, the CBI conducted searches on 20 premises at Jaipur, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi which led to seizure of Rs 55 lakh allegedly routed through hawala channel, an agency spokesperson said.

He said property papers showing investment of Rs 1.78 crores and book entries showing transactions worth Rs 1.63 crores besides other incriminating documents and articles were also seized.

Recently, the government had “forfeited” the Union Home Minister’s medal for Excellence in Investigation awarded to CBI Inspector Rahul Raj in 2023 on the

recommendation of the CBI, officials said.

Raj was caught by the agency this year allegedly receiving Rs 10 lakh bribe, and was dismissed from the service, the officials said. (Agencies)

Dr Jitendra reviews...

(SAM) among children under six years to an impressive 0.6%. With full immunization coverage now at 99% for children aged 9-11 months and 96% of pregnant women receiving antenatal care in their first trimester, YSR Kadapa has set benchmarks in maternal and child health outcomes. These accomplishments are attributed to effective implementation of flagship programs like POSHAN Abhiyaan and Ayushman Bharat, complemented by a robust local health infrastructure.

In education, the district has reported a 100% rate of functional drinking water, electricity, and toilet facilities in schools. It also ensures that all students receive textbooks within one month of the academic year’s commencement. Transition rates from primary to secondary levels stand at an impressive 98%, while female literacy has risen to 72.3%. The initiatives under the PM SHRI scheme, aimed at creating state-of-the-art learning environments, have further strengthened educational outcomes, fostering holistic development among students.

Agriculture in YSR Kadapa has seen a significant boost with the adoption of modern practices and technology. Micro-irrigation now covers 65.17% of the net sown area, a leap from 41.59% in 2018, while 6,950 soil health cards distributed this year have empowered farmers with essential knowledge for optimizing yields. Artificial insemination and animal vaccination programs have further enhanced productivity in allied sectors. Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, 126 crores have been disbursed to 2,10,481 farmers, underscoring the government’s commitment to supporting rural livelihoods.

The district has made remarkable progress in infrastructure development. Nearly 95% of households now have access to tap water under the Jal Jeevan Mission, ensuring safe drinking water for over 2.7 lakh families. Housing projects under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) have provided pucca homes to over 96,000 families across rural and urban areas, with investments exceeding 1,159 crores. Additionally, YSR Kadapa has achieved 100% connectivity through all-weather roads, improving accessibility for remote communities and enabling better economic opportunities.

Financial inclusion efforts have empowered residents with 2.59 lakh Jan Dhan accounts opened and 94.7% linked to Aadhaar. Mudra loans worth 825 crores have fueled the entrepreneurial spirit of small business owners, while skill development programs under the PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana have certified over 17,500 youth, enhancing their employability and contributing to the district’s economic growth.

During his visit, Dr. Jitendra Singh acknowledged the district’s success as a testament to the effectiveness of the Aspirational Districts Programme. He highlighted how the convergence of government schemes, real-time data monitoring, and community participation has created a sustainable model for development.

Dr. Jitendra Singh has directed the district administration to organize workshops aimed at raising awareness about the benefits of various Central Government schemes. Emphasizing the need for effective outreach, the Minister highlighted the importance of educating the public, especially in rural and remote areas, about the opportunities and resources available under these schemes. The workshops will serve as a platform to bridge the gap between policy formulation and grassroots implementation, ensuring that the intended beneficiaries can avail themselves of the schemes efficiently and seamlessly.

The Minister emphasized the need to focus on flagship schemes such as PM Suryaghar, PM Kisan, and PM Vishwakarma, which aim to empower various sections of society. He stressed the importance of active involvement from public representatives to ensure greater public participation and effective implementation of these schemes. Highlighting the pivotal role of collaboration, the Minister urged all stakeholders to work together to maximize the benefits for the intended beneficiaries.

Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized the need to replicate the best practices from YSR Kadapa across other aspirational districts in India to ensure balanced development nationwide. He assured the district of continued support from the central government to sustain its upward trajectory. The district’s transformative journey, driven by a blend of policy innovation and grassroots implementation, serves as an inspiration for other regions, aligning with the nation’s mission of achieving holistic and inclusive growth.

JK faces AT&C...

supplying around 1700-1800 MW of power. However, the unrestricted demand for power is much more,” he said. On asking about the permanent solution of power crisis in Kashmir region, the CM said, “As early as our power projects being constructed will get completed, we can store the power from the projects for the winter use.”

Omar further said, “As of now the AT&C losses in the power sector are more than 50 percent.”

He said that the promises made by the NC government regarding free 200 Units of electricity will be possible only when smart meters will be installed.

“We can measure the consumption only after installing the meters. We would like to roll out the scheme by Mar-Apr. So it is obvious that the 200 units of free electricity will be delivered to those consumers who will have smart meters installed,” Omar said.

About the unscheduled power cuts, the CM said that it usually happens when there is any maintenance, damage or any work being done by the department.

On Wednesday KNO reported that Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (KPDCL) on an average is getting nearly 1700 Megawatts (MW) of Power against the average demand of nearly 1800 MWs.

A top official informed “The local DISCOM on an average was receiving nearly 1700 MW of power against the peak demand of over 1800 MW.”

The official further said that the highest demand of power in the ongoing winters was recorded at 1922 MW including the enduring power curtailment schedule.

Pertinently, last year, the AT&C loss of the Power Development Department was one of the highest in India—causing a gap between power purchase costs.

In the previous fiscal, the AT&C losses were of the order of 50 per cent against the national average of 19.73 per cent. KNO

Rajnath calls upon...

the country by equipping the Armed Forces with state-of-the-art technologies/equipment and bolstering the defence sector through collaboration with the private sector.

In 2025, being declared as the ‘Year of Reforms’, Rajnath Singh asserted that DRDO will play a crucial role in achieving the set objectives.

The minister also expressed his view that each lab of DRDO should identify 2-3 critical projects, which should be completed by 2025. “By the next foundation year, we should have 100 such projects completed,” he said.

He appreciated the efforts of DRDO towards increasing the collaboration with the private sector, including providing its technologies and free access to its patents. He urged the organisation to identify more such areas, which can enhance the participation of the private sector, emphasising that a nation can only progress when all stakeholders work together.

Singh called upon DRDO to explore the possibility of including start-ups in its R&D efforts. This would promote a valuable exchange of ideas and provide an opportunity for the Indian defence sector to come out with innovative technologies according to the changing times.

He expressed that each lab should organise two open days every month for interaction with the industry. And also suggested that laboratories can raise awareness about the works being carried out by DRDO and motivate the youth to contribute to nation building.

“DRDO can play the role of a catalyst for other similar organisations, academia, industry, etc, which can help in bringing a technological revolution to the country. A new ecosystem can be created that focuses on defence as well as dual technology areas that can bring about a transformative change for civilian users,” Singh said.

During the meeting, Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Samir V Kamat briefed the Defence Minister about the ongoing R&D activities, achievements of DRDO in 2024, various initiatives of DRDO in promoting industry, start-ups, and academia, and the roadmap of DRDO for 2025.

He said, so far, 1,950 Transfer of Technologies (ToTs) on DRDO-developed systems have been handed over to Indian industries, of which 256 licensing agreements for ToTs were signed with Indian industries in 2024.

The DRDO Chairman added that more than 19 development cum production partners/production agencies were chosen last year for mission mode projects. The DRDO test facilities have been opened to the industries for utilisation, and over 18,000 tests have been carried out for private industries/DPSUs in the past three years, with more than 5,000 tests in 2024 itself.

Rajnath Singh also felicitated the design team of the Long Range Hypersonic Anti Ship Missile on the occasion. DRDO celebrates its foundation day on 1st January every year.

Border areas, remote...

of India,” it said.

The Army further said the Leh-based Fire and Fury Corps “proactively engaged all the telecom service providers” and assisted them in installation of mobile towers in these remote areas.

“Fighting against the harsh weather including sub-zero temperatures, a total of 42 Airtel 4G mobile towers have been installed in 5 months covering the remote locations of Kargil, Siachen, Demchok, DBO and Galwan providing much needed connectivity to the populace as well as soldiers serving in Ladakh,” it said in its post.

“This initiative will boost tourism in the state and help the local community by improving access to online education, remote healthcare and fostering economic opportunities through government schemes bridging the existing digital divide.

“Indian Army is committed to fostering holistic development of First Villages located in remote areas to achieve our national vision of #ViksitBharat by 2047,” the Army said.

MeT issues ‘yellow...

department has issued an alert, stating that there is a possibility of heavy rain and snowfall at the isolated places. “The disruption of traffic on higher reaches snow avalanches, landslides and shooting stones are expected on January 5 and 6,” the MeT has said.

In a detailed forecast, the weatherman has stated that on January 3, the weather is expected to remain generally cloudy with the possibility of light snow at isolated higher reaches.

From January 4-6, Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that moderate to strong WD is expected and under its influence, there is a possibility of light to moderate rain in plains of Jammu and snow at most places of J&K with peak activity during 4th (Night) to 5th (late Night) and 6th morning & improvement from the afternoon.

He added that generally cloudy and dry weather is expected on January 7-10, adding that from January 11-12th, generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light snow at isolated places.

In its advisory, the MeT has said that in view of fresh snowfall, sub-freezing temperature & icy conditions over roads in plains and higher reaches, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to plan accordingly & follow administration and traffic advisory.

“There is a possibility of heavy snow at isolated higher reaches during 4th night to 5th late night,” it reads. Furthermore, the night temperature has continued to settle below the freezing point in Kashmir. Srinagar, the summer capital of J&K, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.4 degree Celsius while Kupwara recorded a minimum temperature of 1.4 degree Celsius.

However, Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, recorded a low of minus 8.6 degree Celsius while Pahalgam, a famous tourist destination recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.0 degree Celsius. Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, has recorded a low of minus 5.2 degree Celsius while Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded minus 5.8 degree Celsius. KNO

Bali Bhagat criticizes NC Govt's anti-Jammu agenda; urges Dogras to unite against divisive policies

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 2

Bali Bhagat, senior BJP leader and former Minister, criticized National Conference (NC) Government headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for promoting an anti-Jammu and anti-Maharaja agenda, warning that such divisive policies will hinder the restoration of statehood and undermine regional harmony.

Reacting sharply to recent statements from the NC, Bali Bhagat said, "It is disappointing to see Omar Abdullah's National Conference questioning the significance of Maharaja Hari Singh's legacy and opposing a public holiday on his birth anniversary. Maharaja Hari Singh was a visionary leader whose decision to accede to India laid the foundation of modern Jammu and Kashmir. To disregard his

contributions is to disrespect the sentiments of the Dogra community."

The senior BJP leader also criticized NC Political Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani seeking a public holiday on December 5 to commemorate Sheikh Abdullah's birth anniversary. "While honoring leaders of the past is important, the selective acknowledgment of contributions by NC reeks of bias and neglects the diverse cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir," he remarked.

Bali Bhagat also criticized PDP President Mehbooba Mufti for condemning the Omar Abdullah-led government over the exclusion of July 13 and December 5 from the 2025 holiday calendar. He mentioned that July 13



and deliberate on the implications of these developments. "The Dogras must recognize the growing attempts to marginalize their history and heritage. The NC and PDP's agenda is not just anti-Jammu but also detrimental to the unity of the region. It is time for the Dogras to assert their rightful place in shaping the narrative of Jammu and Kashmir," he asserted.

Bali Bhagat reaffirmed the BJP's commitment to preserving the legacy of Maharaja Hari Singh and ensuring equitable development across Jammu and Kashmir. "Only through mutual respect and acknowledgment of our shared history can we pave the way for a brighter and united future," he added.

was observed as a black day by Jammu and Kashmiri Hindus but called 'Martyrs' Day' by the Kashmir Muslim leadership. He described this as yet another attempt to manipulate historical events for political gains, deepening divisions among communities.

The former Minister appealed to the Dogra community of Jammu to rise above party lines

Tony urges PM Modi to announce restoration of Statehood on Jan 26

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 2

Senior Congress leader and DDC Suchetgarh Member, Taranjit Singh Tony, has fervently appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fulfill his promise of restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir by making an official announcement on January 26, Republic Day.

In a statement issued here today, Tony emphasized that the restoration of statehood is not just a political commitment but a necessary step toward addressing the aspirations of the people of J&K.

Tony highlighted that during the abrogation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of the erstwhile state into Union Territories, PM Modi and the Home Minister had assured the people that statehood would be rein-



stated at an appropriate time. He said, "Republic Day is the most significant occasion to honor this commitment. Announcing the restoration of statehood on this day will strengthen the democratic fabric of the nation and fulfill the long-pending demand of the people."

The Congress leader further stated that the absence of a full-fledged state structure has left the administration disconnected from the grassroots, leading to widespread dissatisfaction among the populace. He

urged the Prime Minister to seize this opportunity to demonstrate statesmanship and announce the restoration of J&K's statehood before the Assembly elections. Tony argued that restoring statehood on January 26 would instill confidence among the people and ensure a level playing field for all political parties in the upcoming elections. He appealed to all political leaders across party lines to unite in advocating for this cause, asserting that it transcends political differences and resonates with the collective aspirations of the people. Tony reiterated his commitment to fighting for the rights of the people of J&K and expressed hope that the central government will prioritize the announcement of statehood restoration as a step toward justice, democracy, and progress.

BSP will make strategy for Municipal, Panchayat elections

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 2

State Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) President Darshan Rana has appealed to the workers to be fully prepared for the Municipal and panchayat elections to be held in the state and said that BSP will fight the panchayat and civic elections in Jammu Kashmir strongly. BSP state chief said this during a virtual meeting with District, Block President other senior leaders of the party. He said that BSP also contested most of the assembly seats in the recently concluded assembly elections in Jammu Kashmir and people supported it and now the workers should be fully prepared for the upcoming panchayat and Municipal elections and the party will try to bring better people forward in these elections so that better people get elected and can contribute to the development of the area.

Along with this, he said that in the coming days, the outline of election campaign will also be prepared by the party for these elections and discussions will also be intensified regarding the selection of candidates.

BSP state chief Darshan Rana said that most of the population of India lives in villages, in such a situation, the development of the country is possible only by development at the Panchayat level and this development can be possible only when better people are elected and come forward.

He said that in the coming days, meetings will be organized at the district level and after that, meetings will be organized at the Panchayat level and the names of the candidates will be finalized and there will be discussions about the civic elections during these meetings.

Police arrests 06 drug peddlers across valley; contraband substances recovered

JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 2

Continuing its efforts to eradicate the menace of drugs from the society, police have arrested 06 drug peddlers across Kashmir valley and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

In Srinagar, a police party during patrolling near JVC Hospital Bemina, intercepted one person coming from Children Hospital to JVC Hospital Srinagar who tried to flee upon seeing the Police party. However, he was tactfully apprehended by the patrolling party and has been identified as Javid Ahmad Lone son of Bashir Ahmad Lone resident of Khargam Pattan A/P Mansoor Colony Bemina. During search, 44 grams of charas like substance was recovered from his possession and

was arrested. Similarly, a police party from PS Nowgam during domination on Pahroo Kenihama axis intercepted one person namely Reyaz Ahmed Shah son of Gulzar Ahmed Shah resident of Check-e-Pahroo at Ganjipora. During search, 39 Kgs of Cannabis Powder concealed in two nylon bags were recovered from his possession and was arrested on spot.

In Ganderbal, a police party of PS Ganderbal during naka checking at Harran crossing intercepted a vehicle (Tata Mobile) bearing registration No. JK03H-2841 driven by one person namely Zafar Bashir Bhat son of Bashir Ahmad Bhat resident of Gundirehman. During search of the vehicle, 40 strips of Spasmo Proxyvon-Plus (320 tablets) was recovered. The accused driver has been arrested on the spot besides, the

vehicle used in the commission of crime has also been seized.

In Baramulla, a Police party of Police Station Baramulla at a checkpoint established at Janbazpora Baramulla arrested one person identified as Mubashir Ahmad Bhat son of Gh Mohd resident of Nowpora Jageer Kreeri. During search, 121 grams of Charas like substances was recovered from his possession. Similarly, a police party of PS Uri at a checkpoint established at Laghama-Garkote crossing arrested one person identified as Mohd Rafiq Awan son of Mohammad Abdullah resident of Garkote. During search, 4.2Kgs of Cannabis power like substances was recovered from his possession. He has been arrested.

In Handwara, a Police Party of Police Post Langate during naka checking at Kuhroo Bridge,

intercepted a suspicious person. During search, 55 grams of Charas-like substance was recovered from his possession and was subsequently arrested. He has been identified as Hilal Ahmad Tantray son of Mohd Yousuf Tantray resident of Takiya Langate.

Accordingly, cases under relevant sections of law have been registered at respective police stations and further investigation have been initiated.

We urge the common masses that if you witness drug peddling or any other crime anywhere near you, feel free to contact nearest police establishment or dial 112. People are requested to cooperate with police in curbing the menace of drugs from the society. We reassure the community members that police will act tough against the criminals as per law.

Celebrating The Spirit Of Service: Indian Army Rings in New Year With Awam at Tattapani, Rajouri



JINNEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, 02 JAN 2025

The Indian Army, in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation and locals, welcomed the New Year with a massive cleanliness drive in Tattapani. This collective effort aimed to preserve the beauty of nature and promote environmental awareness, reflecting the Indian Army's commitment to serving the nation beyond its core responsibilities. The event was a testament to the Indian Army's dedication to building a cleaner, greener future and

spreading awareness about the benefits of hygienic living. The drive brought together locals, municipal corporation officials, and The Indian Army personnel, demonstrating the power of collective action in driving positive change. This initiative is part of the Indian Army's broader efforts to promote cleanliness and environmental stewardship, aligning with the government's Swachh Bharat Mission. Launched in 2014, the mission aims to create a clean and hygienic India by promoting widespread awareness and participation in

cleanliness activities. The success of the cleanliness drive in Tattapani serves as a model for similar initiatives across the country, highlighting the importance of community-led efforts in driving sustainable change. As the nation continues to strive toward a cleaner and greener future, the Indian Army remains committed to playing a vital role in this endeavor. The event concluded with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to environmental conservation, setting the tone for a year filled with collective action and positive change.

ABRSM holds state executive meet of J&K UT (School Level); Demands filling up of all posts of all cadres

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 2

Akhil Bhartiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh J&K held its State executive meet in Jammu under the Chairmanship of its National Organizing Secretary Mahendra Kapoor which was attended by about 87 delegates across the UT. While speaking in the meeting Mahendra Kapoor stressed for formation of cluster level bodies by the end of June 2025. He advocated for quality education in government schools and urged all the members to take initiative under the programme "Hamara Vidyalaya Hamara Teerth" for making schools epicenter of moral values, cultural nationalism and to raise educational standards.

Rattan Sharma, State President ABRSM J&K speaking said that it was the result of continuous efforts of organisation that Administration was forced to adjust promoted Masters. It is pertinent to mention here that the 1029 teachers promoted as masters in June last year have been adjusted this week. He urged



Commissioner Secretary education to initiate DPC of all cadres at the earliest possible. ABRSM also demanded early transfer drive of teaching fraternity. As many Teachers are working in hard zones for more than six years and waiting to get transferred whereas blue eyed employees are enjoying at prime locations since their inception in the deptt..

Gulshan Raina State Gen. Secretary started the proceedings by presenting a detailed report on the previous years activities of the organisation in JKUT. He put forth objectives of the ABRSM and termed it quite different from other employees organisations. He said that ABRSM is nation wide organisation working for not only rights of employees but for the upliftment of whole education system in the country. ABRSM's aim is

to Indianise education through ancient holistic approach, implementation of indian values in the society and Guru Shishay Pranali. Raina also threw light on various PRAKOSHITH and AYAMS of ABRSM like SEVA, ACADEMICS, HAMARA VIDYALAYA, HAMARA TEERTH etc.

The other members present in the meeting include Neeraj (State Additional Gen. Secretary), Sanjay (State Cashier), Rahul (State Secretary), Sanjay (State Vice-President), Sanjeev Dutta (State Secretary), Mrs Aruna Parihar (Secretary), Renu (Vice-President), Gurdeep (State Executive member), Pardeep (State Executive member), Mohan Singh Parihar Neeraj Parihar, Rishi Singh, Amit, Ved, Pawan Sharma.

People rejected misleading, false propaganda of BJP in J&K: Rattan Lal

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 2

In a scathing attack on the BJP, Rattan Lal Gupta, Provincial President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), has lambasted the saffron party for raising unwarranted objections to the promises made by the National Conference (NC) to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He labeled BJP's rhetoric as baseless and accused its leadership of attempting to mislead and misguide the public while failing to deliver during its decade-long rule in the region.

The senior NC leader was speaking while interacting with senior functionaries of the Party regarding the present political scenario of J&K at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan Jammu.

The senior NC leader asked the BJP leadership to clarify their achievements for the people of Jammu and Kashmir over their long tenure in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Instead of pointing fingers at the NC, the BJP should come clean about what it has accomplished in J&K. Why has the BJP compromised with the job and land rights of the people of this region? It is unjustified that jobs, land, and contracts belonging to J&K have been handed



over to outsiders, leaving the youth and local workforce neglected and disillusioned," he added.

He criticized the BJP for its governance failures, stating that Jammu and Kashmir reached the number one position in unemployment during the its rule in J&K. "The BJP must take responsibility for this grim reality and explain to the people why their policies have pushed J&K's youth into despair," he remarked.

Rattan Lal added that the BJP's misplaced priorities and inability to safeguard the interests of J&K's people have exposed its incompetence and lack of commitment. "The BJP's hollow promises and misleading propaganda cannot mask the reality of its failures. The people of J&K deserve better, and the National Conference is determined to restore their trust and rights," he asserted.

He highlighted that NC, having recently taken charge of the J&K government, boasts a robust leadership led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who is personally monitoring key issues, including water and power shortages, welfare policies and addressing concerns of Kashmiri migrants. "In contrast, the BJP's dismal performance in the Assembly polls and its inability to win seats in the Valley reflect the rejection it has faced from the people," he added.

Rattan Lal Gupta took a jibe at the BJP's claims of being champions of the people, stating that such lofty assertions are hollow and unbecoming of a party that failed to even secure substantial support in Kashmir. "Even in Jammu, the BJP has been shown the door, as the NC emerged as the second-largest party. The BJP should stop its daydreaming and accept the reality that J&K has

turned its back on them," he asserted.

He accused the BJP of being a stumbling block to the NC-led government's functioning and emphasized that the party's interference is nothing but an attempt to cover up its own inadequacies. "The BJP is scared because, in just one year, NC will outperform the BJP's 10-year rule in J&K. The people trust NC's vision and leadership, as evidenced by our growing support across the region," he said.

The Provincial President asserted that even today Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has also ensured free 200 units of electricity for people of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the NC Govt has already initiated several measures to fulfil the commitments made with the people.

Rattan Lal Gupta reaffirmed NC's commitment to fulfilling the promises made during its election

campaign. "Unlike the BJP, which thrives on creating chaos and division, the NC is focused on addressing the pressing issues faced by the people. With CM Omar Abdullah leading from the front, we are determined to resolve long-standing grievances and bring prosperity to J&K," he declared.

The Provincial President asked the J&K BJP leadership to stop its propaganda and allow the NC government to work for the welfare of the people. "BJP's antics are only exposing its desperation and incompetence. The people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve better, and NC is here to deliver," he said. Those who were present included: Sheikh Bashir Ahmad Provincial Secretary Jammu, Vijay Lochan Chairman SC Cell, Rajni Devi Working Provincial President Women Wing, Rakesh Singh Raka Vice President Central Zone, Naresh Bittu District President Jammu Rural "B", Dilshad Malik Vice President Central Zone, Abid Magrey District President Ramban, Mukand Lal Bandral District Secretary Ramban, Jatinder Kumar Block President Suchetgarh, Amit Choudhary District President Jammu Rural B YNC, Gh. Mohd, Parbhat Kapai, Sunil Kumar and others.

EDITORIAL

Navigating the Upcoming Weather Challenges in J&K

The latest weather advisory from the Meteorological (MeT) Department serves as a clarion call for residents, tourists, and authorities in Jammu and Kashmir. With a yellow alert in place for January 5 and 6, indicating heavy rain and snowfall in isolated areas, the region braces for potential disruptions in daily life and travel. This forecast underscores the urgent need for preparedness and caution to mitigate risks and ensure safety.

The MeT Department's detailed forecast highlights the arrival of a moderate to strong Western Disturbance (WD) from January 4-6. During this period, light to moderate rain in Jammu's plains and snow across most parts of Jammu and Kashmir are expected, with peak activity from the night of January 4 to the morning of January 6. The advisory also cautions against potential hazards, including disrupted traffic, snow avalanches, landslides, and shooting stones. These are particularly concerning for higher reaches and isolated areas prone to extreme weather events.

Additionally, the freezing temperatures across the region amplify the challenges. Srinagar's minimum temperature of minus 2.4 degrees Celsius, Kupwara's 1.4 degrees Celsius, and the harsh lows in tourist destinations like Gulmarg (minus 8.6 degrees Celsius) and Pahalgam (minus 4.0 degrees Celsius) create icy road conditions, further complicating mobility.

In light of these predictions, the MeT Department has issued crucial guidelines for tourists, travelers, and transporters. It is imperative to plan journeys with consideration for the anticipated weather disruptions and adhere to the directives of local authorities and traffic management teams. Precautionary measures, such as equipping vehicles with snow chains and carrying emergency supplies, are essential for those navigating higher altitudes.

Tourists visiting the picturesque yet frigid locations like Gulmarg and Pahalgam must be particularly vigilant. While the allure of snow-clad landscapes is undeniable, the potential for sudden weather changes necessitates preparedness. Local administrations must also step up efforts to ensure safety by maintaining road access and providing timely updates.

The MeT Department's forecast of relatively stable weather from January 7-10, followed by light snow on January 11-12, offers a brief respite. However, this period should be utilized to evaluate and strengthen disaster response mechanisms. Enhanced communication channels, real-time weather updates, and prompt snow-clearing operations can significantly reduce the impact of such events in the future.

The yellow alert for Jammu and Kashmir is a reminder of the region's vulnerability to extreme weather conditions. Collective responsibility, encompassing both individual preparedness and administrative efficiency, is essential to navigate these challenges. By heeding the MeT Department's advisory and adopting proactive measures, the community can safeguard lives and minimize disruptions, ensuring that the natural beauty of the region continues to be both a haven and a source of inspiration.

Lessons for India from a failing US model

JAGDISH RATTANANI

The killing earlier this month of Brian Thompson, the CEO of a leading health insurance provider in the United States called UnitedHealthcare, has led to an outpouring from the American public. There is sympathy for the shooter, even praise for the act, and an embracing of the message of the killing in three words marked out on the bullets that took Thompson's life: "delay", "deny", "defend".

The three 'd's have become a shorthand, almost an anthem for critics who note that insurance companies are failing patients by denying or delaying claims and defending their actions with all their corporate might so that people in the midst of medical issues give up. This is part of the corporate strategy that drives profits of insurers, high salaries to employees and bonuses for CEOs like the late Brian Thompson. Teams reportedly work on denials at the backend while the frontend employs people with designations that paint a caring picture -- like a Chief Affordability Officer in the case of UnitedHealthcare.

This is the rough edge of a healthcare system that is overly complex, largely privatised and intensely competitive with profits that make it among the top two or three most profitable sectors in the US economy. Health and medical insurance and hospitals together had total profits of an estimated \$267 billion in 2024, jointly making it the third most profitable industry in the US economy, according to the global research firm IBISWorld. McKinsey in a report put out in January 2024 estimated that "healthcare profit pools" would grow at a 7% CAGR, from \$583 billion in 2022 to \$819 billion in 2027.

This is a system India and the world need to be wary of. An overly profit orientation in a sector where care should be the currency points to all the things that should not be the way the health sector operates. It is instructive that the rage that is now pouring out was under the surface and seen in bits and parts for a long time.

Consider that two years ago, the slain CEO posted a message on the platform LinkedIn that said: "Making health care more affordable... (is) more important than ever right now. Reducing drug prices and improving price transparency are two ways we are working to lower costs for UnitedHealthcare members." The comments below that post were eye-popping. One wrote: "... I have stage four metastatic lung cancer. We've just left UHC because of all the denials for my meds. Every month there is a different reason for the denial. As of today, we are well over our max out-of-pocket for the year with having spent well over \$20,000. Since we are in our 60s - we don't have time to recoup that." Many others echoed the

anger though the post also recorded several "likes".

Officially, UnitedHealthcare has dismissed reports that it has the highest denial rate of all insurers in the US. The company said it approves and pays about 90% of medical claims upon submission. But other surveys and reports have pointed to frustration and worries over rising costs and growing denials, and of insurance companies in general turning the process into a roadblock that requires special efforts to cross. However, the group CEO Andrew Witty has now agreed that the system is "flawed".

A broken system

The frustrations in the US on healthcare carry important lessons for India because of worries that we may be tilting to the US model. This will be (if it is not already) disastrous in India, where the healthcare system is even more broken. Here, claimed world class care and high standards with the best doctors deliver

rising costs that bring care for the rich and leave out the rest. As such, the Indian system carries many more burdens than that seen in the US. According to India's National Health Accounts Estimates 2021-22, the Out-of-Pocket Expenditure as a percentage of Total Health Expenditure is almost 40%.

To be sure, the American system still works quite well for many. Medications are prescribed and paid for, unlike in the Indian system. No hospital can turn away an emergency, irrespective of insurance or the capacity to pay. Hospitals do not demand an advance as is actually the norm at almost all hospitals in India. In the US, it is entirely possible for an emergency case to be operated on, including critical or high-cost surgeries like cardiac interventions, with recovery of bills set for a later date.

None of this is the way it works in India. The frustration of Indians is first at the denial of care for

those who cannot afford the high fees. For others, it is the inflation of doctor consultation charges, the rising room rents in hospitals and in many cases, the growing disenchantment with the profession itself and the way patients are treated. Insurance costs have grown dramatically, and the elderly are routinely denied coverage, or the coverage costs are prohibitive.

If an avowedly individualistic, free market, capitalistic order that obtains in the US can see a revolt the way it has this time, then at the very least India needs to be wary of going close to the US system. Consider Japan at the other end of the scale, where universal healthcare coverage arrived in the 1960s. Almost all treatments are covered, most services are inexpensive with a systematic long-term care insurance system.

There are lessons we must reject and new ones we need to learn in India when it comes to critical areas like health.

Economic and political prognosis for 2025

AJIT RANADE

We always begin the calendar year with a degree of optimism. To live with hope is in the very nature of human existence. No matter how tough the challenges in the year ahead, the optimists outnumber the pessimists. No amount of gloom or doom prospects purveyed by dismal economists can deter the optimists. Their confidence in the future is undiminished. In that spirit here is a prognosis for the year 2025, full of tough challenges for the optimists to tackle and overcome.

The year ahead is full of uncertainty. Making an accurate prediction is foolish and is sure to fail. The sources of global uncertainty are economic and geo-political. In the latter category are many factors. These include the outcome of the endless war in Ukraine, the escalation of the Israel-Hamas conflict and its spillover into the wider region of West Asia, and the ascendance of far-right parties in many countries, most prominently in Germany.

One of the largest economies in the world, the German government lost the vote of confidence in

Parliament this month, leading to mid-term elections which will be held early next year. The German economy will contract for a second year in a row, even as it grapples with a rising deficit, need for greater funding of the overseas wars, a shortage of skills and underfunded education. Then there is a rising anti-immigrant sentiment fueled by the far-right parties. Will Germany tilt closer to Russia or to NATO? How will it deal with Iran and its competitor China? Will its economy bounce back?

Beyond geo-politics is the economic uncertainty that will be heightened by America's new leader, Donald Trump who takes oath on January 20. He has promised higher import tariffs, slashing government funding, stronger anti-immigrant policies and a withdrawal from most global climate treaties. His government will be more protectionist. He is likely to engage in international diplomacy purely from an American transactional perspective.

At the same time his government will have to fight inflation along with recessionary winds. Meanwhile the American government debt has reached a new peak of 35 trillion

dollars. Feeding this debt mountain are higher deficits and an insatiable appetite by the government for borrowing. The interest on the debt alone is about 1 trillion dollars. The borrowing appetite keeps the American dollar currency strong, causing other currencies like the Indian rupee to fall. Weaker currencies cause inflation to worsen.

Despite its economic woes, the American stock market clocked new highs during 2024 leading to the creation of more than 150 new billionaires. The twelve richest men in America are together worth 2 trillion dollars now. We thus have a cocktail mix of high inflation, high unemployment, a wild asset markets growth (stocks and real estate) and widening wealth and income inequality.

The stock markets have a habit of an abrupt and sharp correction, when collective paranoia takes hold. That bubble burst could happen but is unpredictable. Not many saw the Lehman crash coming in 2008. China is also fighting a slowdown and a large debt with stress in its banking and real estate. It is also trying to transition into the new economy powered by renewable

energy, artificial intelligence, and space technology. The other parts of East Asia and Japan are in relatively better shape and have better macroeconomic features.

Rising inequality is a global concern and its removal or reduction is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations. The rise of populist leaders, higher welfare spending is a response to rising inequality. How to manage the fiscal burden of welfare spending is a new challenge. In India too, welfare spending has expanded hugely, both by the Union governments and the States.

A recent report by the Reserve Bank of India has cautioned against expanding subsidies and freebies indiscriminately. During 2024 sixty countries had national elections including India, and in most places rising inflation and inequality were big issues for voters. In many places incumbents were thrown out (such as in America) mainly due to inflation and economic hardships.

In India too, the State assembly elections to Jharkhand and Maharashtra were swayed by promises of generous subsidies especially targeted

at women. We will have two other States, Delhi and Bihar, electing new legislatures, and there is already talk of income subsidies to the poor, women and other sections of society. Who will pay for all of these is not a matter of debate, at least for now.

On India's domestic front there are many things to watch out. Two State assembly elections have been mentioned. The much-delayed national census is likely to be kicked off. A revamp of the consumer price index and the index of industrial production is on the cards. Discussion will begin on the delimitation exercise of readjustment of Parliamentary seats. The deadline is 2026. The sixteenth Finance Commission will finalise its recommendation later this year. Will it assign assured funding to the third tier of government?

In many States election to local bodies like municipalities and panchayats have been long delayed, affecting local governance. The Indian rupee is expected to depreciate due to strong dollar policies of the Trump administration compounded by a wider trade deficit in India. The worry about how to increase foreign

direct investment will remain. It has been falling for several years.

The outflow of capital as well flight of rich people to other countries is also a matter of concern. Indians are expected to spend 70 billion dollars on the "import" of education, i.e. on students studying abroad. This is a major drain on the economy and reflects dissatisfaction with the quality of education in India, or of affordability and availability.

On the technology front we will see the proliferation of electric vehicles, greater ethanol blending with petrol, and perhaps the initiation of pilot projects of small and modular nuclear reactors. One big economic development to watch for is the increase in private capital spending and the improvement in rural wages.

The slowdown in urban consumption might call for a budgetary stimulus in the Union budget due to be presented in February. In summary a year filled with uncertainty about investment and growth, widening inequalities, the growing influence of geo-politics and conflicts, and ever surging asset markets guided by a loose monetary policy.

how to increase foreign

A New Year's Call for Unity, Progress, and Humanity



ABDUL QUDDUS KUNDRU

As we step into a new year, let us come together with a shared vision of unity, progress, and compassion for all, across every corner of our beloved India, including Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. This year, and the years that follow, should serve as a reminder of our collective responsibility to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and peace that bind us together.

The foundation of any harmonious society is laid within the home. If there are misunderstandings or grievances within our families, it is crucial that

we address them with patience, dialogue, and love. The ability to resolve conflicts within the family unit prevents them from growing into larger issues that might affect the larger society. A home built on love, mutual respect, and understanding sets a positive example, reducing the need for legal interventions and fostering an atmosphere of trust. It is within these walls that we first learn the values that will define our society—compassion, respect, and harmony. Let us all strive to make our homes havens of peace and understanding, because from there, the spirit of unity will spread to the wider community.

As we reflect on the challenges and aspirations of this new year, one of the most pressing matters that need our immediate attention is the role of youth in society. Our young generation holds the promise of

a bright future, and it is our duty to nurture them. They have the potential to drive positive change, but they need the right guidance, resources, and opportunities to channel their energy and skills effectively.

Unfortunately, the specter of drug abuse and addiction has increasingly cast a shadow over the lives of many young people. The widespread use of substances such as drugs, alcohol, and even cigarettes not only harms the individual but also wreaks havoc on families and communities. The lure of these substances may appear appealing to some, but they ultimately lead to despair, broken relationships, and a generation lost to addiction. Drugs and their associated crimes corrode the fabric of society, creating an environment where hopelessness flourishes.

To combat this, we

must take decisive steps to address the root causes. Education plays a critical role in prevention. Schools and community centers should serve as places of awareness and support, helping young people understand the dangers of drug abuse. But beyond simply raising awareness, it is essential to provide opportunities for young people to thrive. Our youth must be able to envision a future where they can succeed, contribute, and lead a life of dignity.

Additionally, those who have already succumbed to addiction need support and care. Rehabilitation centers, counseling services, and strong community networks are essential for helping individuals reclaim their lives and reintegrate into society. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that no young person feels alone in their struggles, and to provide them with the

tools to overcome these challenges and rebuild their futures.

It is also essential to address the issue of unemployment, especially among educated youth. Many young people, having invested their time and energy in education, find themselves struggling to secure meaningful employment. Whether they are recent graduates, diploma holders, or skilled professionals, it is disheartening to see so much talent going to waste due to a lack of opportunities.

It is incumbent upon us—government bodies, the private sector, and society at large—to create avenues for meaningful work. By fostering entrepreneurship, supporting small businesses, and offering targeted skills development programs, we can help young people find work that is aligned with their education and aspirations. In doing so,

we will not only alleviate unemployment but also contribute to the nation's growth by tapping into the vast potential of its educated youth.

In parallel, we must focus on the welfare of marginalized groups such as laborers, domestic workers, and the underprivileged. These communities often work tirelessly, yet they remain trapped in cycles of poverty. It is our moral duty to ensure that they receive fair wages, equal opportunities, and the dignity they deserve. As we enter the new year, let us resolve to take concrete steps toward alleviating hunger and poverty and ensuring that no one is left behind in our pursuit of progress.

Another critical area that demands our attention is the development of education and infrastructure in rural areas. In many parts of India, especially in remote villages, children

are deprived of access to quality education due to a lack of schools or colleges nearby. We must advocate for the expansion of educational opportunities in rural areas by upgrading primary and middle schools to higher secondary levels, and establishing colleges in these remote regions. Only then will the children from these areas be empowered to build a brighter future and contribute to the nation's progress.

Education, however, cannot stand alone without proper infrastructure to support it. Rural communities often lack the necessary facilities to ensure that their children can study, grow, and thrive. The construction of better roads, reliable drainage systems, and bridges should be prioritized, as these essential amenities will significantly improve the quality of life for residents and enable access

to educational institutions and healthcare services. By working together with local governments, district administrations, and law enforcement agencies, we can implement effective programs aimed at both development and job creation in these regions.

Furthermore, it is imperative that we never lose sight of the plight of the most vulnerable members of our society—widows, orphans, and the impoverished. These individuals face daily challenges that we often overlook in our busy lives. We must take it upon ourselves to extend a helping hand, whether through organizing community initiatives, providing financial aid, or offering emotional support. By uplifting the most marginalized, we show the true spirit of humanity and compassion, and we create a society where everyone can live with dignity and respect.

Global Type 1 diabetes market to reach \$9.9 bn by 2033: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Global Type 1 diabetes market is set to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.3 per cent from \$2.2 billion in 2023 to \$9.9 billion in 2033, according to a report on Thursday.

The report by Global-Data, a data and analytics company, showed that the growth will be particular in the seven major countries like the US, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, and Japan.

Among these countries, the US has the largest market, accounting for 80.4 per cent of global sales in 2023 (\$2.2 billion). It is expected to gain further market share during the forecast period, accounting for 91.6 per cent of the seven countries for Type 1 diabetes sales by 2033 (\$9.0 billion).

The growth in these countries is driven by the anticipated introduction of several late-stage pipeline products, including multiple immunomodulatory agents, during the forecast period, said the report.



“The increasing popularity of rapid-acting and ultra-rapid-acting insulin analogs in line with rising insulin pump use is expected to improve patient outcomes by optimising glycemic control,” said Sulayman Patel, Pharma Analyst at Global-Data.

Research shows “high volumes of prescribing physicians and patients have demonstrated positive attitudes towards the use of ultra-rapid insulin analogues, which is expected to drive Type 1 diabetes market growth.”

The late-stage Type 1 diabetes pipeline consists of several agents, including Eli Lilly’s insulin efsitora alfa, Novo Nordisk’s Awiqli (insulin icodex), Johnson & Johnson’s ustekinumab, Dompe Pharmaceuticals’ ladarixin, and Diamyd Medical’s vaccine for Type 1 diabetes.

Sanofi’s Tziel (teplizumab) is the only approved disease-modifying therapy for Type 1 diabetes. Tziel received FDA approval in November 2022 and is the first treatment for Type 1 diabetes that targets the underlying disease mechanisms by delaying the onset of stage 3 Type 1 diabetes in patients 8 years and older.

The report expects Tziel to gain European approval and become the

top-selling drug in the Type 1 diabetes market with sales of \$4.8 billion across the seven countries in 2033.

While the Type 1 diabetes market is projected to grow during the forecast period, it may also face some challenges that will slow its growth.

Potential barriers to growth include the high financial burden of immunomodulatory agents, which means insurance and reimbursement restrictions will impact drug sales, as well as the high failure rate of clinical trials developing disease-modifying therapeutics in the Type 1 diabetes space.

PUPIL SIZE PLAYS KEY ROLE IN STORING MEMORIES IN BRAIN: STUDY

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, JAN 2

The pupil of the eye is key to understanding how, and when, the brain forms strong, long-lasting memories, according to a mice study.

Researchers from Cornell University in the US found that new memories are being replayed and consolidated when the pupil is contracted during a substage of non-REM sleep. And when the pupil is dilated, the process repeats for older memories.

The team explained that the brain prevents “catastrophic forgetting” in which the consolidation of one memory wipes out another one by separating these two substages of



sleep.

The findings, published in the journal *Nature*, showed that it could lead to better memory enhancement techniques for humans and may help computer scientists train artificial neural networks to be more efficient.

Azahara Oliva, assistant professor at Cornell noted that the study proposes that “the brain has

this intermediate timescale that separates the new learning from the old knowledge”.

In the study, the team equipped mice with brain electrodes and tiny eye-tracking cameras while they indulged in a variety of tasks, such as collecting water or cookie rewards in a maze.

One day, the mice learned a new task and

when they fell asleep, the electrodes captured their neural activity and the cameras recorded the changes in their pupils.

The recordings showed that the temporal structure of sleeping mice is more varied, and more akin to the sleep stages in humans than previously thought.

Further, they found that when a mouse enters a substage of non-REM sleep, its pupil shrinks, and it’s here the recently learned tasks -- that is, the new memories -- are being reactivated and consolidated while previous knowledge is not.

In contrast, older memories are replayed and integrated when the pupil is dilated, the report said.

Indian scientists develop injectable hydrogel for targeted breast cancer treatment

AGENCIES
GUWAHATI, JAN 2

A team of scientists from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati and Bose Institute Kolkata has developed an advanced injectable hydrogel for targeted treatment of breast cancer. This innovative hydrogel-based therapy delivers anti-cancer drugs directly to tumour sites, significantly reducing the side effects typically associated with conventional cancer treatments like surgery which is not feasible for internal organs, and chemotherapy that often results in harmful side effects.

Hydrogels are water-based, three-dimensional polymer networks capable of absorbing and retaining fluids. Their unique struc-

ture mimics living tissues, making them suitable for biomedical applications.

This newly developed hydrogel acts as a stable reservoir for anti-cancer drugs and releases them in a controlled manner, responding to specific conditions in the tumour microenvironment, said Prof. Depratim Das, Department of Chemistry at IIT Guwahati.

The hydrogel, composed of ultra-short peptides -- biocompatible and biodegradable building blocks of proteins -- is designed to remain insoluble in biological fluids, ensuring it stays localised at the injection site.

It responds to elevated glutathione (GSH) levels, a molecule abundant in tumour cells. Upon encountering

high GSH levels, the hydrogel triggers a controlled drug release directly into the tumor, minimising its interaction with healthy tissues and reducing systemic side effects.

“This work exemplifies how scientific innovation can directly address the pressing needs of cancer treatment. The hydrogel’s unique properties allow it to work in harmony with the biological environment, offering precision where it is needed most. We are excited by its potential to transform our thoughts about localised drug delivery,” said Das.

The team, in preclinical trials, tested the hydrogel on a murine model of breast cancer. It showcased remarkable efficacy and revealed the findings. Within 18 days, a single

injection of the hydrogel that was loaded with the chemotherapy drug Doxorubicin led to an approximately 75 per cent reduction in tumour size.

Importantly, the hydrogel remained localised at the tumour site. It steadily releases the drug over time without causing detectable side effects on other organs.

This innovative delivery system enhances the drug’s effectiveness while reducing the required dosage, thus minimising toxicity. The team noted that further laboratory studies demonstrated that the hydrogel improves drug uptake by cancer cells. It also induces cell cycle arrest, and promotes programmed cell death, thereby attacking tumours on multiple fronts.

AI-driven adaptive cardiac devices to revolutionise heart disease treatment: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Adaptive cardiac devices are revolutionising heart disease treatment for real-time monitoring and dynamic therapy adjustments, according to a report.

The report by Global-Data, a data and analytics company, showed that these devices offer continuous, precise interventions enabling better patient outcomes. These also present a shift toward more effective and respon-

sive management of heart disease.

In contrast to traditional devices like pacemakers that deliver consistent outputs, the novel adaptive cardiac technologies leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse heart activity. The adaptive technology also adjusts treatment based on fluctuations in cardiac rhythms, leading to a personalised approach.

This ensures that therapy aligns precisely with a patient’s evolving condition, providing 24/7 care

and better health outcomes.

According to Global-Data forecast, the cardiovascular devices market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.20 per cent from \$84.8 billion in 2023 to \$140 billion in 2033.

This growth highlights the increasing demand for advanced diagnostic and therapeutic tools tailored to cardiac care.

“The cardiovascular devices market is undergoing rapid expansion and diversification. AI-



enhanced solutions exemplify the industry’s shift toward precision medicine, aligning with regu-

latory bodies like the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prioritising innovative approaches to

improve outcomes in cardiovascular disease management,” said Cynthia Stinchcombe, Medical Devices Analyst at Global-Data. The report projects that advancements in cardiac care, combined with novel therapies, will transform the field, providing new solutions for millions affected by heart disease globally.

“The adoption of cutting-edge technologies in cardiovascular care emphasizes the critical role innovation plays in modern healthcare. With

these advanced systems, we are moving towards more tailored and effective treatment strategies for heart conditions, improving both quality of life and clinical outcomes,” Stinchcombe said.

The report also highlights the synergy between wearable cardiac monitors -- such as ECG-enabled smartwatches -- and AI-driven devices. Wearables provide continuous monitoring outside clinical environments, while adaptive implants offer precise therapeutic interventions,

creating a comprehensive framework for cardiac health management.

“As cardiovascular diseases remain a leading global health concern, the advancements we’re seeing offer renewed hope. Emerging technologies are crucial in expanding diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities. With the FDA’s support for AI-driven medical devices, these innovations are set to reshape cardiac care, delivering transformative benefits to patients worldwide,” Stinchcombe said.

Healthy India foundation of a strong and powerful nation: Yogi

AGENCIES
LUCKNOW, JAN 2

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has launched an innovative initiative to accelerate progress towards in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of a “TB-Free India”.

The CM has entrusted retired IAS and IPS officers, former Vice Chancellors, educationists, and other senior citizens with the pivotal role of Nikshay

Mitra.’

As ‘Nikshay Mitras,’ they will actively contribute to raising public awareness and supporting efforts to eradicate TB.

Yogi on Thursday convened a meeting with these senior citizens, emphasizing the importance of their cooperation in ensuring the success of the ‘TB-Free UP’ campaign. Welcoming retired IAS and IPS officers, former Vice Chancellors, and senior citizens to a

special meeting, he highlighted PM Modi’s vision of a TB-Free India. “A strong India can only emerge from a healthy India, and India will gain true power when it becomes strong,” he said.

The CM underscored the urgency of eliminating TB, stating that while the World Health Organization has set 2030 as the global target for a TB-free world, PM Modi has ambitiously advanced India’s goal to 2025.

40 years after Bhopal gas tragedy, toxic waste shifted through green corridor

AGENCIES
BHOPAL, JAN 2

Toxic waste lying at Bhopal’s Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) premises for the last 40 years was finally shifted on Wednesday to Pathampur dumping site in Dhar district, around 30 km, from Indore.

The convoy of 12 container trucks carrying around 337 metric tonnes of chemical waste moved from Bhopal to Pathampur amid tight security arrangements by the administration and police, late on Wednesday.

A green corridor was set up to cover around 250 km between the UCIL and Pithampur.

Highly toxic methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, killing at least 5,479 people and leaving thousands with serious and long-lasting health issues. It is considered to be among the worst industrial disasters in the world.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court had on December 3 set a four-week deadline to shift the toxic

waste, observing that even 40 years after the gas tragedy, the authorities were in a “state of inertia”, and warned the government of contempt proceedings if its directive was not followed. More than one hundred people in 30-minute shifts have packed the waste since Sunday. They underwent health check-ups and were given rest every 30 minutes.

All 12 specialised containers that carried toxic waste have been designed according to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) standards. Each container is leak-proof, fire-resis-

tant, and equipped with GPS tracking for real-time monitoring.

“Pithampur’s plant is specifically designed for the safe incineration of waste generated by industrial units across the state. In 2015, a trial run for disposing of 10 metric tonnes of waste of UCIL as conducted under CPCB supervision, adhering to all prescribed safety parameters,” Director of Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Swatantra Kumar Singh said.

He stated that the state-of-the-art treatment, stor-

age and disposal facility (TSDF) at Pithampur has been safely incinerating waste from various organisations since 2006, similar to the storage and operational processes at UCIL.

Singh highlighted that after the 2015 trial run of UCIL waste disposal, emission levels were found to comply with the prescribed national standards. He said the finding also revealed that over the past 10 years in the Pithampur circle village, the cultivation area for soybean and wheat crops has increased.



mitochondria as well as cuts down oxidative stress.

It has shown that melatonin, used to treat insomnia, could be a potential inducer of mitophagy to mitigate Parkinson’s.

To decode the molecular mechanism behind melatonin-mediated oxidative stress regulation, the team from INST Mohali used human serum albumin nano-formulation and delivered the drug to the brain.

The team led by Dr. Surajit Karmakar used a biocompatible protein (HSA) nanocarrier for the delivery of melatonin to the brain. They proved that the nano-melatonin resulted in a sustained release of melatonin and improved bioavailability.

Further, the nano-mel-

atonin boosted antioxidant and neuroprotective properties. It not only enhanced mitophagy to remove unhealthy mitochondria, but also improved mitochondrial biogenesis to counteract a pesticide (rotenone) induced toxicity in an in vitro Parkinson’s model.

The improvement is because of the sustained release of melatonin and targeted delivery to the brain resulting in increased therapeutic efficacy compared to bare melatonin.

The increased oxidative effect is a result of mitophagy induction through the upregulation of a crucial epigenetic regulator called BMI1 that controls gene expression.

Bharat Jodo Yatra to public outreach initiatives: Rahul's newsletter sums up his 2024 exploits

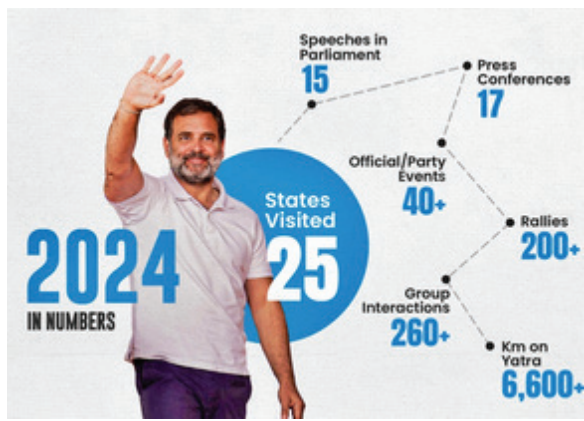
AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday released a newsletter, in an apparent attempt to maximise his reach to the people and impress upon them with his exploits in 2024.

The newsletter summarises Rahul's efforts as well as accomplishments in 2024, his endeavours in connecting with the electorate and also how he cornered the Centre on matters of public issues.

Sharing the newsletter, the Congress MP wrote, "Know my views on my speech on the Constitution and Manusmriti in Parliament and the developments related to it. Read



along about my recent visit to the vegetable market and other activities."

The eight-page newsletter showcases his heartfelt tribute to former Prime Minister Mammohan Singh, his arguments and assertions on the "battle between Manusmriti and

Constitution" and also a recollection of the memorable moments from his Bharat Jodo Yatra.

"In 2024, Rahul Gandhi visited 25 states undertaking a yatra of over 6,600 km. He held more than 260 group interactions, addressed more than 200

public rallies and attended over 40 party events. He gave 15 speeches in Parliament and addressed 17 press conferences," it said.

It also shows the Congress MP visiting people during times of crisis including soaring inflation, expressing solidarity with families of the Hathras rape victim and many others. Rahul's address during the Congress' Belgaum session in Karnataka's Belagavi has also been documented.

A special focus has been laid on his Bharat Jodo Yatra, which the party credits for its spectacular performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Congress party which had just 52 MPs earlier, saw

its numbers swelling to almost double at 99 in the 2024 elections.

The newsletter also has details of his Parliament speech, including his inaugural address as LoP, where he hit out at BJP over its "politics of hatred" while championing the cause of non-violence.

The Congress MP has also urged the readers and netizens to subscribe to his WhatsApp channel.

Notably, the political space in today's world is getting increasingly driven by social media and digital communication and every party including the national ones as well as regional satraps are exploiting it to accentuate their appeal and amplify their reach to the masses.

RSS leader Indresh Kumar presents chadar at Ajmer Sharif Dargah

AGENCIES

JAIPUR, JAN 2

RSS leader and patron of the Muslim Rashtriya Manch Indresh Kumar presented a chadar at the Ajmer Dargah Sharif on Thursday on the occasion of the 813th Urs of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

The 40-foot-long chadar was sent from Delhi with a delegation from the Muslim Rashtriya Manch.

Prayers for peace, harmony, and brotherhood in the country were also offered.

Indresh Kumar's heartfelt message was read aloud from Buland Darwaza, emphasising the importance of mutual harmony, adopting Khwaja Garib Nawaz's teachings, and spreading his timeless



message of love and unity.

Khwaja Saheb's annual Urs has been inspiring visitors with an enduring message of brotherhood and humanity, welcoming people from all walks of life to celebrate his legacy.

Further, Union Minister for Minority and Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju will present the chadar on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Dargah Sharif on Saturday.

Haji Salman Chishti, Chairman Sufi Foundation and Gaddinshin Ajmer Dargah said that PM Modi has been sending chadar to Ajmer Dargah for the last 10 years.

"The 813th Urs of Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishti commenced in Ajmer, Rajasthan, on Wednesday, with the sighting of the moon," he added.

Beacon of peace, brotherhood: Naqvi highlights PM Modi's chadar tradition at Ajmer Sharif Dargah

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 2

BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi emphasised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to promote peace, unity, harmony, and brotherhood in the country by sending a 'chadar' to Ajmer Sharif.

PM Modi has consistently sent a chadar to the Ajmer Sharif Dargah since 2014.

Naqvi said, "Along with the chadar, the Prime Minister conveys a message of peace, harmony, and brotherhood in the country. It gives me immense joy that I have personally taken the chadar to Ajmer around nine times. This time, a minister will represent the PM in delivering the chadar, which is a wonderful gesture."

Addressing AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal's letter to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, Naqvi remarked, "As Delhi elections approach, Kejriwal's promise market reopens. His promises are worth crores, but his performance remains hollow. His decade-long governance in Delhi has been filled with empty assurances.

He appears to be a hero in promises but zero in intentions. This letter, laden with negativity, won't solve anything."

Speaking on Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami's indications about implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand, Naqvi stated, "The UCC is a constitutional responsibility of any Government of India. The BJP

has always supported the idea of a Common Civil Code, whether in or out of power. Implementing a uniform law is a necessity for a united society and aligns with the constitutional mandate. It will not harm religious beliefs but will provide an equitable framework for the 1.4 billion citizens of India."

Naqvi also commented on Switzerland's decision to ban burqas from January 1, 2025.

He said, "Every country has its own laws, systems, and security perspectives. Decisions like these should not be viewed through a religious lens but rather as part of a nation's internal policies and priorities. Each country takes such measures in accordance with its own societal framework."

Don't see it through religious lens: Indian politicians on Switzerland's 'burqa ban'

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Indian politicians on Thursday shared their reactions on the "burqa ban" in Switzerland, which came into effect on January 1 and stated that the decision was country's own and should not necessarily be viewed through a religious lens.

The prohibition, which bans facial coverings in public spaces, has sparked debates internationally.

As per the new Swiss law, those who unlawfully cover their faces in public, they will be imposed a fine of up to 1,000 Swiss francs (\$1,144). This includes covering nose, mouth, and eyes, with certain exceptions in private or sacred



spaces and on planes or diplomatic premises.

BJP national spokesperson Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said that Switzerland might have its reasons for implementing the ban.

"Every country has its own rules and laws. They have their own security arrangements, and as per those, they form rules. I do not think there is a need to view this matter from a religious perspective," Naqvi told IANS.

Similarly, NCP-SP leader Majeed Memon remarked

that the law might not garner support from Muslim-majority nations but would likely have no bearing on India.

"Switzerland is a small nation, and its population is nothing compared to India. The Muslim population there is very small. Their government must have taken these steps considering the conditions in their country," Memon said.

Drawing a comparison, Memon stated, "India's Muslim population is prob-

ably higher than the total population of Switzerland, with over 200 million Muslims residing here. Whatever happens, it will not have any effect on India. It is their matter, and I do not think it is necessary for anyone to intervene."

"Many Muslim-dominated countries might criticize this idea. However, in India, where people of all faiths live together harmoniously, I do not think it will have any effect," he further added.

The ban, which does not explicitly target Islam, was proposed by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) under the banner "Stop Extremism." It also aimed to prohibit violent protesters from wearing masks.

In 2021, Swiss people approved the ban, with 51.2 per cent voting in favour and 48.8 per cent against it in a referendum. The Swiss government, however, had opposed the measure, arguing that it was not the state's role to dictate how individuals dress.

Switzerland operates under a direct democracy system, where citizens regularly vote on national and regional issues. The "burqa ban" referendum was part of this system, granting people a direct say in their governance.

The law includes exceptions for facial coverings in places of worship, during public health emergencies, or for safety reasons in the workplace.

Nitish Kumar responds with folded hands to Lalu's 'invite' for joining Mahagathbandan

AGENCIES

PATNA, JAN 2

Hours after RJD Chief Lalu Prasad's statement that his "doors are open" for Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the JD(U) leader responded with folded hands.

Lalu's remark welcoming CM Nitish to the Mahagathbandan fold created a flutter in Bihar's political circles.

When media persons questioned CM Nitish about Lalu's offer, the Chief Minister kept mum. Instead, he smiled and folded his hands, avoiding any clear indication of his intentions.

The Chief Minister's ges-



ture, made while standing between Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary, has fueled further curiosity about his political future.

However, the BJP lead-

ers have asserted that the

NDA remains united. Union Minister Lallan Singh dismissed Lalu's remarks and termed them inconsequential.

He said, "India is an independent country, and Lalu has the freedom to say anything. He can say

whatever he wants, but we are in the NDA, and it is intact."

Following the swearing-in ceremony of Bihar's new Governor Khan, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and senior BJP leader Vijay Kumar Sinha visited Chief Minister Nitish at his residence.

The political atmosphere in Bihar has intensified following Lalu's remarks about his willingness to reconcile with CM Nitish.

When asked if his door was open for the Bihar Chief Minister, Lalu responded, "My door is always open; Nitish Kumar should also keep his door

open." On whether he would forgive CM Nitish if he returned, Lalu said, "Forgiving has been my job. If he comes back, I will forgive him without any problem. Everyone will work together."

However, RJD leader and Lalu's son Tejashwi Yadav has firmly rejected the idea of aligning with CM Nitish.

Tejashwi earlier said, "Our door is closed for Nitish Kumar forever. We do not need him."

Tejashwi added, "There is nothing left in Nitish now. The people of Bihar trust me, and this time we will form the government on our own."

Now infra projects in Maharashtra to have unique ID similar to Aadhaar

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, JAN 2

The Maharashtra Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, on Thursday decided to create a unique ID for all infrastructure projects in the state, similar to Aadhaar for individuals, the Chief Minister's Office said.

"Many departments carry out the same type of development work at the same place. This leads to a loss of crores of rupees by doing the same work. Just as many bogus beneficiaries and the same names were excluded due to Aadhaar number, this decision will also prevent the repetition of the same development work," the

CMO said in a statement.

The Cabinet's decision is crucial when the state government is in the middle of carrying out a slew of infrastructure projects of more than Rs 3 lakh crore in Mumbai and the rest of Maharashtra.

"The Chief Minister suggested that each infrastructure project should have a unique ID for proper planning of development work and coherence in it. Therefore, in which area, which work has been planned and exactly where, which project is needed, will be available together on one dashboard. Therefore, it will also be easy to know exactly which project is needed where.

This will help achieve balanced development and proper use of funds and labour. This information will be integrated with PM Gati Shakti Portal, Gram Vikas Portal, Maharashtra Remote Sensing Application Centre (MRSAC) said the CMO in a statement.

Chief Minister Fadnis has formed a committee to determine its format.

The committee consists of Additional Chief Secretary of Planning Department Rajagopal Deora, Principal Secretary (Expenditure) Saurabh Vijay, Principal Secretary of Rural Development Department Eknath Dawle and Divisional Commissioner of Nashik Praveen Gedam.

A rare glimpse of religious tradition after 40 years amidst sea of devotion in Shimla

AGENCIES

SHIMLA, JAN 2

Upper Shimla in Himachal Pradesh is currently witnessing a rare and age-old religious tradition as the revered deity Devta Bakralu hosts the "Bhunda Mahayajna." This grand ceremony believed to take place once in four decades, brings together deities from the Spail Valley, showcasing the region's vibrant cultural heritage.

The event, marked by processions of deities carried in intricately adorned palanquins to the sound of trumpets and drums, is a plea for peace, prosperity, and protection from natural calamities. Devta Bakralu resides in a temple

at Dalgaoon village in Rohru tehsil, 135 km from Shimla, built in traditional hill architecture using wood and slate.

The highlight of the ceremony is the rope-sliding ritual, inaugurated last year by cutting "munji," a grass grown in inaccessible mountain terrains. A "jedi" (a man of the Beda caste) creates a sacred rope of "munji," adhering to strict rituals of celibacy and silence.

During the yajna, the divine oil-soaked rope spans 1 km between two hills, crossing a ditch. The jedi, seated on a wooden raft, slides down the rope in a spectacular display.

Surat Ram, a veteran performer, will undertake this ritual for the ninth

time on January 4. Nearly five lakh people, including Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu, are expected to witness the event. In the last "Bhunda Mahayajna" in 1985, Surat Ram faced difficulty while crossing the "valley of death" on a raft while sliding the rope vertically.

Surat Ram told IANS that it took two and a half months to prepare the sacred rope this time. Four people assisted him in this task. While preparing the rope, one has to follow celibacy. After eating at four in the morning, he would eat again the next day. During this time, maximum silence is observed.

Panchayat head Visheshwar Banshtu noted that this ceremony was

last performed in Dalgaoon in 1985. Steps have been taken this year to prevent fatalities during the ritual, ensuring safety for all participants.

The Bhunda Mahayajna is a testament to Himachal Pradesh's rich spiritual traditions, often referred to as "Devbhoomi" or the land of gods. Devta Bakralu, the chief deity of Rohru and Rampur, has invited other deities, including Maheshwar, Bondra, and Moharrish, along with three Parshurams from Gumma, Andareyothi, and Khaskandi, believed to be incarnations of Lord Parshuram.

These deities, carried in processions, travel only on foot, avoiding modern routes like tunnels. The

devotees meticulously follow strict rituals and schedules set by the deities themselves, highlighting a deep connection between the mortals and the divine.

"In earlier times, the Bhunda Yajna was performed every 15-20 years, but its frequency has reduced to once in 40-50 years," octogenarian R.P. Manta told IANS. Preparations for this event, estimated to cost Rs 100 crore, have been underway for months.

Government officials, led by Subdivisional Magistrate Vijay Vardhan, have deployed adequate police personnel to manage traffic and ensure smooth proceedings. This unique blend of devotion, tradition, and community spirit

underscores the enduring faith of the people in their deities.

"The Bhunda Mahayajna is being organized for the prosperity. People have great faith in the deity Bakralu Maharaj. These days there is a divine atmosphere in every house in the Spail Valley. CM Sukhwinder Sukhu will also participate in this event," he told IANS.

The conduit between the mortals and the deities are the "gur" - the traditional shamans, who form the core of the communities' spiritual sustenance.

The 'devtas' accept invites of their followers and move to various locations at their wish. Sometimes they decide to undertake a pilgrimage.

Some do so after one-two year, others do so after 30 to 40 years and some embark on special pilgrimages after hundreds of years.

As per old records, human sacrifice was historically associated with this ritual. Thankfully, such practices have been abolished, reflecting a shift in societal norms while preserving the essence of this remarkable tradition.

According to "A reference book on Kullu Devtas" compiled by the Kullu administration, there are 534 "live" gods and goddesses in the picturesque Kullu Valley. The book says the affairs of the Kullu gods are managed by the 'devta' committees that comprise a 'kardar' or

manager of the temple, the 'gur' or oracle, musicians and a priest.

The 'devta' summons the 'gur' and speaks through him.

The oracle goes into a trance and connects with the deity. The deity's wish spreads and its followers are ready to obey the sacred command. One member of each family has to join the deity's procession.

The book says the long and tough journeys are to be performed on foot. It takes days, even months. Strict rules and rituals have to be followed. The deity sets the time and pace of the journey. No one can lift the palanquin of the deity if he/she is not willing.

South Korea's Defence Minister meets US ambassador, reaffirms alliance

AGENCIES
SEOUL, JAN 2

South Korea's acting Defence Minister Kim Seon-ho held talks with US Ambassador to South Korea Philip Goldberg on Thursday and reaffirmed their steadfast bilateral alliance, Seoul's defence ministry said.

In the meeting held at the defence ministry in Seoul, both sides noted how the South Korea-US alliance remains strong despite changes in the security and political situation, the ministry said in a release.

Kim thanked the outgoing ambassador for his efforts to substantially advance the alliance since taking his post in July 2022 and asked for his continued support in improving the bilateral relationship, Yonhap news agency reported.

In response, Goldberg expressed his country's unchanged support for



the ironclad alliance, the ministry said.

Last month, Kim Seon-ho and US Indo-Pacific Commander Admiral Samuel Paparo had held discussions and stressed on the importance of trilateral security cooperation with Japan to deter North Korea's threats while vowing efforts to further strengthen such cooperation.

Kim and Paparo discussed the issue as they met at Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, 70 kilometers south of Seoul, on

the sidelines of a change-of-command ceremony marking the inauguration of new US Forces Korea Commander General Xavier Brunson on December 20.

In their meeting, both sides agreed that the South Korea-US alliance remains "ironclad," and vowed to bolster cooperation and communications to uphold it with an overwhelming combined defence posture, the ministry said.

For such a goal, they concurred on the need

to smoothly push ahead with pre-planned combined drills, Yonhap news agency reported.

Kim was quoted as saying that South Korea's external policy remains unchanged and emphasised that the military remains committed to maintaining a firm combined defence posture under the acting president.

The meeting was attended by Brunson as well as US Ambassador to South Korea Philip Goldberg and General Kang Shin-chul, Deputy Commander of the South Korea-US Combined Forces Command.

Brunson took office as the new commander of US Forces Korea (USFK) on the same day, vowing a continued commitment to upholding the South Korea-US alliance amid persistent threats by North Korea.

Brunson replaced General Paul LaCamera to lead the 28,500-strong Ameri-

can troops in South Korea in a change-of-command ceremony held at Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, 70 kilometres south of Seoul, attended by top officials from both nations, including acting Defence Minister Kim Seon-ho and US Indo-Pacific Command Commander Admiral Samuel Paparo.

As USFK commander, Brunson also serves as Commander of the South Korea-US Combined Forces Command (CFC) and the UN Command.

He emphasised the importance of the alliance as well as cooperation with the wider international community in maintaining "collective security" and a "rules-based international order" in responding to potential threats.

In his address, the new commander cited a Bible verse that goes: "One may be overpowered. Two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Investigators to execute warrant to detain South Korean Prez; concerns of potential clash grow

AGENCIES
SEOUL, JAN 2

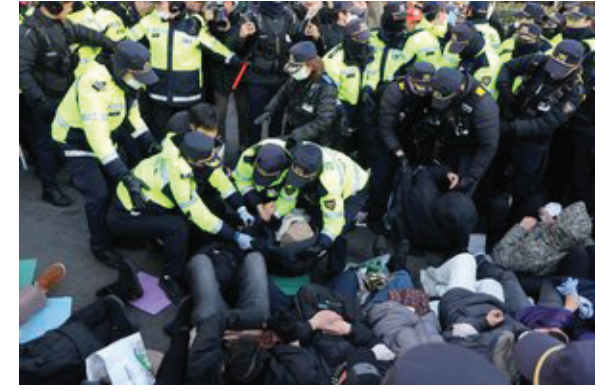
Concerns have grown over a potential clash if investigators proceed with a warrant to detain South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol as the impeached president has vowed to "fight to the end."

The state anti-corruption agency is likely to execute the warrant to detain Yoon as early as Thursday after the Seoul Western District Court granted it Tuesday over Yoon's short-lived declaration of martial law on December 3.

Yoon has become the first sitting South Korean president to face arrest.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) has since been making preparations to execute the warrant without major disruptions amid concerns that the presidential security service and Yoon's supporters may prevent it from doing so, reports Yonhap news agency.

Some 30 supporters were forcibly dispersed by the police after they



broke through a police barrier to protest outside the entrance of the presidential residence.

The supporters were carried away by their limbs, with some yelling the president's name.

Yoon sent a message of solidarity to supporters gathered outside his residence the previous day.

"Due to internal and external forces infringing on its sovereignty and the activities by anti-state groups, South Korea is now in danger," Yoon said in the message. "With you, I will fight to the end to protect this country."

Yoon's lawyer also claimed Thursday that if

police attempt to carry out the warrant on behalf of the CIO, the presidential security service would be able to arrest them on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of official duties.

Yoon's legal defence team has filed an injunction to suspend the warrant's effect, calling it "illegal."

The CIO requested the warrant after Yoon ignored all three summonses to appear for questioning as part of its joint investigation with the police and the defence ministry's investigation unit over the martial law bid.

Bangladesh court rejects ISKCON priest Chinmoy Krishna Das' bail hearing

AGENCIES
DHAKA, JAN 2

A Bangladesh court on Thursday rejected the bail plea of Chinmoy Krishna Das, a Hindu monk and spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammiti Sanatan Jagran Jote, also associated with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), during a hearing held under tight security, local media reported.

Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Saiful Islam rejected the bail plea after hearing arguments from both sides for around 30 minutes, said Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Advocate Mofizul Haque Bhuiyan to The Daily Star.

As many as 11 Supreme

Court lawyers, led by Apurba Kumar Bhattacharjee, represented the ISKCON priest in the high-profile sedition case.

Following the hearing, Chinmoy's lawyer, Apurba Kumar Bhattacharjee, said that they plan to appeal to the High Court for bail.

Arrested on November 25 from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on sedition charges, Das has remained in jail amid growing calls for justice.

The charges, filed against Das and 18 others, were linked to the hoisting of a saffron flag above the country's official flag during a protest rally on October 25 in Chattogram's Laldighi Maidan.

The bail petition, supported by 20 advocates

from Dhaka and Chittagong, highlights allegations of a false and fabricated case. Advocates argue that Das, suffering from health issues such as diabetes and respiratory problems, is being unjustly detained. His primary lawyer, Ravindra Ghosh, was previously barred from filing an anticipatory bail petition.

Earlier on December 11, a Bangladesh court rejected Das' initial bail plea, citing procedural lapses. Reports indicate that the absence of a valid power of attorney and lawyer representation led to the rejection.

The case took another turn when Subhashish Sharma, one of Das' lawyers, missed a December 3 hearing due to security concerns.

JAPAN'S LARGEST MOBILE CARRIER REPORTS SYSTEM GLITCH DUE TO CYBERATTACK

AGENCIES
TOKYO, JAN 2

Japan's NTT Docomo Inc. said Thursday it suffered a cyberattack that caused a website failure and some service disruptions, local media reported, following a series of similar incidents at major firms in the country recently.

Japan's largest mobile carrier said a system glitch started around 5:27 am local time, making it difficult to connect to services due to a distributed denial-of-service attack, in which networks are overwhelmed by data from multiple sources over a short period, Kyodo News reported.

The search function for the "d payment" smart-



phone payment service also experienced problems, although mobile phones and other communication services were not affected, the company added, Xinhua news agency reported.

Recently, a series of system failures believed caused by the same type of attack have hit Japanese

companies.

Japan Airlines experienced a problem with its system used by passengers to check in their baggage on December 26, while MUFG Bank, Mizuho Bank and Resona Bank reported disruptions to online transactions and other problems between late

December and Wednesday.

Last week, Japan Airlines (JAL) said many of its services were halted temporarily following a network disruption that caused problems with baggage check-ins and delays for more than a dozen flights at several Japanese airports.

The airlines had to eventually block the data transmission device that was causing the system failure.

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

The company said it was working to counteract the cyberattack and determine its source.

The rising dependence on increasingly complex and interconnected computer systems in most domains of life is the main factor that causes vulnerability to cyberattacks, since virtually all computer systems have bugs that can be exploited by attackers.

Although it is impossible or impractical to create a perfectly secure system, there are many defence mechanisms that can make a system more difficult to attack, making information security a field of rapidly increasing importance in the world today.

Maldives Foreign Minister to arrive in India today, meet EAM Jaishankar on Friday

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Khaleel will arrive in New Delhi Thursday evening on a three-day India visit during which he would also be holding discussions with External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar.

Khaleel was appointed as Maldives Minister of Foreign Affairs on September 30, last year by the country's President Mohamed Muizzu. Prior to the appointment, he was serving as the country's Minister of Health.

In the past, he has acknowledged that "significant contribution" to his tourist-dependent country's fast recovery from the Covid pandemic was from India.

In October, Khaleel also accompanied Muizzu on the "landmark" five-day State visit - the first by the Maldivian President since assuming office in November 2023.

This visit, he said, was defined by "insightful discussions" and deepened partnership, marking yet another milestone in the enduring friendship between Maldives and

India. "Our Commitment to further enhance the Maldives-India partnership remains unwavering, and I look forward to our promising future collaborations for the mutual benefit of our two nations and peoples," Khaleel posted on X on October 10 after the conclusion of the visit.

Both countries also adopted a 'Vision for Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership' which will guide the bilateral relationship across various sectors, during Muizzu's visit.

The Maldives President



had expressed gratitude to India for providing continuous financial assistance to the Indian Ocean archipelago during the "landmark" five-day state visit

to India.

During the visit, Muizzu held high-level meetings with President Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and several other

senior Indian government officials with discussions centering around strengthening the friendship and development partnership between the Maldives and India. During the high-level talks with PM Modi, Muizzu discussed ongoing initiatives and explored new avenues for cooperation.

Thanking India for its consistent support, especially during challenging times, Muizzu had also expressed gratitude for India's financial assistance, including the rollover of T-bills in May and in September 2024 for an addi-

tional year with no interest to the Maldives and the additional support of INR 30 billion to \$400 million under a bilateral currency swap agreement.

"In his remarks at the business forums held in New Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, Muizzu highlighted the Maldives' significant potential for tourism ventures and outlined opportunities for future collaboration. He emphasised the nation's vision for economic diversification and sustainable growth, mentioning key investment prospects such as special economic zones,

luxury private islands, eco-friendly resorts, and integrated tourism projects," his office stated.

Khaleel and EAM Jaishankar are expected to discuss progress in various spheres - including areas such as social housing, infrastructure development, agriculture and fisheries, trade and investment, human resource development, healthcare, women's empowerment, renewable energy, and maritime and security cooperation - when they meet at the Hyderabad House on Friday afternoon.

Second round of PTI-Pakistan govt talks to take place today in Islamabad

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD, JAN 2

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the government are set to engage in their second round of negotiations on Thursday, at the Parliament House in Islamabad.

This meeting follows a series of consultations within PTI to finalise their key demands.

The session, chaired by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, will take place in the Constitution Committee Room.

The talks, aimed at resolving ongoing political tensions, come as PTI



seeks to address critical issues, including the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the events of May 9 and November 26 and the release of political prisoners.

These demands have been prioritised by PTI in light of the prevailing political and social unrest in the country.

A spokesperson for the National Assembly confirmed that the meeting

time had been adjusted at the request of members, underscoring efforts to accommodate both sides and ensure productive discussions. The negotiations are being facilitated and spearheaded by Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, who has emphasised the importance of dialogue in finding a resolution to the impasse.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has reiterated his party's commitment to pursuing peaceful negotiations, though he signalled PTI's readiness to mobilise a protest movement should

the talks fail to yield results.

Speaking to a private news channel, Gandapur highlighted that PTI founder Imran Khan had authorised party leaders to engage in talks with the government solely in national interest.

He added that while PTI was willing to explore solutions through dialogue, the party would not hesitate to launch a movement if their demands were not met. "Our demands are clear: the formation of an independent judicial commission and the release of our leaders and political workers," Gandapur stated.

Tax evasion among self-employed foreigners on rise in Lithuania: Authorities

AGENCIES
VILNIUS, JAN 2

The number of self-employed foreigners avoiding taxes has been on the rise in Lithuania in recent years, according to the State Tax Inspectorate (VMI).

The majority of those failing to meet their tax obligations are taxi drivers and couriers, Xinhua news agency reported quoting local radio broadcaster LRT.

According to VMI data, in 2023 there were 15,800 foreigners in Lithuania

who registered their individual activity. Of these, 12,400 filed income tax returns, but 2,200 did not fulfill their tax obligations. A further 3,300 foreigners did not file value-added tax (VAT) returns, although they were obliged to do so.

While the VMI does not yet have data for 2024, data from previous years show that the number of foreigners in Lithuania who are both self-employed and do not pay income tax is increasing.

According to VMI, foreigners who avoid income

taxes most often work as couriers, taxi drivers, or in the fields of construction completion and finishing, as well as beauty services.

According to Piret Pert, Wolt's Communications Manager for the Baltic States, the company is providing monthly information to VMI on the income of all couriers, restaurants, and other traders operating through its food delivery platform.

"Therefore, VMI has up-to-date information on 100 per cent of the revenue generated through Wolt's platform.

Indian economy in robust spot globally in 2025 with high frequency indicators picking up growth

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

As 2025 begins on a note of heightened global uncertainties ahead of the US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, India continues to be in a much stronger position with high frequency indicators showing a pick up in the pace of growth in the third quarter of current fiscal (Q3 FY25), according to a report on Thursday.

GST collections, services purchasing managers' index (PMI), air passenger growth, and vehicle registrations saw a notable improvement in Q3 versus Q2, according to a Bank of Baroda (BoB) report.

On the other hand, in China, while the manufacturing sector is expanding slowly, lifting domestic consumption and reviving the real estate sector is proving to be a task for the administration.

The US economy is giving mixed signals



regarding growth. While the labour market appears to be softening and manufacturing activity is weak, retail sales, pending home sales, and the service sector seem to be doing well. In Europe, manufacturing activity is unable to pick up pace so far, while the service sector is regain-

ing ground. In India, the current account deficit (CAD) narrowed to 1.2 per cent of GDP in Q2 FY25 from 1.3 per cent of GDP in Q2 FY24.

"While the trade deficit was higher, buoyant services exports as well as continued strength in

remittances underscored the lower CAD. Our year-end market analysis shows that both Sensex and Nifty 50 surged by 8.7 per cent and 9 per cent in CY24. Sensex touched an all-time high this year as it breached the mark of 85,500," said Sonal Badhan, economist, Bank

of Baroda. Sectors including real estate, consumer durables, and IT were amongst the best-performing stocks in CY24. The Indian rupee depreciated by 2.8 per cent in 2024, but remained one of the better-performing currencies among its peers.

The pressure on yields was lower and boosted demand flow as the market witnessed the bond inclusion in the JP Morgan emerging market index, Bloomberg, and FTSE Russel.

According to the report, high frequency indicators have shown notable improvement in the October-December 2024 period. GST collections have jumped by 8.3 per cent (YoY) in Q3 to Rs 5.5 lakh crore, and are also up from Rs 5.3 lakh crore in Q2, signalling further improvement in consumption pattern.

Apart from this, helped by festive demand, other indicators of urban consumption have also improved. Air passenger traffic registered 11.6 per cent growth in Q3, compared with 7.8 per cent growth registered in Q2. Services PMI averaged 59.2 in Q3 versus 58.1 in the same period last year. "We expect quarterly corporate results to also show improved performance in Q3," said Badhan.

On the central bank actions, the report said growth is expected to recover in H2 FY25 and inflation abating, "we see a scope of 25 bps rate cut in February 2025. We expect a cumulative easing of 50-75bps in the current cycle"

Furthermore, with the expectation of a pick-up in government spending followed by improvement in both government and private investment in H2, the IIP growth will perform a lot better in H2 FY25 from H1 FY25, it noted.

IIT Madras, Agriculture Ministry to partner on project VISTAAR to empower farmers

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, JAN 2

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras on Thursday announced a collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare on Project VISTAAR, which seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the agricultural extension system through digitalisation.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed recently between the Agriculture Ministry and IIT Madras enables them to enrich the VISTAAR platform (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) with information about start-ups in the agriculture and allied sectors. This would enable farmers and other stakeholders in agriculture and allied sectors to be aware of the capabilities and offerings that startups have and easily access them. "Agricul-

ture forms the backbone of India's social and economic rubric. Ensuring a strong agriculture sector therefore becomes a major policy imperative. Start-ups have an important role to play in bringing innovation across the value chain in the agriculture and allied sectors," said Prof. Thillai Rajan A., Head, the Centre for Research on Start-ups, IIT Madras. "The startup information platform developed by the Centre for Research on Startups and Risk Financing at IIT Madras along with its incubatee startup YNOS Venture Engine has information about 12,000 start-ups that are connected to the agriculture and farming sectors. This collaboration would bring this rich information within the easy reach of the farmer and contribute to the effectiveness of extension services of the Department of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare significantly," Rajan added.

Indian Oil inks 30-year pact to operate fuel stations at Noida International Airport

AGENCIES
NOIDA, JAN 2

The Noida International Airport (NIA) has signed a 30-year concession agreement with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) to operate fuel stations at three key locations within the airport premises.

This collaboration will ensure uninterrupted access to high-quality fuelling services at the airport, supporting the Noida International Airport's vision of a seamless and efficient aviation hub, according to a company statement issued on Thursday.

The agreement encompasses the establishment and operation of three fuel stations by the country's biggest oil company.

These will be near the main western access road



for passengers, there will be one airside fuel station for airport operations, and near the eastern cargo precinct. The fuel stations will be designed to adhere to global standards of safety and operational excellence in line with NIA's vision of creating a world-class airport for Northern India.

Noida International Airport is scheduled to commence operations in 2025. Noida International

Airport CEO Christoph Schnellmann said: "Our collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd marks another milestone in NIA's journey to operational readiness. By partnering with one of India's most trusted fuel providers, we will ensure seamless and efficient fuelling services at the airport. This is a step forward in building Noida International Airport as the gateway to Northern India."

India's textile & apparel exports clock 7 pc growth at \$21.36 bn in April-October

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

India's overall export of textiles & apparel (including handicrafts) recorded a 7 per cent growth to \$21.36 billion during April-October of FY 2024-25, compared to the corresponding figure of \$20.01 billion for the same period of FY 2023-24, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Textiles on Thursday.

Ready-made garments (RMG) exports to the tune of \$8.73 billion, constituted the largest share of 41 per cent in India's total textile exports during April-October of FY 2024-25. Cotton textiles rank second in the export list with a 33 per cent share valued at \$7.08 billion followed by man-made textiles (15 per cent,



\$ 3.105 billion) during the 7-month period of the current financial year.

Major textile and apparel export destinations for India are the US and the EU with around 47 per cent share in total textile and apparel exports.

India is a major textile and apparel exporting country and enjoys a trade surplus. The bulk of the import in textiles takes place for re-export or for industry requirements of raw mate-

rial. Exports in FY 2024 were initially low mainly due to the geopolitical crises around the Red Sea, which affected ship movement during January, February, and March 2024.

Growth of exports is observed in all principal commodities during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25 compared to the corresponding period of FY 2023-24, except wool and handloom which

declined by 19 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, the statement said.

The overall import of textiles & apparel (including handicrafts) declined 1 per cent during the April-October period of FY 2024-25 (\$5.425 billion) compared to the same period of FY 2023-24 (\$5.464 billion)

The man-made textiles category with imports of \$1.86 billion has the largest share (34 per cent) in the total imports (\$5.43 billion) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, as there is a demand-supply gap in this sector, the statement said.

On the other hand, India's import of textiles and apparel products has decreased by approximately 15 per cent to \$8.946 billion during FY

2023-24 in comparison to the corresponding figure of \$10.481 billion in FY 2022-23.

Growth of imports is observed majorly in cotton textiles mainly on account of the import of long-staple cotton fibre and such trends of import indicate an increase in production capacity of the country amidst rising consumption and self-reliance, the statement added.

India stands as the 6th largest exporter of textiles & apparel in the world based on 2023. The share of textile and apparel (T&A) including handicrafts in India's total exports stands at a significant 8.21 per cent in 2023-24. The country has a share of 3.9 per cent of the global trade in textiles and apparel.

India's solar panel exports surge as world looks beyond China

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

India is emerging as a major exporter of solar photovoltaic (PV) cells as countries look for alternatives to China for sourcing supplies in their switch to renewable energy to fight climate change.

In April-October FY25, India exported \$711.95 million worth of PV cells assembled in modules or panels with 96 per cent of the shipments going to the US with the world's largest economy turning away from China. India also exported \$25 million of photovoltaic cells that were not assembled into modules in April-October FY25 with 90 per cent of the exports going to the US.

The US was also a key export market for Indian solar photovoltaic (PV) modules, accounting for more than 97 per cent



of the country's solar PV exports in both FY2023 and FY2024.

India is making significant progress in transitioning from a net importer to a net exporter of solar photovoltaic (PV) products, with the export value rising 23 times to \$2 billion in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 from FY2022, according to a report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial

Analysis (IEEFA) and JMK Research & Analytics.

"Focusing on the US market can benefit the Indian PV manufacturing ecosystem. The exposure to the US market will enable Indian PV manufacturers to attain economies of scale, ultimately enhancing their product quality and competitiveness," said the report's contributing author, Vibhuti Garg, Director - South

Asia, IEEFA.

"But, to truly establish India as a global manufacturing hub in the long run, Indian PV manufacturers must focus on upstream backward integration. This will help India maintain its foothold in existing markets while unlocking untapped markets like Europe, Africa, Latin America, etc," she added.

At the same time, the report also notes that it is important for PV manufacturers in India to balance the needs of the growing export market with domestic availability.

India's electronics sector is gaining prominence, with its share in the country's exports rising to 7.9 per cent in 2024 from 3.3 per cent in 2014 with solar panel exports also figuring as a major product along with smartphones in the overseas shipment consignments.

Electronics goods have

emerged as the fastest-growing segment in India's export basket as new manufacturing capacities have come up in the country driven by the success of the Centre's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

The PLI scheme and quick clearances by the government are proving to be a major success as global giants look beyond an alienated China for setting up alternative supply chains.

The country's electronic exports jumped by a robust 27.4 per cent to \$22.5 billion in April-November 2024-25, from \$17.66 billion during the same period in 2023-24.

Electronic goods have now moved up to the third position among the top performers in India's export sector, next only to engineering products and petroleum, from the sixth position last year.

Ambuja Cements-Adani merger receives no objection letter from stock exchanges

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, JAN 2

Ambuja Cements Ltd has received an observation letter with 'no objection' from the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and 'no adverse observations' from Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) with regards to merger with Adani Cementation Ltd.

The proposal for a merger between Adani Cementation and Ambuja Cements had received approval from the board in June 2024.

According to the stock exchange circular on January 1, "The Scheme remains subject to various statutory and regulatory approvals and of the respective shareholders and creditors (where applicable) of the companies involved in the scheme."



"Based on the draft scheme and other documents submitted by the Company, including undertaking given in terms of Regulation 11 of SEBI Regulations, 2015, we hereby convey our "No objection" in terms of Regulation 37 of SEBI Regulations, 2015, to enable the Company to file the draft scheme with NCLT," read the circular.

Adani Group's cement arm, Ambuja Cement, is poised for robust growth. The company has set an ambitious goal of reaching 140 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by 2028.

By this move, Ambuja Cements is set to boost efficiency, enhance competitive strength and simplify compliance processes. To achieve this target, Ambuja Cement acquired Orient Cement Ltd (OCL) at an equity value of Rs 8,100 crore in October last year. The company announced the acquisition of 46.8 per cent shares of OCL from its current promoters and certain public shareholders and the acquisition will be fully funded through internal accruals.

Ambuja, with its subsidiaries ACC Ltd, Penna Cement Industries Ltd and Sanghi Industries Ltd, has taken the Adani Group's cement capacity to 88.9 MTPA, with 20 integrated cement manufacturing plants, 20 cement grinding units and 12 bulk terminals across the country.

REALME 14 PRO SERIES 5G TO FEATURE WORLD'S FIRST TRIPLE FLASH CAMERA

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Smartphone cameras have become ubiquitous, transforming how we document and share our world. From capturing everyday moments to preserving breathtaking scenery,

these pocket-sized powerhouses play an increasingly vital role in our lives.

A great smartphone camera is a sophisticated interplay of several key elements: advanced sensors that capture more light and detail, high-quality lenses that shape and

focus the image, innovative features that expand creative possibilities, and intelligent software that processes and enhances the final result.

The pursuit of the perfect shot drives continuous innovation in mobile photography, pushing the

boundaries of what's possible and empowering us all to become better storytellers.

The realme 14 Pro Series 5G exemplifies this pursuit of photographic excellence. The device's camera system isn't just about taking pictures; it's

about unlocking a new level of visual storytelling. At the heart of this system lies a unique triple-reflection periscope telephoto lens, a feature rarely seen in its segment. This innovative technology shrinks the physics of long-range zoom, allowing you to cap-

ture distant details with remarkable clarity and precision. Complementing this groundbreaking lens is the world's first MagicGlow Triple Flash. This isn't your average flash; it's a portable professional lighting system, offering

adjustable brightness and color temperature to illuminate your subjects perfectly, regardless of the environment.

Whether you're shooting in the vibrant chaos of a dimly lit party or capturing the serene beauty of a twilight landscape, the

MagicGlow Triple Flash ensures your images are vibrant, detailed, and true to life.

This portable professional lighting system isn't affected by environmental interference, giving you consistent and reliable results every time.

ISL: Attacking NorthEast United FC takes on lacklustre Mohammedan SC

AGENCIES

GUWAHATI, JAN 2

NorthEast United FC will host Mohammedan SC in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium on Friday.

NorthEast United FC are enjoying a strong campaign, currently in the top half of the table, while Mohammedan SC are languishing at the bottom, having collected only six points from their 13 matches. The Highlanders enter this fixture buoyed by a commanding 3-0 victory over Mumbai City FC in their last game, while the visitors continue to struggle, with three consecutive away defeats.

This will be the second ISL meeting between the two sides and a win here will see the Highlanders complete a league double for the first time since the 2020-21 season.

The two teams present contrasting fortunes in the league. NorthEast United



FC have been effective in converting their big chances, scoring 15 goals from 27 such opportunities. Overall, the home team has netted (29) the most times in the competition this far. Mohammedan SC have struggled in front of goal too, and 16 of their 22 goals conceded have come in the second half of matches.

For NorthEast United FC, this is an opportunity to not let loose of the rhythm they have gotten after the massive win on the road against the Islanders. They will be hoping

to notch the maximum points in this encounter so that they move higher than the fourth spot that they occupy currently.

NorthEast United FC have excelled upfront, and Alaaeddine Ajaraié has been a key player in the attack, with 87 touches in the opposition box across 13 games, and registering 14 goals overall. He has been well supported by Guillermo Fernandez and Nestor Albiach too, both of whom have scored four goals each.

The Highlanders are determined to bounce

back at home after failing to score in their last home game.

They will look to avoid consecutive home-game goalless streaks, which last occurred between December 2019 and February 2020. In contrast, Mohammedan SC have conceded six goals in their last three matches.

Mohammedan SC have managed just one win in 13 games this season and are on the verge of matching Hyderabad FC's record (6 points in 14 games in 2019-20) for the lowest points tally after 14 games in ISL history.

Despite conceding the fewest first-half goals this season (6), Mohammedan SC have been vulnerable in the second half, as aforementioned, showing that the team could arguably do with some key defensive reinforcements as the game progresses so that they can upkeep the intensity of the matches and not succumb to late goal-scoring endeavours

by their opponents.

In their one previous encounter, NorthEast United FC emerged victorious with a narrow 1-0 win.

NorthEast United FC head coach Juan Pedro Benali opened up on the areas of the game he would want his team to sustain and improve in the coming matches this year.

"Our handling of pressure moments, focus, and the experience that we took are things we take into 2025. Now onwards, we need to try to be calmer too," Benali said.

Mohammedan SC head coach Andrey Chernyshov appreciated NorthEast United FC for their progress and success of late.

"NorthEast United FC did some great results last season and now they're in the top half of the table. They also won the Durand Cup and they're one of the best teams in the league now, as shown by their 3-0 win against Mumbai City FC," Chernyshov said.

Under PM Modi's guidance, para-sports is getting much-needed recognition: Para-athlete Praveen Kumar

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Para-athlete Praveen Kumar, who won the gold medal in the men's high jump T64 at the Paris 2024 Paralympics, expressed his delight on being honoured with the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award and said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, para-sports is getting much-needed recognition.

The 21-year-old Indian para-athlete cleared 2.08m, an Asian record, in the final for his second Paralympic medal. He won the silver medal at Tokyo 2020 with a clearance of 2.07m, which was also an Asian record three years ago.

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, para-sports is getting much-needed recognition. I am feeling honoured to be named Khel Ratna. I will continue to give my best in the major tournaments so that I can bring more laurels to the nation", Praveen told



IANS.

Besides Praveen, World Chess champion Gukesh Dommaraju and Paris Olympics medallists - Manu Bhaker (shooting), and Harmanpreet Singh (hockey) -- are to be conferred with Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award 2024 by President of India Droupadi Murmu at a specially organised function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 17.

Born in Govindgarh (Noida), Uttar Pradesh, Praveen achieved remarkable success on the international stage, notably becoming the youngest para-athlete to win a medal at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. His journey to become a para-athlete was fraught with challenges. Born with a short leg, he initially struggled

with feelings of inferiority compared to his peers. To combat his insecurity, he engaged in sports with friends and discovered a passion for volleyball.

However, his life took a pivotal turn when he participated in a high jump event at an able-bodied athletics competition, which exposed him to the possibilities available for athletes with disabilities.

Under the guidance of Satyapal Singh, a para-athletics coach who recognised Praveen's potential, he shifted his focus to the high jump. This decision proved fruitful, as he went on to win a gold medal at the Asian Para Games 2022, breaking the Asian record with a jump of 2.05 metres. In 2023, he won a bronze at the World Para Athletics Championship.

Praveen's previous accolades include a silver medal from the World Para Athletics Junior Championship in 2019 held in Nottwil, Switzerland, and a gold medal with an Asian Record at the World Para Athletics FAZZA Grand Prix 2021 in Dubai.

You cannot have a cushion for batting order in Tests, need specialists in side, says Ankola

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 2

An aspect which has caught the attention of Indian team on their ongoing tour of Australia has been the frequent changes in the playing eleven of their matches so far.

Be it the batting order change or having more all-rounders in playing eleven, thus increasing load of main bowlers and inability to take 20 wickets, India's playing eleven compositions in this Australia tour has been the topic of endless discussions.

Salil Ankola, who served as member of India men's team selection committee, believes one can't have a cushion for batting order in Tests, citing the longer format being suitable more for specialist players.

"Tests, ODIs and T20Is are different formats of the game. Like, there's a saying in English, horses for courses. When you're selecting team for a Test match, you have to have specialists in the side - like

the bowlers who are going to give you wickets, and the batters who are going to score runs."

"But if you're going to keep on selecting players and thinking about getting a cushion for batting order - like, you cannot have a cushion for batting. You have people who are supposed to score runs, and take wickets."

"It was surprising to see the team for the last match we played. There were Jadeja, Washington Sundar and Nitish Reddy - three all-rounders. The composition also makes you wonder like it is only for the cushion of the batting, so that we can get some runs."

"So, we have to sit down, get thinking hat on and see exactly where we are going wrong. In today's days, we have a lot of data on hand. We can use the data to our reference. Now with data, social media, and live television, everybody can see exactly what's going on."

"If you try to cushion anything, it doesn't work, especially in Test cricket.

In ODI, we need all-rounders, then in T20s, we need a lot of all-rounders," said Ankola in an exclusive conversation with IANS.

Barring Reddy, KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal, the rest of Indian batting card hasn't been heavily amongst runs, something which Ankola has taken note of. "We need batters to back the bowlers with some runs, then only things happen. We have seen Yashasvi score 80s in both the innings."

"But then he was not given proper support and Reddy, who is a new guy, goes out to get a hundred and, see he is more of a batting all-rounder, not a bowling all-rounder. So, you can't depend on him for bowling much. He will give you one wicket, and he has proven that by giving us breakthrough in one or two Tests."

"But he is not that express pace or something of the sort - just a leisurely 125-127 speed is there. Very good fielder, no doubt, and the hundred he made in Melbourne was simply



excellent. But then you have to send him above, you can't send him at number seven as it's not making sense. So, the composition of the playing XI and whole team also matters a lot in Sydney."

While advocating for Sarfaraz Khan and Dhruv Jurel to be given a look-in, Ankola wished for Indian batters to not play any rash shots in the Sydney Test, starting on Friday. "Sarfaraz and Dhruv are warming the bench, so it's about time (to play them). Dhruv has scored a lot of runs in pressure situations, and we have seen that. Sarfaraz has made 150 and he has

sat out from the matches now."

"We have seen that whenever Yashasvi also doesn't get runs, the whole batting order collapses. So, we have to have some people who get runs over there. It was very lucky that catches have been dropped of KL Rahul when he was batting. Everybody is doing the same kind of mistakes again and again (in terms of shot selection)."

"I mean, we have coaches like Gautam, Abhishek Nayar and Morne Morkel there. Bowlers are doing their job fantastically. But batters have to score, no?

If runs are not there, what will the bowler do? VK (Virat Kohli) has to get his thing right, he scored only one hundred. I look up to VK because I love to watch him bat. So, let's hope for the best, and hope we play cricketing shots."

Ankola believes India needs a good third and fourth fast bowler also to support Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj. "When the India A tour was touring in Australia, I think the highest wicket-taker was Mukesh Kumar (11 scalps). Surprisingly, he was not included and then we have Prasidh Krishna (10 scalps) over there, who is warming the bench."

Ankola, who played a Test and 20 ODIs for India, admitted to being upset over India's path for next year's World Test Championship final being out of their control, especially after losing 3-0 to New Zealand - their first-ever clean sweep defeat at home.

"We are playing a five Test match series after a long time, so, it's pretty hard on the boys also.

Who wouldn't want India to qualify for the WTC here? But the way things are going, if we are dependent upon us winning, then waiting for Australia to lose against Sri Lanka, then I don't think it works that way."

"The worst thing was to lose a series against New Zealand, as it's something which never happened before - the team coming in India and we losing to the touring side in Tests. I'm sure Sydney will test the mental strength of our guys, because Australians are going to go all out for tomorrow's game."

"I was hoping that Mitchell Starc would be unfit, because he was feeling his back the other day in the second innings in Melbourne. But no, he is playing and things would look very difficult if we don't score."

Apart from being 2-1 behind in the series and performances not being upto the mark, questions over the Indian team's smooth transition and unrest in dressing room

have made headlines too, and the need of the hour is for Indian cricket to rise above all the challenges it finds itself at the moment.

"We are all upset about the whole thing, because we have never lost the way we are losing. We have won in Australia the last time we went there, when Ajinkya was the captain - he captained and we won. So, it's not that we cannot do it. But the thing is, there has to be something. Like, I don't see people staying there to get runs."

"Every team goes through a lean patch and a makeover. At the moment, we are under that stage. Like Ashwin not being a part of the team anymore, so we have to see who steps in. It's not that we don't have guys who can take their place; we have got guys who can take their place."

"But what happens in the dressing room, that's a different thing. I mean, it should not be leaked out also, and it should not be discussed also by anybody from the side.

2025 U19 Women's T20 World Cup will drive more progress, says Snehal Pradhan

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 2

Snehal Pradhan, manager of women's cricket at the International Cricket Council (ICC), believes the upcoming edition of the 2025 U19 Women's T20 World Cup will be a major catalyst towards more progress for women's cricket worldwide. The upcoming 16-team tournament will be held from January 18 to February 2 in Malaysia, with India entering as defending champions after winning the inaugural edition in 2023 in South Africa.

"It was a fantastic success. It was very much a commitment to equity between the men's tournament and the women's tournament but also a leap of faith. Countries were still maturing in how developed their women's and junior pathways were so it was a chance to see the work that the countries have been putting in over the last few years."

"Having 16 teams was a fantastic starting point in the first place and this will drive more progress in those countries. The ambition was around



opportunity and quality. Having this Under-19 tournament meant there was parity between the men's and women's events," she said. "You had a men's and women's 50-over World Cup, a men's and women's T20 World Cup, and a men's and women's Under-19 World Cup as well. The fact that parity existed was a big statement."

"The other part was opportunity because the ambitions were that this tournament being in existence would drive change in member countries. It would build the junior pathways in those countries and that's exactly what we saw," said Snehal in a statement issued by the ICC.

The tournament was initially scheduled to be played in January 2021 in Bangladesh, but the

COVID-19 pandemic saw the tournament pushed to 2023, with South Africa being the venue. It meant the country hosted two women's events in the country, it was followed by the 2023 Women's T20 World Cup in February.

"It aligned that South Africa got the opportunity to host two back-to-back global women's events. That is probably a unique opportunity for the country. It created momentum with the Under-19 World Cup starting to create awareness around women's cricket in the country, which was capitalised upon with the Women's T20 World Cup that followed, which culminated in that sell-out crowd in Newlands, in a market where women's cricket had never been ticketed before."

"So, the whole thing

came together really well, even though it came together much later and in a different place than originally planned. I have to give credit to those who came before me at the ICC. The Under-19 tournament has been a discussion for a number of years and so many people, primarily our events team and the board who had the vision to commit to the tournament at this age, need to be acknowledged," added Snehal, who played six ODIs and four T20Is for India.

The 2023 U19 World Cup gave explosive opener Shafali Verma her first taste of captaining India to a first-ever world title in women's cricket alongside wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh. The tournament gave many a first chance to see Georgia Plimmer in action for New Zealand, who played a pivotal role in the senior team winning the 2024 Women's T20 World Cup in Dubai.

"The positioning of the tournament across men's and women's is future stars because this is a tournament that allows a number of players to make

their name at Under-19 level before going on to play high-level international senior cricket. This tournament provided an opportunity to give a few players who had already made their name in international cricket, a platform to really step up as senior players in the team."

"For someone like Shafali Verma, she got the chance to lead the team and get captaincy experience, which she wouldn't be close to at senior level, that was fantastic.

The fact that she was able to lead India to a first ICC trophy on the women's side was icing on the cake as far as the storyline. It's huge for the tournament to be able to produce stars but also have stars coming in."

"It's such a great story and probably a great advertisement of how important this tournament is in the pathway. It's fair to say that Georgia Plimmer, if she hadn't had the opportunity on the international stage that she got with New Zealand, may not have been fast-tracked into the senior team as quickly."

Shastri reflects on omitting Gill despite good form

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE, JAN 2

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri on Thursday strongly criticised the decision to omit Shubman Gill from the playing XI for the fourth Test against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Shastri highlighted Gill's impressive 2024 form, having scored 866 runs at an average of 43.3, including three centuries against England and Bangladesh.

"There's Shubman Gill, a player of his quality averaging over 40 in the year 2024 and not playing, which is a shame," Shastri said. "How can he be out of the XI is my question."

Despite these strong statistics, Gill has struggled overseas, with an average of just 23.8 since his 91 in the famous Brisbane Test of 2021, and has scored only one century, in Bangladesh.

Nevertheless, Shastri argued that Gill's performance in Indian conditions should have been enough to secure a place

in the team, especially given the struggles of India's top order.

India trail Australia 2-1 in the ongoing Test series following a dramatic 184-run loss in the fourth Test. India's collapse in the final session saw them lose seven wickets for just 34 runs after posting a competitive first-innings total of 369, in response to Australia's 474.

Despite the solid first-innings total, India's top-order woes continue, with key players failing to convert starts into substantial scores. Shastri made the case that a player averaging around 43-44 in 2024 should unquestionably be in India's best XI, especially in light of the team's batting inconsistency. He questioned the logic behind leaving out a player in such good form while the team grapples with batting issues.

In the Melbourne Test, India opted for a middle-order-heavy side, choosing all-rounders Washington Sundar and Nitish Reddy over Gill. However, the duo combined for only 27 overs with the ball, while Jasprit Bumrah

bowled 28.4 overs in the first innings.

Shastri expressed concern over the team's balance, asserting that if an extra bowler is included, they must be used effectively. He also voiced frustration over the selection process, noting that leaving out a quality batsman like Gill in favour of players who did not contribute significantly with the ball seemed counterproductive. The former coach called for greater scrutiny of team selection, particularly the decision to omit a player of Gill's potential and current form. He urged the team management to reconsider their approach and ensure that players in top form are given the opportunity to contribute.

With the series hanging in the balance, India will aim to bounce back in the final Test, set to begin on January 3 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. As the team strives to level the series, questions about team selection and balance are expected to remain central to the conversation.

Police Attaches Property of Drug Peddler Worth Lakhs Under NDPS Act In Srinagar

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 2

In yet another significant effort to curb the drug menace and dismantle illegal narcotic networks, Police in Srinagar has attached the property of a notorious drug peddler valuing at worth lakhs of rupees in Noorbagh area of Srinagar under the provisions of NDPS Act.

This stern legal action stems from case FIR No. 134/2024, registered against the drug peddler namely Mohd Irfan Sheikh son of Mohd Ashraf Sheikh resident of Pamposh Colony Palpora, under the jurisdiction of Police Post Noorbagh. During investigation, it came to fore that a huge quantity of narcotic drugs had been seized and the accused had acquired substantial property including a house and land through the proceeds of illegal drug trade. Adhering to relevant legal procedures, the property valued in lakhs (house and land) has been attached under the NDPS Act.

A series of strong legal actions by Srinagar Police is to convey a message to one and all involved in drug-related crimes that long arm of law would catch up with them sooner or later. Police targets not only offenders for the crimes they commit but also their unlawfully acquired assets would be attached and seized under law of the land.

Police yet again appeals to the general public to assist us in the fight against drug trafficking by sharing any relevant information. Together, we can work towards creating a safer, drug-free society.

Director Agriculture Jammu inaugurates first harvest of Shiitake Mushrooms

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 2

Director Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu S. Arvinder Singh Reen inaugurated the first harvest of the Shiitake mushrooms (Lentinula edodes), here today at the Shiitake lab of the Spawn Production Office, Krishi Bhawan.

Shiitake mushrooms, known for their rare medicinal properties including anti-cancer, immune-boosting, and anti-allergic effects, require a specialized cultivation environment. These mushrooms can only grow on sawdust blocks made from hardwood, with a cultivation cycle ranging from 120 to 180 days and a biological efficiency of 20-30% on a wet weight basis.

In his address, Director



S. Arvinder Singh Reen emphasized the immense potential of Shiitake mushroom cultivation as a high-value crop for Jammu and Kashmir. He stated that this initiative will not only foster employment generation but also open new avenues for startups, particularly among the region's unemployed youth. Additionally, the project supports the diversification of existing mushroom cultivation activities

within the UT.

The key raw material for Shiitake cultivation is sawdust, and Jammu and Kashmir is uniquely positioned to benefit from this, with its abundant supply of sawdust and Wooden Chips generated by the Jammu and Kashmir's cricket bat industry. Furthermore, the ideal temperature range of 20-28°C (68-82°F) for Shiitake growth is well-suited to the region's climate,

making it an ideal location for large-scale production.

The Directorate of Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu has successfully initiated the commercial cultivation of Shiitake mushrooms for the first time in the region. The Spawn Production Laboratory at Talab Tillo Jammu has successfully achieved spawn production and spawn run, following the protocols established by the Directorate of Mushroom Research, Chamba Ghat, Solan (H.P.). Additionally, 1,000 ready-to-fruit blocks have been procured from District Project Manager-JICA, ODA Palampur, and are being supplied to progressive mushroom growers and DCTCs across the Jammu Province to encourage commercial cultivation of Shiitake mushrooms. Fruit

initiation in these blocks has also been successfully achieved across the Jammu division.

The programme was attended by Deputy Director Central Dr. Ashwani Sharma, Agriculture Chemist Dr. Aman Jyoti Sharma, Spawn Production Officer Verinder Dogra, Mushroom Development Officer Raghuraj Pal Kochar, SMS-RL Dharmesh Vaid, SMS-SDL Kewal Krishan Sharma, along with the staff from the Spawn Production and Mushroom Development Offices.

This groundbreaking project is poised to pave the way for sustainable agricultural practices, increased employment opportunities, and a prosperous future for the mushroom cultivation industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

Amidst inclement weather, DC Kupwara deputed officers to review health facilities, conduct market checking



J I NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, JANUARY 2

In view of the continued cold weather following snowfall, Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan, deputed Tehsildar Zachaldara, to conduct inspection of hospitals within the territorial jurisdiction of Tehsil Zachaldara.

During the inspection, Tehsildar Zachaldara interacted with patients, hospital staff, and administrators to assess the quality of healthcare services being provided.

He enquired about the availability of medical

facilities, equipment, and essential medicines, ensuring that patients receive comprehensive healthcare services.

Similarly, following the directions of the Deputy Commissioner, Tehsildar Handwara, along with the Revenue team conducted market checking in Handwara on Thursday.

During the inspection, Tehsildar Handwara visited various markets to inspect the rates of essential commodities.

Throughout the drive, erring shopkeepers were fined on the spot and directed to keep fresh vegetables available in the market.

DC Kupwara takes detailed tour of Lolab sub division

J I NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, JANUARY 2

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today held a detailed tour of Lolab sub division and took stock of the arrangements for conduct of the Lolab Snow Festival and other functioning of essential services after recent snowfall.

SDM Lolab, Javid Masoodi and Tehsildar Sogam accompanied the Deputy Commissioner.

During the tour, the Deputy Commissioner visited Kariwan Dever where Snow Festival by District Administration is scheduled to be held.

She inspected the facilities to be provided to the people who will visit the place during the snow festival and directed the concerned officers to ensure fool proof arrangements in place so that the visitors will enjoy the different activities during the festival.



Talking to media persons, the Deputy Commissioner appealed the people to come in large number to enjoy the scenic beauty of Lolab during the Snow Festival adding that the District Administration Kupwara has made adequate arrangements to make the Festival more vibrant and successful.

She also inspected the snow clearance operation going on major roads of Lolab sub division.

The Deputy Commissioner also paid a sur-

prise visit to Sub District Hospital Sogam during which she inspected the functioning of all sections of the hospital which include OPD, IPD, Dialysis Unit, Labour Room, USG, X-Ray, Jan Aushadi Store, Pharmacy, Ophthalmology and Dental Section.

She interacted with the patients and attendants and enquired about the services provided by the Hospital.

The DC also interacted with the Doctors and Paramedical staff and enjoined

upon them to ensure seamless functioning of the hospital so that the people living in far flung areas of Lolab sub division do not face any inconvenience in getting proper healthcare services.

She also enquired from the BMO regarding the availability of essential drugs and was informed that sufficient stock of drugs are available in the hospital to cater the needs of the patients.

The Deputy Commissioner on her visit to Kariwan Dever, inspected newly established Receiving Station Diver while she got feedback from the concerned officials regarding the power supply schedule to different areas falling under the Receiving Station. She directed the officials to ensure adherence to curtailment schedule so that the people are provided electricity as per schedule.

J I NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 2

In a significant step towards ensuring welfare for orphaned children, District Magistrate (DM) Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan chaired a meeting of the Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC) today. The meeting focused on deliberations and approvals of new cases under the welfare schemes aimed at providing financial support to orphans.

The Committee approved 23 new cases, taking the total number of beneficiaries under these schemes to 223, against a target of 201. The committee had earlier approved 200 cases following a meticulous verification process.

The focus of the discussion revolved around saturating the target and ensuring that no eligible child is left out of the benefits provided under these



schemes.

The Sponsorship and Foster Care Schemes, implemented under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), aim to provide financial assistance to children in need of care and protection. The Sponsorship Scheme provides monetary support to families or guardians to ensure proper upbringing of children, while the Foster Care Scheme allows children to live with foster families, ensuring a nurturing environment for their holistic development.

DM Kishtwar emphasized the importance of achieving 100% saturation of the target to extend the benefits of these schemes to all eligible orphans in the district. He directed the committee to ensure

the inclusion of every orphan in Kishtwar under the schemes and instructed for robust verification to eliminate any discrepancies.

Besides the participants discussed strategies for effective implementation and evolving workable follow-up mechanisms for the schemes. The committee decided to streamline the application process further and ensure timely disbursement of benefits.

The meeting was attended by the District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) Zubair Ahmed, Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), and other committee members. Representatives from stakeholder agencies and NGOs orphanages in the district were also present.

Kathua Admin launches free Hearse Van service

J I NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, JANUARY 2

The District Administration Kathua has launched a free-of-cost hearse van service provided to administration by Chenab Textile Mills under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. The noble initiative aims to provide dignified last rites to the deceased by ensuring hassle-free and respectful transportation of the deceased to the cremation ground.

The hearse van service was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Rakesh Minhas in the presence of ADC Ranjit Singh besides Executive President of Chenab Textile Mills Umesh Gupta and other district officials. The service will be available through the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) during office hours within the Municipal limits of Kathua wherein people can make calls and coordinate the services on a First-Come-First-Served (FCFS) basis.

The District Administration Kathua expressed its gratitude to the management Chenab Textile



Mills for its generous contribution towards the noble cause. This initiative will provide immense relief to the families of the deceased, ensuring a dignified and respectful last ritual.

The public can utilize this free service by contacting the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) at 01922238796 and 7889958093. The District Administration Kathua has appealed to the public to take advantage of this service and support this noble initiative.

The DC, while speaking on the occasion, appreciated the noble gesture of Chenab Textile Mills for providing the Hearse Van service under their CSR initiative. He stated that this initiative will provide immense relief to the families of the deceased, ensuring a dignified and respectful farewell. The

Deputy Commissioner assured that the District Administration will ensure seamless coordination and smooth operation of the service, and appealed to the public to utilize this free service and support this noble initiative.

The hearse van service will be operated by the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Kathua, through the Red Cross Fund. To ensure the sustainability and expansion of this noble initiative of the administration, the philanthropic individuals and organisations willing or desirous to make contributions can contribute to this humanitarian cause by making donations to the District Red Cross Fund, Kathua, which will be utilized exclusively for the operation and maintenance of the hearse van service.

Jal Shakti Minister inspects Rangil WTP; reviews functioning



J I NEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 02

Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, today inspected Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Rangil in Ganderbal to take stock of its functioning.

The Minister inspected various units of the plant and enquired about their operational status. He took stock of water supply to households, storage capacity, water reservoirs, pump room and water testing laboratories. He was informed that the water treatment plants at Rangil feed portable drinking water to a large population of Srinagar city, Ganderbal district and few areas of Baramulla district.

While inspecting the 20 million gallons per day (MGD) and 10 MGD reservoirs at Rangil, Javed Rana maintained that nature

has gifted the valley with abundant water resources and it is our prime duty to protect and keep them pollution free.

While sharing suggestions for further improvement, Rana urged upon the officials to carry out regular inspection of water tanks. He asked them to keep the surroundings of Rangil WTP clean from any possible contamination of water. He stressed upon the concerned officials to ensure that quality water is supplied to the consumers besides regular water tests are done.

Javed Rana enjoined upon the officers to expedite the work on 5 MGD filtration plant, while maintaining set quality parameters, which will further boost the carrying capacity of the Rangil plant.

Appreciating the work of the officers of Jal Shakti

department, the Minister further emphasised on efficient water supply management and clean, safe drinking water supply to every household. He said that the government is committed to provide drinking water tap connections to every household under the Jal Jeevan Mission. Chief Engineer Jal Shakti Department, Kashmir, Braham Jyoti Sharma, presented a brief about the functioning of both 20 MGD and 10 MGD WTPs and the future plans. He apprised the Minister that the water treatment plant assumes huge significance as it feeds potable drinking water to various habitations of Srinagar, Ganderbal and Baramulla districts. He also said that work is in progress on the 5 MGD water filtration plant and steps are afoot to complete it within the stipulated timeframe.

Awareness program on cleanliness held in Doda town



J I NEWS SERVICE
DODA, JANUARY 2

The District Administration and Municipal Council Doda, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh organised an awareness program to educate residents of Sadiqabad Mohalla, Ward No 8 about cleanliness and waste disposal.

The program was attended by ACR Sunil Kumar Bhutyal; Tehsildar Dr. Subuh Ahmed Shad; EO MC, Ravi Kumar along with sanitation workers, NGOs, and community members.

The officials and NGOs actively interacted with the public, emphasizing the importance of maintaining cleanliness and proper waste disposal. Sanitation workers carried out cleaning drives, including clearing drains and other areas, setting a practical example for the residents.

During the interaction, officers and NGOs urged people not to throw garbage in drains or on roads. Instead, they encouraged residents to use dustbins within their homes and dispose of waste responsibly.