

**JANSAMPARK**  
PRINTING PRESS

BYE PASS SIDHRA, JAMMU  
Mob. 9419104223

**DENGUE WARNING SIGNS**

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

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

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

# JINDRAH IMAGES

DAILY | JAMMU | VOL NO: 12 | ISSUE NO: 4 | PAGES: 12 | PRICE: Rs 2/- | RNI NO: JKENG/2013/49471 | POSTAL REGD. NO. L-29/JK-497/25-27 | dailyjindrahimages.com/Epaper.php | jindrahimages123@gmail.com

## PM Modi likens AAP to 'Aapda' for Delhi, calls for its defeat in polls

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday slammed the AAP as an "aapda" for Delhi, saying this "aapda" has taken the national capital in its grip in the past 10 years.

Addressing people after launching a slew of infra projects in the national capital, including in housing and education sectors, he hit out at the city government led by AAP and said the situation in the national capital would worsen if its reign continued.

On the one hand, the Centre

is making a lot of efforts; on the other, the Union Territory government stands for brazen lies, he said, accusing the AAP government of committing corruption in a host of sectors ranging from school education to fighting pollution and liquor trade.

With the assembly elections set to be held in the city next month, the prime minister said Delhi had launched a war on this "aapda (disaster)" and decided to get rid of it.

"This year will usher in a new politics of nation-building and people's welfare. Therefore, 'aapda' has to be

removed and the BJP brought in," he said.

Due to the city government not allowing the Centre's signature health insurance scheme, Ayushman Bharat, and other programmes in the national capital, Modi said he was unable to help the people living here fully despite his efforts.

If highways are being built in the capital and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has been able to make houses for the poor, it is because "aapda" does not have much role in these sectors, he added.

Taking a swipe at former

Delhi chief minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal, Modi said he could also have built a "sheesh mahal" for himself but his dream was to ensure homes for everyone in the country.

"These people commit corruption and then glorify it," he said, accusing AAP of shamelessness and making false promises.

The BJP has been targeting Kejriwal for allegedly spending a huge amount of money on his official residence when he was chief minister, and described his erstwhile home as "sheesh mahal".



### GOC 16 Corps reviews security in Poonch, Rajouri

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 03

The General-Officer-Commanding, White Knight Corps also known as 16 Corps, Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva on Friday visited the forward posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch and Rajouri districts of Jammu and Kashmir and reviewed security and operational preparedness.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

### Over 400 arrested in bovine smuggling cases in Jammu last year: Police

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 3

Police arrested 408 people in connection with bovine smuggling in Jammu district last year.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

### 2 J&K teachers to receive national award

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JAN 3

Two teachers from Jammu and Kashmir have been selected to receive National award which will be conferred to them in New Delhi.

The teachers to be awarded are Rehana

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## Normalcy not fully restored in Jammu and Kashmir: Omar Abdullah

AGENCIES  
SRINAGAR, JAN 3

A day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated that the Centre has ended terrorism and the terror ecosystem in Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said that the normalcy has not been fully restored in Jammu and Kashmir.

Talking to the reporters here, Omar, according to the news agency, said, "I do not want to say anything on that

(Union Home Minister's statement). (But), today also, reports come from some places when attacks take place. Normalcy has not been fully restored in Jammu and Kashmir even today. It is a process and we will have to see what happens in the coming days."

GOVT READY TO TACKLE WEATHER VAGARIES

Meanwhile, in wake of



the prediction that Jammu and Kashmir may receive yet another spell of major snowfall on Saturday, the Chief Minister reviewed the preparations and assured that the government was ready to tackle the weather vagaries.

"The last spell of snow provided us with an experience. Wherever the work was good it will be repeated. Wherever there were shortcomings that

will be taken care of this time. We have held several meetings to ensure that people don't face any inconvenience," Omar said.

Replying to a query about the prevailing electricity scenario, the Chief Minister said, "This year's situation is better than the previous years, but power cuts take place, we are trying to provide the electricity as per schedule. Whenever

a system develops any snag, every attempt is made to rectify the fault at the earliest."

NO PROPOSAL TO CHANGE KASHMIR NAME

Asked about the reports that the name of Kashmir may be changed to Kashyap, Omar said, "There is no such proposal and no one can change J&K's name without the government's consent. Some media outlet ran it but then corrected it."

Pertinently, Union Home Minister, Amit Shah on Thursday described Kashmir as the land of Kashyap Rishi saying that it's an inseparable part of India's soul.

Shah, while addressing a gathering in New Delhi after launching a book "Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh: Through the Ages" had said, "There is every possibility that Kashmir may have been named after Kashyap Rishi."

## Shah chairs 7th meeting of Island Development Agency



AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday chaired the 7th meeting of the Island Development Agency (IDA) here.

During the meeting, Shah reviewed the progress of ongoing development initiatives in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, an official statement said.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration and Lakshadweep Administration made comprehensive presentation on various development projects, including enhancements in digital connectiv-

ity, air connectivity, and port development.

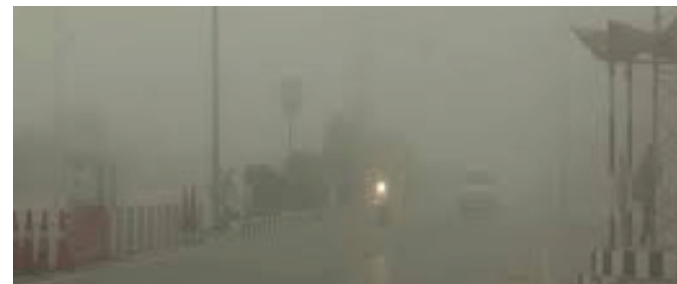
The Home Minister underscored the importance of advancing solar and wind energy initiatives in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

He emphasised achieving the goal of 100 percent renewable energy generation through solar panels and windmills in these regions.

Shah also directed the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) to implement the 'PM Surya Ghar' scheme by installing solar panels in all households across both island groups.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## Dense fog envelops Kashmir as J&K braces for 3-day wet spell



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JAN 03

Dense fog engulfed Kashmir

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir and other parts on Friday ahead of

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## Katra-Srinagar train likely to chug after Jan 20

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JAN 03

The Katra-Srinagar train is likely to chug on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) after January 20.

Officials told the news agency that final preparations are being made to connect Kashmir with Kanyakumari through a railway network.

In connection with train to Kashmir the Railway Ministry has decided to set up a new division with headquarters at Jammu under the Northern



Railway Zone by reorganising the Firozpur division.

The Jammu division, according to the officials, is pro-

posed to have five sections – Pathankot-Jammu-Udhampur, Srinagar-Baramulla, Bhogpur Sirwal-Pathankot, Batala

(excluding)-Pathankot, and Pathankot-Joginder Nagar. The combined length of the section will be 742.1 km.

According to railway officials, there are currently 68 rail divisions under 17 railway zones and Jammu will become the 69th division.

Meanwhile, Northern Railway on Friday announced train timings for the Katra-Srinagar route.

According to the timing schedule, the Vande Bharat Express train will depart

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## 'Aspirational District' concept inspired by commitment to ensure equitable development: Dr Jitendra Singh

AGENCIES  
ANDHRA PRADESH, JAN 3

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh said here today that the "Aspirational District" concept of the Modi Govt is inspired by the commitment to ensure equitable development of every district and also every region of India.

On the third day of his three-day visit to Kadapa, the Minister was conducting a detailed review of the Aspirational District Program and interacted with local MLAs and elected representatives to discuss the program's progress and strategies for further implementa-



tion.

The Minister emphasized the critical role of the Aspirational District Program in fostering inclusive growth and urged the representatives to collaborate with the central government to transform

Kadapa into a leading aspirational district. He underlined the significance of actively engaging citizens to maximize the benefits of key central schemes.

Dr. Jitendra Singh highlighted the impact of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, which provides comprehensive health insurance coverage, especially for those above 70 years of age. He stressed the importance of ensuring the scheme reaches every eligible beneficiary.

He also called for prioritizing the preparation of updated census lists to ensure accurate identification of beneficiaries

for various welfare programs. Referring to the Pradhan Mantri Suryaghar Yojana, the Minister explained how promoting solar energy solutions could empower rural households by reducing energy costs and advancing sustainability.

The Minister further discussed the success of the PM-KISAN Samman Nidhi, which has offered financial stability to small and marginal farmers, bolstering agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. He also outlined the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM Vishwakarma) scheme, designed

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## BJP leader's son shot at in Jammu; Manhunt launched to nab accused

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 03

Unknown person on Friday shot at and injured the son of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader in Jammu district, officials said on Friday.

As per details available with the news agency, Kanav Sharma, son of veteran BJP leader Chander Mohan Sharma was shot at near PDD office, situated at New Plots area of Jammu city.

Kanav Sharma had some verbal exchange with PDD officials over some issue following which one of the persons

opened fire at BJP leader's son, who is also District President of BJYM Jammu unit.

The injured has been rushed to Government Medical College (GMC) and Hospital where his condition is stated to be stable.

Speaking to media outside Hospital, Chander Mohan Sharma claimed that a PDD employee fired at his son with a personal pistol and managed to run away from the spot, adding that his son was stable.

"My son parked his car at PDD Office and the persons inside thought that someone came to check them and they

started fighting with him while one of them opened fire at him and also managed to flee away," BJP leader Chander Mohan Sharma told media persons outside the hospital.

He said police have taken necessary action and started an investigation into the matter.

Sharing details, he said two bullets were fired at his son but his condition is stable.

Meanwhile, a police official said that preliminary investigation suggest that the accused is PDD employ and a massive manhunt has been launched to nab him.

## Sakeena Ito reviews functioning of HME Deptt in Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian districts

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
ANANTNAG, JANUARY 3

Minister for School Education, Higher Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Ito, today convened a review meeting at Khanabal to assess the functioning of Health and Medical Education (HME) department in the districts of Anantnag, Kulgam and Shopian.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Anantnag Syed Fakhruddin Hamid, Director of Health Services Kashmir, Principal Government Medical College Anantnag, Coordinator of GMCs, Chief Medical Officers of three districts, Medical Superintendents, Block Medical Officers, representatives from the Health and Medical Education Department and other senior officials from

the districts.

During the meeting, Principal GMC Anantnag and Chief Medical Officers of the districts presented detailed updates on the health infrastructure through PowerPoint Presentations.

The Minister was apprised of ongoing projects being executed under various schemes and informed that most of the construction works are on track for timely completion.

Addressing the officers, Sakeena Ito directed them to expedite the pace of works for completion of under construction health facilities while ensuring adherence to modern healthcare standards. She laid special emphasis on upgrading infrastructure at primary, secondary and tertiary care hospitals across the three districts. She was informed that all



essential facilities including ambulances, equipment and medicines are available in all the hospitals.

The Minister urged for uninterrupted supply of diagnostic tools, advanced medical equipment and life-saving drugs. She emphasised on filling vacant positions of doctors, nurses and paramedics to address staffing shortage in both urban and rural healthcare centers.

She underscored the need for robust preven-

tive healthcare programs including maternal and child health initiatives, immunisation drives and nutritional campaigns. She directed for implementation of telemedicine services in remote areas to improve healthcare accessibility, strengthening of ambulance network and emergency response systems to ensure prompt attention to critical cases.

The Minister also directed the executing agencies to complete construction of PHC Pahalgam well before the commence-

ment of SANJY 2025. She also called for robust monitoring mechanism to ensure regular evaluation of health institution performance and accountability at all levels.

Reiterating government's resolve to provide quality healthcare services, Sakeena Ito stated, "the public has immense trust in the medical fraternity and it is our responsibility to uphold their faith through dedication, commitment as well as provision of better healthcare services".

The Minister encouraged all the stakeholders to work collaboratively to ensure successful implementation of policies aimed at improving the health and well-being of the population. She also instructed the officers to submit periodic progress reports of several ongoing projects.

## DLSA Srinagar organizes special Lok Adalat for Bank cases

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 3

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar, organized a Special Lok Adalat for Bank cases at the District Court Complex, Mominabad, Srinagar.

The Lok Adalat, aimed at amicably resolving Bank cases, which was held under direction of Jaffer Hussain Beg, Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority (Principal District & Sessions Judge) Srinagar, and under the supervision of Nusrat Ali Hakak, Sub-judge/ Secretary DLSA Srinagar.

To facilitate the amicable settlement of cases, one bench was constituted for the said Special Lok Adalat, which was presided over by Kusoom Lata Pandita, Additional District & Sessions Judge, Bank Cases, Srinagar and



Massarat Jabeen, PT&E Magistrate.

The bench settled the maximum number of cases, marking a significant achievement in promoting peaceful and quick resolutions for Bank matters. This initiative not only provided justice to the parties involved but also highlighted the advantages of settling disputes through Lok Adalats.

The Lok Adalat witness the active participation from the legal fraternity, Officers & Officials of Banks and litigants alike.

By organizing Lok Adalats, DLSA Srinagar continues its mission to provide equitable access to justice for all, ensuring that litigants can resolve their disputes quickly and amicably without the prolonged procedures typically associated with conventional courts.

Overall 43 number of cases was taken up for settlement out of which 12 number of cases were amicably settled & Rs. 9002065 was awarded as settlement amount in Bank Cases.

## First ever National Integration Camp held at PSPS GCW, Gandhi Nagar

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 3

The first ever "All Women NSS National Integration Camp (NIC), 2025" was organized here today under the aegis of Higher Education Department, on the theme "Women Empowerment and Emancipation" symbolizing "Nari Shakti" at PSPS, GCW, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu.

Additional Chief Secretary, Higher Education, Shantmanu, inaugurated the event which was jointly organized by National Service Scheme (NSS), Government College for Women, Parade and Padma Shri Padma Sachdev Government PG College Gandhi Nagar, Jammu.

VC Cluster University of Jammu, Professor KS Chandra Sekar, was the guest of honour on the occasion.

The National Integration Camp is an annual event conducted as a part of National Service Scheme (NSS) to promote national unity, communal harmony and inclusive spirit among the youth of India. This mega event brought together participants from

diverse cultural, linguistic and geographical backgrounds, highlighting the country's rich diversity and collective identity. Nearly, 25 NSS Programme Officers, 200 NSS volunteers and 18 contingents participated in the NIC Camp.

In his inaugural address, Shantmanu emphasized the importance of national integration and youth empowerment in strengthening the nation. He stressed that NSS encourages individuals to actively participate in various initiatives that address the pressing needs of the society. Whether, it be through education outreach, environmental conversation, or health awareness campaigns, their involvement has the potential to make a profound impact, he added.

State SNO, Director Colleges, Dr. Sheikh Ajaz Wazir, stated that NSS has been a beacon of aspiration, creativity and service in our community and it is a platform that embodies the spirit of selfless service among the youth. "Service to humanity is a calling that transcends boundaries, be it social, economic or geographical.

NSS Volunteers represent the very best of our youth their compassion, hard work and commitment in making a meaningful life of others", he asserted.

NSS Camp Commandant, Dr. Gurpreet Kour, gave a brief introduction about the NSS NIC Camp 2025.

Present on the occasion were Dr. Rashmi Singh, Resident Commissioner J&K Government, New Delhi, Professor L K Magotra, Chairman Governing body, GCW, Parade Ground, Jammu, Colonel Munish Jasrotia, Commanding Officer, 2J&K Girls Battalion, NCC, Principals, Deans & NSS PO's of all the Colleges of Jammu Division and Members of Advisory Committee of NSS NIC.

The event witnessed cultural performances that showcased various regional dances and songs, celebrating India's diversity.

Professor K S Chandra Sekar, said that NSS embodies the spirit of selfless service, fostering not only individual growth but also community development.

Nodal Principal, Jammu Division, Dr. S P Saraswat, Principal PSPS, GCW, Gandhi Nagar presented

vote of thanks.

Meanwhile, an orientation program on National Integration and NSS was held which included discussions and lecture by Dr. Hema Gandotra, working as an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Jammu University. She said that NSS plays a crucial role in shaping the character of students while contributing to the social and economic development of communities across India.

Dr. Rashmi Singh, Resident Commissioner J&K Government, New Delhi, said that in today's world, where challenges such as inequality, climate change and public health crisis loom large, the role of NSS becomes all more imperative. NSS Volunteers involvement in various social programs, community development projects, and awareness campaigns fosters a sense of responsibility and instills values that help to shape a better society. In the Cultural evening at PSPS GCW Gandhi Nagar, Jammu the participants came together to celebrate Unity in Diversity, fostering camaraderie and cultural exchange among the attendees.

## DC Bandipora reviews MGNREGA convergence Plan for 2024-25

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
BANDIPORA, JANUARY 3

The Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, convened a meeting on Friday to review the Convergence and Action Taken Reports (ATRs) under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for the financial year 2024-25. The meeting also deliberated on formulating the convergence plan for 2025-26.

On the occasion, threadbare discussions were held on fostering interdepartmental collaboration and optimizing resource utilization to enhance the implementation of MGNREGA projects across the district.

DC emphasized the importance of aligning departmental efforts to achieve tangible outcomes under MGNREGA. He stressed integrating livelihood, conservation, and developmental objectives to ensure projects



address community needs while promoting sustainable development.

The ongoing initiatives under MGNREGA for the current year were also reviewed. DC directed concerned officers to expedite pending works while maintaining quality standards.

Specific instructions were issued to ensure proper documentation and the timely submission of progress reports.

Additionally, M.A Qadri instructed officers to draft a comprehensive convergence plan for 2025-26.

He said, the plan should leverage the strengths of various departments to maximize impact and foster holistic development across the district.

The meeting was attended by District Programme Officer (ICDS), Yaar Ali Khan, ACD, Irfan Bahadur, Chief Planning Officer Mohammad Maqbool Lone, DFO, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, and other officers and representatives from relevant departments.

## District Ramban reinforces services, safety apparatus amid inclement weather alert

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
RAMBAN, JANUARY 3

In view of the weather advisory issued by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), forecasting significant rainfall and snowfall in coming days, the District Administration Ramban, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, has put essential services departments on high alert to ensure public safety and uninterrupted services.

The administration has appealed to the public to adhere to safety guidelines issued by the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) and avoid unnecessary travel during this period to minimize disruptions and ensure safety.

Departments including Revenue, PWD (R&B), PWD (Mechanical Engineering), PMGSY, Urban Local Bodies, JPDCL, Jal Shakti, and Health & Medical Education have been directed to maintain readiness for snow clearance, meeting medical emergency and provide related logistical support. Field staff from these departments have been instructed to remain stationed at their respective headquarters for immediate assistance.

The District Emergency Operation Centre (DEOC) located in the DC Office will be operational 24x7 to address emergencies and provide assistance. The public can reach for support through the helpline numbers: 01998-295500 / 01998-266790. The Deputy Commissioner urged residents to cooperate with authorities, prioritize safety, and limit outdoor activities during adverse weather conditions. Essential services and emergency response teams are on standby to mitigate any challenges during this period.

## DC Ganderbal for effective implementation of COTPA Act



stakeholders for effective implementation of the COTPA Act, 2003, across the district to curb tobacco use.

He also stressed to Promote and declare more institutions, villages, and workplaces as tobacco-free zone, thereby fostering a healthier environment.

The meeting concluded with a strong commitment from all stakeholders to intensify their efforts and ensure timely reporting and monitoring of progress under the NTCP.

The meeting was attended by various stakeholders, including EO Municipal Council Ganderbal, MS District Hospital, DySP HQ, Food Inspector, Assistant Information Officer, Officials from Education and Sales Tax Departments.

of DC Office.

During the meeting, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Dr. Bashir Ahmad Khan, Ganderbal delivered a comprehensive presentation highlighting provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003.

He highlighted the strategies for establishing Tobacco-Free Institutions, Villages, and Workplaces.

He emphasized to promote and declare more

institutions, villages, and workplaces as tobacco-free zones.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC emphasized the need for coordinated and sustained effort to make Ganderbal a model district in effective tobacco control. He urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards achieving the goal of a Tobacco-Free Ganderbal.

The DC issued the several directions to all

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 3

A review meeting of the District-Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) under the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Shyambir to review and assess the implementation of tobacco control measures across the district here in the V.C Room



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 03

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Ito, today held a detailed inspection of Jawaharlal Lal Nehru Memorial (JLNM) Hospital Rainawari and reviewed the overall status of medical facilities available for the locals there.

MLA Zadibal, Tanvir Sadiq and other senior officers of health department accompanied the Minister.

During the inspection, Sakeena Ito held detailed round of the hospital and reviewed overall functioning of the health facility. She inspected OPD, IPD, Operation theatre, blood

bank and other units of the hospital. Interacting with the hospital administration and other on duty staff, the Minister emphasized on cleanliness and hygiene inside the wards for maintaining overall patient care environment in the hospital.

"Round the clock heating arrangements should be maintained in the hospital in view of harsh cold this winter", Sakeena directed the hospital administration. The Minister further underlined on importance of timely maintenance of medical equipments in hospital in order to improve quality of healthcare services for the public. During the inspection, Sakeena Ito also

visited medical supplies section of the hospital and evaluated the inventory. She called upon the officers to maintain adequate stock of medicines and other equipments in the hospital during the winter months.

The Minister assured the hospital administration of continued support from the Government and advised them to work with zeal and zest so that the government hospitals meet the needs of population. The Minister also interacted with the patients and their attendants and took on spot feedback from them about the healthcare services being provided at the hospital.

## CS fixes target of 30,000 installations by March under PM Surya Ghar Yojana

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 3

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a meeting to take first hand appraisal of the progress made in installation of solar rooftops under PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana in Jammu and Kashmir.

Present in the meeting were Principal Secretary, PDD, Principal Secretary, Finance, Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology, MD/JPDC/CPDCL, CEO, JAKEDA, Chief Engineers and other concerned officers in person and through virtual mode.

Dulloo emphasised upon the concerned departments to carry out rigorous IEC campaigns to generate awareness among the public about this scheme. He called for creating awareness material in local languages for easy comprehension besides sending bulk SMSs to the targeted consumers.

He directed for reaching out to each panchayat with full fledged programs distributing IEC materials



in local languages besides demonstrating educational videos and success stories there. He enjoined upon the Discoms to designate nodal officers among their engineers to accomplish these tasks with relevant feedback to their higher-ups.

The Chief Secretary observed that such schemes are reform-oriented with direct benefits accruing to public. He asked for making concerted efforts to increase the number of applicants and timely installations in favour of each of them. He also fixed a target for the Discoms to achieve installation of around 30,000 solar rooftops across the

districts of the UT. He advised for intensifying the outreach campaign till the desired outcomes are achieved.

Principal Secretary, PDD, H Rajesh Prasad, informed the meeting that the financial institutions/banks are extending loans at a rate of 7 percent in order to make the installations easier for the consumers. Besides, the central financial assistance is being directly disbursed among the applicants in their bank accounts only after 15 days of solar rooftop installation by the vendors.

He revealed that the savings under this scheme, even if installed after

taking credit from banks, are attractive. He informed that a subsidy of Rs 33,000/kw is being given by GoI with additional subsidy of Rs 3000/kw by UT government upto the installation capacity of 3 kw in favour of domestic consumers. It was further disclosed that around 11,000 applications had been received by the respective Discoms in Jammu and Kashmir divisions while 617 installations had been done till date. It was added that the savings are going to increase with future revisions in power tariff. It was informed that this scheme is going to substantially improve our progress on restricting AT&C losses

bringing efficiency in power supply to the consumers.

The Chief Secretary, later, reviewed Solarisation of government buildings through J&K Energy Development Agency (JAKEDA). He asked the department to bring further improvement in implementation of this scheme so that the necessary wattage is achieved before its sunset date.

Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology, Saurabh Bhagat, while informing the meeting about the overall progress of this scheme revealed that 4108 buildings had been covered thereby installing a capacity of 35.2 MW. In addition, the vendors had installed capacity of 13.6 MW till date.

Regarding the overall quantum of work, it was informed that under Capex a total of 70 MW capacity of grid connected solar rooftops would be installed on government buildings with additional 238 MW under RESCO mode by NHPC and JAKEDA cumulatively.

## Satish Sharma reviews preparedness of FCS&CA, Transport Department for winters, interacts with delegations

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 3

Minister for Transport, FCS &CA, Science & Technology, Information Technology, Satish Sharma, today convened separate meetings with senior officers to review the preparedness of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs and Transport Department in view of winter season. He also met with various delegations at Civil Secretariat Srinagar.

While reviewing the preparedness of Transport Department, the Minister enquired about the maintenance of busses, revenue generation, transport services to remote areas etc. He said besides bringing efficiency and transparency in working of the department, there is a need for providing better and efficient transport facilities to the public, especially people living in far flung areas and patients. He stressed the need for adopting and incorporating innovative ideas for further improving and streamlining functioning of the Transport Department.

While reviewing the



functioning of FCS&CA, the Minister assessed the stock and supply position of essentials in Kashmir division besides taking stock of extra arrangements made by the department for winter season. He expressed satisfaction over the functioning of the department saying that FCS &CA is directly linked with the people and it becomes mandatory on its functionaries to take every possible step to ensure that consumers do not face any kind of difficulty, especially during winter season.

The Minister also met various delegations, led by MLA Uri Sajjad Shafi, MLA Chanapora, Mushtaq Guroo, MLA Lolab, Jamsahaid Lone and MLA Zainapora, Showkat Hussain Ganie who raised many issues pertaining to their respective areas.

A delegation of Jammu & Kashmir Hotels and

Restaurants Association (JKHARA) met the Minister and apprised him of various issues related to tourism sector and its upliftment.

The Minister assured the delegations that issues raised by them would be taken up with the concerned authorities and would be addressed promptly.

Later, the Minister visited SMHS hospital in Shireen Bagh to personally check condition of the injured shopkeeper named Innayat Sheikh, who was injured in a hit-and-run accident near Bakshi Stadium. He enquired about his well being and assured all possible support from the Government. He also instructed the doctors and nursing staff to provide proper medical care to the victim.

MLA Chanapora also accompanied the Minister during the visit.

## DDC reviews performance of Banks operating in Reasi

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
REASI, JANUARY 3

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Reasi Nidhi Malik on Friday took a detailed review of banking services here at a meeting of District Level Review Committee (DLRC).

Assessing the disbursement against different credit linked government schemes, the DDC asked the banks to work on improving the low Credit-Deposit Ratio. She also encouraged banks to extend banking services to far off and remote places to increase financial inclusion.

The DDC took stock of flow of credit to the priority sector, key indicators of banks and their achievements. She pushed for giving special emphasis on sectors like renewable energy and building social infrastructure.

She directed all the banks to take effective measures for encouraging small lending especially in Agriculture, Education and employment sectors so that the majority of the population was benefited under various schemes.

The meeting was attended by CPO Narinder Kumar, Lead District Manager GM Wani, J&K bank Cluster Head, CAO, CHO, AD Employment and representatives of various banks.

## Policy-Technology synergy imperative for effective implementation of development initiatives: Dy CM



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 3

Underscoring the significance of forging stronger ties between policymakers and technocrats, Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Chowdhary, said that this is imperative to bolster efficiency, service delivery and effective implementation of development initiatives.

The Deputy Chief Minister stated this while addressing the officers and officials during his visit to Mechanical Engineering Division, Shalteng.

During the visit, he reviewed the functioning of Provincial Snow Clearance Control Room, inspected machinery fleet and assessed readiness of men and machinery for ongoing snow clearances operations.

On the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister inaugurated the newly procured state-of-the-art Spider Excavator, a highly advanced equipment set to revolutionise department's operational capabilities.

The Deputy CM emphasized the critical role of integrating policy decisions with technical expertise to optimize the department's functioning. He pointed out that robust col-

laboration between engineers and policymakers is essential for designing and executing infrastructure projects that cater to the region's current and future needs.

A detailed discussion was held on the challenges faced by the department including resource management, project delays, and the adoption of modern technologies. Opportunities to enhance efficiency through digital tools, innovation and skill enhancement were also explored.

Surinder Chowdhary highlighted the importance of maintaining a continuous dialogue between government officials and engineers. This, he noted, would bridge existing gaps and pave the way for more responsive and effective governance.

Present in the meeting were senior officials including Chief Engineer Mechanical Engineering Department, Superintendent Engineers and Executive Engineers.

They provided a detailed briefing on the department's ongoing and upcoming projects, operational challenges and the support needed from the administration to address bottlenecks effectively.

## Commissioner SMC reviews progress of urban development projects



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 3

In a significant step towards enhancing urban development in Srinagar, Commissioner SMC Dr. Owais Ahmed chaired a high-level review meeting today to evaluate the progress of various projects undertaken by the SMC and Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL).

The meeting was attended by the senior officials from both organizations, who provided comprehensive updates on their respective projects, addressing timelines, challenges, and achievements.

Dr. Owais emphasized the importance of these initiatives in improving urban infrastructure and the overall quality of life for Srinagar's residents. Key projects discussed included road improvements, advancements in water management, civil and electrical works, enhancements in waste management systems, and innovative smart city

initiatives designed to integrate technology into public services.

"Timely execution is crucial for the success of our ongoing projects," Dr. Owais remarked. "Our vision is to ensure sustainable development in Srinagar, with measurable benefits reaching every citizen. I encourage all teams to identify obstacles and collaborate on effective solutions."

The Commissioner also stressed the need for adopting innovative strategies and global best practices to improve project efficiency and delivery. He underscored the importance of regular follow-ups and detailed progress reports to maintain accountability and transparency in project management.

As the meeting concluded, Dr. Owais expressed confidence that with coordinated and focused efforts, the SMC and SSCL could drive transformative changes, positioning Srinagar as a model urban center.

## Tehsildar Handwara reviews arrangements for Republic Day celebration

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KUPWARA, JANUARY 3

Following the directions of Deputy Commissioner, (DC), Kupwara, and in order to ensure proper arrangements for ensuring Republic Day (RD) celebration in Sub Division Handwara, Tehsildar Handwara, Zeeshan Khan today convened a meeting of all concerned officers, at Environmental Hall Handwara.

Speaking on the occasion, the Tehsildar stressed upon the officers to ensure hassle free arrangements for smooth conduct of the National Event and instructed them to maintain proper coordination and follow a timeline for ensuring arrangements well in advance.

All the departments were asked to display Tableaus on the eve of Republic Day Parade to showcase



government schemes and achievements of their respective departments during the current year.

He also stressed the need for proper seating arrangement and also issued instructions to the police department for security arrangements.

All the officers were asked that Republic Day celebration functions shall be held at Tehsil and Block levels with fervour and enthusiasm.

Tehsildar Handwara briefed the meeting about the programme and

responsibilities of each officer and informed that the main function of the Republic Day will be held at District Police Lines (DPL) Kulangam Handwara.

Arrangements for Power supply, water, sanitation, seating arrangements, refreshment, deployment of magistrates, cultural programmes, barricading and availability of fire-tenders were also reviewed.

Sectoral Officers, besides senior officers of Police were present in the meeting.

## 4-Day orientation prog for implementation of NALSA scheme held at Anantnag

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
ANANTNAG, JANUARY 3

Following the instructions of J&K Legal Services Authority, Legal Services Unit for Children & Legal Services Unit for Persons with Mental Illness and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities were constituted in Anantnag for providing accessible and impactful legal services to children & persons with mental

disabilities. These units shall be mentored by Mohammad Ashraf Bhat, Pr. District & Sessions Judge (retired).

During the four days of orientation programme, the unit members were sensitized by DLSA Secretary Muzamil Ahmad Wani and resource persons from JJB, CWC and Bar Association who shared knowledge & information

for effective implementation of NALSA Scheme.

The unit members were trained with respect to process of responding to cases and ensuring Legal Aid at Police Station, Jail, Hospital, JJB, CWC or other places.

On the occasion, Secretary DLSA highlighted significance of effective coordination with other stakeholders & institutions.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Sarfaraz Ahmed, S/o Ghulam Hussain, R/o Dehdha, PO Deedha, District Ramban, Jammu and Kashmir, PIN - 182144, hereby inform that I am applying for a correction in my Driving Licence bearing No. JK0220240007169. The correction pertains to my name, which is incorrectly mentioned as Surfaraz Ahmed. The correct name is Sarfaraz Ahmed. If anyone has any objections, they are requested to inform the concerned authorities within 7 days from the publication of this notice.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Javid Ahmad Shah, S/o Gh. Mohd Din Shah, R/o Thater, Jammu (Pin: 180019), hereby notify the intention to transfer my electricity connection, bearing Consumer ID: 0101031022633, to Marifat Majeed Dar, S/o Abdul Majeed Dar. Any objections to this transfer may be communicated to the JKPDC/Department within seven (7) days from the date of this notice. For further inquiries, please contact the concerned department.

### 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-PACKING25	20/01/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for packing of two wheelers and other parcel packages at FZR & LDH.
EAFZR-SLR24-94	20/01/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 12242/F1, 14624/F1, 14618/F1, 14028/F2, 14028/F1, 14505/F1, 14730/F1, 14730/F2, 14028/R1 & 14730/R1.
EAFZR-SLR24-95	21/01/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 12476/F1, 12478/F1, 12460/F1, 14604/F1, 14036/F1, 14650/F1, 12238/F2, 12238/R1, 19804/F1 & 22462/F1.
EAFZR-SLR24-96	22/01/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 22446/F1, 12422/F1, 22552/F1, 11450/F1, 15532/F1, 12498/F1, 14632/R1, 14034/F1, 12446/F1 & 14632/F1.

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). 24/2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

## Govt amends Foreign Trade Policy, 2023 for Stakeholder Consultation; encourages inclusive decision-making

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) on Thursday notified amendment in the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023 to include Para 1.07A and 1.07B to bring legal backing in the FTP to make it necessary to do consultation with stakeholders to seek views, suggestions, comments or feedback from relevant stakeholders, including importers/exporters/industry experts concerning the formulation or amendment of the Foreign Trade Policy.

It also provides the mechanism to inform reasons for not accepting views, suggestions, comments or feedback concerning the formulation or amendment of the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023.

The latest amendments

in the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023 reflect upon the Central Government's commitment towards strengthening the scope of Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) in India by encouraging stakeholder and expert participation through consultation in the decision-making process.

The key objective of the amendments is to encourage the participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process before introducing or changing policy and procedures affecting the importation, exportation, and transit of goods along with a reasonable opportunity to comment and contribute in the process.

The Government is committed to ensuring due consideration is given to every valuable opinion/feedback which is received

from stakeholders. However, at the same time, the Government has to remain cognizant of the fact that multiple stakeholders may offer different opinions on the same subject and in such cases for smooth functioning of business the government ought to reserve to itself the right to take a final call. It is only to deal with exceptional circumstances such as this, that the right to suo moto formulate policies has been reserved with the government.

The notification needs to be read in the light of the overall inclusiveness it is ushering into decision-making, the exception to the notification which provides for suo moto decision-making to meet contingencies has after all to be seen in the broader sovereign power of the Government.

## JKAACL organizes Kashmiri Literary programme at Writers' Club

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, 3RD JANUARY 2025

The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages organised a day-long literary programme at the Writers' Club Jammu. The event was presided over by renowned short story writer and novelist Makhana Lal Pandita, while Sahitya Akademi Award winner Dr. Sohan Lal Koul was present in the hall as the chief guest.

Harvinder Kour Secretary Academy in her address stated that Kashmiri is the largest spoken language of Jammu and Kashmir and the Academy is focusing on its overall development. She further stated that the objective of today's programme is to provide a common platform to Kashmiri writers of both the regions to share their



creative arts.

Earlier Dr. Javed Rahi Divisional Head JKAACL Jammu delivered the welcome address and expressed his views regarding the event.

M L Pandita in his presidential address thanked the Cultural Academy for organizing the event and said that such events should continue to be organized in the Jammu region in the future as well. The second session of the event was the Mushaira, which was presided over by renowned poet

and writer Bashir Bhaderwahi, while BN Betab and Avatar Krishan Naz were present in the hall as special guests and guests of honor. Among the short story writers who presented their works at the short story session were Rinku Koul with "Shash Panj," Vijay Wali with "Booneh Maut," Avatar Hogami with "Bod Shar," Dr. Sohan Lal Koul with "Kaband Ao Voo'rith," and ML Pandita with "Aasun Chh Hechnavan."

Among the poets who presented their poetry

to the audience at the Mushaira were Bashir Bhaderwahi, PN Shad, Dildar Mohan, AK Naz, BN Betab, Santosh Shah Nandan, Ashok Gohar, Moti Lal Masroor, Pyare Hatash, Ratan Lal Johar, BN Abhilash, Dali Tiku Arol, Tej Sagar, Dr. Ramesh Narash, Wali Muhammad Aseer Kishtwari, Kundan Paras, Rajinder Aghosh, Bandiya Tiku, Patambar Razdan, Kusum Dhar, Chaman Panjori, MK Bhat, and Dr. Azhar Izhar. The proceedings of both literary sessions were conducted by Assistant Editor Kashmiri Dr. Gulzar Ahmad Rather, while Kashmiri Editor Javed Iqbal Khan presented the vote of thanks. Jameel Ansari provided full cooperation in the filming and photography of these events, for which he was appreciated at the event.

## Police arrests 06 drug peddlers across valley

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JAN 3

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 Anantnag, a police party of PS Anantnag during naka checking at Bypass near Ganjwada intercepted a suspicious person. During search, 400 grams of Charas was recovered from his possession. He has been identified as Zakir Ahmad Zargar son of Gh. Rasool resident of Papibal Anantnag. Similarly, a police team from Police Post Dialgam at a checkpoint established at Bonadialgam near Bypass, intercepted a suspicious person. During search, 350 grams of Charas was recovered from his possession. He has been identified as Aamir Hussain Malik son of Ab. Hameed Malik resident of Pushwara Khanabal.

## Congress had least respect for Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Balbir Ram

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 3

BJP spokesperson & former vice chairperson, Balbir Ram Rattan, while discussing the splendid contribution of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in framing the Constitution of India, alleged that Congress did not show any respect, always sidelined him and undermined his towering personality.

Balbir Ram Rattan said that the nation is going to celebrate 75th Constitution Day this year, and the total neglect and disrespect to Dr. Ambedkar by the Congress need to be highlighted. The people of marginalized classes should take a pledge to defeat Congress at every level and in every field as it was the political party, which ruled the country for decades together after independence but did not deem it necessary to honour Dr. Ambedkar, while it gave Bharat Ratna to own people like Jawahar Lal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

He was talking to a group of SC community members about the milestones achieved by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during his struggleful life.



He said that the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, visualized a framework that safeguards the rights of marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Today crores of members of these communities are leading dignified life due to the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar only.

Balbir Ram Rattan said that the Indian Constitution is a living testament to Dr. Ambedkar's relentless efforts to eradicate caste-based discrimination and promote equality. He got included few Articles in the Constitution to prohibit discrimination based on caste and emphasized the need for special measures to

uplift disadvantaged groups. The abolition of untouchability marked a revolutionary step toward social justice and equality.

Balbir pointed out that recognizing the historical injustices faced by SCs, STs, and OBCs, the Constitution has provision for reservation in education, employment, and political representation. These measures have been instrumental in bridging the socio-economic gap and fostering inclusivity.

One of Ambedkar's greatest accomplishments was his role in drafting the Indian Constitution. As the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, he ensured that the Constitution enshrined principles of equality, liberty, and social justice, he said.

## Congress to go whole hog in coming ULB elections: Karra

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 3

JKPCC Chief Shri Tariq Hameed Karra has asked the Ex-Corporators & last contested candidates of the party of Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), to defend the basic idea of India, which is under attack by BJP -RSS combine in present times more vigorously than ever before.

Addressing the Ex-corporators and contested candidate of Jammu Municipal Corporation here today JKPCC chief said that the congress philosophy is based on the basic idea of India and the Constitution, which believes in unity in diversity. The basic idea of India is under attack by BJP -RSS combine & other communal & divisive forces which is dangerous for the unity of pluralistic India.

PCC chief today held a day long interaction with the ex-corporators and contested candidates of Jammu Municipal Corporation. PCC president took the feedback about the organizational affairs & party structure at the grass root level. He listened to the views of Ex-corporators/contested candidates and asked them to strengthen congress party in their respective wards. He advised them to listen the problems of people and bring these problems to the notice of senior leadership of the party and the administration for redressal.



He said that it is the prime duty of Congress party & its workers in every nook & corner of the country to counter the fake & false propaganda of the BJP-RSS against basic idea of India & against secular ideology always promoted by our leadership.

He said that the Congress philosophy is based on the basic idea of India which believes in unity in diversity as propounded by our great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Moulana Azad & Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar. He asked the party leaders and workers to get ready for intensifying our struggle for restoration of statehood, which is the right of people of J&K

Those who attended the meeting include Kanta Bhan, Bhanu Mahajan, Satish Sharma, Narinder Gupta, Dwarka Choudhary, Kamal Singh Jamwal, Rajinder Singh Jamwal, Rajesh Sharma, Pritam Singh, Kulbushan Sharma, Dewan Chand, Rashpal Bhardwaj, Surinder Singh Dutta, Som Raj, Hoshiyar Singh, Sunil Kumar, Rajesh Paul, Shashi Kumar, Paramjeet Singh and others.

## Omar govt not addressing problems of UT people: Sethi

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 3

In a press release, Chief Spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party, Jammu and Kashmir, Sunil Sethi, has criticized Omar Abdullah led National Conference government for not addressing the problems and concerns of people of JK Union Territory and showing no regard or remorse to its inaction on pressing problems.

In short span of about 3 months people of Jammu and Kashmir have understood that they can expect no justice or redressal of their grievances by this govt, which is self obsessed and have nothing to offer except blaming it's inactions on UT status. He said that all departments are with UT govt except home and it is matter of fact that only home department is working round the clock in ensuring maintenance of law and order and security, whereas all other departments are not delivering because of directionless governance.

Sunil Sethi also noted with concern the atti-



tude of not listening with Chief Minister who has publicly said he has no time to read even what is being written or said by his own Member Parliament belonging to Shia Community. This shows the attitude of govt which is not listening to its leaders. What can be expected from him about leaders of other parties or general public. While there are pressing problems of power disruption and non supply of adequate fuel, the Hon'ble Chief Minister is busy buying fleet of costly cars for him.

### FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

#### Shah chairs 7th...

The Minister said, "Even though these islands are far from Delhi, they are close to our hearts, development of infrastructure and increasing tourism facilities here is the priority of the government. Modi government is preserving the culture and heritage of these islands and accelerating the development works".

He emphasised the need for a holistic approach to infrastructure projects in both island groups and called on all concerned central ministries to collaborate on initiatives related to tourism, trade, and other key sectors.

The Home Minister also issued clear directives to address pending issues and expedite the completion of ongoing projects.

The meeting was attended by D K Joshi, Lieutenant Governor of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Praful Patel, Administrator of Lakshadweep, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan and secretaries from various Union Ministries and other senior officials.

#### Dense fog envelops...

the forecast of a major three-day snow spell in the Union Territory from Saturday, which is expected to affect the surface traffic.

According to the news agency, a thick layer of fog enveloped Kashmir parts this morning, delaying the flight operations at Srinagar International Airport.

Although no flight was cancelled, the operation of multiple flights was delayed this morning as the visibility fell to about 300 metres, Director Srinagar Airport, Javed Anjum said.

Meanwhile, as per the forecast, Jammu and Kashmir would likely witness a three-day wet spell from tomorrow. "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,"

Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, said.

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.

According to him, the weather is expected to remain generally dry from January 13 to 15.

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," the advisory reads.

Furthermore, the night temperature improved at multiple places across the Valley. Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.2 degree Celsius while Kupwara recorded a minimum temperature of 1.6 degree Celsius.

However, Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, recorded a low of minus 4.5 degree Celsius while Pahalgam, a famous tourist destination recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.6 degree Celsius. Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, has recorded a low of minus 7.3 degree Celsius while Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded minus 5.5 degree Celsius. KNO

#### Katra-Srinagar...

from Katra at 8.10 a.m. and arrive in Srinagar at 11.20 a.m.

Mail Express will run twice every day from Katra -- departure at 9.50 a.m. and arrival in Srinagar at 1.10 pm; departure at 3.00 p.m. and arrival in Srinagar at 6.20 pm

Train timings from Srinagar to Katra for the Mail Express: departure from Srinagar at 8.55 am and arrival in Katra at 12.05 pm The second run will be at 3:10 pm

and arrival in Katra is at 6:30 pm.

Vande Bharat will depart from Srinagar at 12.45 p.m. and arrive in Katra at 3.55 pm

The Vande Bharat train will start at 7 pm from Delhi and arrive in Srinagar at 8 am. KNO

#### 'Aspirational District'...

to support traditional artisans and craftsmen by providing skill development opportunities, modern tools, and access to financial resources.

Dr. Jitendra Singh urged the local representatives to educate citizens about these transformative programs and assist them in availing the benefits. "For Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the satisfaction of the people in governance is paramount. These initiatives are tailored to directly address the needs of the most vulnerable sections of society," he stated.

During the interaction, the elected representatives presented several key requests to Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, who assured them that he would convey these issues to the concerned Central Ministries and work towards their early resolution.

The Minister reiterated the government's commitment to making aspirational districts engines of growth and progress, ensuring holistic development and equitable opportunities for all.

#### GOC 16 Corps...

"The #GOC #WhiteKnightCorps, along with #GOC #AceofSpades Division, visited forward posts along the #LOC in #Poonch & #Rajouri to review security and operational preparedness," White Knight Corps posted on X.

As per the news agency, the GOC lauded troops for their commitment to peace and urged vigilance.

He also engaged with Trainee #IAS officers on national security, governance, and civil-military synergy for a

stronger India, it further posted. KNO

#### Over 400 arrested...

Eight such smugglers were detained and jailed under the Public Safety Act (PSA) in the district, police said.

"As many as 378 FIRs were registered, and 408 accused were arrested during the last year in the district," a police spokesperson said.

In these cases, 354 vehicles were seized and a total of 3,408 bovines were rescued, he said.

The arrests were made under a drive named Operation Kamdhenu.

Police have opened history sheets and personal files for notorious smugglers and initiated the cancellation of registration certificates, route permits, and licenses of vehicles repeatedly involved in bovine smuggling, the spokesperson said.

"A comprehensive database of offenders has also been created to strengthen future enforcement measures," he said.

Jammu Senior Superintendent of Police Joginder Singh said police is resolute in its mission to protect public sentiments and uphold animal rights.

"Our strict measures under Operation Kamdhenu aim to dismantle the bovine mafia and eliminate this menace from the region," he said.

#### 2 J&K teachers...

Kaunsar head teacher Government Boys Middle School Yarikalan in zone Chadoora Budgam and Javed Ahmad Bandy Principal Boys Higher Secondary School Beerwah.

The teachers will be awarded at the National Level Conference of National School Leadership Conference (NSLC) organised by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi. The function is scheduled from January 8 and 10 of 2025.

## STD conducts inspections, enforcement drive to curb menace of recycling of B2C bills, Input Tax Credit mismatches, other GST violations

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 02

State Taxes Department (STD) today conducted inspections and enforcement drives across various district of Jammu division to curb the menace of recycling of B2C bills, Input Tax Credit mismatches and other GST violations.

The inspections were carried under the guidance of Commissioner State Taxes J&K, P K Bhat and under the supervision of Additional Commissioner Enforcement and Administration Jammu, Namrita Dogra.

Based on inputs generated by various AI tools like Business Intelligence and Fraud Analytics (BIFA), E-way Bills Portal, the department constituted special teams headed by STOs. The teams visited various business

premises to investigate violations under GST Law.

Based on the inputs, teams specifically inspected dealers who were found engaged in the recycling of B2C invoices into B2B invoices, thereby passing on ITC to other dealers and contractors. The ITC was being used to settle GST output tax instead of being paid in cash.

The STD urged the dealers to follow the fair-trade practices and avoid indulging in tax evasion activities or fraudulent practices involving fake ITC. Furthermore, the department appealed all taxpayers to practice invoice-based business and report their actual sales and pay the necessary amount of GST in their monthly/quarterly returns to avoid enforcement actions and penalties.

## Rs 2.37 lakh fine imposed on business establishments for violation of FSSAI

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KATHUA, JANUARY 3

In a decisive move to enforce food safety standards and protect public health, Additional Deputy Commissioner Kathua Ranjit Singh imposed a penalty of Rs 2.37 lakh on several business establishments for violation of Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSAI) 2006.

The fines were levied for the sale and distribution of substandard and misbranded food items in the district. The violators included manufacturers,

distributors, and retailers.

This strict enforcement underscores the Kathua administration's unwavering commitment to ensuring the availability of safe and high-quality food products. Commercial establishments have been directed to adhere to food safety regulations and maintain the prescribed standards to avoid legal action and safeguard consumer trust.

The administration has also issued a stern warning to businesses, urging compliance with the law to prevent further violations and penalties.

## IGNOU makes it mandatory for students seeking fresh admission to create DEB ID

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 3

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has released the guidelines for creating a DEB (Distance Education Bureau) ID. DEB ID is a mandatory step for students who wish to enrol in an ODL/Online programme at the university. The university notified that DEB ID shall be created by all learners as per the UGC guidelines. The DEB ID is a unique number which will be provided by the University to each student seeking admission in the University for ODL as well as Online programmes. The admission portal of IGNOU is already open till January 31, 2025 and can be accessed on <https://ignouadmission.sambharth.edu.in/>. The UGC mandates every student enrolling into online and distance education courses to register for DEB ID. Students who are planning to apply for any of the IGNOU programmes are now required to create a DEB ID at the time of admission. DEB ID is helpful when students plan to change their university and transfer their accumulated credits to the new university. Students who have dropped out of their course can continue from where they

left off within 7 years of their dropout year, if they have a valid DEB ID. Students first need to register for the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC ID), then use it to create their DEB ID. This is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, with a sole purpose of creating a digital medium for students for their academic credits. This system is beneficial for those students who need to change their college after one or two years, or even those who drop-out of college and decide to take re-admission after some time. The Academic Bank of Credit system is a digital credit storage system where with every semester, candidates can store their earned credit and use this later on, if required. It is worth noting that the ABC system is not only useful for storing credit, but it also works as a mode of student verification, maintaining an authentic and confidential way to manage student credits. "The purpose of the DEB-ID is to ensure that students are taking admission in the Open and Distance Learning/Online programmes of the Higher Educational Institutes which are recognized by the UGC", said Dr. Sandeep Gupta, Regional Director, Regional Centre Jammu.

## Sat, Kavinder, Koul, Sunil participate in Nagar Kirtan at Shivaji Chowk, Jammu Highlight Guru Gobind Singh Ji's teachings of Equality, Harmony

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 3

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru of Sikhs symbolizes Chardi Kala and righteousness as he relentlessly continued crusade for his mission and with his indefatigable spirit tread on the path of Dharma.

This was stated by Sat Sharma, BJP President J&K while speaking to media persons after participating in the Nagar Kirtan being taken out in Jammu in connection with the Parkash Utsav of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Sat Sharma, while



extending heartfelt greetings to the people on the eve of Gurburab, emphasized the profound teachings of Guru Gobind Singh. He highlighted the essential motto of the tenth Sikh Guru, encapsulated in the powerful message, 'Manas Ki Jaat Sab Ek Hi Pahchanbo'—signifying that all of humankind shares one common identity.

Kavinder Gupta underscored Guru Gobind Singh's pivotal message of

social equality, emphasizing that the revered Guru sacrificed not only his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, but also his four sons for a righteous cause. This selfless act led to Guru Gobind Singh being revered as Sarbansdani.

The BJP leader passionately conveyed that in the current socio-political landscape, there is a pressing need for every Indian to imbibe and follow the timeless teachings of Guru

Gobind Singh. He urged fellow citizens to contribute to the nation in whatever way and capacity they can, aligning their actions with the spirit of social harmony, justice, and the collective welfare advocated by the revered Guru.

Kavinder Gupta appealed to the citizens to uphold and strengthen communal harmony in the diverse fabric of the union territory. Emphasizing the importance of unity in diversity, he urged people from all walks of life, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion, to come together in a spirit of understanding and mutual respect.

Ashok Koul underscored that maintaining communal harmony is not just a responsibility but a shared commitment that enriches the social

tapestry of our nation. He encouraged individuals to engage in dialogue, foster goodwill, and celebrate the common values that bind us as a society. In doing so, he believed that we could collectively contribute to the realization of Guru Gobind Singh's vision of a harmonious and inclusive society for the betterment of the nation.

Prominent among those who were present include Sunil Sharma leader of opposition, Ankush Gupta, Sanjita Dogra, Neha Mahajan, Lucky Puri, Bharat Bhushan, Naresh Singh, Pappu Chowdhary, Indu Puri, Sanjay Jandyal, Sunny Nayan Gupta, Paramjit Singh, Yash Pal Gupta, Varun Sharma, Indu Bhushan, Rachit Khosla, Shailja Gupta, Arvind Gupta, Bhushan Verma, Charanjit Raina, Ramneek Singh, Surjit Singh Chopra and Surjeet Singh.

## NC holds monthly meeting in Chhamb Assembly Khour

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KHOOR | 03.01.2024

NC monthly meeting was held in Chhamb Assembly Khour which was presided over by Block Pradhan Mahendra Singh Chaudhary.

During this, NC Secretary Devidayal Jogi said that according to the new de-imitation, 70% area in Chhamb Assembly Khour is Kandi Belt and Border Actual Line Control Area. Modi government has unjustly snatched the right of raw border by merging the ALC rights of the displaced people living in the only raw border in India (Jammu Kashmir) with the international border. Even today, there is no mobile signal in the area from Buche Di Mandi to Kala Maqam. An appeal is made to the Honorable Jammu Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah that the government employees living in the ALC area will not only get 200 units of free electricity, but the people living in the houses without government jobs should be given at least the right to free electricity so that the ALC rights snatched by the Modi government can be compensated. Ajay Sharma, Devendra Singh etc. were present in the meeting.

## Indian Army conducts Coaching Classes for Children at Budhal, Rajouri

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJOURI: 03 JAN 2025

The Indian Army has initiated a special coaching program to assist students from remote areas of Budhal in Rajouri District in preparing for entrance exams to Sainik Schools and Military Schools. The initiative aims to empower young minds from underprivileged regions and foster their aspirations to serve the nation. These coaching classes, organized free of cost, focus on students from economically weaker sections, with expert faculty and a well-structured curriculum. The program covers key subjects such as Mathematics, General Knowledge, English, and Reasoning, which are critical for the competitive entrance exams. The initiative is part of the Indian Army's broader efforts to uplift and integrate the youth from these regions into the national



mainstream by providing them with quality education and career opportunities in the Armed Forces. Through this program, the Indian Army seeks to encourage discipline, leadership, and patriotism among the youth, while offering them a chance to pursue their dreams of joining prestigious institutions like Sainik and Military Schools. The local population has lauded the Indian Army for its consistent efforts toward the welfare of the region, with hopes that such initiatives will continue to inspire

and empower future generations of Jammu and Kashmir.

## BJP pays floral tributes to Savitribai Phule

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 3

Mahila Morcha, J&K BJP led by its President Sanjita Dogra, paid floral tributes to legendary social reformer Savitribai Phule on her birth anniversary at party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

Sat Sharma CA, President, J&K BJP, Priya Sethi, BJP NEM & Headquarter Incharge, Veenu Khanna, Secretary, J&K BJP and many senior leaders of Mahila Morcha paid tributes on the occasion.

Sat Sharma, while paying tributes, said that born in 1831 in Maharashtra, Savitribai Phule led a strong movement against the unbending society, during a time when women and certain castes were not given education and oppressed. She began this process with reforms in education, caste equality, and women empowerment along with her husband, Jyotirao Phule. He said that the combined efforts from both of them were the beginning of progressive changes that are still occurring up to the present time. He said

that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also working on the mission mode to achieve a society that is free from the social evils.

Priya Sethi, in her address said that Savitri Bai Phule also committed herself to social causes beyond women's education. She worked tirelessly for the cause of self-respect of the Dalits who were suffering at that time. She made the society aware of the plight of Dalits. She opposed untouchability and worked towards molding society to become more inclusive and equitable.

केंद्र शासित प्रदेश जम्मू और कश्मीर  
मुख्य अभियंता पीडब्ल्यू (आर एंड बी) विभाग  
जम्मू क्षेत्र का कार्यालय  
रेलहेड कॉम्प्लेक्स जम्मू (तवी)-180012  
फ़ोन नंबर 0191-2471788  
फैक्स नंबर 0191-2471866  
ईमेल: [cejmurnbpd@gmail.com](mailto:cejmurnbpd@gmail.com),  
[cetendersection@gmail.com](mailto:cetendersection@gmail.com)

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER PW(R&B)  
DEPARTMENT JAMMU ZONE  
Lok Nirman Bhawan, Railhead Complex  
Jammu(Tawi)-180012  
Phone No.0191-2471788  
Fax No.0191-2471866  
e-mail: [cejmurnbpd@gmail.com](mailto:cejmurnbpd@gmail.com),  
[cetendersection@gmail.com](mailto:cetendersection@gmail.com)

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

**e-NIT No. 14 of 2024-25 Dated 02/01/25**

Chief Engineer PWD (R&B), Jammu Zone on behalf of Lt Governor of J&K UT, invite tenders by e-tendering mode from approved and eligible authorized manufacturer/firm for the work mentioned below:

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (in lacs)	Cost of document (in Rs)	Earnest Money (in Rs)	Time Allowed for completion	Time and date of opening of tender	Class of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Supply and Installation of laboratory equipment machinery for up gradation of Material Testing Laboratory at Nagrota Samba and Kathua in Jammu Zone i) 03 no. Rotational Viscometer	15.00 excluding GST(18%)	600/-	25000/-	45 Days	<b>24.01.2025 (1200 hours)</b>	Authorized Firm/Manufacturers

- 1/ Date of Publishing from **02.01.2025**
- 2/ The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from **(1600 Hrs)** on **02.01.2025** to **23.01.2025** upto **(1600 Hrs)**. The bids received will be opened at **(1200 Hrs) on 24.01.2025** online.
- 3/ The complete bidding process will be online.
- 4/ Technical bids of bidders shall be opened online in the office of **Chief Engineer PWD (R&B) Jammu Zone** on **24.01.2025** at **(1200 Hrs)**
- 5/ Bid documents can be seen at and downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> Bid documents contain qualifying criteria for bidder, specifications, bill of quantities, conditions and other details.
- 6/ The site for the work is available.

No :-CEJ/TS/12457-65  
Dated :-02.01.2025

DIP/J-8889/24  
Date: 3-1-25

Sd/-  
(Er. R K Gupta) Chief Engineer  
PW(R&B) Department  
Jammu Zone

## Handloom awareness camp promotes women empowerment, livelihood schemes



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, JANUARY 3

The Office of Assistant Director Handloom Samba organized a comprehensive awareness camp today at Block Rajpura, focusing on promotion of sustainable livelihoods and women empowerment through various departmental initiatives and schemes. The event was honored by the distinguished presence of MLA Ramgarh Dr. Devinder Manyal. He reiterated the government's commitment to supporting local artisans and promoting traditional handloom sectors. The gathering was further enriched by the participation of Asha Rani, DDC member, Niharika, (Assistant Director Handloom) and Ekshu Sharma (Assistant Director Handicrafts).

The awareness camp served as a vital platform to disseminate information about departmental schemes and initiatives designed to boost the handloom sector while creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities, particularly women. The program highlighted the government's continued efforts to preserve and promote traditional crafts while adapting them to contemporary market demands. During the event, participants received detailed information about various governmental schemes, support systems, and opportunities available for artisans and craftspeople in the region. The initiative aligns with the broader vision of economic empowerment and skill development in the handloom sector.

## EDITORIAL

## Colossal financial burden to ensure peace!

Over the past 35 years, Jammu and Kashmir has borne the financial and human costs of combating terrorism. According to the recent report of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Union government has expended over Rs 18,000 crore under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) to ensure peace and stability in the region. While the financial outlay has been substantial, the results reveal a significant improvement in the security situation and a pathway for development. The Security Related Expenditure in J&K has grown steadily, crossing Rs 1,300 crore annually. Since 1989, Rs 11,740.37 crore has been reimbursed for police-related expenditures and Rs 6,478.58 crore for relief and rehabilitation efforts. These figures highlight the consistent efforts to equip security forces and support victims of terrorism. Despite the hefty expenditure, the investments have yielded notable results. The number of terrorist-initiated incidents (TII) has plummeted from 228 in 2018 to just 46 in 2023, a striking 80% reduction. Similarly, casualties among security personnel have declined from 91 in 2018 to 30 in 2023. Counter-terrorism operations have also been effective, with 676 encounters neutralizing 1,076 terrorists over six years. However, the toll on civilians remains a poignant reminder of the challenges, with 225 civilians losing their lives in terror-related incidents during the same period. The MHA report emphasizes the broader dividends of enhanced security. The eradication of organized stone pelting and protests has paved the way for unprecedented economic and social progress. Tourism, a key pillar of J&K's economy, witnessed a record-breaking resurgence with over 2 crore visitors in 2023-24, surpassing the 1.88 crore mark of the previous year. The successful completion of the Amarnath Yatra in 2023, which saw 4.45 lakh pilgrims—the highest in a decade—underscores the improved security scenario. J&K also gained international recognition when Srinagar hosted the 3rd Tourism Working Group meeting of the G-20 in May 2023. This milestone not only showcased the region's progress but also placed it on the global tourism map. While the security situation has improved significantly, the region continues to face challenges. Sustaining these gains requires maintaining a delicate balance between counter-terrorism operations and fostering socio-economic development. The government must ensure that resources allocated for security and development are utilized effectively, benefiting the residents of J&K. Moreover, efforts to integrate J&K into the national mainstream must be complemented by addressing local grievances and promoting inclusive governance. Enhanced security should not come at the expense of civil liberties or alienating communities, as long-term peace is rooted in trust and cooperation. The financial and human costs of fighting terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir have been high, but the outcomes are encouraging. A marked decline in terrorist activities, coupled with unprecedented growth in tourism and global recognition, signals a new chapter for the Union Territory. As the region moves forward, a holistic approach that prioritizes both security and development will be essential to realizing its full potential. J&K's journey from conflict to prosperity is a testament to resilience and the enduring hope for a peaceful future.

## From vision to reality: How good governance is transforming education in India

TUHINA SINHA

Ten years ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set forth his vision of sushasan (good governance), calling it "the key to a nation's progress." He declared December 25, former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary, as Good Governance Day. Vajpayee had envisioned a "New India" where the government would embody the principles of democracy and development, emphasising citizen-centric decision-making, transparency, and public participation.

Put simply, good governance means that the day-to-day functioning of the government is effective, transparent, and accountable, which, in the modern age naturally includes e-governance and digital empowerment. In fact, in the context of a welfare government functioning in a vastly unequal society, good governance is fundamental for ensuring sustainable development, social justice, and the protection of human rights.

In 2019, India also adopted a metric called the Good Governance Index (GGI) to track and compare governance among the states and

union territories across ten key sectors. The 11th Good Governance Day presents an apt moment to pause and reflect on the state of governance in one of the most critical sectors—education. Even though Human Resource Development, composed of indicators like "quality of education" and "elementary school retention rate," is one of the ten key sectors covered by the GGI, a close look at India's education governance reveals substantial room for improvement, particularly at the school level.

Vajpayee's commitment to education was evident during his tenure as Prime Minister—he pioneered the landmark Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002, which emphasised universal school enrollment and went on to form the cornerstone of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Building decisively on this foundation, Prime Minister Modi's leadership has elevated education to new heights through bold reforms.

The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, along with the NIPUN Bharat Mission, has revolutionised the approach to foundational learning. This shift is being carefully monitored



through multiple assessment initiatives - states have implemented third-party evaluations, while programs like CBSE's SAFAL, the National Achievement Survey, and Gujarat's groundbreaking Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK) use cutting-edge technology to track progress systematically. These assessment systems have revealed both progress and persistent challenges in our education system.

The data highlights critical areas that need attention, particularly in

learning outcomes. Various learning surveys show that over 5 crore elementary-grade students lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Learning gaps for these children only keep widening as they progress through grades with a weak foundation. It is then unsurprising that almost 33 per cent of Grade VIII students are unable to read simple sentences or do basic arithmetic.

Recognising these challenges, PM Modi's administration has taken

a step through the State School Standards Authority (SSSA), recommended in the NEP 2020, which emerges as a pivotal reform to enhance India's school governance standards. The proposed SSSA would be an independent quality regulator for all schools, both public and private. One of the key functions of the SA is to ensure public disclosure of school performance data for all schools through a digital portal.

With all schools being held to clear and uniform

quality standards and policymakers being informed by data-driven insights, educational resources will be used more efficiently. The SA can create a culture of transparency where parents are active participants in their children's education.

With its emphasis on streamlining bureaucracy, focusing on outcomes rather than inputs, and integrating technology to reduce administrative burdens, not only does it embody Prime Minister Modi's ideal of "minimum government, maximum governance". A pertinent example is the set of eight principles of good governance recommended by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)—participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, equity, effectiveness, consensus, and responsiveness.

As the nation observes Good Governance Day, the call to action is clear: states must embrace the SA to realise the shared vision of a "New India," where quality education is a right, not a privilege.

(The writer is National Spokesperson, BJP; views are personal)

## India's New Trade paradigm with the us

KUMARDEP BANARJEE

The year gone by saw some crucial path-altering elections in nearly 70 of the most powerful democracies in the world. Some of the most populous countries led by India and including the US, Bangladesh, Indonesia etc. voted for a leadership of their choice in 2024. While the Indian electorate chose to renew another 5-year term for Prime Minister Modi (albeit with a less-than-expected mandate), Bangladesh too renewed its faith in Sheikh Hasina (who was accused of rigging the electoral process to retain power), which ultimately led to her being thrown out in a coup. In a highly polarised election ground, in the US, the incumbent President a front runner for the top job at the white house, pulled out near the finish line, leaving his second in command the Vice President to throw her hat in

the ring against a mighty opponent Donald Trump. The US electorate gave a clear mandate for Donald Trump to lead the new global order for the US. Donald Trump's clear victory in the US elections, now potentially could lead to several multilateral, bilateral rejigs, around the globe. President-elect has already nominated several friends and allies from the past, in some of the top jobs.

He has threatened high tariffs for Canada and Mexico while joking that the former is another state of the US. He has strong views on India's trade surplus with the US which is already an issue of concern for Indian officials. Several Indian ministries were in a huddle in the last week of the year 2024, trying to assess the amount of exports from their respective sectors, while looking at the tariffs imposed on US imports. New Delhi-based policy research



institute Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) spent the last day of the year discussing "Trade Tariff and Trump". Several recommendations were made by the panel of experts regarding the future of India-US bilateral trade relations. A press release from the event highlighted in the first paragraph that "India should have comprehen-

sive engagement with the US, as new administration led by President-elect Trump takes over. India should explore a comprehensive new institutional framework to address the multiple issues that arise from trade, investment, technology and finance linkages. India should urgently consider appointing a Task Force or create other institutional mechanisms that bring in

domestic policy coherence on these lines." In an unrelated development, India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar spent the last week of the year in the US, meeting key presidential nominees for the incoming Trump administration and also attending the last foreign affairs ministers meeting under President Biden, even though QUAD as the framework was empowered by Trump Presidency 1.0.

The policy research institute RIS has cautioned to not respond with any knee-jerk reactions, to possible volatile statements emerging from Washington, immediately after President Trump's swearing-in, instead, it suggests "India may need to plan first, plan hard, and yet plan fast." An agile, business approach may be the best way forward to dealing with the incoming administration.

It may also be worthwhile to note that the

Indian government should reconsider some of the non-tariff barriers it imposes on imports in the form of regulatory compliances and compulsory testing etc. To avert losses, tie up with our US importers need to be strengthened so that they lobby for their own needs. However, low technology products have high US tariffs. We may be left with an avenue there to improve our participation in the value chains being built up in the US manufacturing sector. "A diversification of markets for Indian products may be needed, which could also have a sectoral focus. India can focus on exporting a certain bunch of products to say the Gulf Nations or the ASEAN group of countries depending on the price advantage. Some hedges need to be built to prevent any major hit of Trump tariffs.

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

## AI: Revolutionising Punjab's governance

ASMITAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept confined to science fiction; it is a transformative force redefining governance globally. For a state like Punjab, rich in culture and potential but grappling with multifaceted challenges, embracing AI could be a game-changer. With a technocrat policymaker like Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab is uniquely positioned to leapfrog other states by recognising AI as a critical element for global competitiveness to unlock unprecedented growth. One of the first steps toward AI-driven transformation is the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Artificial Intelligence (MAI). Such a ministry, backed with an Artificial Intelligence policy equipped with adequate budget provisions, could centralise its AI initiatives, ensuring that day-to-day work across multiple departments is well-coor-

inated and strategically aligned.

The ministry could also promote AI literacy among citizens, emphasising the benefits of AI and addressing any potential concerns or ethical challenges. A robust policy framework led by MAI could position Punjab among innovative states. States like Telangana have already set an example by launching an AI mission to drive AI adoption across governance, healthcare, and agriculture. Punjab can adapt these learnings to build a robust AI ecosystem that attracts accountability and efficiency. Fostering Accountability and Efficiency AI is not a replacement for human effort but a tool to support it. AI can free up human resources for more strategic work by automating routine tasks and providing real-time insights. For example, Finland has successfully used AI to improve public services, ensuring accountability and efficiency

in governance without overburdening employees.

Punjab's administration can similarly use AI to track project progress, measure outcomes, and enhance transparency. AI can also play a vital role in curbing corruption, a long-standing issue in governance. By using AI algorithms to analyse patterns in financial transactions and detect anomalies, the government can identify and address instances of mismanagement or fraud. Such measures save resources and build public trust in the governance. Empowering Citizens Through AI Successful implementation of AI empowers citizens. AI-driven e-governance platforms can simplify administrative processes, making it easier for people to access government services. For example, AI chatbots can assist citizens in filing complaints, applying for permits, or seeking information, significantly reducing bureaucratic delays. AI can enhance public safety

by enabling predictive policing and improving disaster management systems. By analysing data on crime patterns and natural disasters, AI can help authorities take preventive measures, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Punjab's residents. Revolutionising Key Sectors -AI can be the cornerstone for transformation in Punjab's key sectors:

1. Health: AI-powered diagnostic tools can revolutionise healthcare delivery in Punjab, especially in rural areas with limited access to quality healthcare. Tamil Nadu's use of AI to predict disease outbreaks and improve maternal healthcare outcomes offers a model worth emulating. Punjab's healthcare system could leverage AI for telemedicine, enabling remote consultations and reducing the burden on overworked medical professionals. Moreover, AI can assist in making cutting-edge treatments more accessible to patients.

2. Education: AI-driven student learning experiences, addressing individual strengths and weaknesses. For instance, a country like Estonia has integrated AI into its education system to offer tailored teaching, ensuring no student is left behind. Punjab can adopt similar systems to improve education levels and employable skill development. AI can also predict dropout rates and identify at-risk students, enabling timely interventions to keep them in education. Additionally, AI tools can train teachers, equipping them with modern methodologies to enhance classroom engagement.

3. Agriculture: Agriculture is Punjab's backbone, but the sector faces multifaceted challenges. AI can optimise irrigation, predict weather patterns, and offer crop-specific advice to farmers. Karnataka's use of AI to predict crop yields and help

farmers secure better prices exemplifies how technology can empower agricultural communities. Punjab could take this further by implementing AI-powered precision farming techniques, which use data from drones and sensors to monitor soil health and pest activity, ensuring higher productivity with lower resource consumption.

4. Industry and Infrastructure: For enterprises, AI could bring regulatory clarity or, conversely, added scrutiny in areas such as data sharing, intellectual property and the ethical use of AI. It can streamline manufacturing processes, enhance supply chain efficiency, and improve project monitoring in infrastructure development. Gujarat's use of AI to attract investments and facilitate industrial growth shows how a state can harness technology to boost its economy. Punjab's industrial sector could use AI to identify global market trends

and adapt its manufacturing capabilities accordingly. In infrastructure, AI can ensure better planning and execution of projects, reducing delays and cost overruns.

5. Resource Mobilisation: AI tools can help Punjab's government enhance efficiency in tax collection, reduce revenue leakages, and improve financial planning. Andhra Pradesh's Real-Time Governance Society (RTGS) uses AI to monitor and optimise resource allocation, providing a blueprint for Punjab to follow. AI can also assist in identifying untapped revenue streams, enabling the government to fund developmental projects without increasing the financial burden on its citizens.

The Way Forward By embracing AI with a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach, Punjab can address its existing challenges and set itself on a path toward sustainable and inclusive growth. The magic of AI lies in its ability

to amplify human potential and solve complex problems. Under the visionary leadership of Bhagwant Mann and with the proper policy framework, Punjab can harness this magic to transform its socio-economic landscape. Establishing a dedicated AI ministry, investing in infrastructure, and adopting AI across key sectors will make Punjab a leader in good governance and improve its people's quality of life. The time to act is now, and Punjab must rise to the challenge to set a precedent for other states to follow.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association. Views expressed are personal)

## Cancer drugs present strongest innovation pipeline in next 5 years: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

Immuno-oncology (IO) drugs or cancer therapeutics represent one of the most promising areas of medical innovation in the next five years, according to a report on Friday.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, based on a survey of 128 pharma industry professionals, showed that the innovation will fundamentally transform how cancer is treated.

"Advancements in immunotherapy such as checkpoint inhibitors, CAR-T cell therapies, cancer vaccines, etc., are revolutionising the way cancer is treated," Urte Jakimaviciute, Senior Director of Market Research and Strategic Intelligence in the health-



care division at GlobalData.

Jakimaviciute noted that these therapies will evolve to lead "to more effective and personalised treatments".

Further, "high unmet needs in cancer with many types of indications lacking effective treatments are driving and will con-

tinue to drive the innovation in immuno-oncology/cancer therapeutics," Jakimaviciute said.

Anti-obesity drugs were the second most popular choice (23 per cent).

The development of anti-obesity medications, such as the GLP-1 receptor agonists that are currently disrupting the market,

is addressing a massive global health issue and creating a lucrative market opportunity for pharma.

The survey also highlighted that anti-obesity medications will have the greatest impact on the pharmaceutical industry this year.

"With still limited effec-

tive treatments available, there is a substantial demand for innovative treatments, making this area a key area of focus for the next five years as well," Jakimaviciute said.

As per the latest estimate from the World Health Organization (WHO)'s cancer agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), there were about 20 million new cancer cases and 9.7 million deaths in 2022.

The data, covering 185 countries and 36 cancers, showed that 3 types of cancer -- lung, breast, and colorectal cancers -- accounted for the most cases and deaths.

It also showed that about one in five people develop cancer in their lifetime, approximately one in nine men and one in 12 women die from the disease.

## Cambodia records 74 per cent drop in malaria cases in 2024: Official

AGENCIES  
PHNOM PENH, JAN 3

Cambodia has reported a 74 per cent decrease in malaria cases in 2024, marking significant progress in the fight against the disease, a health official said on Friday.

Huy Rekol, Director of the National Centre for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control, said malaria cases in the South-east Asian country plummeted by 74 per cent from 1,384 cases in 2023 to only 355 cases in 2024.

"It's wonderful to hear about the remarkable progress Cambodia has made in reducing malaria cases in 2024. It is truly impressive," he told.

"Moreover, Cambodia has reported zero fatalities since 2018 and no local Plasmodium Falciparum cases since January 2024," he added.

Rekol said this achievement could be attributed



eliminate malaria cases by 2025."

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by a parasite that is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito.

Early symptoms include fever, headache, and chills, and usually appear 10-15 days after the bite. Other symptoms include vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, abdominal pain, muscle or joint pain, fatigue, rapid breathing, rapid heart rate, and cough.

Malaria is mainly found in the tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, Asia, and Africa. The term malaria comes from the Medieval Italian phrase mala aria, which means "bad air".

Malaria is common in tropical areas where it's hot and humid. In 2020, there were 241 million reported cases of malaria throughout the world, with 627,000 deaths due to malaria.

Malaria is common in tropical areas where it's hot and humid. In 2020, there were 241 million reported cases of malaria throughout the world, with 627,000 deaths due to malaria.

Malaria is common in tropical areas where it's hot and humid. In 2020, there were 241 million reported cases of malaria throughout the world, with 627,000 deaths due to malaria.

## Elderly patient successfully treated for the rarest of rare Bilateral Herpes Zoster at Manipal Hospitals, Broadway

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, JAN 3

Manipal Hospitals, Broadway successfully handled a rare instance of bilateral Herpes Zoster in Nanda Ghosh, a 74-year-old woman. This is only the fourth documented case of bilateral Herpes Zoster in the country involving a patient who is not immunocompromised. She was brought to the hospital with complaints like fever, high-grade headache, nasal discharge, congestion, and coughing, upon examination, vesiculopapular rashes (small bumps or fluid-filled blisters) among other symptoms suggested a severe and rare presentation of the Herpes virus. Imagine suffering from days of fever, unceasing headache, and pain so inexplicable it just won't subside.

Despite a growing sense that something is seriously wrong, the underlying

cause remains unknown. Such was the condition of this elderly patient till her son brought her to Manipal Hospital, Broadway where finally her condition found a diagnosis and treatment.

Herpes Zoster, commonly known as shingles, can cause painful rashes and typically forms along a single nerve root (dermatome) on one side of the body, often affecting areas like the chest, abdomen, or face.

However, in this case, it manifested bilaterally, which is extremely rare. The lesions formed on both sides of the face, including around the forehead, cheeks, and eyes, which is highly unusual in someone in relatively healthy condition. A multidisciplinary team led by Dr. Partha Sarathi Bhat-tacharjee, Consultant - Internal Medicine, Manipal Hospitals, Broadway, confirmed the diagnosis

through an extensive investigation. The patient was treated with antiviral medication (Zovirax) to target the Herpes virus and antibiotics (Meropenem) to manage secondary bacterial infections. Dermatologists and ophthalmologists were consulted to ensure comprehensive care.

Dr. Partha Sarathi Bhat-tacharjee, Consultant - Internal Medicine, Manipal Hospitals, Broadway, explained, "This case was a medical rarity, especially in a healthy elderly individual without immunosuppression.

Such cases challenge conventional medical understanding and require advanced diagnostic expertise. If left untreated, Herpes Zoster can lead to severe complications such as blindness, hearing loss, and nerve damage. Getting the shingles vaccine can prevent herpes outbreaks.

## What is HMPV virus currently affecting China?

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

After five years of the Covid-19 pandemic, China is currently reeling under the new respiratory the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) virus.

Several media reports and social media posts suggest that the virus is spreading rapidly in the country. Some even claim that hospitals and crematoriums are being overwhelmed.

Videos shared online show crowded hospitals, with some users saying that multiple viruses, including influenza A, HMPV, Mycoplasma pneumoniae, and Covid, are circulating.

The reports claim that the spike in HMPV cases has led to an alarming increase in sudden deaths, with people aged 40 to 80 being particularly affected.

"China is facing a surge in multiple viruses, includ-



ing Influenza A, HMPV, Mycoplasma pneumoniae, and Covid-19, overwhelming hospitals and crematoriums. Children's hospitals are particularly strained by rising pneumonia and 'white lung' cases," said a post by SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) handle on social

media platform X.

Data from the Chinese CDC, in late December, showed that "the positive rate of HMPV in cases aged 14 and below has recently fluctuated and increased", China's state broadcaster CCTV reported.

What is HMPV?

HMPV, discovered in 2001, comes in the Pneumoviridae family along with the Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). However, serological studies have shown that it has existed in humans for more than 60 years and is distributed all over the world.

The virus can lead to upper and lower respiratory disease in people of all ages. Young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are majorly affected.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), symptoms commonly associated with HMPV include cough, fever, nasal congestion, and shortness of breath.

Li Tongzeng, a chief doctor from the Department of Respiratory and Infectious Diseases at Beijing You'an Hospital, Capital Medical University said that HMPV can be transmitted from person

to person through respiratory droplets, and person-to-person contact, such as handshakes, or touching an object contaminated with the virus, the CCTV reported.

It has an incubation period of between three to five days.

Wearing a mask, washing hands frequently, and increasing immunity can help prevent the disease.

Experts are also warning against using antivirals for HMPV.

In a recent interview with the state-backed National Business Daily, a respiratory expert at a Shanghai hospital warned the public against blindly using antiviral drugs to fight human metapneumovirus, for which there is no vaccine but whose symptoms resemble those of a cold.

HMPV had in 2023 been detected in the Netherlands, Britain, Finland, Australia, Canada, the US and China.

## As rabies deaths rise, TN health dept directs vaccine availability in all districts

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, JAN 2

With a rise in dog bite cases across Tamil Nadu, the state health department has directed district and city health officers to ensure round-the-clock availability of Anti-Rabies Vaccine (ARV).

In a statement, the Tamil Nadu Director of Public Health (DPH) instructed health officers to maintain a stock of at least 20 vials of ARV at all times.

Officials have been directed to administer the vaccine in all dog bite cases without hesitation, regardless of concerns about wastage.

Additionally, no denial or refusal to administer

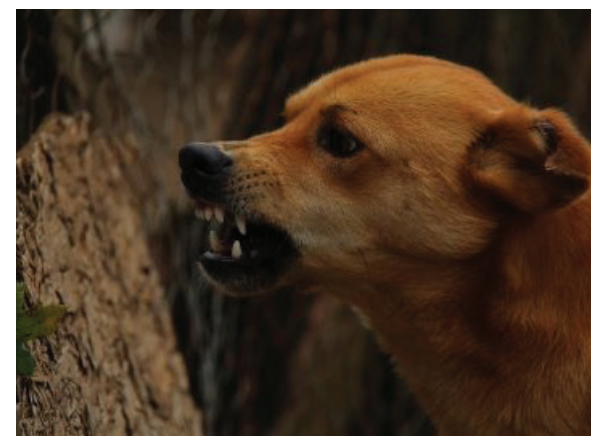
ARV, even during night hours, will be tolerated.

The state has witnessed an alarming surge in rabies-related deaths and dog bites in 2024, with 34 human fatalities and 6.42 lakh dog bite cases reported up to October - the highest in five years.

In comparison, 2023 recorded 18 rabies deaths and 4.41 lakh dog bite cases.

Sources in the health department stated that updated data on rabies cases and deaths is being compiled.

Rabies remains a significant public health concern, with a 100 per cent fatality rate, a stark contrast to Tamil Nadu's zero fatalities from malaria, chikungunya, scrub typhus,



leptospirosis, and Japanese encephalitis in 2024.

A lack of reliable data on the dog population in many districts exacerbates the challenge of managing rabies.

Accurate population estimates are essential

for planning vaccination campaigns and sterilisation surgeries under the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme.

While some districts, such as Chennai and Coimbatore, have conducted dog population censuses,

many others lack this critical data.

Interestingly, the Nilgiris district has been rabies-free for the past 15 years due to sustained and aggressive vaccination efforts.

Sundar Raj, an animal rights activist in the Nilgiris, explained, "We carried out door-to-door vaccination. There was resistance initially, but we convinced people."

He also highlighted the importance of testing dogs with rabies symptoms.

"A rabid dog would have bitten many other dogs before dying. These dogs develop rabies within 2-15 days. If the rabid dog is not tested and ring vaccination is not conducted, the virus keeps spreading,"

he warned.

The DPH's statement also addressed snake bite cases in the state.

Tamil Nadu reported 7,310 snake bite cases till June 2024, compared to 19,795 cases in 2023.

The health department directed district officials to ensure the availability of anti-snake venom (ASV) at all Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres.

A minimum stock of 10 vials of ASV should be maintained at all times.

ASV should be administered to all snake bite victims before referring them to tertiary care facilities.

The department clarified that performing a test dose is unnecessary before administering ASV.

## Modular Operation Theatre, ICU complex inaugurated at SRly Hosp

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, JAN 3

The Southern Railway achieved a significant milestone with the inauguration of a state-of-the-art Modular Operation Theatre (MOT) and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) complex at its newly constructed hospital at Perambur in the city on Friday.

The facility was inaugurated by Dr. Man Singh, Director General, Railway Health Services, Railway Board in the presence of Southern Railway General Manager R.N. Singh and other officials.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Man Singh highlighted the advanced capabilities of the facility and shared

plans for setting up a Post Graduate Institute at the hospital.

He also emphasized the potential of introducing robotic surgery to match corporate healthcare standards, a Railway release said.

Mr Singh reiterated the need to optimally utilize this world-class infrastructure for the benefit of railway employees, their families, and also by non-railway patients on payment basis.

He proposed developing oncology and radiotherapy services under a PPP model in the old hospital premises to enhance services for cancer treatment, while generating additional revenue.

## PRESIDENT MURMU HIGHLIGHTS RISING GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, JAN 3

President Droupadi Murmu has highlighted the rising global concerns regarding mental health, a challenge that has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing societal pressures.

She also acknowledged the growing awareness around mental health issues and the reduction of stigma that had previ-

ously prevented many from seeking help.

"The unscientific beliefs and stigma associated with mental illnesses are a matter of the past," the President remarked, at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) here on Friday.

Murmu noted that mental health issues are now being recognised as significant concerns in

both developed and developing countries, with various age groups facing unique challenges.

"Teenagers and youngsters are grappling with the uncertainty in their studies, while working professionals are facing increased stress. The elderly often suffer from loneliness, and women bear the burden of domestic responsibilities, making them vulnerable to mental health issues," she



observed. The President com-

mended NIMHANS for its proactive role in address-

ing these challenges through innovative initiatives such as the Tele MANAS platform, which has served nearly 17 lakh people across the country, offering mental health support in their preferred languages.

She also praised the institute for pioneering the Bellary model of community-based mental healthcare, which has set a benchmark in accessible mental health services.

In addition to discussing the global mental health crisis, Murmu took note of the significant milestones achieved by NIMHANS over the past five decades.

She congratulated the institute for its leadership in integrating modern healthcare with traditional practices, such as Yoga and Ayurveda, to enhance mental well-being. "This integrative approach serves as a model for

others to incorporate holistic treatments into mental healthcare," the President stated.

Murmu concluded her address by acknowledging the institute's achievements, including its recent recognition by the World Health Organisation with the Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion, and its ongoing commitment to addressing mental health concerns across all demographics.

# Maldives 'concrete expression' of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy: EAM Jaishankar

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI/MALE, JAN 3

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Friday said that Maldives remains a "concrete expression" of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and New Delhi has always stood by the Indian Ocean archipelago, especially when it comes to giving financial support during challenging times.

"We have increased our engagements in various sectors, and I want to emphasise that India has always stood by the Maldives. You are a concrete expression of our 'Neighbourhood First' policy," said EAM Jaishankar during his meeting with Abdulla Khaleel, the visiting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives at New Delhi's Hyderabad House on Friday.

Both sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects under Phase-III

in Maldives through grant assistance by the Government of India and also took stock of progress made on the understandings reached during the State Visit of Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu in October 2024, following-up on issues that need further focus.

"I believe we have some important and positive developments to report, and certainly, there is much more that we need to do. I see that the framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross-border transactions has been signed. We have increased our engagements in various sectors," said Jaishankar in his opening remarks at the start of bilateral discussions.

Khaleel, on his part, appreciated the timely emergency financial assistance extended by India to Maldives in times of need, reflecting India's role as the "First Responder" of Maldives. He reaffirmed Muizzu government's firm commitment to work closely with the Govern-

ment of India in realising the Joint Vision for India-Maldives Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership. Highlighting that the three-day India visit is his first bilateral engagement of the year, he mentioned that 2025 is an important year for Maldives-India relations as both countries celebrate 60 years of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.

"Our partnership dates back to centuries. Our partnership is built on mutual understanding, respect and a shared commitment. Rooted in decades



of trust and friendship, it will continue to thrive... As a beneficiary of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, the government of Maldives deeply values the significant importance India placed in its relationship with the Maldives. We have many examples where the Government of India has consistently stood by the Maldives as an immediate responder in times of need," he said.

"We always appreciate India for its timely assistance, particularly through grant and concessional loans. On the development front, assistance

from India has been transformative. The Greater Male Connectivity Project is a shining example that is set to transform the economic landscape of the Maldives," Khaleel added.

The Maldivian Foreign Minister's visit, stated Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), is part of continued high-level engagements between the two sides and has provided an opportunity to further deepen the bilateral ties for the mutual benefit of two countries and the Indian Ocean Region considering the importance India attaches to its bilateral ties with Maldives under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and Vision SAGAR, or the Security and Growth for All in the Region.

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

## PM Modi blasts AAP as 'Kattar Beimaan', says Delhi suffering under 'AAPada'

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a blistering attack against the Aam Aadmi Party government in the national capital on Friday, saying, "For the past 10 years, Delhi has been engulfed in a major 'AAPada'. Some 'Kattar Beimaan' people (hard-core corrupt individuals), using Anna Hazare's image, have pushed Delhi towards this crisis."

In a scathing criticism of the AAP government, PM Modi said, "Scams in liquor contracts...scams in schools for children...scams in healthcare for the poor...scams in the name of fighting pollution...scams in recruitments...These people talked about the development of Delhi, but instead, they became the 'AAPada' and struck Delhi." These people openly engage in corruption and then glorify it. It's a case of stealing and then showing off. This 'AAPada' has descended upon Delhi, and that's why the people of Delhi have declared war against it. Delhi's voters have decided they will not tolerate this 'AAPada' and



will bring about change, he remarked.

PM Modi called the AAP government a "destructive force" while highlighting the development the BJP has brought to the city. He pointed out that roads, expressways, and new infrastructure projects are progressing in Delhi because they aren't affected by the 'AAPada.' He also expressed his desire to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Delhi to provide free healthcare but noted that the 'AAPada' government was blocking it, depriving the citizens of its benefits.

In his address, PM Modi also inaugurated various schemes worth Rs 4,500 crore and presented keys to newly constructed flats in Ashok Vihar. He also virtually launched urban redevelopment projects, including the World Trade Center in Narojji Nagar and new quarters in Sarojini Nagar. Moreover, he laid the foundation stone for Veer Savarkar College

in Roshanpura, Najafgarh.

While addressing a rally in Delhi, PM Modi slammed former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal without naming him. Referring to social activist Anna Hazare, he stated that some "hard-core corrupt" individuals had used Hazare's image to push Delhi towards a crisis.

He further sarcastically remarked, "Not only do they steal, but they also flaunt it. This 'disaster' 'AAPada' has fallen upon Delhi, and that's why the people of Delhi have waged a war against it. The voters of Delhi have resolved to free the city from this 'disaster.' Every citizen of Delhi is saying, 'We will not tolerate this AAPada, we will change it.'"

He added, "I want to offer Delhi residents the benefits of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which provides free healthcare. However, the 'AAPada' government has a major grudge against the people of Delhi. While this scheme is implemented across the country, the 'disaster' government is blocking it in Delhi, causing the citizens to suffer."

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

Sounding the BJP's poll bugle for Delhi Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday compared the ruling AAP government to a calamity or "AAPada" destroying the city and unveiled a new slogan "AAPada ko hatana hai, BJP ko lana hai".

In an hour-long speech at the inauguration of EWS flats for slum dwellers in Ashok Vihar in North Delhi, PM Modi, without naming the AAP or its leader Arvind Kejriwal, pilloried the Delhi government for alleged corruption in 'Sheesh Mahal', Yamuna cleaning, liquor policy and failure to improve schools and health facilities.

Sheesh Mahal is a reference made in Delhi political circles to the allegedly corruption-riddled renovation of the official residence of AAP leader and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"Ek toh chori upar se seena Jori (They are shameless and show no remorse for misdeed)," he said, highlighting that the

AAP government has failed to utilise even half of the Central government funds given for improving the education sector in Delhi.

Listing the alleged obstructive actions, poor and corrupt governance of the AAP government, PM Modi said, "Delhi voters want to rid the city of this AAPada and are saying, 'AAPada ko nahin sahenge, badal ke raheinge'".

PM Modi's focus on energising the BJP cadre with a new slogan is significant, considering that his iconic slogans - 'Kharchi parchi' in Haryana and 'Ek hain toh safe hain' in Maharashtra - had turned the tide in the BJP's favour in the recent Assembly elections there.

Reiterating his commitment to giving 30,000 new homes to the underprivileged in the city as part of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban, PM Modi took a swipe at the alleged corruption perpetrated by the ruling AAP, saying he could have also built a "Sheesh Mahal" for himself but for him houses for the poor were more important.

PM Modi hit out at the AAP and Kejriwal for



misleading Delhiites with hollow promises of fighting graft. "They used Anna Hazare's anti-corruption campaign as a front and pushed the city towards corruption," he said, adding that Delhiites have been cheated by people who took fake oaths to fight corruption.

Hinting at strict punishment for the corrupt, especially for the AAP leaders facing alleged corruption and money laundering cases, he said, "When AAPada goes and the BJP government comes, these issues will also be tackled."

He promised to give Delhiites the benefits of the nationwide health insurance under Ayushman Bharat and highlighted the plans of the central government to pay up to Rs 75,000 subsidy to every

## Union Carbide waste disposal: Two protesters attempt suicide in Pithampur, CM Yadav blames Cong

AGENCIES  
BHOPAL/PITHAMPUR, JAN 3

Two men attempted suicide during a protest against the transportation of hazardous waste from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal to Pithampur in Dhar district on Friday.

However, some reports said that one person poured petrol over his body and set himself ablaze. Police and other protesters swung into action to douse the fire, during which, another person, who tried to save him also received burns.

Police took both the injured persons to Dhar district hospital for treatment.

According to the information, one of them has been admitted to the ICU ward. Following that incident, police lathi-charged on protesters and chased them away.

However, the protest is being organised at several locations surrounding the Pithampur dumping site. The protesters demanded that the containers carrying the toxic waste be sent back to Bhopal.

Dilip Singh Raghu-

vanshi, a social worker, said: "We have only one request from the state government that the containers of the toxic waste should be sent back from Pithampur. My strike would continue till the 12 containers of waste brought from Bhopal were sent back from here."

The state government said the Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facility (TSDF) at Pithampur is the only suitable site for the disposal of chemical waste in the state. However, the protest that had begun a couple of days back, intensified and more and more people joined the protest on Friday.

Locals also called for a 'Bandh' (shutdown) to mark their protest, closing their shops in solidarity. A local shopkeeper explained, "The reason for shutting the shop is that the 40-year-old toxic waste from Bhopal has been brought here in Pithampur for its disposal. We will not let the waste be incinerated here. We are with the people of Pithampur."

## HIMACHAL CM LAUNCHES PORTAL TO MARKET PRODUCTS OF 350,000 RURAL WOMEN

AGENCIES  
SHIMLA, JAN 3

In a major initiative to empower rural women, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday unveiled an e-commerce portal, Him-Era, to promote products crafted by over 350,000 rural women associated with 44,000 Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

The website, himira.co.in, aims to provide a global platform for SHG products, helping rural artisans and entrepreneurs broaden their market reach and boost their earnings.

The Chief Minister said the Himachal Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission (HPSRLM), under the Rural Development



Department, has been set up to take a step towards empowering the rural women.

He flagged off seven specially designed food vans to offer SHG women new revenue opportunities. A booklet showcasing inspiring stories of women who achieved financial independence under the Himachal Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mis-

sion (HPSRLM) was also released on the occasion.

Sukhu described Him-Era as a symbol of transformation and assured further enhancements to the initiative. He urged SHGs to prioritize quality to maximize their benefits, noting that the state government plans to establish dedicated shops in government buildings to showcase and sell Him-Era

products.

The Chief Minister highlighted the government's commitment to policies aligned with the state's culture and environment, emphasizing rural economic growth and self-employment.

Notable measures have been taken to empower women -- reserving 30 per cent of police constable posts for women; raising the minimum legal marriage age for girls from 18 to 21; providing loans to women to enhance financial accessibility in rural households; engaging women's and youth groups in forest plantation and preservation initiatives, with monetary compensation.

Sukhu criticized the previous BJP government

for distributing Rs 5,000 crore in what he termed "electoral freebies," even to affluent individuals, causing economic strain. In contrast, the current government prioritizes targeted support, such as -- providing 300 units of free electricity to economically weaker households; and offering financial aid for house construction.

He encouraged affluent families to voluntarily relinquish subsidies, citing his own example of giving up his electricity subsidy.

"I am gifting Him-Era products to Union Ministers and other dignitaries," Sukhu added, underlining the state's commitment to promoting rural women's entrepreneurship and showcasing their talent on a larger stage.

## Cold wave grips Telangana, minimum temperature drops below 10°C

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, JAN 3

Cold wave gripped Telangana with minimum temperature dropping to single digits in 15 and out of state's 30 districts on Friday, officials said.

According to the Telangana Development Planning Society (TGDPs), the average minimum temperature in the state was 13.3 degrees Celsius, which is 2.7 per cent below the normal temperature.

There was a significant drop in night temperatures in many places, including the state capital Hyderabad and its suburbs.

Kumaram Bheem Asifabad recorded the lowest temperature at 6.5 degrees Celsius. Sirupur (U) in the district was the coldest place in the state.

Sangareddy district was shivering at 6.9 degrees Celsius, followed by Adilabad at 7.1°C, Vikarabad at 7.3°C, and Rangareddy at 7.5°C.

The other districts which recorded minimum temperature of less than 10°C are Kamareddy (8°C), Nirmal (8.5°C), Mahabubnagar (9°C) and Rajanna Sircilla (9°C), Medak (9.1°C), Medchal Malkajgiri (9.6°C), Siddipet (9.7°C), Jayashankar Bhupalpally (9.9°C), Narayanpet (10°C) and Jagtial (10°C).

There was a sharp drop in mercury levels in and around Hyderabad.

Moinabad in Rangareddy district near Hyderabad experienced biting cold with minimum temperature dropping to 7.5°C.

Moulaali in Medchal Malkajgiri district recorded a minimum temperature

of 9.6°C. Fifteen districts recorded minimum temperatures ranging between 10.3°C and 13.2°C.

Hyderabad district recorded an average minimum temperature of 17°C. Mareddypally was the coldest at 12.1°C.

Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted cold wave conditions at isolated pockets in the Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem Asifabad and Nirmal districts on Saturday.

Mainly low-level North-Easterlies prevail over the state, said an IMD bulletin. Dry weather is likely to prevail for the next seven days.

Mist or hazy conditions are likely to prevail during morning hours at isolated pockets over Telangana during the next five days.

# Two days after peace agreement, deadlock continues in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD, JAN 3

Locals in the Kurram District of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province have refused to end their protest even two days after the rival sectarian tribes of Shia and Sunni Muslims signed a 14-point peace agreement that was supposed to pave way for a ceasefire in the region devastated by violence for over two months now.

Protestors in the district capital of Parachinar maintain that they would continue the sit-in until all roads are opened and made safe for travel.

The protest outside the Parachinar Press Club has been going on for weeks as the locals continue to slam the provincial government for failing to ensure the livelihood and safety of the people, who have been suffering severely due to a complete closure of all routes for over 80 days. This has resulted in major shortage of food supplies and non-availability of medicines, resulting in deaths of more than 150 people, including women and children.

"This is not the first time



that a peace agreement has been signed.

They took over two weeks to sign the agreement, being completely ignorant to the suffering of the people of the area, who are forced to live without food supplies, medicines and basic necessities. 150 people have died because the hospitals did not have medicines to treat them. Who is responsible for this?", a resident of Parachinar told IANS.

"Shia and Sunni conflict has been going on for decades here. People have been slaughtered by rival tribes in ambush attacks many times and every time they end up signing the so-called peace agree-

ments. This time also, a peace agreement has been signed. But no progress is seen on ground as far as opening of routes and supplies is concerned.

Our families are dying here every day because of starvation and medical issues," he added.

The sectarian conflict in Parachinar started in the last week of November when a bus was attacked, resulting in the death of over 47 Shia Muslims. In retaliation, Shia militant groups carried out attacks on Sunni villages, brutally killing over 150 people. Since then, the tribal region has been blocked from the rest of the country.

Even as long delibera-

tions and discussions were being held to establish peace, the delay pushed Parachinar residents into severe misery with over 150 people dying in hospitals due to shortage of medicines. Educational institutions have also remained shut due to security concerns and there has been no movement of public transports. The border with Afghanistan has also remained closed due to security concerns.

Local authorities and members of the peace jirga, or tribal court, have been assuring that after the signing of peace deal, delivery of food and essential goods to Parachinar city, Bushahra and over 100 villages will begin soon.

"Medicines have already been sent to Parachinar by a welfare organisation and similar supplies are also being sent to other affected areas," said Deputy Commissioner Javed Ullah Mehsud.

Roads in Kurram have been blocked for over 87 days now and the only link road that leads to Parachinar has also been closed due to security concerns.

Citing past instances,

locals fear that the peace deal may not materialise because it involves surrendering of all illegal weapons and demolition of bunkers of both Shia and Sunni tribes.

"We welcome the agreement but also know that such agreements in the past have been thrown in the dustbin with a single incident. The Shia and Sunni tribes have been fighting each other for far too long and that they will continue to do so in the future also. I do not think they will surrender their weapons and weaken their firepower," said Saifullah, a protesting resident of Parachinar.

"All we want is our right to live. We do not want to see our children dying in homes and hospitals for lack of medicines and treatment.

We want our children to go to schools and colleges, we do not want our families to spend days without food, we do not want our shops and businesses to shut down.

This is why we will not end our protest until full peace, security and normalcy is restored in the region," he added.

# No safety for civilians anywhere in Gaza: UN humanitarian

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 3

There is no safety for civilians anywhere in Gaza, with more than 80 per cent of the Gaza Strip under Israeli evacuation orders, UN humanitarian said. Philippe Lazzarini, commissioner-general of the UN relief agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, said on social media platform X, "There is no humanitarian zone let alone a 'safe zone.'"

He called for an end to misleading evacuation orders and the killing of civilians, warning that every day without a ceasefire brings more tragedy, Xinhua news agency reported.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the Israeli military ordered the evacuation of large areas within Gaza, citing rocket fire into Israel. The office said an initial analysis indicates the new orders cover about 3 square km in North Gaza and Deir al Balah governorates. Strikes have been reported in the Al Mawasi area, where people were ordered to move and take



shelter.

"Over 80 per cent of the Gaza Strip is under unrevoked Israeli evacuation orders. Amid this situation, OCHA warns that the ability of humanitarian organisations to support people in need across Gaza is further diminishing," said OCHA.

The humanitarians said some of the most onerous restrictions on humanitarian movement were recorded last month, including blocking access to border areas for collecting supplies, denying attempts to deliver goods and services, or assessing needs across Gaza. Overall, 39 per cent of UN attempts to move aid workers anywhere in Gaza were rejected by the Israeli authorities, with another 18 per cent disrupted or interfered with.

Access has been denied for the besieged areas in North Gaza since October 6. According to OCHA, out of 166 attempts, 150 were refused, and 16 were initially agreed to but interfered with or faced impediments. The office noted that access to what remains of hospitals in the north is among the top priorities.

OCHA also said that in the West Bank, it joined with UNRWA and other humanitarian partners to assess the aftermath of an Israeli operation in Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps last week. Teams visited the area on Tuesday and estimated more than 1,000 housing units and about 100 shops were damaged from explosions or bulldozing. Over 20 families of more than 90 people were displaced.

# Security forces seize arms, ammunition in Afghanistan

AGENCIES  
KABUL, JAN 3

Afghan security forces have discovered a vast quantity of arms and ammunition in Kunar and Nuristan provinces, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

The weaponry, which includes 49 Kalashnikovs, four rocket launchers, 29 rocket-propelled grenades, 66 hand grenades, a large number of cartridges and bullets, and other illegally preserved military equipment, have been seized during a series of operations in different districts of the said provinces, the statement added. The statement offered no further information regarding the timing of the seizure of the confiscated weapons and ammunition, nor did it confirm whether any arrests had been made in connection with the case.

On November 3, 2024, security personnel in Afghanistan seized a large amount of weapons and ammunition in the eastern Khost province, the provincial police office said in a statement.

The contraband, which included Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers, PK machine guns, grenades, and a substantial amount of ammunition, was discovered during a series of operations across the province, according to the statement.

The statement did not provide information about when the confiscated weapons and ammunition had been discovered. Six individuals were arrested on charges of possessing illegal weapons and military equipment.

Similarly, on August 20, 2023, Afghan security forces seized a large amount of arms and ammunition in Parwan Province, located in eastern Afghanistan, an official reported.

According to provincial administration spokesperson Sayed Hikmatullah Shamim, during operations in the Jabal Saraj district of the province, 140 rounds of BMI bullets, six boxes of M24, thousands of bullets, explosive devices, and other illegally possessed ammunition were found and seized by the security forces.

# South Korea: Investigators halt execution of warrant to detain impeached Prez Yoon after standoff at presidential residence

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 3

South Korea's anti-corruption agency suspended its attempt to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his failed martial law bid Friday following an hours long standoff between investigators and presidential security staff.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) said it halted execution of the warrant at 1:30 pm, about five-and-a-half hours after its investigators arrived at the presidential residence to detain Yoon, Yonhap news agency reported.

"We determined that executing the detention warrant would be practically impossible due to the continued confrontation, and suspended the execution out of concern for the safety of on-site personnel caused by the resistance," the CIO said in a notice to the press. "We plan to decide on the next steps following a review."

"We express serious regret over the behavior of the suspect who refused

to comply with legally set procedures," it added.

A CIO official later told reporters investigators got within 200 meters of the residence building but were deterred from getting any closer.

"More than 10 buses or cars were blocking the way and some 200 people with the Presidential Security Service (PSS) or military were forming layers of walls, making it impossible to get past," the official said, noting the team executing the warrant comprised 20 people from the CIO and 80 police personnel. "I understand there were scuffles big and small at each stage."

The official said three prosecutors were allowed to walk up to the front of the residence, but not inside, making it difficult to determine whether the president was at home.

The prosecutors did, however, meet with two lawyers for Yoon -- Yun Gap-geun and Kim Hong-il -- who the official said repeated their position that the president could not comply with a warrant issued "illegally" to



an agency unauthorised to investigate insurrection charges.

The CIO has until Monday to execute the detention warrant on charges of insurrection and abuse of power linked to Yoon's short-lived imposition of martial law on December 3.

Rallies by Yoon's supporters outside the presidential residence, however, have complicated the CIO's effort, along with the potential for clashes with the PSS.

More than 1,000 pro-Yoon protesters gathered near the residence on Friday morning. Surrounded by some 2,700 police officers deployed

to maintain order, they chanted: "Illegal warrant. Completely invalid" and "Arrest the CIO."

When news broke about the CIO's withdrawal, the protesters, whose number had grown to 11,000 according to a police estimate, erupted in cheers and shouted "We won" while waving the South Korean and US flags and chanting the president's name.

Anti-Yoon protesters led by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, meanwhile, vowed to stage an overnight rally near the residence to demand Yoon's arrest.

The CIO had been expected to try to detain

Yoon on Friday as executing the warrant on Saturday or Sunday could risk confronting even larger crowds, while executing it Monday would be too close to the deadline.

The CIO has teamed up with the police and the defense ministry's investigation unit to conduct a joint probe into Yoon's failed martial law bid.

During Friday's attempted arrest, the investigators presented their court-issued warrants to detain Yoon and search the presidential residence, but were denied entry by PSS chief Park Chong-jun, who cited restrictions on secured areas.

Before confronting the PSS, the investigators had also been resisted by a military unit stationed on the compound.

The CIO requested the detention warrant after Yoon ignored all three summonses to appear for questioning. The agency also obtained a warrant to search the presidential residence.

Yoon's legal defence team has called the warrants "illegal and invalid"

and filed for an injunction against their execution.

On Friday, Yun told Yonhap News Agency "legal action" will be sought against the CIO's attempt.

Police had said anyone trying to stop the CIO from executing the detention warrant would be taken into custody on charges of obstruction of official duties. No one was detained on such charges Friday, a police official said.

The joint investigation team later revealed PSS chief Park and his deputy were booked on suspicion of obstructing special official duties and requested to appear for questioning Saturday.

Investigators had planned to arrest Yoon and take him to the CIO's headquarters in Gwacheon, just south of Seoul, for questioning before detaining him at the Seoul Detention Center in nearby Uiwang.

Once detained, the CIO would have had 48 hours to either seek another warrant for his formal arrest or release him.

# Israeli strikes hit defence factories, research facility in Syria's Aleppo

AGENCIES  
DAMASCUS, JAN 3

A series of blasts rocked Syria's southern Aleppo province, as Israeli warplanes carried out strikes on defence factories and a research centre there, according to local media and a war monitor.

The local news outlet al-Watan Online reported that multiple explosions reverberated in Al-Safira city, where defence facilities are located.

The report added that the attack targeted a scientific research center on the city's outskirts, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, confirmed at least seven large explosions, saying

Israeli aircraft bombed both the Al-Safira defense factories and a research centre.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The latest raid, the observatory noted, brings the total number of Israeli airstrikes on Syrian territory to 498 since the fall of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government in early December last year.

Earlier on December 30 The death toll from a powerful explosion at a Syrian weapons depot near the Adra Industrial City in rural Damascus rose to 11, with most of the casualties believed to be civilians, a war monitor reported.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights and local media, search and rescue teams remain at the scene to recover bodies and clear debris.

The blast sent debris flying and caused extensive damage to the facility associated with the now-ousted Bashar al-Assad's government, Xinhua news agency reported.

Initial reports indicated at least two people were killed, but the death toll continued to rise throughout the day.

A video posted online showed significant destruction and multiple fatalities.

Guterres underscored that Israel and Syria must uphold the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, which remains fully in force.

# WORST PRESIDENT IN US HISTORY: TRUMP SLAMS BIDEN OVER 'OPEN BORDER POLICY'

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

United States President-elect Donald Trump on Friday launched a fiery attack on outgoing President Joe Biden, calling him "the worst President in the history of the United States" while criticising his administration's Open Border Policy.

In a series of posts on social media platform X, Trump described the current state of the country as a "disaster" and "a laughing stock" on the world stage, blaming President Biden for the decline in national security, safety, and leadership.

Trump's scathing remarks centered on what he perceives as the

disastrous consequences of President Biden's 'Open Border Policy'.

He warned that the policy would lead to worsening levels of radical Islamic terrorism and violent crimes in America, saying, "The time has come, only worse than ever imagined."

In his post, Trump further condemned President Biden, stating, "What he and his group of Election Interfering thugs have done to our country will not soon be forgotten!"

The President-elect also accused various US institutions, including the Department of Justice (DoJ), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Democratic state officials, of failing in their duties.



According to Trump,

these agencies and officials have been "incompetent and corrupt," focusing instead on politically attacking him rather than safeguarding the country from internal and external threats.

"Our country is a disaster, a laughing stock all over the world!" Trump wrote.

"This is what happens when you have OPEN BORDERS, with weak, ineffective, and virtually non-existent leadership."

He further added that the DOJ, FBI, and local prosecutors have spent their time unlawfully attacking him, instead of tackling violent elements that have infiltrated the US government and the nation.

Trump also called for immediate action from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), urging them to intervene before the situation deteriorates further.

"The USA is breaking down - a violent erosion of Safety, National Security, and Democracy is

taking place all across our Nation," he said.

"Only strength and powerful leadership will stop it," he added.

In a final message to his supporters, Trump promised that his administration would restore the country's strength, stating, "See you on January 20th. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN."

Trump, who is set to be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20, will take office amid a turbulent political climate. In addition to his criticism of Biden's policies, Trump also voiced support for the H-1B visa programme, which has been a point of contention in US immigration debates.

# India's smartphone market to cross \$50 billion in value this year: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

India's smartphone market is projected to cross \$50 billion in value by 2025, driven by the ongoing trend of premiumisation and thrust on local manufacturing, a report showed on Friday.

The retail average selling price (ASP) of India's smartphone market is expected to cross the \$300 mark for the first time this year, according to latest research from Counterpoint's 'India Smartphone Outlook'.

Apple and Samsung are leading this shift by offering competitive options in the premium and ultra-premium segments.



Apple is expected to see strong demand for its Pro models, driven by local manufacturing and recent price reductions across its iPhone lineup.

Meanwhile, Samsung's value-focused strategy is

gaining traction, particularly with its flagship S series. OnePlus, with the launch of its flagship OnePlus 13, is aiming to increase its share in the ultra-premium segment (above Rs 45,000), the report men-

tioned. The shift towards premiumisation is also being driven by consumers increasingly opting for offline stores, where they can experience premium smartphones firsthand before making a purchase.

The report stated that growing interest in AI-powered features has further motivated consumers to seek hands-on demonstrations to better understand these innovations and make more informed decisions.

"The Indian smartphone market is evolving rapidly, with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) increasingly focusing on premium

launches to strengthen brand equity, showcase technological capabilities and improve profitability," the report noted.

In the affordable premium category (Rs 30,000-Rs 45,000), brands such as Vivo, OPPO and OnePlus are attracting consumers by offering advanced camera systems and refined CMF designs.

The planned investment of Rs 6,000 crore by OnePlus in local market expansion in a phased manner is expected to accelerate its recovery and growth.

According to the report, the premium segment (Rs 30,000 and above) in the country is projected to exceed 20 per cent market share by 2025.

# NSE clocks highest capital raised at Rs 1.67 lakh cr globally via 268 IPOs in 2024

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 3

The Indian stock market witnessed an initial public offering (IPO) boom in 2024 as compared to any other global stock exchange, with the National Stock Exchange's (NSE) Rs 1.67 lakh crore (\$19.5 billion) capital raised through them becoming the highest in the world, according to a report by the exchange on Friday.

The 268 successful IPOs across mainboard (90) and SME (178) raised Rs 1.67 lakh crore, and were also the highest number of IPOs within Asia.

The 268 IPOs are also the highest figure of public issues recorded ever in India, demonstrating the growing con-

fidence of investors in the capital markets.

It includes the largest IPO in India and the second largest IPO globally of \$3.3 billion of Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL).

While 90 mainboard companies (excluding REITs, InvITS, and FPOs) raised over Rs 1.59 lakh crore, 178 SMEs collectively raised around Rs 7,349 crore, the report stated.

"The record number of IPOs during 2024 highlights the resilience and potential of the Indian economy. Companies across various sectors are recognising the value of public markets to support their growth strategies," said Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer (CBDO), NSE.

In fact, the data suggests that NSE has alone done more IPOs than other top exchanges in Asia which includes the IPOs Japan's (Japan Exchange Group), Hong Kong's (Hong Kong Stock Exchange), and China's (Shanghai Stock Exchange) have done cumulatively.

The capital raised by the companies via the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) was \$15.9 billion and the Shanghai Stock Exchange was \$8.8 billion. China's Shanghai Stock Exchange recorded 101 public issues while Japan and Hong Kong's stock exchanges witnessed 93 and 66 IPOs, respectively.

In 2024, there were a total of 1,145 IPOs raised globally compared to 1,271 in the year before.

# Indian tech industry grows 3.8 pc at \$254 billion in FY24, employs 5.43 million people

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

Despite a challenging year, the Indian technology industry, valued at \$254 billion, grew by 3.8 per cent (year-on-year) in FY24, according to a report on Friday.

The tech industry employed 5.43 million professionals, with a growth rate of 1.1 per cent in FY24, focusing on Generative AI, cloud and cybersecurity skills.

The expansion into tier 2 and 3 cities is seen as critical to bridging talent shortages, according to Grant Thornton Bharat's '2025 Tech Trends Report'.

"As far as India is concerned, technology companies will need to navigate the business growth challenges as well as seize the new opportunities from Generative AI and new tech in 2025," said Raja Lahiri, partner and technology industry leader, Grant Thornton Bharat.

The country's focus on GenAI and Engineering



Research and Development (ER&D) services drove 7.4 per cent growth, with aerospace, defence and automotive leading digital engineering projects.

Moreover, with 1,700 global capability centres (GCCs), India remains a hub for tech innovation, bolstered by investor interest and a strong startup ecosystem, the report mentioned.

"India is expected to continue to dominate the global technology services

market driven by the availability of massive tech, engineering talent as well as high-quality business and digital transformation impact on global clients," Lahiri added.

Despite challenges, the industry's vast talent pool and growing adoption of generative AI, SaaS and digital transformation projects position it for a moderate recovery in 2025.

According to the report, Indian companies would need to create and foster

a culture of excellence in quality, innovation and customer experience to lead the world of tech in the New Year.

The Indian tech industry faced slowing revenue growth and rising employee costs in FY24, spurred by high attrition rates during the pandemic.

"Firms must balance cost containment with strategic investments in innovation to navigate economic uncertainties and maintain competitiveness in the evolving tech landscape," the report mentioned.

India's deep tech ecosystem, comprising over 3,600 start-ups, demonstrates immense potential in areas like AI, space tech, and health tech.

"Strategic Gen AI deployment, encompassing use-case selection, robust governance, and operational efficiency, positions organisations to achieve long-term value creation, making AI a cornerstone of the digital transformation journey," it added.

# realme partners with KRAFTON India to revolutionise Indian e-sports landscape

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

India's gaming industry is experiencing remarkable growth, transforming the country into a major force in the global gaming landscape. By 2028, the APAC region is projected to generate \$181.8 billion in gaming revenue, representing 54.4 per cent of the global market. Within this region, India's online gaming market is expected to reach Rs 66,000 crore by 2028, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 14.5 per cent.

Several factors contribute to this growth, including India's young demographics, with nearly 600 million people under 35 years of age. Coupled with some of the world's most affordable mobile data prices and over 650 million smartphone users, India has cultivated a strong culture of digital entertainment consumption, particularly in gaming.

The industry's growth is particularly evident in two key segments. The



real-money gaming (RMG) market has gained significant momentum through skill-based games, while the social and casual gaming sector continues to expand its reach among young adults and working professionals.

This surge in app-based gaming reflects broader changes in entertainment preferences, driven by increasing smartphone adoption and improved internet connectivity.

To further tap into India's burgeoning gaming market, realme has joined forces with KRAFTON India as the official smartphone partner for Battlegrounds Mobile India Series (BGIS) 2025 and Battlegrounds Mobile India Pro Series (BMPIS) 2025.

Marking 2025 as its first dedicated gaming year, realme has positioned esports as a core strategic focus. This strategic collaboration comes at a pivotal time, as India is projected to reach 720 million mobile gamers by 2028. The partnership will kick off with the BGIS 2025 LAN Finals in Kolkata, featuring a substantial prize pool of Rs 2 crore, demonstrating the scale of investment in competitive gaming.

To realise this gaming-focused vision, realme has established an internal team, bringing together specialists from research and development, marketing, and product departments.

The team works closely with KRAFTON India on joint research and development and exclusive debugging initiatives, demonstrating realme's commitment to building a robust e-sports ecosystem.

Following its "make it real" philosophy, this commitment is already evident in devices like the realme GT 7 Pro, which has

been well-received in the Indian market for its strong gaming performance capabilities.

The realme GT 7 Pro will also be serving as the official smartphone for BGIS 2025.

The collaboration represents a significant step in realme's broader vision to revolutionise the mobile gaming landscape in India.

Through strategic investments in esports infrastructure, grassroots initiatives, and technological innovation, realme aims to make premium gaming experiences more accessible while nurturing the next generation of esports athletes. Beyond tournaments, the partnership focuses on building a comprehensive ecosystem that supports content creators and provides interactive platforms for the gaming community, leveraging realme's expertise in high-performance smartphones and KRAFTON's influential position in the gaming industry to create a more engaging gaming ecosystem for Indian users.

# VANDE BHARAT SLEEPER TRAIN ACHIEVES PEAK SPEED OF 180 KM PER HR DURING TRIALS

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

The government on Friday said that Vande Bharat sleeper train has achieved a peak speed of 180 km per hour in its multiple trials in the last three days.

The trials will continue till this month-end, before this world-class travel for long-distance travel is made available to rail commuters across the nation, the Ministry of Railways said.

Sharing a video of a successful trial in Kota Division, Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, mentioned the speed in a post on X.

The video shows a full



glass of water adjacent to a mobile on a plain surface inside a Vande Bharat sleeper train.

The static water level can be seen in the video as the train achieves near constant peak speed of 180 km per hour.

The post came after 3

days of successful trials, which concluded on January 2, in which a Vande Bharat sleeper train in its loaded condition touched the peak speed, according to the ministry.

On Thursday, during a 30-km long run between Kota and Laban in Bundi

district of Rajasthan, the train reached a peak speed of 180 km/hour.

A day earlier, in a 40 km long trial run between Rohal Khurd to Kota, Vande Bharat sleeper train touched the peak of 180 km per hour.

On the same day, peaks of 170 km/hr and 160km/hr were achieved on the Kota-Nagda and Rohal Khurd-Chau Mahla sections.

"New Year is all set to bring faster and safer rail travel to commuters in India. After successfully giving faster, safer and world-class travel experience to people travelling short and medium distance chair car trains,

Indian Railways is making this a reality for long-distance trains also," the minister emphasised.

Once these trials are over, the train will be evaluated by the Railway Safety Commissioner at the maximum speed. Only after passing the final stage, Vande Bharat trains will be officially certified and handed over to Indian Railways for induction and regular service, the ministry said.

Passengers are already enjoying reclining seats and world-class travel experience through 136 Vande Bharat trains running across the country on medium and short distances.

# India well-positioned to see significant growth in agricultural export in 2025: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

With the government's focus on infrastructure development, technological advancements and initiatives to promote exports, India is well-positioned to see significant growth in its agricultural export sector in 2025, according to a report on Friday.

Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) have emerged as a powerful tool for improving the economic well-being of Indian farmers, especially smallholders, according to the report by Praxis Global Alliance.

By pooling resources, FPOs help farmers achieve collective bar-



gaining power, providing access to quality inputs at lower costs and facilitating market access.

"One of the most successful examples of an FPO model is Amul, the dairy cooperative, which has empowered millions of small farmers by providing them with fair prices and access to a vast market network," said Akshat Gupta, Practice Leader, Food and Agriculture at Praxis Global Alliance.

India's agriculture

sector remains a cornerstone of its economy, employing approximately 42 per cent of the population. Its contribution to GDP stands at 18 per cent.

According to the report, with the establishment of Mega Food Parks and investing in cold chains, India can significantly reduce post-harvest losses and increase the shelf-life of its produce, enabling it to access high-value international markets.

Australia's success in expanding agricultural exports is largely due to the Farm Export Facilitation Program (FEFP), which improves logistics, establishes export hubs, and enhances market access through better trade agreements.

# DPIIT, Startup Policy Forum partner to establish India as global hub for innovation

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, on Friday announced a partnership with the Startup Policy Forum (SPF) aimed at establishing India as a global hub for innovation and entrepreneurship.

SPF is a premier industry organisation representing India's leading new-age companies.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DPIIT and SPF aims to empower startups, innovators, and entrepreneurs to drive economic growth.

The MoU reflects a vision to make technology and innovation integral to India's economic growth,

driving the nation closer to Bharat at 2047 aspirations.

"This strategic collaboration with SPF underscores DPIIT's unflinching commitment to create a congenial atmosphere where startups could thrive and contribute immensely to India's mission of becoming a global innovation hub," said Sanjiv, Joint Secretary, Startup India.

"This alliance is a testament to the shared vision of DPIIT and SPF to cultivate a resilient and thriving startup ecosystem. By fostering impactful collaborations, we aim to position India prominently on the global innovation map and empower entrepreneurs to unlock their full potential," added Shweta Rajpal Kohli, President & CEO, Startup Policy Forum.

# White-collar hiring in India up 9 pc in Dec, AI and ML roles in high demand

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

White-collar hiring activities increased by 9 per cent in December as compared to the same period last year, according to a report.

In the white-collar hiring sphere, high-skill and strategically important jobs were in high demand.

According to Naukri Job-Speak, the index increased to 2,651 points in Decem-

ber 2024, posting a strong annual growth of 9 per cent.

In the white-collar hiring in December, AI/ML registered a jump of 36 per cent, oil and gas 13 per cent, FMCG 12 per cent and healthcare, 12 per cent.

The report further stated that fresher recruitments witnessed a slowdown throughout 2024 but in December, it registered a jump of 6 per cent.

Freshers' hiring has seen a 39 per cent increase in the design sector, 26 per cent in beauty and wellness and 19 per cent in consumer durables.

Top metro cities saw an impressive 10 per cent jump in recruitment at the end of the year, the report mentioned.

After the recruitment trends in October, south India's performance remained strong in Decem-

ber as well and it contributed significantly to the increase in white collar jobs.

Chennai and Bengaluru registered a jump of 35 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively, in recruitment.

Coimbatore registered a jump of 14 per cent in freshers' recruitment and Hyderabad registered a jump of 15 per cent in hiring.

# 5TH TEST: RELENTLESS BOLAND PICKS 4 AS AUSTRALIA BOWL OUT INDIA FOR 185

AGENCIES  
SYDNEY, JAN 3

A relentless Scott Boland proved to be India's nemesis yet again by picking a four-wicket haul as Australia bowled out India for a paltry 185 on day one of fifth Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.

Electing to bat first on a grassy pitch backfired for India, as they suffered another first-innings failure to be dismissed for a score below 200 for the fifth time in the ongoing series.

Apart from Boland's 4-31, Mitchell Starc took 3-49 while skipper Pat Cummins chipped in with two scalps as Australia's fast bowlers took nine wickets in an accurate bowling performance.

On a cloudy morning, India left out captain Rohit Sharma, with Jasprit Bumrah replacing him at the helm. In the morning,

Starc and Cummins got some steep bounce on the green SCG pitch, which has shown signs of being on the slower side.

KL Rahul initially showed good judgement to balls outside the off-stump, but fell for four off 14 balls after chipping a half-volley on leg-stump to square leg off Starc. Boland struck with his fourth ball in India's eighth over when he got to nip one away and extracted an outside edge of Jaiswal's bat, which was safely caught by debutant Beau Webster at third slip, as the opener fell for 10 off 26 balls.

The seamer almost got his second wicket on the bounce when he found Virat Kohli's outside edge, and Steve Smith dived across to catch to his right at second slip. But it seemed like Smith had got his fingers underneath the ball and flicked the grass while scooping the ball to



Marnus Labuschagne at gully, something which TV umpire Joel Wilson spotted while ruling Kohli not out.

From there, Kohli, batting with his stance covering middle and off stumps, looked solid in defence, even as Gill got a great start by collecting a four each off Cummins and Starc. Just when it felt that India would end the session unscathed, Gill danced down the pitch against Nathan Lyon in the final over before lunch, but he

managed to only nick him behind to slip and fell for 20 off 64 balls.

The post-lunch session began on a bad note for India as Boland got to seam away sharply Kohli jabbed at the delivery on a fifth-sixth stump line to give a catch to debutant Beau Webster in the slips and fell for 17 off 69 balls.

Starc also turned up his pace and left Pant with a bruise on his bicep, as well as hitting him on the helmet, leaving the left-

handed batter circumspect. Starc's pace was too hot to handle for Jadeja as he looked to duck his rapid bouncers.

After cutting Starc past backward point for four, Pant danced down the pitch to smack Webster over the sightscreen for six, despite taking in a blow to his body again. Jadeja got his first boundary of the match by driving Lyon past non-striker for four, before being dropped by the off-spinner at five against Webster.

Pant rocked back to cut Lyon in the gap between backward point and cover point to end a slow scoring session for India. Post-tea break, Pant attempted to pull off Boland, but top edged straight to mid-on and fell for 40. One brought two as Nitish Kumar Reddy steered Boland's wide short one straight to slip.

Jadeja tried resurrecting the innings with two more boundaries before being trapped plumb lbw by Starc for 22. Washington Sundar hit three boundaries in his 14 off 30 balls before being bounced out by Cummins, with Wilson saying the snicko detected a little spike as the ball brushed past the glove.

Though Jasprit Bumrah hanged around by hitting three fours and a six in his 17-ball 22, the highest score by an Indian skipper in the ongoing series, Australia wrapped up the innings as Starc had Prasad Krishna heaving straight to the deep fielder, while Cummins got the Indian captain holing out in the same fashion to bring an end to another sorry batting show by the visitors'.

Brief scores: India 185/10 in 72.2 overs (Rishabh Pant 40, Ravindra Jadeja 26; Scott Boland 4-31, Mitchell Starc 3-49) against Australia

## United Cup: Czechia beat Italy to set up semis clash with USA

AGENCIES  
SYDNEY, JAN 3

Karolina Muchova and Tomas Machac led Czechia into the semifinals of the United Cup after beating Italy 2-1 in their quarterfinal here on Friday. After World No. 22 Muchova conceded just four games in her fifth consecutive win over World No. 4 Jasmine Paolini, Machac imposed his physicality on 22-year-old Flavio Cobolli to clinch the tie. Czechia will next face the USA for a place in the final. Machac, entering the season at a career-high No. 25 in the ATP Rankings, breezed through rankings service games and out-muscled the World No. 32 from the baseline. He charged through the first set in just 23 minutes and claimed a 6-1, 6-2 win in just 54 minutes.

"I think this is the highest level of tennis that I can play. I'm really happy to play like this at such an important moment. I was surprised how I played great without any mis-

takes and I didn't give him any opportunity to come back. I know I have this kind of level...when I saw how the match was going I just tried to be strong mentally for as long as possible. I was playing like Novak!" Machac said.

Earlier, Muchova gave Czechia a 1-0 lead after defeating No. 4 seeded Jasmine Paolini 6-2, 6-2. The victory improved Muchova's record to 5-0 over Paolini.

"I really wanted to bring a point to the team so I was trying to stay focused. Jasmine is an unbelievable player. It was a really tough match. I knew I had to go until the end. She had many break chances. I think I served well. I'm really happy I made it," said Muchova.

Muchova's attacking game proved too much for Paolini, who has won just one set in the pair's five meetings. Their last duel was at the US Open last fall, where Muchova prevailed 6-3, 6-1 en route to the semifinals.

## KKFI unveils trophy, mascots for inaugural Kho Kho World Cup

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

The Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) on Friday unveiled the trophies for the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup, scheduled for January 13-19. Under the aegis of the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the tournament will showcase 21 men's and 20 women's teams from 24 countries across six continents at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium. The World Cup will feature two trophies - a blue trophy for the men's championship and a green trophy for the women's event. Both trophies embody the spirit of Kho Kho through their contemporary design, featuring flowing curves and golden figures.

The blue trophy symbolises trust, determina-



tion, and universal appeal, while the green trophy represents growth and vitality. Both pieces feature intricate crystal detailing that symbolises the precision and excellence demanded at the highest level of competition.

The KKFI also introduced 'Tejas' and 'Tara,' a duo of gazelles serving as the official mascots for the tournament. These mascots embody the sport's core attributes of speed, agility, and teamwork.

Tejas, symbolising brilliance and energy, and Tara, representing guid-

ance and aspiration, are depicted in vibrant blue and orange sporting attire adorned with traditional Indian motifs, celebrating both the sport's heritage and its modern appeal.

"We are very grateful to all our stakeholders who will be supporting the inaugural edition of the Kho Kho World Cup 2025. The World Cup will be live streamed free on Disney+ Hotstar and broadcast for free on DD Sports as well, which is a massive boost to a sport indigenous to India. This World Cup is the first step towards taking the sport to the Olympics, and with the help of all our partners, we hope to show the world the beauty of Kho Kho. Our mascots Tejas and Tara symbolise the sport's core attributes of speed, agility, and teamwork.

He emphasized the importance of staying focused and continuing to

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, JAN 3

Mohun Bagan Super Giant head coach Jose Molina expressed satisfaction with his team's dominant performance in their Indian Super League (ISL) victory over Hyderabad FC.

In a match that showcased Mohun Bagan Super Giant's attacking prowess, the team cruised to a commanding 3-0 victory over Hyderabad FC on Thursday night. The scoring began early with

Stefan Sapic's own goal in the 9th minute, followed by Tom Aldred doubling the lead in the 41st minute. Jason Cummings sealed the win with a well-taken goal in the 51st minute.

He emphasized the importance of staying focused and continuing to



work hard as the season progresses.

"The plan is similar in every match we play. We have to go to win the match from the beginning, from the first minute. Sometimes the plan works better than other days, you know.

But usually, it's working well, right? And today we could score in the first minutes, we had a lot of chances to score, to dominate the game. It's

true that they have some chances at the end, in the last minutes of the game they had some chances to score too," Molina said, reflecting on the team's strategy during the post-match press conference.

Molina was pleased with the team's efforts but acknowledged room for improvement ahead of their next game when they host arch-rival East Bengal FC on January 11. "I think we did a great

job, a great match. We scored three goals, we could have scored many more goals. It's the only point I can have, I can be disappointed with our performance... We are going to have some days off now, and after that start to work hard for the next match," he said.

The coach also highlighted the value of squad depth and the importance of maintaining readiness across the team.

He praised the players' professionalism and adaptability, particularly as Mohun Bagan Super Giant deals with injury concerns and prepares for the highly anticipated Kolkata derby.

"Hopefully, we can recover some injured players, but this venue has injuries too. It's the same for all teams—some play-

ers are unavailable. Now we have time to work on recovery. If it's not possible, we have enough players. I always say the same: I won't cry over unavailable players. I'll help those available win the match and work to get the others back as soon as possible," Molina remarked confidently.

Looking ahead, Mohun Bagan Super Giant will enjoy a brief break before resuming preparations for their next match.

Molina acknowledged the challenges and importance of the upcoming clash, stating: "This has to be a big match. Hopefully, we can recover some of the players who are still injured. If not, we have enough players, and I am not going to cry because some players are not available."

## UP Rudras defeat Soorma Hockey Club 3-0 in Hockey India League

AGENCIES  
ROURKELA, JAN 3

UP Rudras took on Soorma Hockey Club and beat them 3-0 in the Hockey India League 2024-25 at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here.

Sudeep Chirmako (2') scored early in the game for the UP Rudras on Thursday night, while Soorma Hockey Club created multiple opportunities in the second quarter, the UP Rudras held firm and Jobanpreet Singh (38') doubled their lead in the third quarter.

Akashdeep Singh (58') scored in the last quarter to seal the UP Rudras' second win in the League.

UP Rudras took control of the game right from the push off, forcing Soorma Hockey Club to



defend deep. And in just the second minute, Gurjot Singh ventured into the shooting circle and found Lalit Kumar Upadhyay but his shot was deflected to Sudeep Chirmako who unleashed a rocket on the

half turn to score the first goal of the game.

Soorma Hockey Club began stringing passes together as the quarter progressed and rebuffed the Rudras' advances on their goal. Soorma went

on to earn two penalty corners as the first quarter came to an end but failed to find the back of the net.

UP Rudras continued to employ a high press in the second quarter but Soorma grew into the

game, earning a slew of penalty corners but the Rudras' defensive unit, led by first rusher Lars Balk and goalkeeper James Mazarelo remained alert to avert any danger to their goal.

The Rudras stepped it up a notch in the third quarter, putting together incisive passes around Soorma players.

At the 38 minute mark, Sudeep Chirmako, from the left wing, pulled the ball back to Jobanpreet Singh who pushed the ball into goal and doubled UP Rudra's lead in the game.

Soorma Hockey Club began pressing high in search of a goal but were unable to find chinks in UP Rudras' defence.

Soorma Hockey Club wrestled more possession

as the last quarter began and forced the UP Rudras into their own half. They showed more patience on the ball to create chances and it wasn't long before Vivek Sagar Prasad found Gurjant Singh in the shooting circle but his shot sailed wide of the post.

The UP Rudras earned a couple of penalty corners with five minutes left in the game but failed to capitalise. Soon after, Hardik Singh initiated a counter attack and passed to Akashdeep Singh. He made it 3-0 for the UP Rudras with a blistering reverse tomahawk.

Soorma Hockey Club's Captain Harmanpreet Singh surged ahead in search of a consolation goal and earned a penalty corner but was unable to keep it on target.

## Arsenal were best team in the league in '24 but still missing something: Arteta

AGENCIES  
LONDON, JAN 3

Mikel Arteta has proudly stated that Arsenal were statistically the best team in the league in 2024, but his side still has no major trophies to show for it.

While speaking on his team's ambitions, he asked his team for consistency and hopes to flip the coin on their fortunes. "We have to show the same level of consistency and a bit more, because last year we were the best team in the league, broke various records and still haven't won a major trophy, so something is missing. It's going to be very thin, small details; you can pick up certain games



and situations, but at the end, we're so close, and we just have to flip that coin to the other side to make it happen. That's only going to happen if we do what we have to do and what we can control; the rest is out of our hands," said Arteta.

While Manchester City claimed the 2023/24 title and Liverpool have been the standout team so far this season, it is Arsenal who finished out the year at the top of the calendar year table with 85 points across 36 matches.

## 'Motivation for all Indian coaches': Dronacharya awardee football coach Armando Colaco

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 3

Former national coach Armando Colaco said the Dronacharya Award 2024 for Lifetime achievements he was conferred with on Thursday, should go a long way in producing more quality Indian coaches.

Colaco, who comes from Goa, is the third Indian football coach after

Syed Nayeemuddin and Bimal Ghosh to be conferred with the prestigious award.

Undoubtedly one of the country's most successful coaches in the new century, Colaco, during his coaching career of nearly four decades, holds the distinction of excelling in both the national and international arenas.

"First and most impor-

tant is that our coaches are going to realise that all your hard work is going to communicate, and I could be an inspiration to all these coaches because I'm like a bridge between the old generation and the new generation. This could be a sort of motivation for all Indian coaches since foreign coaches are currently playing a dominant role in Indian foot-

ball," said Colaco, who coached the national team in 2011.

During his short stint as the national coach, Colaco had some impressive results under his belt, including a 2-1 victory over Qatar in a friendly played at Doha. The same year, Colaco guided India to a creditable 2-2 draw against the mighty United Arab Emirates in a World Cup

qualifying match at the Ambedkar Stadium, Delhi.

"But etched in my memory will always be the 0-3 defeat we suffered against UAE in the away tie. We were reduced to nine men within 25 minutes because of two red cards.

I had to quickly change the tactics and shuffle the players to stay in the game," said Colaco.

As a club coach, Colaco took Dempo Sports Club, Goa, to a new height. Under him, Dempo won the National Football League twice and the I-League three times. His wards included players like Samir Naik, Mahesh Gawali, Clifford Miranda, and Climax Lawrence, who went on to don the national colours for many years. In the years

between 2004-05 and 2011-12 seasons, Dempo were the dominant force in Indian domestic football under the tutelage of Colaco.

"I had players who went on to play for the national team and even captain the national team. So, you know, that made me a very happy person. God has rewarded me. That's the greatest satisfaction

because I have really worked very hard all these years," said the veteran coach.

Even at 70, Colaco remains an active coach and hasn't lost his hunger for success. He is currently attached to the Sporting Clube de Goa.

"My aim now is to take the club to the I-League, and I hope to succeed soon," he said.

## DLSA Samba inaugurates 4 day Orientation Training Program for implementation of NALSA Scheme

JNEWS SERVICE  
SAMBA, JANUARY 3

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Samba today inaugurated a four day Orientation Training Programme for the members of the Legal Services Unit for Persons with Mental Illness and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (LSUM) and Legal Services Unit for Children (LSUC).

The event was held under the Chairmanship of Ravinder Nath Wattal, Chairman DLSA /Pr. District & Sessions Judge and under the supervision of Sandeep Singh Sen Secretary DLSA.

The initiative aims to enhance the understanding and implementation of the NALSA Scheme 2024.

The programme was inaugurated in the Conference Hall of ADR Centre, DLSA by the Chairman



DLSA (Pr. District & Sessions Judge), in presence of the Child Welfare Committee, Principal Magistrate Juvenile Justice Board and Superintendent of Palaash (home for boys) and Pareesh a home for girls, besides members of JJB and LSUM, Panel Lawyers and PLVs of

DLSA Samba. The inaugural session highlighted the importance of the scheme in ensuring access to justice for individuals with mental and intellectual disabilities.

Bala Jyoti, Former District and Session Judge, Advisor/Mentor of the

Committee, addressed the participants virtually. She emphasized the need for effective implementation of the scheme and provided valuable insights on the role of LSUM and LSUC in bridging the gap between the legal system and vulnerable individuals. She also shared her experience in the implementation of Child related laws and she further emphasised that Children are the most vulnerable yet valuable segment of our society and they represent the hope and promise of a better future and as caretakers of this future, it is our collective responsibility to ensure they grow up in an environment that nurtures their rights, dignity and well-being.

The Secretary DLSA Samba further elaborated on the objectives of the

orientation programme, underscoring its importance in equipping the participants with the necessary knowledge and tools to implement the scheme effectively.

Principal Magistrate Juvenile Justice Board Cheema Sumbraria and Chairperson CWC Neemisha Rajput, shared their practical experiences in the field, providing the participants with a first-hand perspective on handling cases related to children's

The four days orientation programme is poised to be a significant step in fostering collaboration and understanding among stakeholders, ultimately aiming to ensure better legal aid and support for persons with mental and intellectual disabilities in the region and children in need of care and protection.

## Agriculture Minister calls for strict enforcement of norms to curb supply of substandard pesticides, fertilisers

JNEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 3

Minister for Agriculture Production Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, today reiterated government's commitment towards supporting the farmers and strengthening the agricultural sector through targeted initiatives and effective oversight.

He stated this while chairing a meeting with Director Agriculture Kashmir, Joint Directors, Provincial Heads, Scheme Heads, Sectoral Officers and Chief Agriculture Officers from various districts at the Agriculture Complex, Lalmandi, Srinagar.

During the meeting, the Minister reviewed the physical and financial progress under the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP),



CAPEX budget and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). Besides, implementation of projects under HADP and the performance of allied departments was discussed in detail.

Highlighting the importance of timely and efficient utilisation of funds, the Minister stressed the need for expeditious and judicious expenditure under HADP, CAPEX and CSS projects. He emphasised the need for maintaining highest standards of transparency and accountability throughout the expenditure process.

Dar directed the officers to ensure that only genuine and high-quality inputs

including pesticides, fertilisers and seeds are made available to farmers. He also underlined the significance of stringent enforcement of norms to prevent circulation of substandard products that could harm agricultural productivity and farmer livelihoods.

The Minister instructed the officers to actively engage with farmers in every area and educate them about the latest farmer-friendly technologies in the agriculture sector. He urged them to work collaboratively with farmer communities to ensure the successful implementation of various projects at the grassroots level.

## 2-Day orientation prog on NALSA scheme by DLSA Srinagar & Budgam concludes

JNEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 3

District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) Srinagar and Budgam successfully concluded a two-day orientation programme today for members of the Legal Services Unit for Children (LSUC).

This initiative, held as part of the implementation of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) Scheme 2024, aimed to enhance the knowledge and effectiveness of LSUC members in ensuring justice for children.

The programme, which commenced on January 2, 2025, brought together participants both physically and virtually to discuss strategies for providing accessible and impactful legal services to children.

Nusrat Ali Hakak, Secretary DLSA Srinagar and Budgam, underscoring



the critical role of LSUC members in upholding the rights of children. She highlighted the transformative potential of the NALSA Scheme 2024 in empowering vulnerable children and ensuring they receive timely and effective legal aid.

Masarat Shaheen, a retired judicial officer, joined the programme virtually and shared her expert insights on the legal framework for children's rights.

She emphasized the importance of understanding of the NALSA Scheme and its provisions,

encouraging participants to adopt a proactive and empathetic approach in their roles.

Members of the LSUC actively engaged during the sessions, discussing practical applications of the NALSA Scheme and exchanging ideas to enhance service delivery.

Participants from DLSA Budgam joined virtually, ensuring that geographical constraints did not hinder comprehensive involvement. The orientation programme also focused on fostering a deeper understanding of the legal rights and entitlements of

children, equipping participants with the tools necessary to address their specific needs effectively.

This initiative reflects the commitment of the District Legal Services Authorities of Srinagar and Budgam to upholding the principles of justice, equality, and inclusivity.

By equipping LSUC members with the knowledge and skills required to implement the NALSA Scheme 2024, the DLSAs continue to demonstrate their dedication to ensuring access to justice for the most vulnerable members of society, especially children.

The successful conclusion of this programme marks a significant step forward in the collaborative effort to safeguard the rights of children and ensure their voices are heard within the justice system.

## Doda admin issues public advisory in view of adverse weather forecast

JNEWS SERVICE  
DODA, JANUARY 3

The District Administration Doda advised people to take necessary precautions and adhere to safety guidelines in view of inclement weather forecasted by Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Meteorological Centre Srinagar.

The District Administration/DDMA has urged the people to avoid unnecessary travel during adverse weather conditions. Ensure adequate preparation for cold weather, especially for vulnerable individuals such as children and the elderly. Hotel, lodge, and guest house owners must ensure proper ventilation in rooms to prevent suffocation and health issues for visitors and travellers.

The Departments including Revenue, PWD

(R&B), PWD (Mechanical Engineering), PMGSY, Urban Local Bodies, JPDCL, Jal Shakti, and Health & Medical Education have been directed to keep men and machinery ready for maintenance of respective services.

In case of emergencies, the public can reach out to the 24x7 control rooms and essential services through -Control Room - DC Office Doda with Toll-Free numbers 18001807122, 9906320997, 9596776203; Additional Deputy Commissioner Office, Baderwah on 9419169866, 9419258788. Sub-Divisional Magistrate Office Assar on 9596950297, 7889545110; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Office Gandoh on 9018308432, 9419963224; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Office Thathri on 7780969683, 9596944416.

For medical and other emergency Services, people can contact CMO Office Doda & Ambulance Service: 01996-233542; Mechanical & Hospital Division Doda-9103325287, 7006522052 and Fire & Emergency Services Doda: 101, 01996-233458. PCR Doda (24x7): 7298923100, 01996-233530. Departmental Contact Numbers: PWD R&B Doda/Baderwah/Thathri/Gandoh: 9419000691, 9419145428, 9596945909, 9906147680. PDD Doda/Thathri/Gandoh: 9419155397, 7006723366, 7006042530, PMGSY Doda / Thathri : 9419126567, 9419185243, NHIDCL PMU Doda: 7889551818, Jal Shakti Doda/Thathri/Gandoh: 7006471597, 7006545633, 9906147680, FCS & CA Doda: 9419091918.

## DLC approves 03 Change of Land Use Cases

JNEWS SERVICE  
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 03

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan convened a meeting of the District Level Committee on Change of Land Use (CLU) today.

The meeting was held to discuss and approve several CLU applications relevant to the district.

After thorough scrutiny and verification, the committee approved 03 cases seeking change of land use.

Each case was assessed based on its merits and potential impacts to ensure a balanced approach towards land use changes in the district.

DDC stressed the need to adhere to regulatory guidelines, ensuring that all CLU decisions align with the development goals and environmental priorities of the district.

## Javed Rana reviews development scenario of Pulwama

JNEWS SERVICE  
PULWAMA, JANUARY 3

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting regarding development scenario of Pulwama district.

The Minister asked the district administration to take local MLA's into confidence while formulating and implementing the government's schemes in the district. He said that being elected representatives of the area, MLAs have a mass reach and officials can take their help in ensuring that each eligible beneficiary is covered under the government schemes. He asked for holding awareness camps about the schemes so that people at grassroots can be enrolled under various schemes.

He called for maintaining quality standards in execution of development works while ensuring time bound completion. He also called for continuous monitoring and regular follow ups to ensure that all schemes are implemented successfully for welfare of the people. Reiterating gov-



ernment's commitment towards people centric development under the leadership of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, the Minister underscored the importance of ensuring prompt services to the people.

Maintaining that the district has immense potential for economic and social transformation, the Minister asked the administration to focus on productive utilization of district's abundant natural resources. This would alleviate unemployment and contribute to inclusive socio-economic growth, he added.

While reviewing progress on Jal Jeevan Mission in the district, the Minister called for coordinated efforts to ensure that every household is provided a functional tap water connection.

The Minister highlighted the government's unwavering commitment on holistic development

of tribals with an emphasis on improving basic amenities and socio-economic indicators. He asserted that significant attention be given to initiatives such as tribal hostels, Eklavya Residential Schools and hostels.

During the meeting, the Minister outlined plans for enhancing natural resource management including establishment of Firewood Depots that could evolve into Timber Depots, ensuring equitable access and sustainable resource utilization for the people. The Minister also praised Pulwama's potential in high-density plantation and other programs aimed at environmental preservation and community engagement. Javed Rana highlighted the plans for improving medical facilities, bolstering manpower in health and education, infrastructure and rural development and expanding access to scholarships for underprivileged students.

## CS reviews progress on 29 HADP projects

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 3

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a meeting of Agriculture Production Department to review implementation of different sub projects taken up under flagship Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) in J&K.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, APD, Principal Secretary, Finance, VC SKUAST J/K, MD, JK Bank, MD, HADP, Deputy Commissioners, HoDs in APD besides other concerned officers while out station officers participated online.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon the concerned to focus on establishment of units under different sub-projects of this programme. He maintained that the programme is target oriented with milestones to achieve at different intervals. He maintained that the productivity of this programme would be gauged by the activity-wise outcomes registered in different districts having direct bearing on its potential to generate employment in the UT.

He sensitized the district administration about



the need for periodic review of the targets so that the concerned sectoral officers chase them purposefully. He also directed the Mission Director to personally examine the performance of each officer for course correction down the line. Dulloo also enquired from the DCs about the progress achieved under this ambitious programme in their respective districts. He asked them to give priority to the areas depicting poor performance. He also reviewed project wise applications received and approved by districts besides units established in each along with position of funds received and utilized.

Earlier in the meeting, Principal Secretary, APD, Shailendra Kumar, gave an introduction about the

overall progress of this programme. He highlighted the steps being taken up by the department to achieve the annual targets set under this 5 year programme.

It was given out that full disbursement of subsidy amount in favour of around 11,000 units had been done till date under this mission. It was added that the number of courses would be increased to 161 shortly under Daksh Kisan educational portal.

Moreover, nearly 4000 events had been organised under Kisan Sampark Abhiyan 3.0 with a total attendance of more than 1,85,000 farmers covering around 92% panchayats, as informed in the meeting.

Regarding the approvals given by the district level committees, the meeting was apprised

that its rate hovers at around 74%. It also discussed the performance and establishment of Kisan Khidmat Ghars and that of Krishi Udhayis in different districts. A portal demonstrating their performance on real time basis is under creation through BISAG-N to bring efficiency in the functioning of both, the meeting was told.

The sub-projects discussed in the meeting included Farm mechanisation and automation, development of fodder resources, Development of Seed & Seed Multiplication chain, promotion of Niche Crops, promotion of vegetable/exotic vegetables under open and protected cultivation, strengthening of agriculture marketing, Medicinal and Aromatic plants, beekeeping, promotion

of Sericulture, promotion of Millets and nutri-cereals, self-sufficiency in mutton production and promotion of year round mushroom cultivation among others. The plan included a total of twenty-nine projects and the interventions made under HADP are going to create employment opportunities for over 2.8 lakh youth with establishment of around 19,000 enterprises.

Moreover, 2.5 lakh persons shall be skilled in various agri-enterprises ranging from seed production, precision farming of vegetables, bee-rearing, cocoon production, mushroom farming, integrated and organic agriculture, high-density fruit farming to processing, dairying, sheep and poultry farming as well as fodder production.