

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 pain
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool
- 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: 18 | 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

'Mann Ki Baat': EC used power of technology to strengthen people's power: PM Modi

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the Election Commission on Sunday, saying it has used the power of technology to strengthen people's power and also shown commitment to a fair polling process.

Modi's praise for the poll body in his monthly Mann ki Baat broadcast came ahead of its foundation day on January 25, observed as the National Voters' Day, and amid frequent criticism from the opposition for its alleged pro-BJP bias.

The EC has modernised and strengthened the elec-



tion process from time to time, Modi asserted. "It has used power of technology to strengthen people's power," he said, asking people to partici-

pate in the polling process in large numbers to be part of democratic process and empowering it. Opposition parties have increasingly raised

questions on the integrity of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and Modi's remarks can be seen as an endorsement of the EVMs.

The prime minister said doubts were cast on India's viability as a democracy after it became independent, but the country proved them wrong. After all, India is mother of democracy, he said.

The programme was held on the third Sunday this month as against the last, which is usually the case, as next Sunday is Republic Day, Modi noted.

The prime minister played short audio clips of some of the members of India's constituent assembly, including its chairman Rajendra Prasad, Bhim Rao Ambedkar and Syama Prasad Mookerjee, to highlight the values

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Train to Kashmir: 22-bogie train's trial run successful on Katra-Srinagar line



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

A 22-bogie train chugged between Katra and Srinagar railway stations on Sunday, officials said, marking the first successful trial run on the newly completed line to connect Kashmir with the rest of the country via rail.

The train, comprising 18 AC coaches, two luggage carriers and two engines, left the Katra railway station at around 8 am, successfully reaching its destination within four hours under the watchful eyes of the railway authorities, the officials said.

This was the first trial run between Katra

and Srinagar, and came within six days after the Commissioner of Railway Safety (Northern Circle) Dinesh Chand Deswal authorised the opening of the newly constructed Broad Gauge line.

He had given the authorisation for the start of public carriage of goods and

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LG attends Bharatiya Jain Sangathan's programme at Jammu



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 19

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today expressed his gratitude to the voluntary organ donors and called upon the people to come forward and join the noble cause of organ and tissue donation.

"For donors, organ donation provides a life-giving opportunity. Let us all join the efforts and

make our valuable contribution to society through organ and tissue donation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor was attending a programme organised by Bharatiya Jain Sangathan J&K under the aegis of SS Jain Sabha J&K to promote organ donation.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor requested the State

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Lt Governor interacts with the Youth participating in Border Area Youth Exchange Programme



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 19

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today interacted with the youth from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, who are on a five-day visit to Jammu under Border

Area Youth Exchange Programme (BAYEP), under the aegis of NYKS-MY Bharat, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.

During the interaction, the participating youth shared their experiences about their visit to the border areas of Jammu

region.

Extending his best wishes for their future endeavours, the Lieutenant Governor called upon the youth to play active role in socio-economic progress and contribute towards realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat.

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MeT predicts rain, snow from Monday in Jammu and Kashmir

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 19

The Meteorological Centre Srinagar predicted three-day wet weather from Monday with rain and snow over Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

The MeT office said the weather will remain dry over the plains with the possibility of light rain

or snow over the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday.

During January 20 and 21 there is a possibility of light snow at isolated to scattered places while light rain over the plains of Jammu and on January 22 there is a possibility of light to moderate rain over the plains of Jammu and snow at many places

of Jammu and Kashmir, it said.

Higher reaches of Chenab valley and Pir Panjal Range may also receive light to moderate snow.

Another spell of light to moderate rain over the plains of Jammu and snow at many places of Jammu and Kashmir is

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Death Strikes again: Rajouri village loses 17th victim to mysterious 'disease'

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 18

The sixth and last child of Mohammad Aslam from Badhaal village of Rajouri in Jammu division has succumbed at GMC Jammu, taking the death toll in the 'mysterious disease' to 17.

An official told the news agency Yasmeeena Jan, daughter Mohammad Aslam was taken to GMC Rajouri last Sunday from where she was referred to

GMC Jammu on Monday where she died during treatment this evening.

Principal GMC Jammu, Dr Ashutosh Gupta confirmed her death to KNO and said that her condition was critical from day one. Yasmeen was the lone surviving child of Mohammad Aslam, who lost his all six children to this 'mysterious illness' now.

Aslam has lost four daughters, two sons and his maternal uncle and

aunt in last one week.

Minister for Health and Medical Education Sakina Itoo has reportedly said that there is no need to panic as she ruled out the possibility of virus and infection after conducting tests at multiple institutes of India.

Meanwhile, a high level of team of Union Government reached the Badhaal area on Sunday to ascertain the cause of the mysterious deaths.

Gunfight between militants and security rages in Sopore

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 19

A gunbattle is underway between militants and security forces in the Sopore area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district Sunday evening, officials

said.

They said the security forces on a tip regarding the presence of militants at Zaloor area of Sopore launched a CASO.

"During the searches, as the joint team of security forces reached a particular place, the

militants opened fire, and the foremen effectively retaliated, triggering an encounter," they said.

Police said fire was observed in the area when a hideout was busted.

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Dr Jitendra inaugurates mega 'innovation complex' at Mumbai, dedicates it to startups

JI NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, and Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated India's first-of-its-kind CSIR Mega "Innovation Complex" at Mumbai and dedicated it to StartUps and Industry stakeholders.



The new Innovation Complex at Mumbai, inaugurated by the Science & Technology Minister, is

a huge state-of-the-art set up spread over nine floors, equipped with 24 "ready-to-move" incuba-

tion labs in addition to furnished office and networking spaces for innovative StartUps, MSMEs, industry, and CSIR labs. The Mega facility will provide high-end scientific infrastructure, expertise, and regulatory support to stakeholders including CSIR labs, StartUps, MSMEs, and industry, for the SOP-driven studies necessary for regulatory submissions and compliance.

The Complex includes ready-to-move world-class incubation labs and IP/business

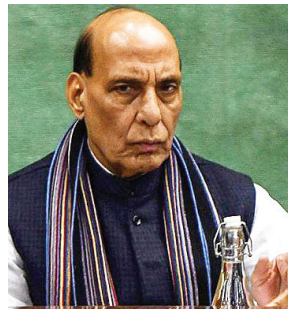
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Will make India a developed country by 2047: Rajnath Singh

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAUNPUR (UP), JAN 19

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has become the largest digital economy today. While talking to the reporters, the Defence Minister said, "There are the highest number of 5G users from cities to villages. We will make India a developed country by 2047."

He was talking to journalists after attending a ceremony organised at



the residence of senior BJP leader Jagat Narayan Dubey. Rajnath said that today when India says something, the whole world listens to what India is saying. "Scientists are making military equip-

ment on Indian soil and are also exporting it to other countries. 1.30 lakh startups are working in the country," he said.

He said that today the youth of the country should read the history of India and its achievements in every field are present in the history. While answering the questions of the reporters, the Defence Minister said that occupied Jammu and Kashmir is the crown jewel of India and without it Jammu and Kashmir is incomplete.

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Mortar shell found near IB in Samba

JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA/JAMMU, JAN 19

A rusted 82-mm mortar shell was recovered on Sunday by the Border Security Force (BSF) near the International Border in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

The mortar shell was noticed by a BSF patrolling party near Border Outpost Kamour area in Ramgarh sub-sector around 9.45 am, the officials said.

Pandit Abhay Sopori honoured with National Business Excellence Award 2025 by Global India Business Forum

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

Renowned Santoor maestro and music composer Pandit Abhay Rustum Sopori has been conferred with the prestigious National Business Excellence Award 2025 by the Global India Business Forum (GIBF), which is connected with over 150 countries embassies and consulates supporting India's Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The award recognizes exceptional leaders, innovators, and pathbreakers, including entrepreneurs, diplomats, and cultural icons, for their contributions to the nation's development. The award recognizes Pt. Abhay Sopori as India's Best Santoor Player and Music Composer, and his extraordinary contributions to preserving and innovating the legacy of the Santoor as well as his efforts in promoting Indian music and culture globally. The award was presented at the Constitution Club of India, Delhi by Dr. Jitendra Joshi, Founder and Global President of GIBF, along



with H.E. Dr. Ali Achoui, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to India, and H.E. Ganbold Dambajav, Ambassador of Mongolia to India. The ceremony was graced by esteemed dignitaries for giving the award including H.E. Clemente Pedro Francisco Camenha, Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to India, H.E. Mariano Augustin Caucino, Ambassador of Argentina to India, H.E. Vahagn Afyan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Armenia to India, H.E. Elchin Huseynli, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to India, H.E. Fesseha Shawl Gebre,

Ambassador of Ethiopia to India, H.E. Jagannath Sami, Commissioner of Fiji to India, H.E. Ina Hagnningtyas Krishnamurthy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Indonesia to India, H.E. Munyiri Peter Maina, High Commissioner of Kenya to India, H.E. Javier Manuel Paulinich Velarde, Ambassador of Peru to India, H.E. Denis Alipov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to India, H.E. Dr. Roger Gopaul, High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago to India, H.E. Prof. Joyce Kakuramatsi Kikafunda, High Commissioner of Uganda to India,

Deepali Gadhari, Secretary General GIBF, and others. Pandit Abhay Rustum Sopori, a scion of the Sopori - Sufiana Gharana of Kashmir, represents a 300-year-old musical legacy with deep roots of Shaivism and Sufi mysticism, and is the son of the Saint Music Legend Pandit Bhajan Sopori and grandson of Master musician Pandit Shambhoo Nath Sopori. Known for revolutionizing the sound and technique of the Santoor, he has elevated the instrument to global prominence through innovation and exclusive renditions. His performances, including at prestigious events like G20 summits and Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2025, have showcased Indian classical music on the world stage. Apart from his artistry, Pandit Abhay Sopori has contributed significantly to the academic and cultural landscape of Jammu & Kashmir and has been instrumental in introducing a Cultural Policy and incorporating music as a subject in colleges, which led to the historic

inclusion of Postgraduate Degrees in Music in Kashmir recently. His initiatives have created new avenues for academic and professional growth, empowering countless musicians especially the youth. Pandit Sopori expressed gratitude to Global India Business Forum and dedicated the honour to his fabled legacy, the Sopori Sufiana Gharana of Kashmir and the rich cultural heritage of India. "This recognition is a reflection of the timeless legacy of Indian classical music and the transformative power of culture in uniting the world," he remarked. The Global India Business Forum, a leading international business chamber, celebrates exceptional individuals and their extraordinary contributions to the nation. Through the National Business Excellence Awards, GIBF highlights and honours innovators, leaders, and visionaries like Pandit Abhay Rustum Sopori, who inspire progress and excellence across industries.

Natrang Stages 'Sarkari Afsar' Highlighting Government Office Vices

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

Natrang presented 'Sarkari Afsar', a play in Hindi in its weekly theatre series, Sunday Theatre today at its Studio Theatre here in Kachi Chawni, Jammu. The play has been written by Laxmikant Vaishnav and was directed by Neeraj Kant. The play portrayed a real life situation of a 'Sarkari Daftar' (Government Office) and highlighted the vices in a very intelligent manner. The play opens in a Government Office where all the employees are shown to working in their own styles. As they have job security, no one bothers to exercise punctuality; on the contrary, they have their own reasons to modify the rules and regulations as per their personal convenience. The common vices like red-tapeism, nepotism, favouritism, corruption, absenteeism and sycophancy which are generally associated with such offices are prominently shown in the play in a very genuine manner. The office has a peon who listens to none as no one can remove him from his permanent job and moreover no one, even the boss has courage to say anything to him as he has lot of secrets of theirs



and thus exploits them at appropriate times. Everyone in the office has his/her weakness and each one is busy exploiting that just to implement a personal agenda. The only person who musters respect from this stubborn peon is an official who is relative of a minister who works fearlessly as being a relative of a Minister, as no one could harm him in any manner. On the top of it, the Head of the Department, who was supposed to maintain integrity and punctuality of the office himself, shirks from his duties and remains absconding from the office to cater to his personal merry making engagements. But to the dismay of

all, a vigilance officer conducts a surprise raid and finds no one in the office without any information and thus orders suspension of all the absconders. But by the time this new situation could establish the faith of good governance, the raid by a vigilance officer turns out to be dream and the fate of working of a Government office continues to be the same. Natrang young artists who performed in the play included Mihir Gujral, Aryan Sharma, Kartik Kumar, Adaksh Bagal and Lalita Sharma. Lights were operated by Neeraj Kant whereas the music of the play was scored by Kananpreet Kaur.

Omar Govt committed for comprehensive development, youth empowerment: Rattan Lal Gupta

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU JAN 19

Rattan Lal Gupta, Provincial President of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), reaffirmed the party's unwavering commitment to the empowerment of J&K's youth, terming them as the backbone of society. He was addressing a joining program held at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan, Jammu, where he strongly criticized the Central Government for failing to fulfill its promises made on August 5, 2019, regarding the development of J&K. The Joining Programme was organized by S. Tejinder Singh Aman District President Jammu Urban YNC. Expressing deep resentment, Rattan Lal Gupta stated that despite grand assurances on the floor of the Parliament, the ground reality in J&K remains unchanged. He highlighted that unemployment in the region has reached its peak in the last ten years, with no tangible outcomes from the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 85,000 crore signed by the previous J&K government in the past. He lamented that no major industries have been established, leaving the youth struggling for employment opportunities. The senior NC leader further emphasized that the Omar Abdullah-led government has always been dedicated to the cause of youth empow-



erment. He urged the newly joined members to create awareness among the youth regarding various government schemes aimed at fostering entrepreneurship in J&K. He stressed that J&K's youth are hardworking and equally competent as their counterparts across the country, but they require adequate support and opportunities to excel. Calling upon the party cadre, Rattan Lal Gupta urged them to strengthen the hands of Omar Abdullah and work diligently towards ensuring that the youth of J&K receive their due rights and opportunities. He reiterated the commitment of NC Govt headed by the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to building a progressive and prosperous future for the younger generation, emphasizing that their growth and success are pivotal to the overall development of Jammu and Kashmir. He stated that the party would continue to advocate for policies and programs that focus on skill development, job creation, and educational advancement, ensuring that no young individual

in the region is left behind. The Provincial President underscored the necessity of collective efforts in shaping a future where the youth can contribute meaningfully to the progress of J&K, reiterating NC's resolve to stand by them in their aspirations and struggles. Sheikh Bashir Ahmad Provincial Secretary Jammu asked the newly joined members to work hard and actively engage with the people at the grassroots level. He emphasized the importance of strengthening the party's base by connecting with the youth and addressing their concerns. He encouraged them to spread awareness about the party's vision and commitment to the welfare of J&K's youth, ensuring that they become a driving force in the region's development. Addressing the gathering, Tejinder Pal Singh Aman apprised senior party leaders about the pressing issues faced by the youth, including rising unemployment and the lack of opportunities due to hollow policies adopted by previous regime.

He emphasized the need for a proactive approach to address these concerns and lauded the National Conference for its consistent efforts to uplift the younger generation. Those who joined the party fold include: Raman Sharma, Tanveet Singh, Harsimarjeet Singh, Charanpreet Singh, Manpreet Singh, Taranpal Singh, Taranjit Singh, Karanvir Singh, Shushant Bhaderwaj, Amitpal Singh, Kirsh Kumar, Kewal, Tarsem, Sunny and others. Those who were present on this occasion included: Vijay Lochan Chairman SC Cell, Mohinder Kumar Rana Joint Secretary Central Zone, Zamir Quershi, Nitish Gowsami, Muzamil Malik Provincial Secretaries YNC Jammu, Ajay Kumar Block Secretary Jammu East, Yasir Ashan, Adhyan Sharma District Vice President Jammu Urban YNC, Amit Sharma, Majid Iqbal Naik District Joint Secretaries Jammu, Attal Singh Block President North A YNC, Sourav Sharma, Naresh Kumar, Akhil Mehra Ward Presidents Jammu Urban YNC and others.

Cardiac Health in Rural Areas- Disparities and Challenges: Dr Sushil

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

To strengthen their campaign further to aware the common populace about the ill effects of Cardiovascular diseases Head Department of Cardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma in collaboration with Shri Ram Krishan Jan Kalyan Mission Trust held a day long cardiac awareness cum health check camp at Shri Raghunath Dham Bhojpur R S Pura, Jammu in loving memory of Late Shri Yashpal Sharma Ji (former MLC J&K) who will continue to inspire upcoming generations to work for upliftment and betterment of society in their diverse sectors. While interacting with the people Dr Sushil Stated that Cardiac health is a critical component of overall well-being, yet significant disparities exist between rural and urban populations. Individuals living in rural areas often experience higher rates of heart disease and related conditions, exacerbated by systemic inequalities in access to healthcare, socioeconomic factors, and lifestyle challenges. Understanding these disparities is vital for creating targeted solutions to improve cardiac health outcomes in rural communities. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death and rural populations are disproportionately affected. Studies show that residents in rural



areas have higher rates of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and smoking as key risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Limited access to preventive care often means that these conditions go undiagnosed or poorly managed, leading to more severe outcomes such as heart attacks and strokes. He elaborated that one of the primary reasons for these disparities is the lack of access to healthcare facilities and specialists in rural areas. Rural regions often face shortages of primary care physicians and cardiologists, making timely diagnosis and treatment difficult. Additionally, rural residents may need to travel long distances to access care, a barrier that is further complicated by inadequate public transportation and financial constraints. Emergency care for acute cardiac events is also delayed in rural areas due to the longer response times of emergency medical services (EMS). Socioeconomic disparities play a significant role in cardiac health outcomes in rural areas. Poverty

rates tend to be higher in rural communities, limiting individuals' ability to afford healthy food, medications, and regular medical check-ups. Educational gaps also contribute to poorer health literacy, making it difficult for residents to understand and manage their risk factors. For example, rural individuals may lack awareness of the importance of routine screenings for hypertension or cholesterol, which are crucial for preventing heart disease. He added that Efforts to reduce disparities in cardiac health in rural areas require a multifaceted approach. Expanding access to healthcare through telemedicine is a promising solution, as it allows rural residents to consult with specialists without the need for travel. Increasing funding for rural healthcare facilities and incentivizing healthcare providers to work in underserved areas can also make a significant difference. Community-based interventions, such as public health campaigns to promote healthy lifestyles, are another criti-

cal component. Educating rural populations about the importance of heart health and preventive care can empower individuals to make informed choices. Policymakers must also address systemic issues, such as improving infrastructure for transportation and increasing access to affordable healthy food options. He Said Swami Shri Umeshanand Ji (Director & Guardian) of the Trust while addressing the people of the area during Homage to Late Shri Yashpal Sharma appreciated his contribution to the society irrespective of any region or religion and his contribution will be remembered for the ages to come and Dr Sushil Sharma and his team is carrying forward the legacy of Late Shri Yashpal Sharma, He Said. Others members of the Trust Shri Jasvir Singh , Shri Rajinder Sarfu , Shri Bhag Singh , Shri Ajit Singh Chaidi, Shri Mohinder Lal and Shri Rajinder Kumar appreciated the efforts of Dr Sushil and his team for conducting cardiac awareness cum health check up camp in their area for welfare of the people . Others who were part of this camp includes Dr Ventatesh Yellupu. Paramedics and volunteers includes Ranjeet Singh , Amnish Datta , Rajkumar , Gourav Sharma , Vikas Kumar , Amish Jamwal, Rajinder Singh , Rohit Nayyar, Makhan Sharma and Nirvair Singh Ball.

Annual Meeting of Sudan Brahmin Biradri Held, Annual Congregation Scheduled for January 26

J I NEWS SERVICE
AKHNOOR, JAN 19

An important meeting of the Sudan Brahmin community was held on Sunday under the chairmanship of President Madan Lal Sudan

at the Baba Satto Siddh Ji Temple in Jandial, located in the Bhalwal Tehsil of Jammu district. The primary agenda of the meeting was to discuss preparations for the upcoming annual congregation, scheduled to be held on

Sunday, January 26, 2025. During the meeting, it was decided that the rituals at the temple, including puja and havan, would commence at 10:00 AM, with the Purnahuti ceremony slated for 11:00 AM. Following the ritu-

als, the distribution of langar prasad will begin at 2:00 PM. To ensure the success of this grand event, the executive committee of the community has appealed to all members residing in Jammu & Kashmir and other states

to actively participate in the annual fair and seek the blessings of the deities. The President of the community stated that the tradition of celebrating the annual fair on the second Sunday of the

Magh month to commemorate the birth anniversary of Baba Satto Siddh Ji has been followed for years. As the Congregation date approaches, cleaning and decoration work at the temple is progressing with great

enthusiasm. Despite time constraints, committee members are working tirelessly, day and night, to adorn the sacred site and make the event memorable. The president emphasized that the primary

aim of this holy event is to unite the community members and strengthen their devotion to religion and culture. This annual gathering holds immense religious as well as social significance for the Sudan Brahmin community.

Don't dare to touch sole seat reserved for PoJK displaced community: Chuni warns pol parties

J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, JANUARY 19

The SOS International, a frontline organization spearheading the struggle for the rights of 12-lakh refugees from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK), has warned the political parties against interfering with the sole reserved seat for PoJK refugees.

It passed a unanimous resolution that any attempt to politicize this seat would not be tolerated and the PoJK refugees would be forced to launch a district-level agitation to oppose any such move.

Thousands of people from PoJK while braving the biting cold gathered under the banner of SOS International in Bathuni area of Rajouri district today to demand political empowerment for their community.

Addressing the rally, Rajiv Chuni, Chairman SOS International, regretted the long-standing neglect of PoJK refugees by political parties, saying "Politicians, whether PM, CM, MPs, Ministers or MLAs, have failed to address our plight and bring us out of the current morass," he said.

He issued a stern warning to political parties,



urging them to refrain from interfering with the reserved assembly seat. "We have passed a unanimous resolution that any attempt to politicize this seat will not be tolerated. Our agitation, which started in Rajouri today, will extend to Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Poonch, Udhampur, Reasi and eventually other district headquarters across the region if any attempt is made to reap political benefits out of this sole seat reserved for PoJK refugees. We are determined to reach every household and mobilize against any such moves," Mr Chuni declared.

Mr Chuni threw light on the community's efforts to gain representation in the legislative assembly, stating, "It was resolved

that at least eight seats out of the 24 reserved for PoJK must be allocated to our people who fled PoJK in 1947. We achieved a small success in 2006 when the Wadhwa Commission recommended reserving eight seats for PoJK refugees living in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere."

The senior refugee leader also pointed to the 2014 report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, chaired by the former vice president of India and former BJP national president Venkaiah Naidu, which endorsed the demand for eight seats, even suggesting constitutional amendments if necessary. "The report was tabled in both the House of the Parliament in October 2014 but

remains unimplemented," he said.

While criticizing the amendment in J&K Reorganization Act of 2023 for allocating only one seat to PoJK refugees, Mr Chuni said it was grave justice with the community of 12 lakh people.

He accused political parties of exploiting the sole reserved seat for their own gains, warning them to stay away. "This seat should be provided to a non-political person who can effectively represent and empower our community in the legislative assembly. He must be free from party affiliations and is committed to the cause of the community," Mr Chuni said.

He further argued that existing representatives from the PoJK commu-

nity who had risen to positions such as Ministers had failed to address the community's concerns. "If they had been competent enough, there would have been no need to reserve a seat for our community," he said.

"This seat was envisioned to empower the PoJK community and should be nominated for a non-political individual who can rise above party politics to serve the interests of PoJK refugees. Those associated with political parties and their organisations will prioritize party agendas over community welfare," Mr Chuni asserted.

The rally concluded with a fervent appeal for the government to honour its commitment to the PoJK refugee community by ensuring that the reserved seat serves its intended purpose—uplifting the lives of those displaced and empowering the community.

Prominent among those spoken on the occasion were VK Datta, Ved Raj Bali, Capt Ravinder Raina, Sushil Sharma, Shivali Sharma, Prof. Ram Parkash, Raj Kumar, Babu Kewal Ram, Som Raj, Khem Raj, Yogesh Sharma, Tarvinder Kumar and others

SMVDU Hosts One Day Academic Exchange with Faculty Members of IIT-Jammu



J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

In a significant step towards fostering student growth, academic collaboration and intellectual exchange, the School of Biotechnology (SoBT), Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU), hosted an interactive session with faculty, post-graduate (PG) and Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) Biotechnology students with the faculty from the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering, IIT Jammu. The event, held on brought together thought leaders, researchers, and students from both institutions to discuss advancements, challenges, and opportunities in biotechnology and biochemical engineering. The primary aim of the event was to establish a platform for interdisciplinary learning and collaboration between SMVDU and IIT Jammu. It sought to bridge gaps between academic institutions, foster research partnerships, and inspire young minds to pursue innovative solutions to pressing challenges in the biotechnology/bioscience's domain. Dr. Mithu, Head and a distinguished faculty member Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering IIT-Jammu, led the session with an engaging discussion on the soon to be offered M.tech program in Biomedical devices. Dr. Mithu emphasized the department's commitment to

innovation, cutting-edge research, and industry-oriented learning, making it a preferred choice for advanced studies. One of the key highlights of the interaction was the discussion on potential collaborations between SoBT, SMVDU, and the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering, IIT Jammu. Prof. Ratna Chandra, Head of the School of Biotechnology at SMVDU, expressed enthusiasm about the interaction, stating, "This exchange is not only about sharing knowledge but also about creating a roadmap for joint research projects, academic collaborations, and nurturing the next generation of biotechnologists." Faculty from IIT Jammu highlighted their ongoing research in bioengineering, synthetic biology, and drug delivery systems. Students from PG Biotechnology and BTech Biotechnology at SMVDU actively participated in discussions, showcasing their curiosity and enthusiasm. Faculty from both institutions expressed their interest in organizing joint workshops, faculty development programs, and student exchange initiatives. Collaborative research projects, particularly in areas like bioinformatics, bioprocess engineering, and sustainable technologies, were identified as promising avenues for partnership. The interaction underscored the importance of cross-institutional collaborations in enhancing academic and research

outcomes. It not only inspired students but also laid the groundwork for a long-term partnership between SMVDU and IIT Jammu. Dr. Shafaq Rasool, Associate Professor, at School of Biotechnology and Associate Dean Academic Affairs, concluded the session with a wrap-up of the event highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary research in bridging the gap leading to impactful innovations. The event was moderated by Ms. Tanvi Sharma, Ph.D. Scholar, School of Biotechnology. The interaction marked a significant step towards creating a collaborative ecosystem between SMVDU and IIT Jammu. By opening new avenues for academic and research opportunities, the event has set the stage for a long-term partnership that promises to benefit students and faculty alike. With initiatives such as exchange programs, and dual degrees with scholarships, the collaboration aims to redefine academic excellence and equip students with the skills and knowledge to thrive in the ever-evolving field of biotechnology. The event was organized under the active patronage of Prof. (Dr.) Pragati Kumar, Honourable Vice Chancellor SMVDU. He expressed his vision of creating a vibrant academic ecosystem that encourages innovation and interdisciplinary learning, and he lauded the efforts of both faculties for initiating this meaningful dialogue.

Annual Day Celebration of Bhardwaj Academy, Barui, Graced by Sham Lal Sharma

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

The Annual Day Celebration of Bhardwaj Academy, Barui, was marked by great enthusiasm and vibrant cultural activities. Shri Sham Lal Sharma, MLA Jammu North and Former Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

The program commenced with the traditional lighting of the ceremonial lamp, symbolizing the dispelling of darkness and the spreading of knowledge. This was followed by a series of colourful and engaging cultural performances by the students, showcasing their creativity, talent, and dedication. The audience, comprising parents, teachers, and dignitaries, was thoroughly enthralled by the performances.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Sham Lal Sharma praised the school for its

commitment to holistic education and character-building. He said, "Bhardwaj Academy is setting a commendable example by focusing not only on academic excellence but also on cultural and moral values. These values are the foundation of a responsible and progressive society. The efforts of the school management, teachers, and students are truly laudable."

He further emphasized the importance of integrating moral and value-based education into the learning process, stating, "Education is complete only when it prepares students to be compassionate, ethical, and socially responsible individuals. Schools like Bhardwaj Academy play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our youth and, thereby, the future of our nation."

Shri Sharma also appreciated the management and staff of the school for



their dedication and innovative approach to education. He encouraged the students to continue excelling in all spheres of life and to uphold the values imparted to them by their institution.

The highlight of the event was the prize distribution ceremony, where Shri Sharma personally felicitated students who had achieved excellence in academics, co-curricular activities, and other fields. His words of encouragement motivated the students to strive for greater heights while remaining grounded in humility and

ethics. In his concluding remarks, Shri Sham Lal Sharma expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the parents and dignitaries for their presence and unwavering support for the school. He said, "The collective effort of parents, teachers, and the school management is crucial in shaping the future of these young minds. I commend Bhardwaj Academy for being a beacon of quality education and values in the region."

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by the school's

Principal, Shri Bal Krishna Sharma. He expressed sincere gratitude to Shri Sham Lal Sharma for his inspiring address and encouragement. He also thanked all the dignitaries, parents, teachers, and students for their participation and support, saying, "Your presence has made this event memorable and successful. We look forward to continuing this journey of excellence and value-driven education with your blessings and cooperation."

Prominent dignitaries present at the event included DDC Shri Suresh Sharma, School Chairperson Mrs. Sunita Sharma, Former Sarpanch Shri Rashpal Sharma, School Management Committee Chairman Shri Ramesh Lal, Retired Regional Education Officer Shri Madan Lal, DGPC Member Sardar Ranvir Singh, Former IB Officer Sardar Navjot Singh, and other respected members of the community.

Civil Defence, Jammu concluded 05 days CD training programme

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

05 days Civil Defence basic training programme was concluded at Govt. Hr. Sec. School, Muthi Jammu, which was started on 14-01-2025 under the supervision of Dy. SP. Anita Pawar, Deputy Controller Civil Defence, Jammu. In the training camp 155 male/ female Students of the School have attended the basic training. The said training was given by the Civil Defence Experts on the knowledge of First Aid, prevention, management and control of Fire Fighting, Snake bite, Choking and other basic life saving technique and preventive measures during the natural/ manmade disaster.



On the occasion, a demonstration on first aid fire fighting including improvised emergency rescue methods during road accidents etc. was presented by the Civil Defence team. Smt. Kiran Sharma, Principal of School appreciated the programme.

Smt. Asia Banoo, vice Principal, Sh. R. Vijay Magotra, Dy. Chief Warden Civil Defence, Jammu, Sh. Romesh, Post Warden CD Jammu, Sub-Inspector Ram Dayal Saini, Incharge CD Trainings and other staff of the School also present on the occasion.

CUKashmir student shines at National Yogasana Championship

J1 NEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, JAN 19

Central University of Kashmir (CUKashmir) announces the remarkable achievement of its student, Malik Ishiyaq Ahmad, from the M.P.Ed 4th Semester. Malik secured 1st position in Rhythmic Yogasana and 3rd position in Artistic Yogasana at the prestigious 36th National Yogasana Championship 2024-25.

The championship witnessed participation of over 600 contestants from 15 states across India, underscoring the high level of competition. The event was organized by Sakti Sangha Vayamager and Sankalp Foundation Midnapore, West Bengal, in collaboration with the SARA Bangla

Yoga and Sports Association and the All India Yoga Culture Federation.

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. A. Ravinder Nath, extended his congratulations to Malik and assured continued support for students to showcase their talents on national platforms. Dean Academic Affairs, Prof. Shahid Rasool, Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zarger, Dean School of Education, Prof. Syed Zahoor Ahmad Geelani, and I/C Director-Sports Dr. Kaukab Azeem, along with other faculty members, also congratulated Malik and wished him success in his future endeavors. This accomplishment highlights the exceptional potential of CUKashmir students and the institution's unwavering support for their aspirations.

District Samba Students Shine at PRO MMA League

J1 NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JAN 19

Pathseekers International School celebrates a remarkable achievement as its students clinched Gold and Bronze medals in the prestigious PRO MMA League, held as part of the National Indoor Martial Arts Games in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The event was organized under the banner of AIMMAC (All India Mixed Martial Arts Council) and GAMMAC (Global Association of Mixed Martial Arts Council).

Bakshesh Singh showcased extraordinary skill and determination to secure a Gold medal, while Kunal Kumar Motton displayed commendable grit to win a Bronze medal in the highly competitive Mixed Martial Arts event. The championship witnessed participation from students across Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of the country.

Manpreet Kaur, Principal of Pathseekers International School, applauded the outstanding efforts of the students and credited their success to the relen-



less dedication of their Martial Arts Trainer, Mr. Pankaj Kumar, and Physical Instructor, Ms. Sulekha Kundal. "This is a proud moment for Pathseekers International School. The hard work and perseverance of our students, coupled with the unwavering

support of our trainers, have led to this incredible milestone," she said. The school remains committed to fostering excellence in both academics and co-curricular activities, encouraging students to aim for greatness in every endeavor.

Jammu & Kashmir Day celebrated at New Moti Bagh; visitors relish ecstasies of UTs' unique cuisines, heritage

JNEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

A winter carnival marking the celebration of Jammu & Kashmir Day was held today at New Moti Bagh Club, New Delhi.

The event was organized by the Resident Commissioner, Jammu & Kashmir in collaboration with New Moti Bagh Residents Welfare Association with joint efforts of Sudhandu Pandey, President, NMB-RWA and Dr. Rashmi Singh.

The venue exuded a pleasant aesthetic ambience tempting the visitors to click selfies in the instagrammable environment displaying the paintings curated during the famous Sambhaav Utsav held in the Resident Commissioner in 2024.

Principal Resident Commissioner, Dr.



Rashmi Singh, expressed her delight envisioning upstride of Sambhaav Utsav in the form of this carnival.

Sudhanshu Pandey, President, NMB-RWA, expressed gratitude for this cultural and artistic extravaganza showcasing the true spirit of J&K.

The event was a testimony to the rich and diverse cultural heritage of J&K. The wintry air of Delhi was laced with the beguiling aroma of Kashmiri gourmet and Dogri cuisine. The festive platter included Wazwan thali for the non-vegetarian palates as well as lip smacking

ing spicy vegetarian delicacies. The saffron aroma of the piping Kashmiri hot Kehwa swirled in the air thrilling all the taste buds.

In addition to the enticing culinary delights, the people also enjoyed the foot tapping cultural performance which included Kashmiri, Dogri and Pahadi folk performances sponsored by J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation by the local residents mainly comprising senior bureaucrats and their families. The authentic intricately designed Pashmina shawls, especially the GI tagged ones, Sarees, Pherans, Papermachie artwork attracted staggering number of buyers.

Real Kashmir FC hosts I-League match against Sporting Club Bangalore at TRC Ground

JNEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 19

Real Kashmir Football Club (RKFC) faced off against Sporting Club Bangalore in an exciting I-League match held at the TRC Ground here on Sunday.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, graced the event as the Chief Guest to encourage the participating players.

While interacting with the players and other officials of both the teams, the DC extended his best wishes to them. He said sport plays a crucial role in development of physical and mental health of the youth, besides inculcating discipline and leadership qualities among them.

During the match, Real Kashmir Football Club (RKFC) secured a commanding 3-1 victory over Sporting Club Bangalore in an electrifying I-League



match.

On the occasion, RKFC owner Arshad Shawl expressed his gratitude to the Deputy Commissioner for his support, which he said was a significant encouragement for the team. Brazilian striker Paulo Cezar was the star of the evening, scoring twice (28', 55') to give RKFC a solid lead. Senegalese forward Abdou Karim sealed the win with a penalty, while SC Bengaluru's Henry Kisseka managed a

late consolation goal.

The breakthrough came in the 28th minute when Lalramsanga's perfectly timed cross from the left was headed home by Cezar. Although a follow-up goal by Cezar was disallowed soon after, the hosts remained dominant.

In the 55th minute, Cezar struck again, skillfully rounding Bengaluru's goalkeeper Bishal Lama after receiving a well-placed pass from Karim. The situation worsened

for SC Bengaluru in the 70th minute when goalkeeper Lama fouled Karim inside the box, earning a red card. Down to 10 men, Bengaluru conceded the penalty, which Karim converted with ease.

The match's intensity continued as SC Bengaluru's captain Carlos Lomba was also sent off in stoppage time, reducing the visitors to nine players. Despite the setbacks, Ugandan striker Kisseka found the net in the dying moments, offering a consolation for Bengaluru.

With this victory, all three of RKFC's wins this season have come on their home ground, reinforcing their strength at the TRC Football Turf. RKFC is the only team from J&K participating in the I League. The team will play their next home game on January 26.

FROM THE PAGE 1...

'Mann Ki Baat': EC used...

they promoted.

Ambedkar called for everyone to work together in everyone's interest, while Prasad highlighted India's commitment to humanistic values, he noted.

"We should take inspiration from them to build an India of which our Constitution makers would have been proud," Modi said.

The Republic Day will mark the 75th anniversary of the implementation of Constitution, he said.

Speaking of the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, the prime minister said people of various castes and regions have come together. There is no discrimination of any kind, he added.

Modi said extensive participation of the youth is visible in the gigantic get-together of devouts, saying it will strengthen civilisational roots and assure a gold future.

The event's global popularity is a matter of pride for every Indian, he added. (Agencies)

Train to Kashmir: 22-bogie...

passenger traffic in a seven-page letter to the ministry and railway authorities, based on his detailed inspection of the track on January 7 and 8.

The CRS referred to his inspection of the newly constructed BG line between the Katra and Reasi section by a motor trolley and on foot, followed by a speed trial on the entire section from Katra to Banihal.

He had then authorised regular opening of the section for passengers and freight traffic at a maximum permissible speed of 85 Kmph on the main line and 15 Kmph on turnout.

The work on the dream project to link Kashmir by train was started in 1997 and it missed several deadlines given geological, topographical and meteorological challenges.

Out of the total 272 km Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, 209 km was commissioned in phases with the first phase of the 118 km Qazigund-Baramulla section commissioned in October 2009, followed by 18 km Banihal-Qazigund in June 2013, 25 km Udhampur-Katra in July 2014 and 48.1 km long Banihal-Sangaldan stretch in February, last year.

The work on the 46-km Sangaldan-Reasi section was also completed in June last year, leaving a total of 17 km stretch between Reasi and Katra. And this section was finally completed in December 2024 as announced by the Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

On January 4, a successful trial run of an electric train was successfully conducted on the Katra-Banihal section. The railways has conducted six trials over the past month on various segments of the track, including the two major milestones of the Anji Khad and Chenab bridges. (Agencies)

LG attends Bharatiya...

Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization to add his name in the donors' list.

"Organ donation should be the life motto. This selfless act not only affects the recipients but also touches the lives of families and friends of those seeking transplantation," he said.

Lauding the Bharatiya Jain Sangathan for doing great service by inspiring people for organ donation, the Lieutenant Governor reiterated the government's commitment to support the social organizations and volunteers associated with this noble cause.

The Lieutenant Governor further called for collective efforts to make organ transplant affordable and accessible by using modern technology in government and private hospitals.

He emphasised that permanent help-desks related to organ donation and transplant should be set up in hospitals to provide information and counter myths surrounding organ donation.

Organ and tissue donation camps should also be organized in the hospitals in collaboration with all stakeholders to inform and encourage people, he said.

The Lieutenant Governor asked the youth to imbibe the ideals and teachings of Lord Mahavir and dedicate themselves to the service of humanity.

Lord Mahavir's eternal message of Samyak Darshan - Right Faith, Samyak Gyan - Right Knowledge and

Samyak Charitra - Right Conduct, will continue to guide us on the path of non-violence, truth and compassion, he said.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated the Bharatiya Jain Sangathan (BJS) on the beginning of its community connect program 'BJS Moksh Path' aimed at promoting organ donation amongst community leaders and debunking the myths around organ donation.

Bharatiya Jain Sangathan also initiated 'BJS Khilona Bank' to provide educational toys to children belonging to underprivileged sections of the society. Youth were also conferred with the BJS Pratibha Samman on the occasion.

Sh Anand Jain, ADGP Jammu; Sh Sandeep Jain, President, Bharatiya Jain Sangathan, J&K; Ms. Monika Jain, General Secretary, Bharatiya Jain Sangathan, J&K; senior officials of civil and police administration; members of Bharatiya Jain Sangathan, SS Jain Sabha and various social organizations were present.

Lt Governor interacts...

The Lieutenant Governor also reiterated the commitment of the government for Border Infrastructure development and welfare of the border area dwellers.

Sh Nisar Ahmad Bhat, Director, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) J&K and Ladakh, officials and volunteers of NYKS were also present on the occasion at Raj Bhawan.

MeT predicts rain...

expected on January 23.

The night temperature rose at many weather stations but recorded below freezing point in Kashmir valley.

Srinagar had a low of -1°C recorded during the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday and this was 1.0°C above normal for the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir during the period.

Gulmarg recorded a low of -7.8°C against the -8.2°C and remained the coldest place of the valley. The temperature, however, was 2.4°C above normal for the famous ski resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district for the day.

The night temperature at Pahalgam further improved and recorded at -3°C against the -3.4 °C the previous night. This was 3.3°C above normal for the valley of shepherds during the period.

The minimum temperature at the froner Kashmir district of Kupwara slipped to a low of -2.6°C on Sunday against the -1.3°C and this was still 0.3°C above normal for the place during this period of the season.

Kokernag in south Kashmir dropped and recorded at -3.4°C against -2.8°C the previous night and it was 0.1°C above the average for the picnic spot during the period.

The minimum temperature at Qazigund on Srinagar Jammu national highway further improved and recorded at -2.8°C on Sunday against the -2.5°C a day ago and it was 0.3°C above normal for the gateway to Kashmir during the period, the MeT office said. (Agencies)

Gunfight between...

"During a CASO launched by police & SFs at Zaloor, Sopore, a hideout was busted. During the same, fire was observed from inside. Area cordoned off. Further details shall follow", police said on X.

The operation is underway in the area, they said. Further details to follow, they added.

Dr Jitendra inaugurates...

development support for innovative start-ups, companies partnering with CSIR labs, MSMEs, deep-tech companies from India and abroad, public-funded research institutions, and CSIR labs."

Catching up with the excitement of the audience, Dr. Jitendra Singh remarked, "This inauguration is just the beginning. We are excited about the future potential and the immense contributions this Innovation Complex will make to India's growth story."

The Minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his vision, which has enabled India to emerge as a global hub for StartUps and innovation. He described the inauguration of this complex as another landmark step inspired by the patronage of Prime Minister Modi.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, "We are proud to be the third-largest start-up ecosystem in the world, with over 100 Unicorns that stand as testaments to India's entrepreneurial spirit. This remarkable growth is a reflection of the transformative initiatives and policies introduced by our government to empower the youth and drive economic self-reliance."

The Science and Technology Minister further highlighted that the CSIR Innovation Complex Mumbai comes at a pivotal moment in India's start-up journey.

According to the Minister, the state-of-the-art facility has been designed to provide incubation and business spaces, enabling start-ups, MSMEs, and industry stakeholders to collaborate with CSIR's network of researchers and innovators. It serves as a bridge between cutting-edge science and its application to address real-world challenges, thereby contributing to the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

He called the Innovation Complex a significant milestone for CSIR, representing a giant leap forward in India's innovation landscape and reinforcing the nation's position as a global leader in science and technology. Dr. Jitendra Singh underscored the high-end scientific infrastructure and expertise designed to foster critical translational unmet needs (spanning lab-to-regulator and regulator-to-industry domains) for start-ups, MSMEs, and CSIR labs, while catalyzing faster tech-transfer processes.

Dr. Jitendra Singh informed that the IC-Mumbai will provide high-end scientific infrastructure, expertise, and regulatory support to stakeholders (CSIR labs, start-ups, MSMEs, and industry) for the SOP-driven studies necessary for regulatory submissions and compliance.

Adding further, he said, "The facility includes ready-to-move world-class incubation labs and IP/business development support for innovative start-ups, companies partnering with CSIR labs, MSMEs, deep-tech companies from India and abroad, public-funded research institutions, and CSIR labs."

Informing the industry and start-ups, Dr. Jitendra Singh shared that the complex will function as an innovation and incubation hub to support, collaborate, and partner in key industrial sectors such as healthcare (pharma, biopharma, medtech), chemicals, materials, energy, and other relevant areas of interest to CSIR labs.

Speaking about the physical infrastructure of IC-Mumbai, Dr. Jitendra Singh informed that the facility, spread over nine floors, is equipped with 24 "ready-to-move" incubation labs and furnished office and networking spaces for innovative start-ups, MSMEs, industries, and CSIR labs.

Concluding his remarks, Dr. Jitendra Singh said, "The inauguration is just the beginning. We are excited about the future potential and the immense contributions this Innovation Complex will make to India's growth story." He added that facilities like the C-ICM embody the spirit of collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity that define the nation's approach to building a self-reliant India.

The event was attended by Dr. V.K. Saraswat and Dr. V.K. Paul, Members of NITI Aayog; Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary of DSIR and DG CSIR; and Dr. Ram Vishwakarma. The inaugural event witnessed participation from industry leaders, foreign delegates from Norway, Switzerland, and Germany, MSMEs, start-ups, and over 1,000 scientists from CSIR labs across India.

Will make India...

"For Pakistan, it is nothing more than a foreign territory and it is using it to fuel terrorism and for anti-India propaganda," he said.

He described occupied Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India and also gave a stern warning to Pakistan that it should eliminate the terrorist training camps and launching pads in occupied Jammu and Kashmir or else a befitting reply would be given.

He also reminded Pakistan of the surgical strike and the Balakot strike on terrorist camps. He said that Pakistan is continuously hatching conspiracies to fuel terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

On the anti-India propaganda of Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq, the Defence Minister said that Pakistan is trying to instigate people there against India in the name of religion and is oppressing the residents there. (Agencies)

MD KPDCCL conducts extensive tour of Bandipora, reviews power infrastructure

JNEWS SERVICE

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 19

In order to have firsthand review of electrical infrastructure in Bandipora District, Managing Director (MD), Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (KPDCCL), Mehmood Ahmad Shah Sunday undertook an extensive tour of Bandipora District.

During the visit, the MD inspected Grid station Putshahi Bandipora and reviewed the grid level power availability in the district. He also carried out inspection of the Workshops and Stores of the Electric Division (ED) Bandipora and Sumbal to assess the availability of critical equipment and spare parts, alongside maintenance protocols.

He emphasised for speedy repairs of transformers that get damaged due to excessive load.

The MD also took stock of the existing power infrastructure, assessed the ongoing projects that are being carried out in the district under the centrally sponsored scheme

RDSS and reviewed the overall functioning of the power distribution system in the district.

Emphasizing the corporation's commitment to providing reliable and efficient power supply, the MD directed the officials to expedite the completion of ongoing projects, ensure timely maintenance of electrical infrastructure and enhance customer satisfaction.

Later, the MD interacted with the field staff and Engineers to understand the ground-level challenges and receive feedback on the corporation's services.

He assured that KPDCCL is dedicated to improving the power infrastructure in Bandipora and other parts of the Kashmir valley, aligning with the government's initiatives for economic growth and development.

The visit was part of KPDCCL's efforts to strengthen its services, address local concerns, and augment the overall power supply scenario in the District.

Indian Army Conducted Comprehensive Ayush Medical Camp For Local Youth At Seri Khawaja Poonch

JNEWS SERVICE

POONCH : 19 JAN 2025

The Indian Army, in collaboration with the AYUSH Department of Poonch, successfully conducted a comprehensive AYUSH medical camp in the remote area of Seri Khawaja, Haribudha during the winter season. The camp, which took place in these far-flung regions, focused on educating local residents about winter-related diseases while also offering vital medical services. The camp provided a platform for health professionals to engage with the local community and raise awareness about common winter illnesses, including respiratory infections, joint pain, and cold-related diseases. Medical experts from the AYUSH Department conducted informative sessions on preventive measures and the benefits of Ayurvedic treatments for sea-

sonal health issues. In addition to health education, the camp offered free medical consultations and distributed essential Ayurvedic medicines, winter health kits, and wellness resources to attendees. The Indian Army worked closely with the AYUSH Department to ensure that the local population received not only guidance but also tangible support to manage their health during the harsh winter months. The residents of nearby areas of Haribudha expressed their appreciation for this timely initiative, which addressed both their immediate health concerns and provided long-term wellness solutions. The success of the camp is a testament to the strong partnership between the Indian Army and the AYUSH Department of Poonch, aiming to improve the health and well-being of people living in underserved areas.

ADGP Jammu Zone Flags Off Inspiring Kashmir to Kanyakumari Cycle expedition launch by Cyclists for a Pollution-Free India

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

A powerful message of environmental consciousness and national unity was sent forth today as Shri Anand Jain, IPS, ADGP Jammu Zone, officially flagged off a dedicated team of cyclists embarking on a remarkable 4,080-kilometer journey from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. This inspiring voyage, initiated by Shri Mangal Bhanushali and his four-member team of friends, aims to raise awareness about the importance of a pollution-free India and inspire the nation's youth to take action.

The Cycle journey commenced from the historic Lal Chowk in Srinagar on January 16, 2025. After cycling through challenging terrain, the team arrived in Jammu this morning, where they were greeted with enthusias-



tic support and a formal send-off ceremony at the Police GO's Mess, Gulshan Ground, Gandhi Nagar.

ADGP Jammu, Shri Anand Jain, IPS interacted personally with the cyclists, commending their dedication and highlighting the significance of their mission. "This initiative is a testament to the power of individual action in driving positive change," he stated. "By undertaking this arduous journey, these cyclists

are not only promoting a vital message about environmental protection but also embodying the spirit of adventure and national unity. We must all encourage our youth to embrace such initiatives and contribute to building a cleaner, healthier Bharat."

Key Highlights of the Expedition: The core message of the cycle journey is to promote a pollution-free India and encourage sustainable practices. The cyclists aim to inspire

young people across the country to become actively involved in environmental conservation. Physical Endurance: The 4,080-kilometer route presents a significant physical challenge, demonstrating the team's commitment and resilience. Community Outreach: The cyclists plan to engage with local communities along their route, spreading awareness and fostering a sense of collective responsibility towards the environment.

The Jammu Police provided support and ensured the team's safe passage through the region, underscoring their commitment to facilitating such positive initiatives.

Officers present at the flag-off ceremony were: DIG JSK Range Shri Shiv Kumar -IPS, SSP Jammu Shri Joginder Singh-JKPS, SO to ADGP Jammu Zone, SP City North and other senior police officers.

Haq Insaaf Council Celebrates 11th Foundation Day with Inspiring Series of Events in Poonch

JINNEWS SERVICE
POONCH, JANUARY 19, 2025:

The Haq Insaaf Council commemorate its 11th Foundation Day with a series of impactful events that celebrate national integration, youth empowerment, and communal harmony. The celebrations in Poonch witnessed widespread participation from dignitaries, sports enthusiasts, and prominent civil society members. The day began with a Bike Rally, flagged off from Pritam Park by ADC Tahir Mustafa Malik and Colonel Vipin Prashar under the aegis of the 93 Infantry Brigade. The rally, promoting road safety and unity, concluded at Pritam Stadium. Helmets were distributed to the participants to emphasize the importance of safe riding. A two-minute silence was observed at Pritam Stadium to pay tribute to the bravehearts who have made the supreme sacrifice for the nation, reflecting the solemn gratitude of the attendees. The celebrations reached their peak with the Grand Finale of the Martyrs Premier League 2, held at Pritam Stadium. Brigadier Mudit



Mahajan of the 93 Infantry Brigade graced the event as Chief Guest, while Advocate Zeshan Syed, Chairman of Haq Insaaf Council, served as the Guest of Honour. The thrilling final match between Poonch Scorchers and Amjad Club emerged victorious, leaving the audience captivated. A cultural program performed by the children of Indra Memorial School,

Poonch, added a vibrant touch to the event, showcasing the region's cultural richness and talent. Addressing the gathering, Advocate Zeshan Syed expressed his gratitude to the Indian Army, District Administration, and District Police Office for their steadfast support during the Martyrs Premier League 2. He reaffirmed the Council's commitment to fostering unity and empowering

youth. Brigadier Mudit Mahajan commended the Haq Insaaf Council for its dedication to promoting national integration and communal harmony across Jammu and Kashmir. Prominent civil society members, including Syed Zaki Haider, Sardar Surjan Singh, Dr Nusrat Shah, Owais Ganai, Aftab Choudhary, Vijay Kumar, Rafaqat Zingar, Nasir Ali, Masroor and others were present on the occasion, reflecting the community's collective support for the Council's initiatives. The event's success was attributed to the efforts of the organizing team, including Sadaqat Mir, Ikhtlaq Mehmood, Mohd Mashooq, Kamran Ali, Istikhhar Choudhary, Waseem Qureshi, Prince Singh, Rashid Mir, Raman Singh, Varun Sharma, Istikhhar Choudhary, Danish Pathan, Taranjeet Singh, Saqib Kirmani, Inz-Imam Ahmed and others. Their dedication ensured a seamless and impactful celebration. The 11th Foundation Day of the Haq Insaaf Council was a profound reminder of the importance of unity, remembrance, and community collaboration in shaping a progressive future.

13th Raising Day of 2nd Bn SDRF celebrated in Jammu

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

The 13th Raising Day of the 2nd Bn State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was celebrated today at Gulshan Ground, Jammu. Shri Nalin Prabhat, Director General of Police, was the chief guest on the occasion.

Nalin Prabhat inspected the parade and took salute at the march past.

In his address, the DGP appreciated the critical role that SDRF has been play-



ing during times of disaster and natural calamities.

The DGP told SDRF personnel that HQ J&K

Police shall proactively address issues related to HR Management, special equipment and training.

The DGP inspected the special equipment layout and interacted with the rank and file.

Vijay Kumar, Commandant General HG/CD & SDRF J&K, welcomed the chief guest and all officers to the event and highlighted the achievements and role of SDRF.

MK Sinha, ADG HQ Coordination and other officers graced the occasion.

Ravinder Sharma bereaved

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

Jammu & Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee has deeply con- doled the sad demise of Shri R.C.Sharma elder brother of Shri Ravinder Sharma Chief Spokesperson JKPC.

President JKPC Shri Tariq Hameed Karra accompanied by party

leaders S/Shri Th. Balwan Singh, Shabir Ahmed Khan, Neeraj Kundan, Iftikar Ahmed-MLA, Neeraj Gupta, Ajay Lakhotra-President NSUI visited today the residence of Ravinder Sharma at Sunderbani-Rajouri to condole the sad demise of Shri R.C.Sharma and conveyed their heartfelt condolences to Ravinder

Sharma and expressed deep sympathy with the bereaved family & prayed to Almighty God to grant peace to the departed soul in heaven.

Later, JKPC President met with party leaders & workers of Sunderbani and discussed the current situation.

Prominent among those who were present in the meeting were

included S/Shri Ashok Sharma- Secretary PCC, Sardar Ajit Singh-Block President Siot, Tirath Ram Sharma-Block President Devak, Yograj Sharma, Manik Raina, Govind Sudan-President AYC, Advocate Junaid Ahmed, Balkrishan Sharma, Susheel Sudan, Vijay Guru, Amit Syal, Verinder Singh, Javed Lone and others.

SKUAST-J Joint action committee calls on Deputy CM, discuss salary issues

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

A joint delegation of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology - Teaching Association Jammu (SKUAST-TAJ) and Non Teaching Employees Association Jammu (NTEA-J) under the chairmanship of Dr Vikas Sharma called on Deputy Chief Minister Sh. Surinder Choudhary at Civil Secretariat today. President SKUAST-TAJ Dr Vikas Sharma informed the CS that the salary disbursement system has been totally disrupted in SKUAST-Jammu as the teaching and non teaching employees of SKUAST-Jammu are not getting their salaries on time from the last 1.5 year, due to which there is strong resentment and frustration among the employees, as they are facing financial difficulties in the very beginning of every month. Even, till date i.e., 19.01.2025, the employees have not yet received their salaries for the month of December, 2024. It is very painful that the employees of SKUAST-Jammu, got their salaries of November, 2024 after the lapse of 01 month i.e., on 31st December, 2024 (first time in the history of SKUAST-Jammu). S. K.D. Singh President NTEA-J further



informed the Deputy CM that as on date, among other J&K Universities, only the employees of SKUAST-Jammu are waiting for their salaries for the month of December, 2024, due to which the employees are not able to clear their dues well in time like monthly instalment of housing loan, insurance premium, school fee of children, medical treatment etc. and they have to pay more interest and late payment fees in addition to their normal rate of interest. Moreover, low paid employees are worst sufferers, specifically for extra burden of interest and hardships, being total dependency on salary.

The Deputy CM assured the delegation that proper mechanism should be developed for the disbursement of salaries of SKUAST-J employees, on 1st of every month, to save the teaching and non-teaching staff of the university from the extra burden of interest.

Congress has no moral right to invoke Ambedkar's legacy: Adv. Purnima Sharma

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 19

Spokesperson BJP J&K and former Deputy Mayor, Adv. Purnima Sharma launched a blistering attack on the Congress party, accusing it of betraying Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's ideals and neglecting his contributions to the nation. She asserted that the Congress systematically sidelined Ambedkar throughout his lifetime and has now resorted to political opportunism by falsely claiming his legacy.

Reacting strongly over the Congress' upcoming 'Jai Babu-Jai Bhim-Jai Samvidhan' campaign, Adv. Purnima Sharma reminded the public of how the Congress government displayed utter disregard for Ambedkar's dignity even after his demise in 1956, forcing his family to bear the expense of transporting his mortal remains. "This act alone reflects the Congress party's deep-seated apathy towards Dr. Ambedkar, despite his monumental role in shaping the Indian Constitution," she said.


She lambasted the Congress for undermining Ambedkar's vision of social justice and failing to uplift marginalized communities during its prolonged rule. "Congress has only used Dalits and back-



ward sections as a vote bank while doing little to empower them. Their decades of governance lacked genuine commitment to social justice," she asserted.

Contrasting this with the BJP's approach, Adv. Purnima Sharma highlighted the Modi government's initiatives like the development of Panch Teerth to honor Ambedkar's contributions, and numerous welfare schemes designed to uplift the underprivileged. "Unlike Congress, which only indulged in lip service, the BJP has taken concrete steps to realize Ambedkar's dream of an equitable and progressive society," she stated.

She called upon the people of J&K to recognize the difference between symbolic gestures and real commitment. "While Congress sheds crocodile tears, the BJP has demonstrated through actions that it truly respects and upholds Ambedkar's ideals," she concluded.



For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders are invited on _____ from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State / Central Governments for the following works:

S.No.	Description of Work	Estimate	Max. Bid	Approx. Billable Qty	Approx. Duration	Quality
1.	CONSTRUCTION OF SECONDARY ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOMS UNDER (PAB) PLAN SAMAGRA HEAD AT GOVT HIGH SCHOOL NAGHBHATNA EDU ZONE DRABSHALLA DISTRICT KISHOTWAR	36.00	600.00	72000/-	60 Days	"A "
2.	CONSTRUCTION OF ELEMENTARY ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOMS UNDER (PAB) PLAN SAMAGRA HEAD AT GOVT MIDDLE SCHOOL SHIROTI EDU ZONE DRABSHALLA DISTRICT KISHOTWAR	31.26	600.00	62,520/-	60 Days	"A "
3.	CONSTRUCTION OF ELEMENTARY BOUNDARY WALL UNDER (PAB) PLAN SAMAGRA HEAD AT GOVT MIDDLE SCHOOL SHIROTI EDU ZONE DRABSHALLA DISTRICT KISHOTWAR	7.60	600.00	15,200/-	30 Days	"A,B,C,D"
4.	CONSTRUCTION OF ELEMENTARY DILAPIDATED BUILDING UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL UNDER (PAB) PLAN SAMAGRA HEAD AT GOVT MIDDLE SCHOOL HADDHAR EDU ZONE DRABSHALLA DISTRICT KISHOTWAR	35.79	600.00	71,580/-	60 Days	"A "
5.	CONSTRUCTION OF ELEMENTARY DILAPIDATED BUILDING UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL UNDER (PAB) PLAN SAMAGRA HEAD AT GOVT MIDDLE SCHOOL HANG EDU ZONE DRABSHALLA DISTRICT KISHOTWAR	35.79	600.00	71,580/-	60 Days	"A "
6.	CONSTRUCTION OF ELEMENTARY DILAPIDATED BUILDING UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL UNDER (PAB) PLAN SAMAGRA HEAD AT GOVT MIDDLE SCHOOL LAWA-A EDU ZONE KISHOTWAR DISTRICT KISHOTWAR	44.00	600.00	88,000/-	60 Days	"A "

The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website _____ as per below schedule:

S.No.	Event	Date
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	
3	Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting.	
4	Bid submission Start Date	
5	Bid Submission End Date	
6	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of _____
_____ as mentioned in the bid documents. The earnest money of the unsuccessful bidder shall be released only after submission of Treasury Challan.

No. e-tenders/Kishtwar/625-637
Dated: 17-01-2025

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
PWD (R&B) Division
Kishtwar

DIP/J-9293/24
Date: 18-1-25

EDITORIAL

Mystery of deaths in Rajouri

The ongoing tragedy in Budhaal village of Rajouri district is a grim reminder of the vulnerabilities that persist in our healthcare and governance systems. So far, at least 17 lives have been claimed in just 42 days, including 12 children and four adults, leaving a community devastated and a nation seeking answers. The Ministry of Home Affairs' decision to dispatch an inter-ministerial team underscores the gravity of the situation, but much more needs to be done—and urgently. The mysterious illness has left medical authorities grappling with symptoms that defy easy categorization: fever, dizziness, vomiting, sore throat, and severe neurological complications. Preliminary investigations point to neurotoxins as a potential cause, but the source of these toxins remains unidentified. For the residents of Budhaal, this uncertainty compounds their grief, fueling mistrust in local healthcare systems and administrative responses. One of the most glaring revelations from this crisis is the woeful inadequacy of local healthcare facilities. Families have alleged that children's conditions deteriorated after receiving treatment at community health centers. Such claims, whether entirely accurate or not, highlight a perception of neglect and incompetence that cannot be ignored. The inability to transfer critically ill patients to advanced medical facilities outside the Union Territory in a timely manner further exacerbates the crisis. This situation raises a fundamental question: Why were local healthcare systems unprepared for such an outbreak? Basic diagnostic capabilities, coupled with efficient referral systems, could have mitigated the loss of lives. Instead, delays in diagnosis and treatment have left families in despair and fueled public outrage. The detection of neurotoxins in preliminary analyses shifts attention to environmental factors. Contaminated water sources, food items, or other environmental hazards are suspected to be the carriers of these toxins. Yet, the investigation has been hampered by poor infrastructure, including narrow and inaccessible roads, delaying the deployment of advanced mobile laboratories and other resources. Environmental safety is a shared responsibility, but lapses in regular monitoring and enforcement of standards have likely contributed to this tragedy. For a region like Rajouri, where the terrain poses unique challenges, proactive measures such as routine environmental audits and community awareness campaigns are essential. The deployment of expert teams from the National Center for Disease Control, Indian Council of Medical Research, and PGIMER Chandigarh reflects the seriousness with which higher authorities are treating the crisis. However, such interventions must translate into actionable solutions, including the identification of the source of neurotoxins, immediate containment measures, and long-term strategies to prevent similar incidents. Rebuilding trust between the residents of Budhaal and the authorities will require more than promises. Transparent communication about the investigation's progress and findings is crucial. Furthermore, holding accountable those responsible for any lapses—whether in healthcare delivery, environmental safety, or governance—will be key to restoring public confidence. The residents of Budhaal have also threatened widespread protests, reflecting their frustration with perceived official apathy. Their voices must be heard, and their concerns addressed with sincerity and urgency. The Budhaal tragedy is a stark reminder of the need for robust public health systems, proactive governance, and stringent environmental monitoring. It is not enough to react to crises; we must anticipate and prevent them. The inter-ministerial team's findings and recommendations should serve as a blueprint for addressing systemic weaknesses, not just in Rajouri but across the country. For the families of the 16 victims, justice will come not just through answers but through actions that ensure no other community endures such heartache. The lessons from Budhaal must catalyze change, transforming grief and outrage into a resolute commitment to public health and safety. Only then can we honor the memories of those who lost their lives to this tragic and preventable crisis.

Reverse brain drain: A game-changer for growth

WASEEM JAVED

India has witnessed a mass exodus of talent for decades, as highly skilled professionals and students left the country in search of better opportunities abroad. This phenomenon, known as 'brain drain', has historically deprived the country of its brightest minds. However, the tide is reversing, with individuals returning to their home country, as seen in the recent past. With acquired skills and rich experience, the 'reverse brain drain' is increasingly becoming a powerful force in India's economic growth and development. This comes against the backdrop of India's fast-paced economic growth, combined with government initiatives and an evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem that has made the country an attractive destination for global talent, including those who once left its shores. This shift is not about just people coming back; it's about knowledge transfer, innovation, and global networks essential to building a competitive and resilient economy.

Economic and Entrepreneurial Opportunities Driving Return

In most cases, what has caused this reverse brain drain is the prospect of available opportunities in India. The growth pattern of India as a country with an upward economic trajectory brings with it demand for science, technology, and innovation

skills from professionals in their fields.

Returnees easily get absorbed in suitable roles since their international experience puts them on top of the sought-after candidates at startups, large multinational companies, and research centres. Government initiatives like Make in India, Startup India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat have further made India more attractive. These initiatives encourage entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and innovation by offering financial incentives, regulatory support, and access to infrastructure. Thus, many Indian professionals who had earlier worked in global hubs such as Silicon Valley are returning to start their startups or take up leadership roles in Indian enterprises.

For example, several Indian entrepreneurs who have returned from the United States or the United Kingdom are at the helm of billion-dollar startups in India today.

They cut across fintech, e-commerce, health tech, and renewable energy among other sectors that create jobs and spur economic growth. Their global networks and access to venture capital give them a competitive edge that will allow them to scale their businesses quickly and effectively.

The Role of Overseas Education in Shaping Talent

Education in foreign lands serves as the core of the reverse brain drain. In 2024, more than 13.35 lakh students from

India pursued education abroad, of which the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and Germany were among the top destinations. In general, courses in engineering, business management, medicine, and technology attract Indian students with promising career avenues. This international education equips students with advanced knowledge, technical skills, and a global perspective. Many also gain valuable work experience abroad before deciding to return to India.

A key facilitator in this journey has been the rise of AI-powered consultancy platforms that streamline the process of studying abroad. These platforms help students identify the best courses, universities, and countries based on their aspirations and career goals.

They also help with visa processes, and education loans, and even offer post-admission help, so everything goes off smoothly.

These consultancies not only empower students in terms of succeeding abroad but also lay the groundwork for their potential contributions upon returning to India while bridging the gap between students and global education systems.

Benefits of Reverse Brain Drain for India

The reverse brain drain is an economy-changing force for India, bringing skilled professionals back to drive progress across sectors. In the case of technology, returnees provide cutting-edge expertise in areas like arti-

ficial intelligence, biotechnology, and clean energy, which ensure that India is not left behind globally.

The knowledge that these returnees provide creates technological advances that benefit both industries and society. Entrepreneurship and innovation also pick up pace as returnees start new ventures, create jobs, and develop innovative products and services that address local and global challenges. This not only increases employment but also makes India a creative solutions hub.

Furthermore, these professionals enhance scientific collaboration by connecting Indian institutions with international research networks, thereby facilitating the exchange of ideas and resources in areas such as healthcare and renewable energy. The economic impact is equally strong as the reverse brain drain strengthens productivity, draws in foreign investment, and propels GDP growth.

Key Challenges and the Way Forward

Although reverse brain drain promises to boost Indian growth immensely, bureaucratic red tape, infrastructural inadequacies, and differing work environments in India versus the developed world will still prevent most professionals from coming back. This will only come true when registration procedures, tax regimes, and the regime for intellectual property become more simplified, paving the way for return-

ees to establish enterprises or meaningfully contribute to organizations.

To tap into returning talent effectively, India must improve its infrastructure: world-class research facilities, modern educational institutions, and strong health care. More competitive incentives to attract international talent include tax breaks, grants for research, and easier access to funding. Only then will the reverse brain drain convert into practical input toward the nation's economic growth and innovation.

Government Initiatives and Policy Support

The Indian government has been proactively capitalising on reverse brain drain. By setting up innovation hubs, funding startup companies, and collaborating with world-class research institutes, the country is attracting much-needed talent as well as fostering innovation. Many countries have implemented policies and incentives to encourage skilled professionals to return to their home countries. For example, Taiwan created the Hsinchu Science Park and offered tax cuts to encourage the development of high-tech industries. Such policies not only encourage the return of skilled professionals but also provide them with a platform to flourish.

The Global Context and Its Implications

Interestingly, reverse brain drain is not an Indian phenomenon

alone. Developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom are losing talent due to restrictive immigration policies and limited opportunities for career advancement. For example, America's flawed immigration policies have inadvertently driven away skilled professionals who are now contributing to India's growth.

This shift points to a wider paradigm wherein developing countries are transformational centres of innovation and economic activity. It could also help India emerge as a global leader in sectors ranging from technology to healthcare.

A Bright Future for Reverse Brain Drain

The reverse brain drain represents a new paradigm in India's journey to become a global economic superpower. In this new scenario, talent can be an asset to the country by nurturing innovation and fostering collaboration. With government support, private sector participation, and an emphasis on developing world-class infrastructure, the country is poised to turn reverse brain drain into a sustained growth driver.

In doing so, this movement is not only for India but reshapes the global talent landscape with a new reality of importance— inclusive and dynamic economies in a more integrated and interconnected world.

(The writer is the founder and CEO of EduVib; views are personal)

Our Actions Shape Our Lives

AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all should know about karmaphalas. These are the results of both good and bad karma (acts) done by us in the past with our minds, words and bodies. I have mentioned minds separately from bodies because karmas done by the mind are subtle. And they can be quite lethal. What is a mental disease? You have guessed right; it is caused by our minds.

Similarly, words are no less dangerous. Yes, words can be very deadly, as experienced by all of us, when we choose to speak foolishly. And these bad karmaphalas can manifest

at any age but they hurt the most in old age when we are weak and not left with many options.

This is when a person laments about his bad luck and there are not many sympathisers. Aren't we written off as we age? This article describes what we can do about it. We are not so helpless after all. The first step is to stop doing all bad acts right from this moment. And we know what these are. Goodness has to increase in us by doing all acts of goodness.

We must speak pleasantly; we should see goodness programmes; we should stick to foods in goodness; and so on. What

this will do is protect us from the ill effects of our present acts, to begin with. Controller mental must be curbed; one must become realistic because there is only one controller and that is God. If it wasn't so we will obtain whatever we desire, which hardly even happens. The ego must be curbed because there is only one superior entity, which is God. All our lives we try to prove our superiority and what happens? We become very unpopular with others, especially with our family members, whom we desperately need in our old age. Spiritual practices must be started in the right

earnest.

They will make a lot of sense if we realise that we are souls, parts of God.

Shouldn't parts be dependent on the whole? Should we not be respectful towards God, just like a son is supposed to be towards his father? Don't we thank others when they do us some favour? God is forever doing us many favours. To begin with, He has provided all essentials free like the light of the sun, water, air containing oxygen, etc. God has to help ultimately because fate cannot be changed by anyone else. He also doesn't, but helps to deal with bad kar-

maphalas; we won't end up badly. (9.31) This is a very big 'kripa' but more important is His mercy in protecting us from our good karmaphalas, when we are most likely to hurt ourselves badly. Because it is hard to tolerate good times. And God and only God can help in improving our nature, which is also part of our fate.

Doesn't our nature let us down time and again? We see people destroying themselves by angry acts, lusty behaviour, envious attitudes, etc. God protects us from foolish acts, if we remain in His shelter. I am very scared about the prospect of ill

fate in my old age when I am already weak. God has to protect me.

I am not taking any chances; I have taken God's shelter. Only God is the one who can help, being the owner and controller. God can intervene and God does for His devotees. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 18.58) Wouldn't this make us peaceful? It has made me gradually as my connection with God is getting strengthened by my spiritual practices. Please don't take chances.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Andhra Pradesh's journey towards zero hunger and inclusive education

TV KATTIMANI

Since Independence, food security has been a significant concern in India. Despite notable progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger, India still grapples with the challenge of undernutrition.

According to a United Nations report, the country accounts for nearly 195 million undernourished individuals, with children constituting 43 per cent of this population. Various initiatives, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the PM Poshan Mid-Day Meal scheme, have been implemented to address this pressing issue.

Historical Roots of Mid-Day Meal Schemes

The origins of the Mid-Day Meal scheme in India can be traced back to the colonial era. In 1925, the

Madras Presidency proposed the first-ever Mid-Day Meal initiative for underprivileged children. Tamil Nadu became the first state to implement this idea, with Sourashtra Boys Higher Secondary School in Madurai serving meals to children in 1955.

By the 1980s, this programme gained widespread acceptance, particularly with the introduction of the "Nutritious Noon-Meal Scheme" by Tamil Nadu's then Chief Minister, M G Ramachandran. This initiative aimed to provide food to 6.8 million malnourished children in the state. Over the years, the programme has demonstrated the strong correlation between nutritious meals and improved education. For children in tribal and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, the scheme has proven to be a lifeline. Many of these children,

previously engaged in household activities or income generation due to food insecurity, could now attend school and pursue their right to education. The programme also had a transformative impact on children from Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, De-notified Tribes, Nomadic Tribes, and girl children.

Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal Scheme

In a significant step forward, the Andhra Pradesh government recently launched the "Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal Scheme." This initiative, named after Dokka Seethamma—revered as Aparna Annapurna—provides free



meals to students in junior colleges across the state. Seethamma, born in 1841 in Mandapet village, was renowned for her compassion and dedication to serving the needy. Despite limited formal education, she imbibed strong moral values through stories and songs from her childhood. Along with her husband, Dokka Joganna, she provided food and shelter

to travelers and disaster-stricken communities near the Godavari River. Her legacy of humanitarian service remains a beacon of inclusivity and maternal love.

The Dokka Seethamma scheme is the first of its kind in India, targeting intermediate students. Benefiting 148,419 students across 475 government junior colleges in

Andhra Pradesh, the programme aims to reduce dropout rates, enhance academic focus, and improve overall student health. By lessening the financial burden on low-income families, the initiative also promotes greater equity in education. It sets a model for other states to emulate, addressing hunger while fostering a nurturing environment for academic and personal growth.

Complementary Initiatives for Inclusivity

In addition to the Dokka Seethamma scheme, Andhra Pradesh has revived the "Anna Canteens" initiative. This program offers wholesome meals at just Rs 5 to economically disadvantaged individuals, significantly

alleviating hunger and improving living standards. By ensuring affordable access to food, the state aims to bridge socio-economic disparities and support marginalised communities.

For tribal students, particularly girls, the Dokka Seethamma scheme has been a game-changer. Tribal communities often face acute food insecurity due to geographical remoteness and limited resources. Free nutritious meals enable tribal children to focus on their education instead of household chores or income generation. The scheme also addresses educational inequity by encouraging families to prioritise their children's schooling. For tribal girls, the program has a transformative impact. Social and financial pressures often force girls to leave school prematurely, but free meals

reduce family burdens and promote their continued education.

A Vision for a Better Future

The Mid-Day Meal scheme and similar initiatives signify more than just food distribution—they represent a commitment to empowering the marginalised and uplifting the underprivileged. These programs not only ensure access to nutritious meals but also encourage higher education, better living standards, and healthier lifestyles. By fostering cooperation among teachers, students, and staff, the scheme revives the ancient "Gurukula" system of holistic education, emphasising both mental and physical wellbeing.

(The writer is Vice Chancellor of Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

Study decodes how grey matter in mothers' brains undergoes changes during pregnancy

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

A new research shows that 94 per cent of the grey matter in the brains of mothers undergoes changes during pregnancy.

The team from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) found that there is a reduction and partial recovery of almost 5 per cent of grey matter in 94 per cent of the total grey matter volume of the brain, especially in regions linked to social cognition.

The study analysed the brains of women during pregnancy for the first time using neuro-imaging



techniques.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, included non-pregnant mothers, whose partners were pregnant, to distinguish bio-

logical effects from those caused by the experience of being a mother.

Researchers from UAB, the Gregorio Marañón Health Research Institute and the Hospital del Mar

Research Institute together, with other prestigious international institutions, were part of the study.

The findings reveal a dynamic trajectory in the brain during pregnancy and postpartum, significantly linked to the steroid hormone fluctuations inherent to pregnancy, and to the psychological well-being of the mothers.

The findings revealed that, during the first pregnancy, gray matter volume in the brain is reduced by up to 4.9 per cent, with a partial recovery during the postpartum period.

"These changes are observed in 94 per cent of

the brain, being particularly prominent in regions linked to social cognition," said the study.

The study also demonstrated, for the first time, that the evolution of these morphological changes in the brain is associated with fluctuations in two estrogens hormones that increase exponentially during pregnancy and return to basal levels after delivery.

The researchers observed that a greater increase and subsequent decrease in estrogen levels is associated with a greater decrease and subsequent recovery of brain grey matter volume.

Study decodes why sickle cell patients suffer cognitive problems

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

An ageing brain in people with sickle cell disease may be responsible for cognitive problems, finds a study.

Sickle cell disease is a genetic blood disorder characterised by the presence of abnormal haemoglobin (Hb).

People with the illness are also likely to face trouble in remembering, focusing, learning, and problem-solving.

The patients face these conditions even without brain stroke. To understand, researchers and physicians from Washington University School

of Medicine in St. Louis examined more than 200 young adults with and without sickle cell disease.

They participated in brain MRI scans and cognitive tests. Each person's brain age was calculated using a brain-age prediction tool that was developed using MRI brain scans from a diverse group of more than 14,000 healthy people of known ages.

The estimated brain age was compared with the individual's actual age. The results, published in *JAMA Network Open*, showed that participants with sickle cell disease had brains that appeared an average of 14 years older than their actual age.

Sickle cell participants with older-looking brains also scored lower on cognitive tests.

Further, the study showed that people experiencing economic deprivation, who struggle to meet basic needs, even in the absence of sickle cell disease, also had more-aged-appearing brains, the team said. On average, a seven-year gap was found between the brain age and the participants' actual age in healthy individuals experiencing poverty.

"Sickle cell disease is congenital, chronically depriving the developing brain of oxygen and possibly affecting its growth from birth.

Cardiovascular risk underestimated for people in HIV, finds global study

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, JAN 19

A team of US researchers has found that for people with HIV, current risk models underestimated cardiovascular events in both women and black men in high-income countries.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality globally, posing a particularly significant threat to people with HIV (PWH), according to new study published in the journal *Lancet HIV*.

Previous studies have called into question whether these commonly used prediction models perform well among people with HIV, and there remains a gap in understanding of what these scores mean for PWH in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Researchers from Mas-



sachusetts General Hospital, a founding member of the Mass General Brigham healthcare system, in collaboration with an international team of investigators, conducted a study to evaluate how well existing atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) risk estimates could be used to predict cardiovascular outcomes in global populations with HIV.

Their prospective cohort study used data from Randomized Trial to Prevent Vascular Events in HIV (REPRIEVE) to

analyse individuals with HIV who were from low-, middle-, and high-income countries across several continents.

The researchers found that for those in REPRIEVE, current risk models underestimated cardiovascular events in both women and black men in high income countries (HICs), while overestimating cardiovascular events for all PWH in LMICs.

"These findings allow researchers to fine-tune cardiovascular disease

prediction models for people living with HIV," said Patrice Desvigne-Nickens, a medical officer within the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

"Assessing the accuracy of these predictions in subgroups of the population is possible because of carefully developed outreach and enrolling a diverse study population - representing all people at risk," Desvigne-Nickens added.

According to Steven Grinspoon, chief of the Massachusetts General Hospital Metabolism Unit in the Endocrinology Division of the Department of Medicine, this study underscores the need for nuanced, region-specific and population-specific CVD prediction models that accurately reflect cardiovascular risk for PWH, including those living in LMICs.

India's medtech sector expected to reach \$30 billion by 2030: JP Nadda

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

The medtech sector is rapidly growing and it is expected to reach \$30 billion by 2030, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, JP Nadda, said on Saturday.

With the expansion of digital health infrastructure, like Ayushman Bharat Health Account IDs, telemedicine, and AI integration, "we are enhancing healthcare access, fostering a compassionate and quality workforce, and making strides towards self-reliance and affordability in medical solutions for all," the minister emphasised at the 'IIMA Healthcare Summit'.

"India's remarkable healthcare evolution over the past decade is marked by significant achievements such as expanding medical infrastructure,



including significant growth in the number of AIIMS and medical colleges; strengthening of public healthcare with initiatives like Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush, which are improving health outcomes for millions; implementation of robust disease control measures that is exemplified by a substantial dip in malaria cases and

the COVID-19 pandemic response, and so on," the minister explained.

By fulfilling about 20 per cent of the global generic drug supply by volume and producing 60 per cent of the world's vaccines, India now stands as a global leader in affordable medicines and vaccines, he noted.

Underlining the significance of technology inte-

gration into healthcare delivery and efforts being made by the government in this direction, Nadda said that as we aim for Viksit Bharat at 2047, "let us foster innovation and collaboration across sectors, be it management, medicine, engineering, or social sciences, ensuring a people-centric approach in delivering quality healthcare to every citizen."

The Union Minister exhorted the industry and academia to contribute to policy interventions with their research and said, "Research work of the industry and academia is meant to be implemented in policy and we as policymakers are ready to do it". "You suggest to us the roadmap for policy interventions, innovations, joint collaborations, and we will support you in every way to build that road," he said.

Excess maternal weight in 1st trimester linked to foetal fat accumulation: Study

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

Foetuses of women who gain excess weight in the first trimester of pregnancy are likely to have excess fat distribution in their body, according to a study.

The study, led by researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), showed that foetuses in the womb may have more fat in their upper arm and the abdomen.

The findings, appearing in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, may be key to developing early intervention strategies to

prevent adult obesity associated with heavier birth weight.

Excessive weight gain early in life is a known risk factor for adult obesity and related conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. For the study, the researchers analysed data from an earlier study of more than 2,600 singleton pregnancies.

This included information on maternal weight before and during pregnancy and three-dimensional (3D) ultrasound scans (up to five) throughout pregnancy.



The results showed that pregnant people with excessive weight gain -- defined as more than 2 kilograms (about

4.4 pounds) in the first trimester -- had foetuses with larger abdominal circumferences.

Compared to women with adequate weight gain in their pregnancy, these babies in the womb also had more abdominal area and larger foetal arm fat thickness.

Further, the team reported that foetuses from the excessive weight gain group continued to have greater arm thickness and abdominal measurements through the end of pregnancy, even when weight gain was not considered excessive during

the second and third trimesters.

In contrast, most previous studies have not examined foetal 3D measures during pregnancy and have only linked total weight gain across pregnancy, not just in the first trimester, with birth weight.

"The findings suggest that the timing of weight gain, instead of total weight gain, could be important for developing efforts to prevent excess foetal size and reduce the risk of heart disease and other conditions later in life," the researchers said.

38K HEALTH CARDS ISSUED TO SENIOR CITIZENS

AGENCIES
BHOPAL, JAN 19

Stepped-up efforts by the district health authorities have resulted in the issuance of 38,000 medical assistance cards to senior citizens under the Ayushman Bharat Vardana scheme. The cards ensure cashless treatment up to Rs 5 lakh, with easy registration at both government and private hospitals. Benefits under the scheme are available for citizens aged 70 and above. Releasing the data, the district health office on Friday said these cards

are being made at government health institutions and private hospitals affiliated with the Ayushman Bharat Nirman Scheme.

The health office has issued instructions to inform eligible beneficiaries of the Ayushman scheme about the availability of card-making services at private hospitals.

Under the scheme, senior citizens whose Ayushman cards have already been made will need to re-register to receive an additional Rs 5 lakh top-up, which will be over and above the Rs 5 lakh treatment coverage

for their family. This extra amount will be available for their individual use as cashless treatment.

Affiliated hospitals include all major government and 160 private hospitals in the district.

Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO), Dr Prabhakar Tiwari, informed that senior citizens aged 70 years or above can easily get their cards made through Ayushman Mitras at hospitals using their Aadhaar card and Aadhaar-linked mobile number. The process takes only a few minutes.

BMI a screening tool, obesity must be confirmed by body fat: Experts

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

Body Mass Index (BMI) can be a screening tool, but obesity must be confirmed by measuring body fat, said health experts on Saturday, even as India revamped its obesity guidelines after 15 years.

Traditionally BMI was used to define obesity, but a team of doctors redefined obesity based on the Indian population.

Noting obesity as a serious concern in the country, with the potential to overwhelm healthcare systems, the experts, part of the redefining team, called it essential to move beyond BMI-only

approaches to tackle the ever-growing people related to other major health risks. The new approach, published this week in the *Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology*, focuses on abdominal obesity and comorbid diseases, rather than just BMI. "The new definition of obesity primarily categorises obesity into pre-clinical and clinical obesity," Dr. Naval Vikram, Professor of Medicine, at AIIMS, New Delhi, told IANS.

The expert explained that preclinical obesity is an accumulation of adipose tissue without any abnormalities in the functions of body organs. This state may be temporary

and may convert to clinical obesity in the future and have an increased risk of developing several obesity-related diseases. On the other hand, clinical obesity is defined as a chronic systemic illness with abnormalities in the functions of organ systems (metabolic, mechanical, cardiorespiratory, etc) due to excess adipose tissue, Vikram said.

"BMI should be used for screening purposes, but obesity should be confirmed ideally by a measure of body fat wherever feasible, or another measure such as waist circumference, WHR, or Waist-to-height ratio," the doctor added.

SCIENTISTS FIND SEPSIS MOLECULE, TO BOOST TREATMENTS FOR CRITICALLY ILL PATIENTS

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

A team of US scientists has uncovered how a molecule found on certain bacteria may drive blood clotting in sepsis -- a life-threatening condition that causes about eight million deaths per year.

The team at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) focused on the role of specific blood clotting mechanisms in sepsis.

The findings may pave the way for enhancing treatments for critically ill patients. They found that lipopolysaccharide, or LPS -- a molecule found on the surface of certain bacteria



like *E. coli* -- can directly activate proteins in the blood that trigger clotting.

This process can both block blood flow and damage vital organs in a

chain reaction where proteins in the blood work together to form clots. The researchers found a specific type of LPS, called O26:B6, that is particularly

good at setting off this reaction, making it more likely to cause clotting problems. The research, published in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, is based on a study conducted in non-human primates. The team found that when bacteria containing LPS entered the bloodstream, it quickly activated the clotting system.

This included coagulating proteins like factor XII, which seems to initiate the clotting process, causing a chain reaction. "People who are born without factor XII are healthy and don't bleed abnormally," said Joseph Shatzel, a physician-scientist at OHSU.

"That makes it a great target for therapies -- blocking it might help stop dangerous clots without causing bleeding."

Andre L. Lira, Post-doctoral scholar and lead author of the study, said his research focuses on how the physical properties of bacterial surfaces trigger the clotting system. Sepsis can arise from bacterial, viral, or fungal infections.

"Even when we know the bacteria causing the infection, different strains can behave differently," he said. "By understanding this, we hope to develop precision therapies."

PM Modi highlights Netaji's connection to Jharkhand's Gomoh in 'Mann Ki Baat'

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 19

Jharkhand's Gomoh holds a special place in India's freedom struggle, as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose touched the soil here the last time before embarking on his mission to secure India's Independence. This historical connection was brought to light by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 118th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' on Sunday.

Recalling the dramatic events of 'The Great Escape', PM Modi said, "It was January in Kolkata during the peak of World War II. India's anger against British rule was rising. Police patrolled every corner of the city, with special attention to a house in the heart of Kolkata. Amid this tension, a man in a brown coat, pants, and a black hat stepped out of the house under the cover



of darkness. Dodging several checkpoints, he reached Gomoh station in Jharkhand. From there, he boarded a train, eventually making his way to Europe via Afghanistan, despite the British Empire's watchful eyes."

PM Modi added, "This thrilling story might sound like a movie scene, but it reflects the extraordinary courage of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Today, we celebrate January 23, his birth anniversary, as 'Parakram Diwas', commemorating his bravery and indomitable spirit."

The events of January 18, 1941, mark one of the boldest episodes in India's freedom movement. Under house arrest at his residence on Elgin Road, Kolkata, by the British authorities, Netaji orchestrated a meticulously planned escape. Disguised as a Pathan, he left his home with the assistance of his nephew, Dr Shishir Bose, travelling in a Wanderer car (registration number BLA 7169). By 8 p.m., he reached the home of his lawyer friend, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, in Gomoh's Loco

Bagar.

With Sheikh Abdullah's help, a Pathan outfit was hastily prepared by Amin Tailor of Gomoh. Amin himself escorted Netaji to Gomoh station at 1 a.m. in the dead of night, where he boarded the Howrah Peshawar Mail (later came to be known as the Kalka Mail). This train, renamed Netaji Express in 2021, carried him to Delhi. From there, he continued his journey via the Frontier Mail to Peshawar, eventually leaving India and evading the British authorities.

To honour Netaji's legacy, Gomoh station was renamed Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Junction in 2009. A life-sized bronze statue of him now stands between platforms 1 and 2, accompanied by a plaque narrating the tale of his daring escape.

Shishir Bose vividly described the emotional moment in his book, "At Gomoh station, a sleepy

porter carried Netaji's luggage as he climbed the overbridge and disappeared into the darkness. Moments later, the Kalka Mail arrived, and I stood outside the station, listening to the sound of its wheels which carried him further into history."

Historical records reveal that the British only realized Netaji's disappearance nine days later, on January 27, 1941. His escape was a meticulously planned operation involving key figures like Satyaranjan Bakshi and freedom fighters Alijan and Chiranjeev Babu. Netaji's audacious journey from Gomoh inspired countless Indians to fight for Independence.

Today, the memory of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's courage remains immortalized at Gomoh Junction, reminding generations of his relentless pursuit of freedom and justice.

Delhi polls: Parvesh says Kejriwal using Punjab funds in campaign, seeks ECI probe

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 19

BJP candidate from New Delhi Assembly constituency Parvesh Verma on Sunday sought an Election Commission of India (ECI) probe into the alleged use of Rs 50 crore sent from Punjab for funding the election campaign of his rival and AAP Convenor Arvind Kejriwal.

Addressing a press conference, Verma claimed that Kejriwal is going to lose the February 5 election by 20,000 votes and the fear of this humiliating defeat is forcing him to resort to illegal means and spread falsehoods about threat to his life.

"Arvind Kejriwal is conducting his election campaign with a convoy of 50 cars and 400 Punjab Police personnel, despite previously taking oaths to refuse security and vehicles," said Parvesh Verma.

The BJP leader said that a sum of Rs 50 crore had allegedly been sent by the



AAP government in Punjab solely for Kejriwal's campaign in the New Delhi constituency and demanded an investigation by the ECI. Verma said that whenever Kejriwal visits the New Delhi constituency for campaigning, the people question him about employment, electricity, and other pressing issues and he has no answers.

He also said that witnessing the erosion of his political standing, Kejriwal does not even want Chief Minister Atishi, and other AAP leaders Manish Sisodia, or Saurabh Bharadwaj to win. "For this reason, they are being kept away from election campaigning and bogged down with press conferences and meetings," he said.

Despite being an MLA for 12 years, Kejriwal has no support in the constituency, said Verma, adding that wherever the former Chief Minister or his wife Sunita campaign in New Delhi, they reportedly do not have even 10 local people with them.

Verma recalled that five years ago, on this exact date, January 19, Kejriwal had announced 10 guarantees, which included a pollution-free Delhi, a clean and bright Delhi, a safer Delhi for women, facilities in unauthorised colonies, housing for slum dwellers, a shining Delhi, access to clean water, world-class schools, affordable health-care facilities, and the largest and cheapest public transport system.

Justice will be denied unless all conspirators of RG Kar punished: Dilip Ghosh

AGENCIES

KOLKATA, JAN 19

A day after a special court in Kolkata convicted civil volunteer Sanjay Roy for the rape and murder of a junior woman doctor of the state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh claimed on Sunday that justice would be denied unless "all the conspirators behind the macabre crime are identified and punished".

"Every conspirator behind the macabre crime should be identified and punished. Otherwise, the common people will lose faith in the judicial system," BJP's former national vice president and the former party Lok Sabha member Ghosh told media persons.

The special court convicted Roy on Saturday and the quantum of sentence is scheduled to be pronounced on Monday.

Special court Judge Anirban Das, on Saturday,



has already intimated to the convict that the maximum and minimum punishments in the case are "death penalty" or "life imprisonment", respectively.

According to Ghosh, the R. G. Kar tragedy involves a much larger conspiracy.

"I feel that the same larger conspiracy should be revealed at the earliest. The court should direct the Central Bureau of Investigation to find out who is actually behind this crime," Ghosh said.

According to Ghosh,

while all have faith in the country's judicial system, it is also true that a large section of the common people and civil society feel that Sanjay Roy is not the only handler in this entire crime.

"I have nothing more to say about the role Kolkata Police played in the matter. But the probe process by CBI is also not beyond questions," Ghosh added.

While the conviction in the crime of rape and murder crime is over, the angle in the tampering of

evidence in the matter is still alive.

The CBI, sources said, already informed the special court that the scope for filing a supplementary charge sheet on the tampering of evidence angle is still open.

Last year, the former and controversial principal of R. G. Kar Sandip Ghosh and the former SHO of Tala Police Station Abhijit Mondal were granted "default bail" by the same special court, as the CBI failed to file the supplementary charge sheet against the duo within 90 days of their arrest.

Both Ghosh and Mondal were accused of misleading the investigation and tampering with the evidence when the Kolkata Police conducted the initial investigation.

Roy, an erstwhile civic volunteer attached to Kolkata Police, was arrested by the city police on August 10 last year, a day after the body of the victim doctor was recovered.

EPFO simplifies process for funds transfer, correcting personal details

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 19

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has introduced major changes to simplify key processes for its 7.6 crore subscribers by cutting down circuitous approvals that led to delays and inconvenience.

Labour and Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the EPF members, who have linked their Universal Account Number with their Aadhaar number, can file their transfer claims online using the one-time password generated using their Aadhaar. For this too, the intervention of the employer is not needed now.

Members will now be able to self-correct personal details, including name, address and bank details, by logging in to the EPFO website. "Such changes by Aadhaar-verified account holders will no longer require the approval of



the employer," the minister said.

This revision will immediately benefit around 3.9 lakh members whose requests are pending at various stages.

If any member who can self-approve has already filed his request which is pending with the employer, the member can delete the already filed request and self-approve as per the simplified process.

The majority of the cases could directly be self-approved by the members themselves or in some selected cases by the employer.

Out of the total eight lakh requests received at EPFO for correction through employers in FY 2024-25, almost 45

per cent of the change requests can be self-approved by the member without the employer's verification or approval at EPFO. On average, this will eliminate a delay of nearly 28 days taken by the employer to approve Joint Declarations. The request for change of EPF Account holders not having a full e-KYC shall get approved at the employer level in approximately another 50 per cent of the cases without the requirement for any approval at EPFO, the Minister said.

At present, around 27 per cent of the grievances filed by the members relate to member profile/KYC issues and with the introduction of the revised JD functionality, it is expected that there shall be a drastic reduction in the number of grievances being filed by the members, the Minister explained.

To rectify common errors in recording name, marital status and service

details during the registration process or later, an employee had to make a request online with supporting documents. The request would have to be verified by the employer and then forwarded to EPFO for approval, a process called joint declaration.

"The EPFO has simplified this process on the EPFO portal by allowing an employee to self-correct most common errors in his personal details without verification by the employer and approval by the EPFO if an employee has a valid universal account number (UAN) issued after October 1, 2017, when Aadhaar matching was made compulsory," the minister said.

If the UAN was issued prior to October 1, 2017, corrections can be made by the employer without EPFO's approval.

The requirement of supporting documents has also been simplified for such cases.

DMK gears up for 2026 TN Assembly polls, seeks reports from seat in-charges

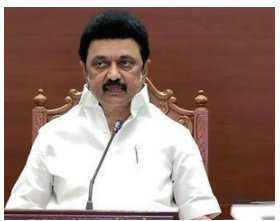
AGENCIES

CHENNAI, JAN 19

The ruling DMK is intensifying preparations for the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, with the party leadership calling for periodic reports from in-charges of each constituency.

Party president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is closely monitoring the election preparations. A dedicated team, led by Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and party organising secretary R.S. Bharathi, is overseeing daily operations. Senior DMK leaders and state ministers Thangam Thenarasu and E.V. Velu are also playing key roles in these efforts.

DMK has already appointed full-time workers for all 234 Assembly constituencies. These appointments were made based on performance, with half of the workers selected for their contributions during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, where the DMK-led INDIA bloc in the state achieved a landslide victory, securing all 39 seats and also the lone seat in



Puducherry.

Each full-timer has been carefully screened and chosen after consulting with the party's local leadership. Notably, these appointees are not residents of the constituencies they oversee, ensuring impartiality and focused execution of party strategies. The constituency in-charges are required to submit weekly reports to the state party headquarters, detailing progress and highlighting strengths and weaknesses in their respective areas.

To enhance coordination, DMK has also appointed ministers in charge of each district. These ministers will collaborate with the full-time constituency in-charges to monitor performance and ensure the effective implementation of state government schemes and programs.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's office is actively tracking the performance of these ministers. CM Stalin has expressed confidence in the DMK's ability to secure 200 out of the 234 Assembly seats in the 2026 elections. Currently holding 133 seats, the party is working towards this ambitious target.

During a recent high-level meeting at Anna Arivalayam, Udhayanidhi Stalin criticised certain party leaders for underperforming in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections despite being assigned specific responsibilities.

R.S. Bharathi, the DMK organising secretary and a senior member of the core committee tasked with candidate selection for the 2026 elections, stated, "Our leader and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru M.K. Stalin, has already set a target of winning 200 Assembly seats in the 2026 elections. The party's organisational machinery is fully activated to achieve this goal." He added that senior leaders, including Udhayanidhi Stalin, are working tirelessly to ensure the party's preparedness.

Pilgrims praise PM Modi, CM Yogi for Maha Kumbh arrangements, selfie point major attraction

AGENCIES

PRAYAGRAJ, JAN 19

Devotees thronging Prayagraj to take a dip in Triveni Sangam the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati in Prayagraj, are expressing happiness over the arrangements made by the Centre and state government.

Selfie point with a huge cut out of Maha Kumbh and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has become a major attraction of the event with the people queuing up to click a photo at the spot.

Talking to IANS, several devotees, soaking in the spiritual energy of the event, opened up about their experience.

Anand Dubey, a devotee from Jharkhand, said cleanliness and security arrangements are up to the mark and thanked the Modi and Yogi governments for the same.

Dubey said: "Swachhata Abhiyaan is being followed properly and we are not



noticing any litter."

Police personnel deployed at every naka were extending all help to devotees who are new to this place, he said.

On Digital Kumbh, he said that through an app, we can find out about food, administrative information or any particular point. Another devotee Mukesh said that he reached Prayagraj via train by booking a Tatkal ticket and did not face any inconvenience.

Mukesh, a devotee from Jamshedpur said: "People who have reached here are lucky. Digital Kumbh has been successful. Free tents are also available. We didn't face any difficulty. Everything is so good."

Akash Khare from Mumbai said arrange-

ments for everything are good and we are lucky to have made it to the Maha Kumbh. The ghats are clean. Toilets are available at every 100 metres.

Ashwin Ghule from Mumbai said: "I feel lucky to have reached here, all arrangements are good. Toilets are available at every 100 metres."

Sanjay Pande from Lucknow, who clicked a selfie with cutouts of PM Modi and CM Yogi Adityanath, also hailed the government for the arrangements.

Raghuroop from Haryana said: "Yogi ji and Modi ji have made brilliant arrangements. We have taken selfies with the two great leaders."

Chandan Kumar from Gaya said time to time sanitation workers clean

the toilets.

Shailesh Kumar Pandey from Jharkhand said he was having an amazing experience.

Sanatani Suraj said: "I am feeling very good after coming here."

Meanwhile, two devotees, who are observing 'Kalpvaas', also shared about the ritual and their experience at the event.

Udaybhan Sharma said: "While observing 'Kalpvaas' (one-month stay) one has to take a dip in the Sangam before sunrise, listen to seers and visit them."

He also shared that he has been observing Kalpvaas for the past 17 years while noting that it is a very difficult practice if all the rules and regulations of the religious practices are observed properly.

"However, the divine experience is such that if you once visit a Kumbh, you cannot stop yourself from coming the second time," he said.

On how he feels during the month-long stay, Sharma said he felt

blessed.

Another devotee Pushpa Sharma said: "Kalpvaas is difficult but can't be done in the village...old people can have food twice as they have to take medicines but the rule allows only one meal a day. And I am doing this." Sourabh Singh from Ettawah, a small vendor selling Prashad said: "Trade has increased. There is no dearth of anything"

Another vendor, Jaihind Kashyap, from Auriya, said he has been visiting the city since 2021.

Expressing joy over increased sales, he said that whatever he brings from 'mandi (wholesale market)' in the morning is sold by evening.

Halki Bai from Jabalpur, who was selling vermilion at the Kumbh Mela, said she is doing well. "Food is provided for free. Everything is fine," she said.

Manish Kashyap, a shopkeeper from Mathura said he is elated over the arrangements. "There is no tension," there is no tension.

TRUMP LOOKS SET TO BRING SHIFT IN US APPROACH TO ALLIES, NORTH KOREA, DIPLOMACY, TARIFFS

AGENCIES
SEOUL, JAN 19

Under his America First leitmotif, incoming US President Donald Trump appears poised to bring a shift in the United States' approach to the alliance with South Korea, North Korea's unabated nuclear threats, trade and other key issues.

Trump will take the oath of office in the Capitol Rotunda on Monday as the US 47th president amid expectations that he will employ a diplomatic playbook that seeks to curtail America's costly overseas engagement, pressure allies to shoulder more security burden and redress US trade deficits for the sake of American interests.

His swearing-in comes as South Korea is reeling from the aftermath of now-impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol's botched martial law bid last month, with the current period of political uncertainty feared to weaken Seoul's hands in policy coordination with the Trump administration.

In his second term, Trump's America First credo is expected to be an overarching theme of his administration's policy

formulation and implementation given that he has named stalwart loyalists for Cabinet posts in the absence of the "axis of adults" that can help stably guide the US' foreign and security policy.

US allies like South Korea have now been bracing for the return of Trump's perceived transactional foreign policy approach -- a far cry from the Biden administration's formula centring on rebuilding and cementing a network of allies and partners as America's "greatest strategic asset."

"We know the transition from the Biden to the Trump administration represents a significant shift in how the United States approaches allies," Patrick Cronin, chair for Asia-Pacific Security at the Washington-based Hudson Institute, told Yonhap News Agency via email. "There is a time for strenuous demands on allies, but now is not that time for South Korea."

In South Korea, concerns have persisted that Trump could demand Seoul raise its financial contributions to the stationing of the 28,500-strong US Forces Korea (USFK), though a new cost-

sharing deal for the 2026-30 period was signed last year.

Trump has already asserted the need for North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states to spend 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defence -- much higher than the current 2 per cent guideline of the transatlantic alliance.

In his campaign remarks in October, Trump called South Korea a "money machine" and claimed that South Korea would be paying US\$10 billion a year for the upkeep of USFK if he was in the White House. Under the new cost-sharing deal, Seoul is to pay 1.52 trillion won (\$1.04 billion) in 2026, up from 1.4 trillion won in 2025.

Trump's picks for Cabinet posts underscored that they are in sync with Trump's view on NATO and other allies when they appeared at recent Senate confirmation hearings.

"I think there's been broad acknowledgement across Europe and across multiple administrations, both Republican and Democrat, that our NATO partners ... these are rich, advanced economies, need to contribute more to their own defence and



ultimately to the NATO partnership as well," Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio said.

The Florida senator added that what matters is for the US not just to have defence allies, but to have "capable" allies that are able to defend their own region.

When it comes to diplomacy toward North Korea, expectations remain high that Trump might seek to resume his direct diplomacy with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, given that on the stump, he repeatedly boasted about his personal ties with the reclusive leader.

During his time in office, Trump employed a direct leader-to-leader approach with the North, leading to three in-person meetings with Kim, including the first-ever bilateral summit in Singapore in 2018,

though serious nuclear talks have been stalled since the no-deal summit in Hanoi in February 2019.

Trump's recent personnel choices have added to growing expectations for a rekindling of diplomacy between the US and the North.

Earlier this month, Trump picked William Harrison -- an aide, who was involved in planning summits with the North Korean leader during his first term -- as an assistant to the president and deputy chief of staff for operations.

Last month, he named former Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell as his presidential envoy for special missions that he said cover "some of the hottest spots" around the world, including North Korea, while tapping Alex Wong, who was engaged

in working-level nuclear talks with the North, as his principal deputy national security adviser.

Still, it remains to be seen whether Pyongyang has an appetite to reengage with Washington as it now relies on Russia for food, fuel, security assistance and other forms of support in the wake of its support for Moscow's protracted war in Ukraine.

In Seoul, concerns have persisted that with Yoon's suspension from official duties and the absence of a fully elected president in office, policy coordination with the Trump administration could weaken, or South Korea could be sidelined or bypassed during Trump's diplomacy toward Pyongyang.

This is a key line of concern over the future trajectory of the Seoul-Washington alliance under Trump as the political turmoil continues in the Asian country currently led by acting President Choi Sang-mok.

"This is a tale of two allies on different tracks. The US will be starting a new government that will move at 100 miles per hour starting January 21.

Trump will be signing EOs (executive orders) on

all sorts of issues," Victor Cha, president of the Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department and Korea Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told Yonhap News via email.

"Meanwhile, South Korea is stuck in neutral gear, not moving forward, and politically paralysed by the impeachment crisis. It is imperative that the adjudication of the case be done promptly and without partisan bickering.

The longer the delay in resolving the situation -- however it is resolved -- the more disadvantageous to the alliance," he added.

Frank Aum, a former senior Pentagon adviser on Korea, said the lack of certainty and direction in Seoul's foreign policy might increase the likelihood for the Trump administration to take greater initiative on the alliance and North Korea policy.

"A stronger, more legitimate ROK president would be in the best position to advocate for ROK interests, especially in instances where Washington and Seoul are not on the same page," Aum told Yonhap via email. ROK stands for South Korea's official

name, the Republic of Korea.

Trump's unconventional, uncertainty-laced brand of diplomacy has been what keeps allies and partners on edge.

Recently, Trump took them by surprise when he refused to rule out using military or economic coercion to retake the canal that Panama took control of in 1999 and acquire Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory -- a move that some say has laid bare an expansionist facet of his foreign policy.

Nam Chang-hee, a political science professor at Korea's Inha University, interpreted Trump's move on the Panama Canal and Greenland in a broader geopolitical context, saying the new president looks set to conduct a global "chess game" against China, a rival that has steadily been striving to expand its sphere of influence.

In the midst of the intensifying rivalry with China, Trump would come to grips with the strategic value of South Korea, a capable treaty ally home to major US Army and Air Force installations in close proximity to China's mainland.

Nearly 200,000 Syrian refugees returned since December: UN

AGENCIES
DAMASCUS, JAN 19

Nearly 200,000 Syrian refugees have returned to their home country since December last year, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.

As of January 16, about 195,200 Syrians have returned home since the fall of President Bashar al-Assad's government on December 8, 2024, according to figures posted by Grandi on social media platform X on Saturday.

He also announced plans to visit Syria and neighbouring countries soon to strengthen the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, for returnees and host communities, though the timeline remains unspecified, reports Xinhua news



agency.

Meanwhile, according to the post, the UNHCR estimates more than 550,000 Syrians returned to their home country in 2024, with the northern Aleppo governorate receiving the largest share -- about 23 per cent of the returnees.

While many Syrian refugees have shown interest in returning, a UNHCR report released on Friday noted mixed sentiments, as some refugees remain

cautious. Many of them have emphasised the need for financial and logistical assistance to be able to return and rebuild their lives and homes inside Syria.

In response, the UNHCR and its partner organisations advance an inter-agency plan to facilitate refugee returns, according to the report. The agency also underscored the importance of sustained funding and protection programs for both refu-

gees and host communities.

Earlier on December 17, the UNHCR Director for the Middle East and North Africa Rema Jamous Imseis said that around 1 million Syrian refugees may return to their homeland between January and June 2025.

"We have forecasted that we hope to see somewhere in the order of one million Syrians returning between January and June of next year," Imseis had said during a press conference in Geneva.

She described the recent developments as bringing "a tremendous amount of hope" for resolving the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria. However, she emphasised that regime change does not necessarily mean the end of the ongoing crisis, highlighting the immense challenges ahead.

Sudan's Omdurman city faces drinking water crisis due to paramilitary forces' attack on dam

AGENCIES
KHARTOUM, JAN 19

Omdurman city, north of the Sudanese capital Khartoum, has been facing a significant drinking water crisis over the past five days due to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) attack on the Merowe Dam in Northern State, local authorities said.

"Due to the complete interruption of electricity supply, a water crisis occurred as the Nile stations and wells went out of service," the Khartoum State government said in a statement on Saturday, attributing the power outage and water shortage to the RSF drone attack on the Merowe Dam, a hydroelectric dam on the Nile River. "We are making intensive efforts to implement some urgent solutions to address the drinking water crisis," it added.



The Merowe Dam, located about 350 km north of Khartoum, is one of the largest hydropower projects in Africa.

Governor of Khartoum State, Ahmed Osman Hamza, inspected a number of wells in the western districts of Al-Thawra neighbourhood, checking the operation of wells with generators, the state's media office said

Saturday. It noted that the governor has instructed authorities to supply citizens with water from the Al-Manara water station's reserve.

Meanwhile, Khartoum State Water Corporation said its engineers were working on implementing emergency measures to operate the water wells and restore water flow into the national network.

It revealed that 15 wells have been activated in several neighbourhoods, which has significantly contributed to providing water supply to some areas.

Omdurman, Sudan's second most populous city, has seen a surge in population after it became one of the safest areas in the state, prompting thousands of displaced people to move to the city. Amid the severe water shortage, residents have to stand in long queues to obtain water from old wells or water trucks.

Sudan has been gripped by a devastating conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF since mid-April 2023, which claimed at least 29,683 lives and displaced nearly 15 million people, either inside or outside Sudan, according to the latest estimates by international organisations.

Trump family departs for Washington DC ahead of inauguration on Jan 20

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, JAN 19

President-elect Donald Trump and his family are headed to Washington, D.C. ahead of his inauguration on a US military airplane supplied by President Joe Biden.

The President-elect's private navy and crimson "Trump Force One" and the US military plane were both on the tarmac at Palm Beach International Airport on Saturday.

Trump's son Eric and Eric's wife Lara boarded the private plane, according to the media.

Karoline Leavitt, spokesperson for the Trump-Vance transition team, wrote on X, that "The President and First Lady are leaving Mar-a-Lago now for Washington, DC, on a great journey of success for our country!"

For his less than a three-hour flight to Washington

Dulles International Airport, Trump, his wife Melania, daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared are on a specially configured Boeing BA.N 757-200 in trademark blue and white colours and bearing the words "United States of America".

After he arrives in DC, Trump is expected to head to his golf club in Sterling, Virginia, on the outskirts of Washington.

From there, he's be joined by some 500 guests to watch a fireworks display and musical performances that include Leo Days, an Elvis impersonator, and Christopher Macchio, a tenor who has been featured at other political events.

Trump will also hold a rally with supporters inside the Capital One Arena in downtown D.C. on Sunday, the eve of his inauguration.

The President-elect aims to execute rapid mass deportations of undocu-

mented immigrants once he takes office.

Deportations of illegal immigrants will begin "very early, very quickly" after inauguration.

Trump emphasised the priority of removing criminals from the country, asserting widespread support for this approach.

Trump declined to reveal which cities would be targeted first, noting the evolving nature of the plan.

Trump maintained that the effort is about ensuring the removal of criminals, stressing its importance.

President-elect Trump emphasised his desire for the war between Israel and Hamas to end during a phone interview with NBC News.

Trump told Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to "keep doing what has to be done" while highlighting the importance of upholding the ceasefire-hostage agreement.

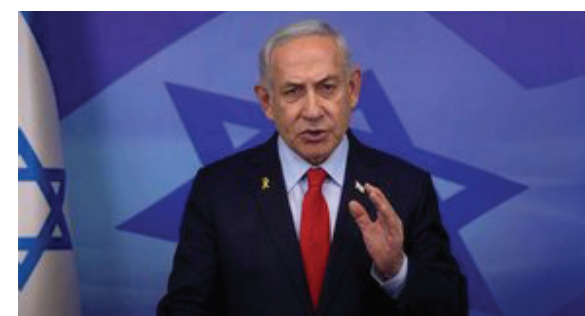
Netanyahu says Israel reserves the right to return to war if Gaza ceasefire deal with Hamas falls apart

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV, JAN 19

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel reserves the right to resume fighting Hamas if its ceasefire-for-hostages deal with the militant group falls apart -- and that it would have US backing in doing so.

In a televised address made hours before the ceasefire is set to begin Sunday morning, Netanyahu praised the deal, which he said was thanks in part to both the outgoing administration of US President Joe Biden and President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration. The Prime Minister, who faces a growing political firestorm surrounding the deal in Israel, vowed to "achieve all the goals of the war and bring everyone home".

"This agreement is, first



and foremost, the result of the courage of our fighters in battle, and it is also the result of our steadfast stand on Israel's vital interests. A tough stand in the face of heavy pressures, both from within and abroad," Netanyahu said.

The Prime Minister cautioned Hamas to follow the rules of the deal. Netanyahu said both Biden and Trump had agreed to support Israel's "right to return to fighting" if Hamas does not abide by the deal.

"I deeply appreciate

that," he added. "If we need to return to fighting, we will do so in new ways, and we will do it with great strength," Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu said that he stuck to three "fundamental principles" in the negotiations that led to the ceasefire-for-hostages deal agreed with Hamas.

First, he said in a televised address on Saturday, was Israel's right to return to war, with the backing of the US, if negotiations on the second phase of the deal break down.

Secondly, Netanyahu said he fought for a "significant increase" in the number of living hostages to be released in the first stage of the deal. He claimed to have "nearly doubled" that number since discussions in May, but did not specify.

Thirty-three hostages are expected to be released by Hamas in the first stage of the deal, but it remains unclear how many of them are living. Israel has typically included hostages who have died but whose remains have not been returned to Israel among its official hostage tally.

The third principle, according to Netanyahu, was that Israel would maintain full control over the Philadelphi Corridor -- the thin strip of land along the Gaza-Egypt border -- and the security buffer zone surrounding the entire Gaza Strip.

Israel's continued military presence in the Philadelphi Corridor was previously a sticking point in negotiations, but Netanyahu said Saturday that, "contrary to all the reports I hear from the outside," Israel was "not only not reducing the forces there -- we are even slightly increasing them".

Netanyahu added that the 42-day first phase, was a "temporary ceasefire".

"If we are forced to resume the war, we will do so with force," the Israeli PM said, adding that Israel had "changed the face of the Middle East" since the war began.

The pause in 15 months of war is a step toward ending the deadliest, most destructive fighting ever between Israel and the Hamas militant group -- and comes more than a year after the only other ceasefire achieved.

World Bank expects India's fiscal deficit to shrink further amid rising tax revenues

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

India's fiscal deficit is expected to shrink further, on the back of growing tax revenues, according to a World Bank report.

The report noted that this trend is anticipated to contribute to fiscal consolidation policies of the government.

"In India, fiscal deficits are expected to continue shrinking, largely on account of growing tax revenues," the report said.

While fiscal deficits across South Asia are predicted to remain tight, India stands out with its improving fiscal position. In contrast, fiscal deficits in other South Asian nations are projected to remain stable due to fiscal adjustments being offset by higher interest payments in Pakistan and infrastructure investments in Bangladesh.



The report noted that inflation in the region is forecast to moderate during the projection period, supported by stabilising exchange rates. Inflation is expected to remain within or below target ranges in countries like India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

India is also projected to retain its position as the fastest-growing economy among the world's largest economies, with a GDP growth forecast of 6.7 per cent for FY2025-26 and

FY2026-27.

The report highlighted sustained growth in India's services sector and a strengthening of manufacturing activity, driven by government initiatives to enhance logistics infrastructure and simplify tax regulations.

Private consumption growth is expected to rise due to an improving labour market, increased credit availability, and easing inflation, while government consumption growth may remain restrained.

Investment growth in India is anticipated to stay robust, underpinned by rising private investments, strong corporate balance sheets, and better financing conditions.

These factors are expected to enhance the country's economic resilience in the coming years.

The Indian government aims to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the current financial year from 5.6 per cent in 2023-24.

India's net direct tax collections, comprising corporate tax and personal income tax, shot up by a robust 15.4 per cent to Rs 12.1 lakh crore, from April 1 to November 10 during the current financial year, according to the latest figures released by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

Similarly, there has been a robust growth in

GST collections on the back of rising economic activity.

The buoyancy in tax collections places more funds in the government's coffers to undertake investments in large infrastructure projects to spur economic growth and take up welfare schemes for the poor.

It also helps to keep the fiscal deficit in check and strengthens the macroeconomic fundamentals of the economy.

A lower fiscal deficit means the government has to borrow less which leaves more money in the banking system for big companies to borrow and invest. This in turn leads to a higher economic growth rate and the creation of more jobs.

Besides, a low fiscal deficit keeps the inflation rate in check which strengthens the fundamentals of the economy and ensures growth with stability.

Motilal Oswal denies accusations circulating on social media, calls them 'baseless'

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, JAN 19



Asset manager Motilal Oswal Asset Management Company (MOAMC) on Sunday denied accusations circulating on social media against the company and its officials, saying these "baseless accusations are a deliberate attempt by individuals with vested interests to malign the good reputation that our firm and leadership have built over decades".

Responding to rumours on social media that claimed MOAMC money managers may have been bribed to stock up on Kalyan Jewellers, the financial services major categorically denied "the baseless, malicious, and defamatory allegations".

"Such baseless attacks on our integrity are completely unacceptable to us. Motilal Oswal Financial Services (MOFSL) has a legacy of nearly four decades of working with ethical practices and

transparency," said the asset manager.

In a statement, the company further stated that the "integrity of our teams is of highest standards and we assure investors that we never have, and we never will tolerate any slip up on this count".

"The allegations made against the firm and its officials about rumours related to resignation, unethical practice or search are totally false and a blatant attempt to mislead the public and damage the trust we have earned over decades of exemplary service," MOAMC said.

The asset manager urged people not to

believe these baseless and unethical attempts to spread misinformation.

"We urge all stakeholders to rely on credible and verified sources of information. We reassure our Investors, Distributors, Shareholders and all other stakeholders that we follow highest level of compliance standards and we have full faith in our systems, processes and fund managers.

"MOAMC will take all necessary measures to protect its reputation and safeguard the trust and confidence placed in us by our investors and the broader community," it added.

CII pegs India's growth rate at 7 per cent for 2025-26 amid rising private investments

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

An increase in private investments and employment is expected to keep India's overall growth around a stable 6.4-6.7 per cent during the current financial year and is likely to drive up the growth to 7.0 per cent in FY26, according to a survey released by apex business chamber CII on Sunday.

India has emerged as a bright spot amid geopolitical fault lines that have disrupted global supply chains and posed serious challenges to global growth, the survey said.

The sound economic policies initiated by the Government, with emphasis on public capex-led growth, helped revive the economy, it pointed out.

The pan-India CII survey, which was conducted over the past 30 days, suggested that 75 per cent of the respondents believe that the

current economic environment is conducive to private investments.

"Given that 70 per cent of the firms surveyed said that they would invest in FY26, an uptick in private investments might be on the cards over the next few quarters," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII.

Along with economic growth, employment generation has also been at the centre stage in recent policy discussions. India's vision of a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047 is hinged upon performing well on the imperative of "creation of good quality jobs".

Encouragingly, the early results from the survey show that about 97 per cent of the sample firms are likely to increase employment in both 2024-25 and 2025-26. In fact, 79 per cent of the respondents' firms said they added more people over the past three years.

Responding to the question on the extent

of employment generation expected in FY25 and FY26, about 97 per cent of the firms indicated that employment is expected to increase with 42 per cent to 46 per cent of the firms indicating a 10 to 20 per cent increase in employment over and above the existing workforce and about 31 per cent to 36 per cent of them have indicated an expected increase in employment of up to 10 per cent.

The average increase in direct employment due to planned investments in the next year is expected to be in the range of 15 per cent to 22 per cent between the manufacturing and services sectors respectively. Similar expectations were seen in the interim results on indirect employment with manufacturing and services firms expecting about a 14 per cent increase in indirect employment respectively over and above the existing levels

of employment.

The majority of the firms surveyed indicated that it takes anywhere between one to six months to fill in vacancies at Senior management, Management/ Supervisory level, while regular and contractual workers take less time to fill in a vacant position indicating the need to fill the availability of skilled staff at the higher level in sample firms.

On wage growth, which has an impact on personal consumption, a major proportion (40 per cent to 45 per cent) of sample firms surveyed saw an increase in average wage growth for senior management, managerial/ supervisory roles, and regular workers, in the range of 10 per cent to 20 per cent in FY' 25. The trend was similar in FY' 24.

The CII survey was based on a sample of 300 firms spread across all industry sizes (Large, Medium and Small),

India's first flying taxi prototype unveiled at auto expo 2025

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

In a bid to realise the dream of air taxis and transform urban mobility in India, the country's first flying taxi prototype, called 'Shunya', has been unveiled at the 'Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025' here.

Precision manufacturing firm Sona SPEED signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bengaluru-based Sarla Aviation towards this goal.

Sarla Aviation is developing India's most sophisticated electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft.

Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, HD Kumaraswamy, visited the Sarla Aviation booth, and showed keen interest in the flying taxi prototype, considered a historic step toward sustainable and futuristic mobility in the country.

Sona SPEED motors have been part of several space missions of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The agreement positions Sona SPEED as a key partner in revolutionising urban air mobility in the country.

"This partnership is a significant step in Sona SPEED's evolution as



a hub for aerospace innovation. Together, we aim to shape a cleaner, faster, and more efficient future for urban transportation," said Chocko Valliappa, CEO of Sona SPEED.

Under the MoU, Sona SPEED will utilise its state-of-the-art facilities in Karnataka to design and manufacture critical components, like the motors and landing gear among others for Sarla Aviation's eVTOL aircraft.

"Sona SPEED's expertise in precision engineering perfectly complements our vision for electric flying taxis. This collaboration reinforces our mission to redefine urban

mobility with cutting-edge eVTOL technology," said Rakesh Gaonkar, CEO of Sarla Aviation.

The development highlights India's growing aspiration in sustainable urban air mobility and underscores the importance of synergies in driving innovation.

Focused on developing eVTOL aircraft, Sarla Aviation aims to transform urban mobility with faster, cleaner, and more efficient transportation solutions.

The company plans to initiate test flights and develop additional prototypes, with a market launch targeted for 2028.

Scientists discover new superconductor material for wider use

AGENCIES
TOKYO, JAN 19

Researchers from Tokyo Metropolitan University have discovered a new superconducting material which can be more widely deployed in society.

They combined iron, nickel, and zirconium, to create a new transition metal zirconide with different ratios of iron to nickel.

While both iron zirconide and nickel zirconide are not superconducting, the newly prepared mixtures are, exhibiting a "dome-shaped" phase diagram typical of so-called "unconventional superconductors," a promising avenue for developing high temperature superconducting materials, according to the study published in the Journal of Alloys and Compounds. Superconductors already play an active role in cutting-edge technologies, from superconducting magnets in medical devices and maglev systems to superconducting cables for power transmission.

However, they generally rely on cooling to temperatures of around four Kelvin, a key roadblock in

wider deployment of the technology.

Scientists are on the lookout for materials which can show zero resistivity at higher temperatures, particularly the 77 Kelvin threshold at which liquid nitrogen can be used to cool the materials instead of liquid helium.

Now, a team of researchers led by Associate Professor Yoshikazu Mizuguchi from Tokyo Metropolitan University have conceived a new superconducting material containing a magnetic element. For the first time, they showed that a polycrystalline alloy of iron, nickel, and zirconium shows superconducting properties. Curiously, both iron zirconide and nickel zirconide are not superconducting in crystalline form.

According to the study, in experiments which began as an undergraduate student project, the team combined iron, nickel, and zirconium in different ratios using a method known as arc melting, confirming that the resulting alloy had the same crystal structure as tetragonal transition-metal zirconides, a family of promising superconducting materials.

THE THIRD EYE: ALL BUSINESS IS HUMAN ACTIVITY

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19:

Different aspects of business, including sales promotion, building mutual trust with prospective buyers on the strength of the customer feedback, effective communications, honouring the organisational ethics, and use of emotional intelligence for handling people, prove the basic point that all business is about human beings -- conducted 'by and for the people'.

Even funding, business diversification, and mergers involve individuals as investors, planners of growth, and negotiators from the two sides.

Successful businesses ultimately owe their gains to a set of persons who took right decisions at the right time and who are knowledgeable about the market and the competitors.

This required them to be information savvy -- a quality that only human beings could have.

In the era of Artificial Intelligence and 'Machine Learning', it is data analytics that held the key to productivity but it worked within the fundamental principle that results

would be dependant on the information 'fed' into the system.

The gift of 'imagination' that only a human mind possessed, could make all the difference between success and failure and could never be overestimated.

Imagination has the base of knowledge but only those who could see 'the wood behind the trees' would visualise the opportunities and risks that lay ahead and put the business on the path of progress by embracing the former and avoiding the latter.

The success of any business is traditionally judged by the extent to which it can sell its product or service but for it to hit a benchmark three basic parameters have to be unfailingly met.

First, promotion must be free of 'lies' though it could accommodate some 'exaggeration' within an 'ethical' limit.

Secondly, there should be an awareness of the need for the business to earn the reputation of a 'brand' so that expansion or diversification could be supported by investors.

And finally, arrangements must exist for an ongoing study and analysis

of the competition developing around that business.

All these ingredients of success are heavily dependant on the quality of communications that the leaders and representatives of the organisation had with their clients, customers, and the general public, interpersonal relations that prevailed within the corporate body across the vertical hierarchy and the system the organisation has established for garnering information of relevance that is available within and outside of the business entity.

Communications have acquired a new-found significance in the age of online functioning. A good communication in all situations must conform to three requirements -- it should be 'unambiguous' which means it should not permit more than one interpretation, it must be 'concise' within the precept that 'brevity cannot be there at the cost of clarity' and it should follow the 'need to know' principle where mandated.

The reputation and image of a 'brand' depend largely on the consistency of its promise, use of the feedback for improving the

product or the service, and the ability of the company to stand up to the competition in terms of pricing.

For all of this to happen the leadership must make knowledge-based decisions using information that is made available to the corporate body by those who studied and analysed the competitive environment. It should, in particular, make adequate use of whatever was there as 'exclusive' information in the possession of the organisation.

The operation of the human factors in business is manifest in the new trend of corporates using the data on customers and their purchasing history and preferences, to reach out to them through personalised communications and keep up their loyalty by offering what they are seeking in particular.

Online follow-up with customers to ascertain their requirements is a useful way of enhancing outreach and ensuring customer retention.

However, there is a sudden spurt in promotional activities on social media platforms and there is an impression in public that some of it is meant to

push untested products into the market -- thus reflecting poorly on the ethical side of the business.

It is also true that monetary inducement is being used by business houses to get the better of the competition.

On the strategic front social media has attracted adverse notice for becoming an instrument of 'proxy war' and 'misinformation campaign' that is meant to hurt the security interests of the target country and even bring down a regime.

Its potential in creating a 'business warfare' is certainly to be watched out for in the times to come, because economic security is an essential ingredient of national security, and covert attack on the opponent's economy is now a part of the said 'proxy war'. Digital marketing has come to stay and businesses are already in the thick of using Artificial Intelligence to enhance their output and expand their operations.

For most mortals, life is a continuum of decisions -- big or small -- required to be taken at work or home on a day-to-day basis.

More than half of these involved contacting or communicating with

another person.

This person may be a colleague, a boss -- a customer is a 'boss' too -- or someone who served you.

In any human interaction, three things come into play -- attention to the conversation which one will not be able to provide unless one is a good listener, use of 'emotional intelligence' to understand where the other person is coming from and an analytical mind that enabled you to evaluate a developing situation.

A person working for you giving a curt reply which is not like things, might lead you to discover that something happening at home has upset him.

The boss-subordinate relationship is subject to a set of do's and don'ts for both sides.

A senior can 'task' the subordinate but should be available to give legitimate guidance wherever sought by the latter.

The boss's interest in the subordinate as a human being should enable the former to have at least a minimal knowledge of the situation the latter faced at home so that the relationship is not lacking in empathy.

Kuldeep will be India's X-factor in the middle overs in Champions Trophy: Raina

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

Former India all-rounder Suresh Raina believes left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav will be the side's X-factor in middle overs with the ball in the upcoming Champions Trophy games in Dubai.

Since January 2023, India have picked 186 wickets in overs 11-40, and that's generally been the phase where Kuldeep has bamboozled the batters. On Saturday, Kuldeep, who's not played any competitive cricket since his hernia surgery in November, was included in India's squads for ODIs against England and the Champions Trophy.

With uncertainty over Jasprit Bumrah's participation and Mohammed Shami himself returning from an Achilles injury, a lot will depend on Kuldeep, who has 172 wickets in 106 ODIs, to weave his magic in the middle overs for India in the three matches against England and the eight-team Cham-



pions Trophy starting on February 19.

The good news, though, is that Kuldeep has been bowling at the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru and is building up well to achieve full-match fitness. Raina, a member of India winning the 2013 Champions Trophy, also feels Hardik Pandya's seam bowling will be of importance in middle overs.

"From the way you will look at it, Arshdeep will be the key along with Bumrah, who will be very lethal when it comes to death overs as well. But the most important role here

will be of Hardik Pandya, like will he come to bowl with Kuldeep? Moreover, will Washington Sundar or Axar Patel play?"

"I feel that Arshdeep, Shami, Bumrah, Hardik, Kuldeep and Axar or Jadeja (will be the initial bowling combination), as you can increase the batting, especially with top five batters there. Hardik can be used as a floater, with Rishabh Pant capable of batting well.

"But the most important player in the middle who can bring a little bit of pressure will be Kuldeep Yadav. We all remember

how he castled Babar Azam and changed the game. Right now, he is working very hard at the NCA and he also has that skill of deceiving batters with a very different type of action.

"We do need to praise Rohit Sharma for the way he's backed Kuldeep Yadav. We did have a mystery spinner in Varun Chakaravathy during the T20 World Cup there in 2021 in Dubai. But Kuldeep Yadav has that stillness, different action and bowls in a very different way. So, I think the X-factor in middle-overs bowling will be Kuldeep Yadav," said Raina while replying to a question from IANS in the Star Sports press room show.

For the ODIs against England, set to happen in Nagpur, Cuttack and Ahmedabad on February 6, 9 and 12, respectively, seam-bowling Harshit Rana is in the Indian team as a cover for Bumrah, who will not be ready for the first two matches of the bilateral series.

With doubts still over

Bumrah, who hasn't bowled since back spasms didn't allow him to bowl in the second innings of the Sydney Test, Raina stated Rana is a promising player but felt India will be better off having Mohammed Siraj in the squad if the fast-bowling spearhead isn't fit.

"Harshit Rana has good pace, good bumper, variation, yorker and pace, as seen from the Test matches he played in Australia. He's young and brings something new to the table, while we all saw the different pace and angles he brought in for KKR in IPL. He and both Arshdeep Singh can bowl at the death. But I still feel Siraj is a better option if Bumrah is not fit," he said.

India, the two-time Champions Trophy winners, will begin their Group A campaign in Dubai against Bangladesh on February 20, after which they play against arch-rivals Pakistan on February 23, before facing New Zealand on March 2.

Last minute dagger ends India's winless campaign at AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers

AGENCIES
YOGYAKARTA (INDONESIA),
JAN 19

India dished out a vastly improved display before being edged out by Kyrgyzstan 3-4 in their concluding Group B tie of the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers on Sunday.

Trailing 1-3 at half time after taking the lead in the third minute through Drishti Pant, the Indian girls wreaked havoc in the final five minutes to make it 3-3, thanks to two dazzling strikes by deceptive attacker Khushbu Saroj (34', 40').

Yet, the pleasure of taking at least a point home remained unfulfilled as the goal by Nazik Kumyshbek Kyzy, with less than 25 seconds remaining, saw the Kyrgyzstan have the last laugh.

The winners scored the other goals through Aizhan Boronbekova (10'), Nursulu Murzakulova (12'), Rebecca Zamthianmawi (OG, 18'). It was Kyrgyzstan's first victory in the group after losing against hosts Indonesia



and Hong Kong.

While the disappointment of defeat, the third consecutive in their maiden campaign, writ large on their faces, the three goals they scored against more experienced opponents were clear indications of the fight the Indian girls put up without lowering their guard even once.

It was also a day when Drishti Pant created history by scoring India's first international goal in women's futsal. India began with a bang. In the third minute, Rebecca passed the ball for skipper Arya More, who promptly sent it for Drishti to find the target.

As the Indian bench erupted in joy, Drishti

moved into Indian football's hall of fame, in the elite company of two others, S Raman and Tababi Devi. Both are credited for scoring India's first goals in FIFA-recognised internationals in men's and women's football, respectively.

While Raman's goal came on July 31, 1948 against France, Tababi Devi achieved the feat against Hong Kong on December 5, 1997. Now it was time for Drishti to emulate the two in women's futsal. India's finest time in the match, if not in the tournament, came between 35th and 40th minutes. Khushbu was on a song; even the faint smell of her caused panic in the Kyrgyz defence.

Jadeja joins Saurashtra practice session; likely to play Ranji Trophy match against Delhi

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 19

Veteran left-arm spin bowling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja could play for Saurashtra in their upcoming Ranji Trophy match against Delhi after joining the team's practice session in Rajkot.

A report in Cricbuzz said that Jadeja, who was picked in India's squad for ODI series against England and the Champions Trophy, has been at Saurashtra's net sessions on Sunday morning and training with the squad to be captained by left-arm fast-bowler Jaydev Unadkat.

Jadeja's last Ranji Trophy match for Saurashtra came when he was coming back after a knee injury layoff against Tamil Nadu in January 2023, and picked eight wickets.

He recently featured in three of the five Tests during India's tour of Australia, where they lost



3-1.

Shortly after that, the BCCI apparently introduced a 10-point policy document making participation in domestic cricket mandatory, and that non-compliance could impact international selection and central contract renewals.

Saurashtra, ranked fifth in the Elite Group D points table with 11 points, will restart their Ranji Trophy campaign when they face fourth-ranked Delhi, who have 14 points, at the Niranjan Shah Stadium on

January 23.

Apart from Jadeja, many of his India team-mates not named in the squad for T20I series against England are going to turn out in the starting phase of Ranji Trophy's second leg. Wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant will turn out for Delhi in Rajkot, while India's Test and ODI captain Rohit Sharma along with opener Yashasvi Jaiswal will turn out for Mumbai in their match against Jammu & Kashmir at the MCA ground in Bandra-Kurla Complex.

SA20: MI CAPE TOWN, PAARL ROYALS WIN IN FANTASTIC RUN CHASES

AGENCIES
CAPE TOWN, JAN 19

SA20 delivered a batting bonanza with the two Western Cape teams MI Cape Town and Paarl Royals completing fantastic run chases.

After missing a couple of matches, Ryan Rickelton returned to the MI Cape Town line-up and the Season 2 leading run-scorer made an immediate impact with a fabulous 89 off only 39 balls to power the home team to a seven-wicket bonus point victory over Joburg Super Kings, while Joe Root delivered a T20 masterclass to steer the Paarl Royals to an equally thrilling victory by eight wickets over Pretoria Capitals at Centurion.

The 'El Clasico' at a sold-out Newlands lived up to all its pre-match hype with the faithful treated to some high-octane cricket.

After winning the toss and electing to bat, Joburg Super Kings captain Faf du Plessis led from the front



with a superb 61 from just 38 balls (6x4, 3x6). Du Plessis passed 11,000 T20 career runs in the process - the most by any South African batter.

Devon Conway (35 off 31 balls) played the supporting role in the 97-run first-wicket partnership, but a middle-order collapse saw the Super Kings lose four wickets for the addition of just nine runs.

The architect of JSK's fall was surprisingly brought on by Reeza Hendricks' (2/11) part-time off spin.

England's double World Cup winner Jonny Bair-

stow reignited the JSK innings with 43 not out off only 27 balls to lift the visitors to 172/5.

But it was not nearly enough with Rickelton in sublime form at the same ground he struck a career-best 259 in the second Test against Pakistan just a couple of weeks ago.

The run-chase was given the perfect start through a 70-run opening stand with Rassie van der Dussen (39 off 24 balls) in just 6.4 overs.

Van der Dussen's run out was merely a speed bump, with Rickelton and

Hendricks continuing the carnage with a 92-run partnership off only 49 balls.

Hendricks finished unbeaten on 34 as the bonus point was achieved with one ball remaining that set off raucous applause within a vibrant Newlands.

Earlier on Saturday, Root struck 92 not out off 60 balls as the Royals chased down the Capitals' 212/5 with just two balls to spare.

The former English captain's innings was a masterpiece of placement, timing, and innovation and showed that a T20 innings can consist of more than just power.

It contained 11 sweetly timed boundaries and two sixes.

The Royals had lost inform Rising Star Lhuan-dre Pretorius to the first ball of the run-chase - much to the disappointment of the many Royals fans draped in pink spotted all over Centurion.

All it did, though, was to unearth a new Betway

SA20 star in Rubin Hermann - elder brother of Sunrisers Eastern Cape's Jordan.

Rubin Hermann enjoyed a dream Royals debut with a strikingly good 33-ball 56 (5x4, 3x6) forming an explosive 125-run partnership off just 69 balls with Root.

It set up the perfect platform for Royals captain David Miller to close out the game with Root through another unbroken 88-run stand off only 48 balls that secured the valuable four points.

The Capitals will be left wondering how they were not on the victorious side after Will Smeed (54 off 34 balls), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (42 off 29 balls) and Kyle Verreynne (45 off 23 balls) had earlier set up an imposing total.

On a Centurion pitch that resembled a batting paradise, Royals' mystery spinner Muejeb Ur Rahman's 2/28 from his four overs proved to be the difference along with Root's brilliance on the day.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN: IGA SWIATEK IS IN TOTAL CONTROL DURING A 6-1, 6-0 ROUT OF EMMA RADUCANU

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE, JAN 19

Everything came so easily for Iga Swiatek during a 6-1, 6-0 victory over Emma Raducanu on Saturday in the only Australian Open women's third-round match between two past Grand Slam champions - if you thought that meant it would be close, you would have been rather wrong - that this was how she described it:

"I felt like the ball," Swiatek said, "is listening to me."

Loud and clear. Asked to explain that sensation, Swiatek put her two index fingers a few inches apart and said, "It's just being able to aim for this kind of space." Then she spread her palms more than a foot apart to show that's the margin for error on other days.

The difference, she said,

comes down to "being more precise and actually knowing where the ball is going to go, seeing the effects that you want it to."

When the five-time major champion and former long-time No. 1-ranked woman - now No. 2, behind Aryna Sabalenka - is at the height of her powers, as she sure has seemed to be in Week 1 at Melbourne Park, it is hard for anyone to slow Swiatek down.

The heavy-spinning, high-bouncing forehands. The squeaky-sneaker scrambling to get to every shot. The terrific returning. And so on.

Later Saturday, No. 4 Taylor Fritz, the runner-up at last year's U.S. Open, became the highest-seeded man to leave the bracket, defeated by 38-year-old Gael Monfils 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (1), 6-4. Monfils joined Roger Federer as



the only men 38 or older to get to the fourth round in Melbourne since the field expanded to 128 players in 1988.

At the other end of the age spectrum, a pair of young Californians who have been pals for a while and trained together in the offseason - Learner Tien, 19, and Alex Michelsen, 20 - earned debuts in the fourth round at a major. Ben Shelton, who is 22, won, too, while another

American, Marcos Giron, was facing No. 1 Jannik Sinner at night.

Tien, a qualifier ranked 121st, followed up his surprising win against No. 5 Daniil Medvedev in a five-setter that ended at 3 a.m. On Friday with a 7-6 (10), 6-3, 6-3 victory over Corentin Moutet of France.

Michelsen, who is ranked 42nd, overwhelmed No. 19 seed Karen Khachanov of Russia 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-2. It was the second time

Michelsen knocked off a top-20 seed this week after beating No. 11 Stefanos Tsitsipas, the 2023 Australian Open runner-up, in the first round.

Shelton, the 21st seed and a U.S. Open semifinalist in 2023, defeated No. 16 Lorenzo Musetti of Italy 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) and will take on Monfils on Monday.

Michelsen will try to send another high seed packing when he plays No. 8 Alex de Minaur, an Australian who beat No. 31 Francisco Cerundolo 5-7, 7-6 (3), 6-3, 6-3. Tien faces 55th-ranked Lorenzo Sonego of Italy, a 6-7 (3), 7-6 (6), 6-1, 6-2 winner over Fabian Marozsan.

Against Raducanu, who won the 2021 U.S. Open as a teenage qualifier, Swiatek played at a level she called "perfect."

Indeed, Swiatek mounted a 24-9 edge in winners,

made only 12 unforced errors - roughly half of Raducanu's 22 - and claimed 59 points to 29. That caused one spectator to yell out, "No mercy!" in the second set as Swiatek was reeling off the last 11 games after the match was tied at 1-all early with not a cloud in the sky and the temperature approaching 80 degrees Fahrenheit (above 25 Celsius).

"I think it was a little bit of her playing well, and me not playing so well," Raducanu said. "That combination is probably not good."

Swiatek, who agreed to accept a one-month suspension in a doping case late last year, owns four trophies from the French Open and one from the U.S. Open.

But she's never been beyond the semifinals in Australia; she lost in that round to Danielle Collins in 2022.

Ski World Cup: Men's winner won over \$3,000, women got towels and shampoo

AGENCIES
TRONDHEIM, JAN 19

As a reward for finishing first in qualifying at a ski jumping World Cup event, organisers presented the male winner Jan Heerl with 3,000 Swiss francs (\$3,290), and the female winner Selina Freitag with towels and shampoo.

"I received a partner bag with shower gel and shampoo and four hand towels," Freitag told German TV channel BR24 after she finished first in qualifying at the Two Nights Tournament in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany on December 30. "We unfortunately didn't have a spare five hundred (euros) or so."

Skiing's governing body, FIS, told CNN that female winners of qualifying events don't receive prize money like their male counterparts, according

to a CNN report.

They said the gift also included a voucher for a weekend of wellness treatments and "was certainly well intentioned, but it is understandable that it may have generated frustration and given a bad impression if seen as formal compensation for the victory. This was not the case."

FIS added that women's ski jumping is still a relatively new sport with less spectator interest and marketing revenues than its male counterpart, and consequently has less prize money available. CNN has contacted the event organiser for comment too.

The discrepancy in prize money available "highlights the inequalities that still exist in sport in sport to this day," Her Sport, an advocacy group for gender equality in sport, posted on X.

Deputy Chief Minister reviews progress on Capex works in Nowshera

JI NEWS SERVICE
NOWSHERA (RAJOUR),
JANUARY 19

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting of ongoing works under the District Capex Budget here.

The meeting was attended by ADC Nowshera, Babu Ram Tandon, ACD, Vijay Verma along with other district and sectoral officers.

During the meeting, the Deputy Chief Minister issued clear directives to expedite completion of all ongoing developmental works, ensuring adherence to quality standards. He emphasised



the importance of timely project execution to meet the expectations of public and enhance the district's infrastructure.

Underscoring the significance of responsive governance, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the officials to address public grievances at their doorsteps. He also called for strict implementation of the Public Services Guar-

antee Act (PSGA) at the grassroots level, ensuring transparency and accountability in service delivery.

The Deputy Chief Minister further urged the officers to maintain a proactive approach in resolving issues faced by the public. He stressed the need for effective coordination among various departments for seamless execution of projects.

Transport Commissioner flags off Students Rally

JI NEWS SERVICE
ANANTNAG, JANUARY 19

As part of ongoing National Road Safety Month, Transport Commissioner, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, participated in a series of events in Anantnag aimed at enhancing road safety awareness.

The event featured flagging-off students rally with an aim to spread the message of road safety across the district and built a sense of responsibility in inculcating traffic rules right from minorhood.

In addition, the Transport Commissioner inaugurated a special road safety campaign by pasting stickers depicting crucial road safety measure messages on vehicles. These stickers highlighted essential practices such as wearing seat belts, adhering to speed limits, avoiding distractions and other measures to promote responsible driving on roads.

There were major eye-catching stickers bearing powerful messages such as "Think of Them: Drive Safe for Those Who Love You," "Slow Down: Someone Loves You," and "Drive Safe: Save Lives, Your Family Awaits" pasted on windshield.

Speaking at the event, Vishesh Paul Mahajan underscored the critical importance of road safety and called for collective efforts to reduce road



accidents and fatalities. He emphasised the role of society, media in fostering a culture of safe driving behaviour and urged all stakeholders to contribute towards this mission.

The initiative also saw active involvement from local drivers, youth and community members. This initiative is part of a larger campaign to mitigate road accidents and promote a culture of safety in Jammu and Kashmir.

Later, the Transport Commissioner visited the proposed land for construction of office cum driving test track at Zudder.

The Transport Commissioner further reiterated that applicants should use

their mobile phone as an agent to avail 54 available online services and not to fall prey to touts. Our department is committed to safeguard the interests of public in general and transporters in particular, he added.

Regional Transport Officer Kashmir, Qazi Irfan Rasool, reiterated departments commitment towards reducing accidents on roads and utilising every resource available to prevail a sense of safety on roads.

Later, ARTO Anantnag held a pledge ceremony among minor students for not taking control of vehicles before age of 18 or before becoming eligible for driving licences.

SDRF, NDRF celebrate 13th annual Raising Day at Srinagar hqrs



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 19

J&K SDRF and NDRF celebrated its 13th Annual Raising Day today on 19th of January -2025 at SDRF Bn. Hqs Srinagar.

The contingents of SDRF and NDRF jointly presented March Past/Parade on the occasion at Bn. Hqs. Baghat Barzulla Srinagar.

Masroor Ahmad Mir SSP-JKPS Commandant SDRF 1st Bn. Srinagar pre-

sided over the function and took salute of March Past.

The chief guest while addressing Officers/officials and Contingents of NDRF/ SDRF highlighted the dedication exhibited by SDRF and NDRF while conducting Rescue Operations during Disasters as well as their extra ordinary performance exhibited during the Shri Amar-nath Ji Yatra-2024.

The Officers and officials of SDRF/ NDRF

pledged to work with zeal and dedication in future also to safeguard the lives and property of the public and Govt. during Natural and Human induced Disasters.

Various Officers of SDRF/ NDRF participated in the Raising Day function including Ranajeet Singh Asst. Commandant (SAR) 13th Bn. NDRF Srinagar, M Muzaffar Khan Dy.SP and other Officers/ officials of SDRF and NDRF were also present.

Director Agriculture visits Hi-tech Poly Houses at Tahab Pulwama

JI NEWS SERVICE
PULWAMA, JANUARY 19

Director Agriculture Kashmir, Mohammad Ilyas Khatib today visited 'Hi-tech poly houses' at Tahab Pulwama.

During the visit, the Director underlined the importance of Hitech technology for the development of agriculture sector in the region.

Speaking to different progressive farmers, Khatib highlighted the importance of vertical expansion in vegetable cultivation. He said under holistic agriculture development program HADP, department is working on a special project for round the year cultivation of different vegetable crops.

He said the vegetables cultivated in these hi-tech poly houses these days is one such step in this direction, and to achieve this goal department has estab-



lished Hitech poly houses in all the districts of Kashmir.

Director asked the farmers to diversify their agriculture operations via a vis crop varieties, adding that these hi-tech poly houses would add new dimensions to the agriculture scenario in the region.

He also asked educated youth to come forward and avail benefits of modern technologies in the field of

agriculture.

Khatib said, Kashmir have huge potential as for as the vegetable sector is concerned, that needs to be explored for the overall economic development of the region.

He also visited seed multiplication farm Allowpora and inspected different sections of the farm. He also held a meeting with the concerned officers and technical experts, there.

SBI RSETI Ramban organises plantation drive at Village Thopal, Batote under Swachhata Pakhwada

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, JANUARY 19

In alignment with the Swachhata Pakhwada 2025 initiative, SBI RSETI Ramban organised a Plantation Drive today at Village Thopal, Batote.

The environmental awareness program was marked by the active participation of 25 candidates from the Soft Toys Maker & Seller Training Program, along with the faculty of SBI RSETI Ramban and the Assessor from the National Academy of RSETI.

The primary objective of the plantation drive was to promote environmental sustainability and cleanliness initiative of District Administration Ramban, while involving the local community and trainees in meaningful eco-friendly activities.

The participants planted a variety of saplings, including fruit-bearing and native plants, aimed at enhancing greenery, improving biodiversity,



and contributing to the overall environmental health of the region.

During the program, Harvinder Singh, Director of SBI RSETI Ramban, emphasized the significance of such initiatives under the Swachhata Pakhwada campaign. He said, "Cleanliness and greenery go hand in hand in creating a healthy and sustainable environment. This plantation drive not only helps in beautifying the village but also serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility toward nature."

The trainees from the Soft Toys Maker & Seller program actively participated by preparing the plantation sites, planting the saplings, and ensuring

their proper care through watering and fencing. Their enthusiasm and commitment to the cause were widely appreciated by the villagers and officials present.

The Assessor from the National Academy of RUDSETI commended SBI RSETI Ramban for its dedication to integrating environmental conservation with skill development. He remarked, "This plantation drive highlights the importance of combining vocational training with community service, instilling values of sustainability and responsibility in the trainees."

The event concluded with a pledge by all participants to protect the saplings and encourage others to engage in similar activities. This initiative reflects SBI RSETI Ramban's dedication to not only imparting skills but also nurturing a sense of environmental and social responsibility among its trainees.

Friendly volleyball match at Bharat Camp

JI NEWS SERVICE
DODA, JAN 19

On popular demand of locals of Bhart, Indian Army organised a friendly volleyball match between two local teams of Doda on 15 Jan 25 in alignment with "Khelo India". Both the teams consisted of players from various caste, creed and religion & displayed very high degree of sportsmanship and healthy competitive spirit. It was a thrilling and exciting match till the end. 13 local people participated in the match. The Volleyball match was aimed at developing a competitive



spirit amongst the youth and also to provide them a platform to showcase their talent. The match was witnessed with keen interest by one and all thus generated bonhomie amongst the players as well as locals. Company commander, Indian Army graced the event as chief

guest. He congratulated both the teams for the sterling performance and distributed prizes to both the teams. Team members and locals expressed their heartfelt gratitude for organizing the event and requested for more such sporting events in the future.

Dy CM visits Sunderbani fire victims, assures help



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 19

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today visited the fire incident victims at Sunderbani and assured them complete support. The Dy CM was accompanied by MLA Sunderbani, Randhir Singh and other senior officers

of local administration.

While interacting with the fire sufferers, the Deputy Chief Minister assured them that the government will provide adequate compensation to them. He directed the officers to prepare a comprehensive damage assessment report as early as possible.

DC reviews facility for elderly persons at DH Kishtwar



JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 19

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan today visited the District Hospital (DH) here to review special healthcare facilities for the elderly persons.

During the visit, the DC inspected the proposed building for establishing a special facility to provide better care and support to the senior citizens in the district.

Furthermore, the DC issued directions to the District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO), Chief Medi-

cal Officer (CMO) and the Medical Superintendent of DH to jointly oversee the renovation of the identified building, with an emphasis on completing the renovation and maintenance work within the next 10 days.

Later, the DC also visited the Sakhi "One Stop Centre for Women" to assess its operations and facilities.

During the visit, the DC directed immediate improvements in the infrastructure and services to ensure a more conducive environment for women seeking assistance from the centre.

Medical Camp organised by Indian Army witnesses overwhelming response at Banihal



JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, JANUARY 19

A highly successful medical camp was organized by AYUSH and Health department in collaboration with the Indian Army at Banihal, drawing participation from over 1000 beneficiaries.

The event witnessed the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including the Commanding Officer of the Indian Army 12 RR, the Block Medical Officer Banihal Dr. Bashir Ahmed and the Station House Officer.

The Indian Army played a pivotal role in the camp's success, extending invaluable logistical support and deploying dedicated medical professionals.

Special mention was

made of Dr. Aditya from the Indian Army, Dr. Shaista, Dr Shabbat for his tireless efforts in ensuring the delivery of quality medical care.

The camp provided essential healthcare services, with doctors, paramedics, and volunteers from local NGOs working diligently to address the medical needs of the attendees. The dedication and hard-work of all involved staff members were widely appreciated.

The people of Banihal extended heartfelt gratitude to the Indian Army and all stakeholders for their selfless contribution to the well-being of the community. Events like these underscore the spirit of collaboration and commitment to public health in the region.