

**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:

- Headache and continuous fever above 102°C
- Joint and muscle pain
- Diarrhoea
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool, urine or vomit
- Redness on the face

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

# JINDRAH IMAGES

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## Our prime objective should be to promote the idea of unity of all mankind: LG Sinha

**JNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today addressed Shrimad Bhagwat Samagam at Mahakumbh, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. The occasion was graced by Acharya Mahamandleshwar Swami Kailashanand Giri ji Maharaj. In his address, the Lieutenant Governor called upon the spiritual leaders, thinkers and social leadership to work for unity of mind and heart and contribute in nation building. "Our prime objective should be to promote the idea of unity of all mankind," he said. "Mahakumbh is the



confluence of spirituality, education, experience and enlightenment. It is the symbol of India's spiritual heritage, culture and traditions," the Lieutenant Governor observed. He said the presence

of revered saints at Mahakumbh illuminates our path and guides us for virtuous living. "Samagam is the door to enter the highest level of consciousness. This is also a confluence of great personalities who provide leadership to various sectors of society," the Lieutenant Governor said. He asked the religious heads, saints, teachers, scientists, philosophers to make dedicated efforts to carry forward our rich spiritual legacy to young generation and connect more youth to nation-building and realise the resolve of Viksit Bharat. "Our ancient saints, philosophers and teachers' life and vision of selfless service, brotherhood, equality and universal values is an inspiration for all humanity. They inspired people to follow the righteous path, awaken the society to fulfil duties for a developed society," he said. The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that a mass campaign should be started in mission mode to preserve and nurture the ancient Indian civilizational heritage. Our mystic saints have created a divine aura through meditation and yoga and laid the foundation for the all-round development and

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## Several deputations call on CM Omar to highlight public issues



**JNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 22

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday met several deputations at Civil Secretariat Jammu, and listened to their issues, demands and grievances for immediate redressal.

A deputation led by District Development Council Chairman Kishtwar, Pooja Thakur, brought development and employment issues to the notice of the Chief Minister. Representing far-flung areas of Paddar, Dachhan, Atholi, Nagseni and other

areas of Kishtwar district, the delegation submitted a memorandum of demands to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, highlighting key issues faced by these remote areas of Kishtwar district. The delegation emphasised

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## Only God knows when statehood will be restored to J&K: Farooq

**JNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 22

Former Chief Minister and National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah on Wednesday said that only God knows when statehood will be restored to Jammu and Kashmir. "Only God knows when statehood will be restored to Jammu and Kashmir and we will regain the status of state," Abdullah told reporters on the sidelines of a party function organised by the SC Cell of the National Conference. On Congress raising many questions on its alliance partner National



Conference in Jammu and Kashmir government, he said, "this can be asked to the Congress party what they want. What do they want from us?" "The government knows what to do and it will work as it should be without any pressure

from any quarters," the NC President stated. However, on allegations leveled against the government by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Abdullah said, "why they partnered with BJP, go and ask them." "When the talks between PDP-BJP were on to form a coalition government, I had told Mufti Mohammad Sayeed not to alliance with BJP," he said, adding that the PDP must have first looked within itself. The former Chief Minister also launched a scathing attack on

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## Health crisis deepens in Rajouri as four more including three siblings, fall ill

**JNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 22

The situation in the Badhaal area of Rajouri district has taken a worrisome turn, with four more persons, including three siblings, falling ill in the past 24 hours. This comes amidst an ongoing investigation into mysterious deaths that have claimed 17 lives over the last 50 days. An official told the news agency that the latest case involving a 25-year-old youth, Aijaz, who was attending patients at GMC Jammu, has intensified concerns. Aijaz was air-



lifted to PGI Chandigarh during the night, where his condition is reported to be stable. Three siblings from the family of Bagga Khan also fell ill and were shifted to GMC Rajouri before being airlifted to PGI Chandigarh

for further treatment. MLA Budhal, Javed Iqbal Choudhary said the situation is of serious concern and that the government is making all-out efforts to manage the crisis. "The seriousness of the government is evident, as Aijaz

was airlifted to Chandigarh, and arrangements are underway to shift other patients as well," he said. Principal, GMC Rajouri, Dr Amarjeet Singh Bhatia said all fatalities exhibited brain involvement and nervous system damage. "Among nine admitted patients, five have recovered, but recovery becomes challenging once the brain is affected," Dr Singh said, adding that preventive measures and public awareness campaigns are being prioritised to curb further risks. The inter-ministerial team, constituted by

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and led by a director-level officer from the Ministry of Home Affairs, continued its investigation for the third consecutive day. Experts from the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Chemicals, and Water Resources, as well as forensic departments from Chandigarh and Lucknow, are actively involved. The District Magistrate of Rajouri has declared Badhaal as a containment zone. He has issued orders to prohibit all public and private gatherings. The affected families

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## Chilla-i-Kalan set to end on dry note J&K records 81% deficit rainfall in first 3 weeks of Jan 2025

**JNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 22

Chilla-i-Kalan—the 40-day period of harsh winter—in Kashmir is all set to culminate on the dry note as there is no forecast of any major weather activity till January end while the Jammu and Kashmir during the first three weeks of 2025 has recorded a deficit rainfall of 81 per cent. According to the news



agency, the Director Meteorological department (MeT) has predicted mostly dry and cloudy

weather conditions till January 31. However, he stated that there is a possibility of light rain and snow at isolated places on January 23 and in between January 29 and 30. As per the details available with KNO, J&K has recorded a deficit rainfall of 81 per cent till today (January 22) as against the normal precipitation of 60.5 mm, the Union Territory has recorded just 11.4mm rainfall with highest deficiency in Kathua at 98 per cent from January 01 to 22nd. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir has recorded a deficit rainfall of 71 per cent while Shopian has recorded the second highest deficiency with 94 per cent. Reasi, Kishtwar, Kulgam, Jammu and Doda have recorded a deficient rainfall of 90 per cent

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## Crime Branch books 6 including J&K Bank employee for duping candidates of Rs 1.34 Crore

**JNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 22

The Crime Branch (CB) has booked six individuals, including an employee of J&K Bank, for defrauding 15 candidates out of Rs. 1.34 crore under the pretext of offering jobs in the Territorial Army and J&K Bank. Jammu travel guide

two separate complaints were filed with the Crime Branch. In the first case, complainants Jugal Kumar and Gopal Chand, residents of Samba, were promised jobs in the Territorial Army's sports category by accused Tarsem Singh and Balbir Singh. The victims were convinced to make payments through cheques, online

transfers, and cash. The accused then provided fake call letters with forged signatures and stamps of senior officers. When the complainants attempted to join, they realized they had been scammed, and their original documents were still in the possession of the accused, who refused to return them.

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## Nine underpasses to be constructed on Delhi-Katra Express Corridor, fulfilling public demand: Dr Jitendra Singh

**JNEWS SERVICE**  
KATHUA, JANUARY 22

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, MoS, PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr Jitendra Singh today inaugurated the vital Nora bridge

along Lakhanpur-Thein Road in Basohli sector of district Kathua. The bridge constructed at a cost of Rs 1646.88 lac was a long pending public demand and provides a vital picturesque link reducing the travel time by around two hours. On the occasion, Dr Jitendra Singh also announced nine additional under-passes and one flyover at Kalibari along the under construction

Express corridor, in response to demand from local people living in these respective locations. Dr Jitendra Singh said, in his third term as MP in the third term of Narendra Modi Government 3.0, the other notable achievements in Kathua include completion of long pending Juthana bridge, beginning of first session of Centrally funded North India's first



Homeopathic College, approval of Rs 30,345 cr Chattergala project, decision to shift Industrial Biotech Park to PPP model, completion of last

phase of Shahpur Kandi project and revival in principle of 100 year old Ujh Multipurpose Project etc. Referring to nine underpasses now to be constructed on the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Express corridor for the convenience of the public, Dr Jitendra Singh underlined that this demand had been met four days ago. He stated that plans are on

the anvil to turn Kathua into a major hub of trade and tourism. Dr Jitendra Singh was addressing a public rally here during the inauguration of the 191-metre long Nora Bridge costing 1700 lakh rupees. He said the construction of the double-lane bridge meets a long-pending demand. He said the local people will no longer have to face inconvenience while traveling from Bani to Basohli.

The construction of the bridge, Jitendra Singh said, alternate alignment of Lakhanpur-Thein road, was necessitated by the submergence of some portion of Nora Nallah falling in Panchayat Thein of district Kathua. Dr Singh underlined that the fulfilment of the public demand manifests the government's commitment to ensuring ease of travel for the locals.

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## Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Mission Shakti celebrates a decade of empowerment and progress in Arnia

J1 NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, JANUARY 22

In a monumental celebration, Mission Shakti Social Welfare Department marked 10 glorious years of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative at Government Higher Secondary School, Block Arnia. The event was a resounding testament to the organization's unwavering commitment to empowering girls and fostering gender equality.

MLA, Rajeev Bhagat graced the occasion as the chief guest, lauding Mission Shakti's relentless efforts in driving change at the grassroots level. Speaking at the event, he highlighted the transformational impact the initiative has had on the lives of countless young girls over the past decade.

In line with its mission



to tackle societal taboos, Mission Shakti installed a Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine at the school premises. This groundbreaking step aims to eradicate the stigma surrounding menstruation and provide young girls with easy access to essential hygiene products, further empowering them to lead healthy and confident lives.

Adding vibrancy to the celebration, students showcased their talents through cultural performances, including dance,

skits, and poetry recitations. These activities beautifully captured the theme for National Girl Child Day 2025—"Empowering Girls for a Bright Future." The event also recognized and rewarded meritorious students who were honored with essential school supplies, including bags, water bottles, and tiffin boxes, as a gesture of encouragement for their hard work and dedication.

Prominent dignitaries such as BDO Arnia Mr. Vip-

love Sudan, District Mission Coordinator Mission Shakti Ms. Shagun Manchanda, Principal Sushma Kumari, and other officials from Mission Shakti Sankalp and the BDO office attended the event, further adding to its significance.

The programme, organized under the supervision of District Social Welfare Officer Mr. Navaz Sharief in collaboration with RDD, was a shining example of coordinated efforts to uplift and empower young girls.

Mission Shakti's decade-long journey continues to inspire, breaking barriers and setting benchmarks for social welfare and gender empowerment. As the organization looks ahead, its commitment to ensuring every girl's right to education, dignity, and opportunity remains stronger than ever.

## Special Block Diwas program held at Wagoora, bringing governance to doorsteps

J1 NEWS SERVICE

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 22

A special Block Diwas program was today held at Wagoora Kreeri under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, to address public grievances and promote inclusive governance at the grassroots level.

The program witnessed active participation from local residents of Wagoora Kreeri and adjacent areas, along with officers from various line departments.

On the occasion, residents raised several pressing issues, including the upgradation of healthcare facilities, improvement in drinking water supply, macadamization of roads, upgradation of irrigation facilities and other local concerns. Several issues were resolved on the spot



by the DC, while others were referred to the concerned departments for timely redressal.

Addressing the gathering, DC emphasized that the primary objective of the Block Diwas initiative is to bring governance closer to the people. He explained that these programs are designed to ensure transparency, responsiveness and accountability in administration. The Block Diwas

program is a direct channel for citizens to communicate their concerns, seek solutions, and understand the government's schemes and programs, said the DC, adding that it is an opportunity for the Administration to engage with the community and address their needs in real-time.

The DC further added that these programs are part of the District Administration's continu-

ous efforts to ensure that every citizen has access to government services and welfare schemes. Whether it's healthcare, infrastructure, or livelihood, the government is committed to improving the living standards of people.

He also highlighted the importance of schemes like the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP), PM Sauri Ghar, Mission Yuva, and Vishwakarma Scheme in fostering development and empowering local communities. The special Block Diwas program continues to serve as a vital platform for resolving grievances, promoting welfare schemes, and ensuring effective service delivery, strengthening the bond between the administration and the public.

## DC Poonch tours Aspirational block Mankote

J1 NEWS SERVICE

POONCH, JANUARY 22

District Development Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal, visited Mankote Block today to inspect the ongoing Water Supply Schemes (WSS) and works taken up under Aspirational Block Development Programme (ABDP) in the area.

The two major projects, WSS Shiekhan Berja and WSS Barooi Chowki, are being developed under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) at a cost of Rs 3.85 crore and Rs 2.82 crore, respectively.

The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the progress of the projects. At WSS Shiekhan Berja, the executing agency has successfully drilled and commissioned two bore wells, providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to



150 households. Similarly, WSS Barooi Chowki has completed one bore well and provided FHTCs to 75 households.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the Executive Engineer to ensure that every household receives FHTC, reinforcing the government's commitment to providing safe and adequate drinking water to all citizens.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner convened a high-level meeting at Tehsil Headquarter Mankote to review the implementation and progress of the Aspirational

Block Development Programme.

The initiative aims to fast-track development in block and improve key socio-economic indicators. The review meeting focused on the performance of crucial sectors such as Integrating Child Development Services (ICDS), Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Health, Education and other allied departments.

Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need to enhance performance across sectors and ensure the achievement of development indicators in a

time-bound manner.

Furthermore, to gain a firsthand understanding of challenges and progress, officers were directed to adopt a collaborative approach to address gaps, expedite project execution, and achieve tangible outcomes that directly benefit the residents.

The meeting was attended by all the District Heads and other sectoral officers.

Meanwhile, District Development Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kundal inaugurated and handed over the keys to the house owner who constructed his house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Grameen (PMAY-G). Vikas Kundal interacted and congratulated the new house owner and his family members, who built his house by availing PMAY Gramin Scheme benefits.

## GDC Ramgarh organises awareness program themed 'Disease Free India, Healthy India'

J1 NEWS SERVICE

SAMBA, JANUARY 22

NSS Unit 'Prabha' and NCORD of Government Degree College, Ramgarh, in collaboration with Health and Medical Education Department Directorate of Ayush, organised an awareness programme on 'Disease Free India, Healthy India'.

The programme was aimed to raise awareness about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and encourage individuals to adopt measures that prevent diseases and promote overall well-being. The event was organised under the guidance of Prof. (Dr.) Geetanjali Andotra, Principal of the College.

The program began with a welcome address by Prof.

Braham Dutt, who outlined the significance of the initiative and emphasized the need for a collective effort in achieving a disease-free and healthy India. He stressed the importance of making informed health choices and the role of both prevention and early intervention in ensuring long-term health.

The distinguished guest speakers for the event were Dr. Rozy and yoga instructor Pooja from the Health and Medical Department.

Dr. Rozy delivered a powerful and informative lecture on ill-effects of drug abuse and on various aspects of health and well-being, providing valuable insights into maintaining a disease-free lifestyle.

Pooja demonstrated various Asanas and

explained their benefits in enhancing physical health and mental peace. Her session left a lasting impact, encouraging attendees to incorporate yoga into their daily routines for better health.

The programme ended with a pledge taken by all attendees to fight against drug abuse, highlighting the importance of living a drug-free life for better health and well-being.

The event was attended by all faculty members of the college. This awareness programme successfully contributed to raising consciousness about health and wellness, fostering a sense of responsibility among the students and staff to work towards a disease-free and healthy future.

## DC Reasi conducts extensive tour of Aspirational Block Thakrakote

J1 NEWS SERVICE

REASI, JANUARY 22

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Reasi Nidhi Malik on Wednesday conducted a comprehensive tour of Aspirational Block Thakrakote to assess the progress of the development works under the Aspirational Block Development Programme. During her visit to Panchayat Ghar Panassa, she reviewed the initiatives being implemented to uplift the block and stressed the need for accelerated development. The DC's visit focused on enhancing education, health, and infrastructure while addressing public grievances.

## DC Udhampur presides over weekly Block Diwas programme at Panchari

J1 NEWS SERVICE

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 22

Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai on Wednesday presided over the weekly block Diwas program organized at village Panchari.

The event witnessed active participation of DDC member, Jasvir Singh, former PRI members and local residents, who presented a range of demands aimed at addressing critical developmental needs in the region.

The programme was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Rajinder Singh, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Dr Umesh Shan, Assistant Commissioner Development Dr Ranjit Singh Kotwal and other officers of various departments.

The locals projected several demands and issues including establishment of PHE and PDD Sub-Division Offices in Panchari, construction of a new building for local PHC, provision of adequate parking facilities, Fire & Emergency Services, replacement of old and damaged electricity poles, construction of a Panchayat Ghar in Panchayat Badhota, and establishment of a Sub-Centre and Ambulance facility in Panchayat Badhota, Upgradation of



Primary School Loudhra to a Middle School, Construction of Lathyar to Sanasar road, installation of a J&K Bank ATM and CCTV cameras in the market area and addressing manpower shortages in Agriculture and allied sector offices.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC acknowledged that many of the demands require substantial financial outlays and assured that efforts would be made to fulfil them in a phased manner. She directed officials of PMGSY and JJM to strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure the quality of development works. To address manpower shortages, she advised utilizing volunteers at the Panchayat level until regular staffing is arranged.

Highlighting the district administration commitment to developing Panchari as a tourist destination, the DC emphasized ongoing efforts to improve road connectiv-

ity and warned of strict action against contractors failing to maintain roads. She also sensitized participants about key government schemes, including the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, JK Samadhan Portal and PM Awas Yojana 2.0 Gramin Survey.

As part of the program, a Voter's Pledge was administered to promote electoral awareness.

Earlier, the DC also inspected a Bee Keeping Unit and an Integrated Farming System model under HADP at Panchayat Pathi. The DC also visited farmers' fields covered under the Per Drop More Crop scheme in Panchayat Malli and interacted with local farmers to understand their issues and provide guidance.

Enroute, the DC distributed course completion certificates to farmers trained under the DAKSH Kisan Program as part of HADP at Mansar Udhampur.

## DC Srinagar reviews progress on establishment of District Export Hub

J1 NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 22

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat today chaired a comprehensive meeting at DC Office here to review the progress on 'District Export Hub' under the ODOP- DEH initiative being established at Kashmir Haat.

The District Export Hub is coming up with an aim to boost the export of goods from Srinagar District with adequate market linkage to the industry, provide guidance regarding exports, consultancy, etc under one roof.

At the outset, DC held an extensive discussion with all the stakeholders present in the meeting in order to ensure that the District Export Hub is operationalized with the vision to enable holistic socio-economic growth of the local Artisans and Exporters, besides institutionalizing the Export Ecosystem in the District.

The DC said the objectives of the initiative is to give a fillip to the export volume and to boost the local economy, particularly focusing on promoting specific products or industries within the District that have good export potential, thereby likely enhance produc-



tion, improve quality, and facilitate marketing and export of these products with adequate market linkage.

During the meeting, DC instructed the concerned Officers to take up necessary measures for setting up of Art Gallery & Display Stalls, development of Website, Staff for gallery and other requisite provision for making District Export Hub functional in effective manner.

The DC also called for

engaging all stakeholders and artisans in the process to enhance exports and the market linkage.

General Manager, DIC, Chief Planning Officer, Deputy Director Handicrafts, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, Lead District Manager and other concerned were present in the meeting, while other stakeholders associated with different trades also attended the meeting.

## MVD Doda organises awareness rally as part of National Road Safety Month 2025



J1 NEWS SERVICE

DODA, JANUARY 22

As part of the National Road Safety Month 2025, the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) Doda, in collaboration with Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) and the National Service Scheme (NSS), organized a special awareness rally to promote safe and responsible driving. The rally commenced from the ARTO Office and concluded at Khan Plaza, with enthusiastic participation from students, volunteers, and stakeholders.

The event was held under the directions of the Transport Commissioner, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, and Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh, and was supervised by ARTO Rajesh Gupta.

Participants were educated about the sig-

nificance of adhering to traffic rules to ensure road safety. They were informed about measures to minimize accidents, including disciplined driving practices, avoiding over-speeding, and the importance of wearing helmets and seat belts.

During the rally, drivers, conductors, and the general public were encouraged to adopt road safety as a lifestyle to protect lives and prevent injuries. The initiative aimed to foster a sense of responsibility among road users, with a focus on reducing road accidents and saving precious lives.

The event highlighted the administration's commitment to spreading awareness about road safety and emphasized the collective effort required to make roads safer for everyone.

## Poonch celebrates 10 Years of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme with grand scooty rally

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, JANUARY 22

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal today flagged off a Scooty rally here from the DC office to mark the 10th anniversary of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign.

The grand rally passed main areas of the Poonch Township and culminated at Dhallan Bridge. The event was organized by the Social Welfare Department.

The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the significant improvements in women's education, women's empowerment, and child sex ratios achieved over the past ten years. He emphasized that the district administration is committed to furthering these initiatives through a series of week-long activities aimed at promoting the goals of the



Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme.

District Social Welfare Officer Wakeel Ahmed Bhat also spoke about the programme, outlining plans for community engagement activities throughout the week to raise awareness about the critical importance of educating and uplifting girls.

The Deputy Commissioner called on all citizens to participate actively in these efforts, reinforcing the message of the programme that aims to protect and empower the girl child.

In addition to the rally, a signature campaign was also held to encourage community support for the programme.

## CHC Thathri gets TruNaat Machine DDC inaugurates new facility, leads plantation drive in hospital premises

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, JANUARY 22

The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Doda Harvinder Singh today inaugurated a TruNaat Machine at Community Health Centre (CHC) Thathri, marking a significant step forward in strengthening healthcare services in the district.

The event witnessed the presence of DDC Councilor Sandeep Kotwal, Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Doda Manesh Kumar, Tehsildar Thathri Satish Rana, Dr. Versha Sharma (Block Medical Officer, Thathri), Chander Kant Shan (DM&EO Doda and Nodal

Officer, NTEP Doda), and Ashima Kotwal (District Accounts Manager, Doda).

The inauguration of the TruNaat Machine at CHC Thathri is expected to significantly enhance diagnostic capabilities, providing accurate and rapid testing for infectious diseases.

As part of the program, the DDC Doda also led a plantation drive within the CHC premises, emphasizing the importance of eco-friendly practices and creating a green and sustainable environment. Several saplings were planted to enhance the hospital's surroundings, symbolizing a commitment to both health and nature conservation.

Later, the DDC conducted a thorough inspection of the hospital infrastructure, including wards, consultation rooms, and other facilities. He interacted with the medical staff, assuring them of the administration's unwavering support and urging them to continue delivering quality healthcare services to the public.

He also inspected a medical shop near the hospital to ensure the availability of essential medicines for the public. He stressed the need for transparency, affordability, and meticulous record-keeping to maximize benefits for patients.

## DDC reviews progress of Jal Jeevan Mission projects in Samba District



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, JANUARY 22

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Samba, Rajesh Sharma, conducted a detailed review of ongoing Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) projects today.

The meeting focused on key components such as tubewell drilling, installation of electro-mechanical equipment, construction of Overhead Tanks (OHTs), and filtration plants to ensure clean and reliable water access for all.

importance of timely completion of these tasks and directed concerned officials to accelerate efforts.

He instructed departments to address pending issues urgently and ensure Har Ghar Jal certification for villages marked 100% covered on the portal.

Specific timelines were set for completing the allotment of tubewells for WSS Pacholi and Rajpura Kholav, finalizing pump rooms for operational tubewells within two weeks, and installing machinery for left-out schemes promptly.

The DDC stressed the

## Ensure foolproof arrangements on Shab-e-Meraj (SAW) & Friday Following: Div Com Kashmir directs officers

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 22

To ensure availability of essential services at shrines and prominent Mosques across the valley on the auspicious occasion of Shab-e-Meraj (SAW) & Friday Following, Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri convened a meeting on Wednesday and instructed officers to make adequate arrangements to facilitate devotees.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, SSP Srinagar, SSP Traffic Srinagar, SSP Traffic Rural, and officers from the Waqf Board, Legal Metrology, Information, Roads and Buildings, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Food Safety, FCS&CA, Fire and Emergency Services, Health, SRTC, SSCL, KPDC, PHE, ULB, and other concerned departments.

The meeting deliberated over various facilities including uninterrupted power and water supply, illumination, medical facility camps, availability of essential items, transportation and parking, traffic management, security deployment, sanitation, fire safety, stray dog control and mobile toilet vans.

Addressing the meeting, Div Com issued instructions to Deputy Commissioners to make foolproof arrangements to facilitate devotees in their respective districts, particularly



at Assar-e-Sharief Hazratbal, Aasari-e-Sharief Kalashpora, Jenab Sahib Soura, Ziyarat Sharief Kabamarg, Ziyarat Sharief Khirram (Anantnag), Ziyarat Sharief Makhama (Budgam), and Ziyarat Aham-e-Sharief (Bandipora).

On this occasion, the Div Com instructed KPDC to ensure uninterrupted power supply across the valley on the eve of Shab-e-Meraj and the Friday Following.

SRTC and SSCL were directed to arrange transportation services on designated routes to transport devotees to Hazratbal Shrine.

The Srinagar Municipal Corporation was asked to conduct a sanitation drive at important Shrines & Mosques in the City and ensure stray dog-free sur-

roundings at the Hazratbal shrine.

Div Com directed officers of Waqf Board to install waterproof tents within the premises of Hazratbal Shrine.

Jal Shakti Department was asked to ensure uninterrupted supply of drinking water at all the religious places besides to keep water tankers available at Hazratbal Shrine.

Similarly, all concerned departments were instructed to provide uninterrupted services pertaining to their respective areas to assist both devotees and the general public.

He also directed Deputy Commissioners to assess the arrangements for the observance of Shab-i-Meraj in their districts to ensure advance arrangements at religious places.

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

Principal Secretary, Culture and School Education, Suresh Kumar Gupta, today released a Hindi book titled "PushpitPulkit Path Pe" authored by Dr. O.P. Vidhyarthi at an event held at K.L. Saigal Hall.

The function was organised by the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages (JKAACL), bringing together a galaxy of eminent writers, thinkers and literary enthusiasts.

The event was presided over by Dr. Ashok Bhan, former Director General of Police and graced by Deepika Sharma, Secretary in Culture Department; prominent Dogri writer, Professor Lalit Mangotra; author Dr. O.P. Vidhyarthi besides Dr. Javid Rahi, Chief Editor, Gojri and Head of Jammu Division, JKAACL.

In his keynote address, Suresh Kumar Gupta lauded Dr. O.P. Vidhyarthi's deep connection with the biodiversity of Jammu & Kashmir. He praised the author for his prolific contribution, having penned 51 books dedicated to the themes

of environmental conservation and the beauty of Mother Earth. Calling him a "living encyclopedia of forests and forest products," Gupta emphasized the importance of such literary works in raising awareness about environmental issues.

Deepika Sharma highlighted the need to disseminate Dr. Vidhyarthi's knowledge among the younger generations. She advocated for organizing similar programs in educational institutions to inspire students to connect with and conserve the environment.

Dr. Ashok Bhan, in his presidential address, described the book as a poetic representation of the forests' beauty, the anguish of nature during disasters and the healing touch of environmental balance. He read select excerpts from the book, sharing their profound impact with the audience.

Dr. O.P. Vidhyarthi shared insights from his journey, reflecting on the life experiences that inspired him to write and dedicate himself to environmental conservation.

Eminent art historian Lalit Gupta commended

Dr. Vidhyarthi's unparalleled contributions, advocating for his recognition on a national scale.

Professor Lalit Mangotra also spoke about the author's remarkable literary contributions, particularly in Dogri literature, and shared his personal association with him.

Earlier, Dr. Javid Rahi, said that the objective of the event was to honor Dr. O.P. Vidhyarthi's significant contributions to Dogri and Hindi literature, as well as his efforts in promoting environmental awareness.

The program featured scholarly presentations by Maharaj Krishan Santoshi and Pooja Kapoor Suri, who shared critical analyses of the book and the author's literary journey.

The proceedings were conducted by Rajkumar Behrupia, while S. Popinder Singh Paras, Editor Punjabi, JKAACL, delivered the vote of thanks.

This event celebrated a writer whose works not only enrich regional languages but also serve as a call to action for environmental preservation, inspiring future generations to value and protect nature.

## Weekly Block Diwas Public outreach camp held at Gatha Park Baderwah



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, JANUARY 22

A public outreach camp under the aegis of Weekly Block Diwas was successfully organized today here at the sprawling Gatha Park in the Baderwah. The event, aimed at addressing public grievances and improving governance at the grassroots level, witnessed the participation of local residents and public representatives.

The program was presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Sunil Kumar, who interacted with the attendees and listened to their issues and concerns. He emphasized the govern-

ment's commitment to ensuring transparency, efficiency, and accessibility in public services delivery. The ADC assured the public that their grievances would be resolved on priority and urged them to actively participate in developmental initiatives.

Tehsildar Baderwah, along with officers from various departments, also attended the event. They addressed sector-specific issues, including road connectivity, water supply, healthcare, education, and rural development. The concerned officers provided on-the-spot resolutions to several complaints and outlined steps for addressing remaining issues.

## Sakeena Itoo chairs Cabinet Sub-Committee meet on Reservation Rules



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Reservation Rules convened its meeting under the chairpersonship of Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo here today.

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana (member of Sub-committee); Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department, Sanjeev Verma; Secretary Law, Achal Sethi and representatives from General Administration Department also participated in the meeting.

The Sub-committee examined the grievances and issues raised by section of aspirants and students on different aspects of existing reservation policy. The Sub-committee also discussed the existing reservation policy and evaluated several aspects of it.

Pertinently, the cabinet Sub-committee was constituted by the government last month to look into grievances projected by several section of aspirants against the existing reservation rules.

The sub-committee will submit its report to the council of ministers headed by Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah.

## GDC Sunderbani organises awareness rally themed- Sadak Suraksha, Jeevan Raksha

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

NSS Unit of Government Degree College Sunderbani organized an awareness rally on the theme "Sadak Suraksha, Jeevan Raksha" to observe Road Safety Month and raise awareness about road safety among the public.

The rally witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty members, and staff.

During the rally, students highlighted critical aspects of road safety, such as wearing helmets, using seat belts, adhering to speed limits, and avoiding the use of mobile phones while driving.

The participants also interacted with local residents, distributing pamphlets and sharing valuable tips on minimizing road accidents and saving lives. The event was part of the college's ongoing

commitment towards social responsibility and fostering community awareness. A notable highlight of the rally was the students' effort to raise awareness about traffic signals and their significance in preventing road accidents.

They displayed informative placards explaining the meaning of various traffic signals and emphasized the need for strict adherence to these rules.

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KULGAM, JANUARY 22

To boost rural employment generation, J K Bank Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) Kulgam today organized a Bazar at DC Office Kulgam.

The exhibition cum stall was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan.

The DC briefed the media regarding the mission of RSETI and the professional training it has given to the budding entrepreneurs.

He took a detailed inspection of items placed in the exhibition by RSETI. Athar expressed



satisfaction over training & placements done by RSETI Kulgam during the current financial year.

It was given out that RSETI Kulgam has trained and made self-reliant as many as 900 entrepreneurs in different trades including cutting & tailoring, knitting, pickle making, embroidery, handicrafts, electrician and many more.

DC instructed the Principal RSETI to

install a mega exhibition cum stall on 26th January at Ganta Ghar Kulgam.

It is worth mentioning that such programs are to be held every quarter in the financial year as a part of RSETI functioning so as to showcase the products made and services offered by the settled trained candidates from the RSETI.

## DC Kulgam inaugurates RSETI Stall at Mini-Secretariat

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-AUCTION NOTICE		
The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/FS, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division.		
Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFZR-SLR25-15	07/02/2025 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 15098/F1, 12422/F1, 22446/F1, 22552/F1, 11450/F1, 12498/F1, 22462/F1, 12476/F1, 14632/F1, 14632/R1, 12446/F1 & 15532/F1.
For other details and registration, please visit Railway website <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> .		
245/2025		
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

Weekly Block Diwas

## DC Ganderbal convenes grievance redressal camp at Mini Secretariat



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 22

In a bid to address the concerns and aspirations of the locals, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Shyambir, today presided over a public grievance redressal camp as part of weekly Block Diwas program for block Ganderbal here in the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat.

The camp focused on addressing public grievances, fostering inclusive development and ensuring time-bound redressal of issues.

During the event, residents of Block Ganderbal apprised the DC of several issues like staff dearth in PHC Shuhama, unavailability of Government school books, upgradation of roads, maintenance of street lights, leveling of Kholmullah play field, ration store at Baba Deryadin, permanent Tehsildar at Tulmulla, dredging of Tulmulla Nallah, completion of tehsil building Tulmulla and tehsil library

Tullamulla.

Meanwhile, DDC members of block Ganderbal demanded ground for Gutlibagh, Baba yayil to Gutlibagh road upgradation, Panchayat Ghar at Gutlibagh, roads connectivity to Badargund area and addressing bottlenecks of alternate road from Duderhama to Umar Hair.

The DC directed the health department to send the requirements of ambulances including the current status of ambulances in the district so that the matter could be discussed with higher ups.

Regarding availability of government books, the ZEO Ganderbal said that the requisition has been already sent and books will be available very soon.

Similarly, the R & B department was asked to take assessment of the roads for widening that were discussed in the program.

Regarding Umar hair road widening, the DC said that the land acquisition

matter has been taken up with Srinagar Administration and will be resolved soon.

Interacting with the participants, the DC urged locals to engage with the departments to learn about available schemes, ensuring that benefits reach those in need. He also directed the department that the awareness camps should be given wide publicity so that maximum people could participate.

While replying to the issue of staff rationalization in government schools, the DC urged the dedicated persons of the district to register themselves under Vidyanjali Yojana to work with the education department.

Among others, the event was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Gulzar Ahmad, DySP HQ, Assistant Commissioner Development, Executive Engineers of various engineering wings and other district and sectoral officers.

## ISPL 2: Grateful to be picked by Chennai Singams again says Farhat Ahmad

### Medium-pacer wants to make Kashmir proud by winning matches for Singams

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 22

Farhat Ahmad is one of two players from Jammu & Kashmir in Chennai Singams' squad for the upcoming second edition of the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL), and the talented fast-medium bowler is eager to pull his weight for the team.

Last year's semi-finalists Chennai Singams will open their campaign against Falcon Risers Hyderabad on January 27, day two of the extended season that will run for 21 days at the Dadoji Konddev Stadium in Thane and feature more exciting matches for both, the teams and spectators.

"I was a part of Chennai Singams in the inaugural season last year and we made it to the semi-finals. Although I didn't get to play in the XI, the recognition of being with the Singams in the ISPL is easily the highlight of my cricket career," said Ahmad, who lives in Kashmir with his mother and younger sister.

"During the player auction for this season I was hoping to be picked by Chennai Singams again and I am grateful to God for that. I love this team,

and I want to play this year and win matches for Singams and make Kashmir proud," added 30-year-

league for tennis ball cricket. However, with the expansion of franchise-based sport and the sheer popularity of tennis ball and gully cricket, it always had the potential and gully cricketers were always hopeful," said Ahmad, whose bowling idol is Australia quick Pat Cummins.

"ISPL is a spectacular platform and gives tennis ball cricket lovers an amazing opportunity, we are grateful," he concluded.

Chennai Singams Squad  
Icon Player: Deepak Dogra | All-Rounder | North Zone  
Zone Wise Break-

Up  
•South Zone: R. Thavith Kumar (All-Rounder), Siyyadri (Batter), V. Vignesh (All-Rounder)

•West Zone: Shubam Sangale (Bowler), Vedant Mayekar (All-Rounder), Ketan Mhatre - RTM (Batter), Sumeet Dhekale - RTM (Batter), Rahul Sawant (All-Rounder), Jignesh Patel (All-Rounder)

•East Zone: Jagat Sarkar (Batter), David Gogoi (Bowler)

•North Zone: Anurag Sharshar (Bowler), Farhat Ahmad (Bowler)

•Central Zone: Prashant Gharat (Batter), Mohammed Zeeshan (Bowler)



## DC Reasi flags off All-Women Bike Rally to mark 10 years of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
REASI, JANUARY 22

Deputy Commissioner Reasi Nidhi Malik today flagged off an All-women bike rally from the DC Office Complex to celebrate a decade of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative.

The rally symbolized women's empowerment and highlighted the importance of education and equality for girls. Women from different walks of life enthusiastically participated, showcasing their strength and determination.

The event commenced with a pledge to uphold the values of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, reaffirming the collective commitment to supporting and uplifting girls.

As part of the celebration, a signature campaign on Nari Shakti was also organized, where the Deputy Commissioner, along with officials and participants, marked their signatures to commemorate the occasion.

Later, the Deputy

Commissioner visited Government Degree College, where the Social Welfare Department led by DSWO Sachin Sharma had organized a vibrant cultural event.

Addressing the participants, the Deputy Commissioner encouraged young girls to be confident, reminding them that they are no less than anyone. She urged them to dream big and believe in their potential. Highlighting the journey of women's empowerment, she emphasized that while significant progress has been made, the journey continues. She praised the resilience of women and called for collective efforts to ensure that every girl has the opportunity to thrive and succeed. The initiative celebrated not only the achievements of women but also the community's role in enabling their growth and success. ADDC Reasi Sukhdev Samyal, ADC Rakesh Kumar, CPO Narinder Kumar, DSWO, DIO (info) and other officers were present.

## FROM THE PAGE 1...

### Our prime objective...

welfare of humanity since time immemorial. Modern communication tools, reach of social media and other communication mediums have eliminated geographical boundaries. We must use these mediums to spread research work, books, magazines, monographs on meditation and yoga to every corner of the world, he said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that the basic foundation of cultural-spiritual institutions should be based on 3 Es - Education, Experience and Enlightenment.

By empowering the society through a system based on education, experience and enlightenment, we can uplift every section, without any discrimination. This system will lay emphasis on character building which will build a strong society with the vision of equality and social justice and create a sense of self-respect and self-pride in the citizens, the Lieutenant Governor further added.

He also called upon the devotees visiting Mahakumbh from across the globe to become ambassadors of the glorious Indian culture.

### Only God knows when...

the BJP government over the return of Kashmiri Pandits stating, "On January 19, it has been 33 years since Kashmiri Pandits left their homes."

"They (BJP) were in power for 10 years, what did they do? This government has been in power for only a short time, they were in power for 10 years. Ask them what they did, how many people did they settle in Kashmir," said the National Conference Chief.

On the issue of unemployment, he said, "we still have 5 years in hand. Go and ask those who talk about generating 50,000 jobs and find out how many people they have employed."

Meanwhile, responding to a query on a train connecting the Kashmir valley very soon, Abdullah claimed, "as per my information, the train to Kashmir will be delayed by two months because some spots are yet not ready."

"I was also waiting and ready to go to Srinagar by train on January 25 but the train I think will start only when the tourist season begins in April," he said.

### Health crisis deepens...

have been categorised into three containment zones to ensure continuous monitoring and prevent further spread:

Containment Zone 1: Homes of families where deaths have occurred will be sealed, with no entry allowed unless authorised.

Containment Zone 2: Close contacts of affected persons will be shifted to GMC Rajouri for health monitoring.

Containment Zone 3: All households in Badhaal village, with staff deployed to monitor food consumption. Designated officials have been tasked with overseeing

food distribution to families in containment zones. Log-books will document every instance of food consumption, with police personnel monitoring compliance.

An epidemiologist at GMC Jammu told KNO that no indications of a virus or infection have been found so far. "However, traces of toxins have been detected and are being analysed at a broader level. The source and nature of the toxins are still under investigation," he said.

He said authorities are conducting preventive CT scans, educating the public on hygiene practices and advising them to consume only government-provided food. "Locals have been urged to cooperate with the measures to ensure safety and help in identifying the root cause of the deaths," he said. KNO

### J&K records 81% deficit...

or above during the period while Udhampur, Samba and Ramban have recorded a deficit precipitation of above 80 per cent in 22 days.

Anantnag and Pulwama districts in South Kashmir have seen a deficiency of 77 per cent and 75 per cent respectively, the data revealed and added that Budgam, Bandipora and Rajouri have recorded a deficient rainfall of 69 per cent, 63 per cent and 64 per cent respectively. KNO

### Crime Branch books...

Each candidate was reportedly defrauded of Rs. 9 lakh.

In the second case, a complaint was filed by Sahil Choudhary from Rajouri, who alleged that Sunny Sharma and Bisharath Hussain Mirza promised him a permanent Class IV position at J&K Bank for Rs. 8 lakh. The accused introduced him to J&K Bank employees Majid Ali and Imran Tantray, who instructed the complainant to transfer Rs. 7.90 lakh into accounts they provided.

After receiving the payment, Majid Ali handed over a fake appointment order. When the complainant tried to join at the Dalhori Rajouri branch, he was informed that the appointment order was fraudulent.

The Crime Branch has registered two cases, FIR No. 07/2025 and FIR No. 08/2025, and investigations are underway.

### Nine underpasses to...

The Minister informed that Juthana Bridge is ready, and it will be inaugurated soon. He said after assuming charge as the Prime Minister Modi resolved to carry out development in the underdeveloped and previously-neglected areas. He said the aim was to bring these areas at par with places already touched by development on many fronts.

Dr. Jitendra Singh informed that fulfilling another popular public demand and to assuage the concerns of local populace vis-à-vis livelihoods, the government has decided to build nine under passes on the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Express Corridor, including two at

Dayala Check, as many as at Hatli Morh, and two each at Rajbagh and Chanrorian, and one at Koodah. Also, an elevated flyover at Kalibari is also proposed, Dr Singh further informed.

The Union Minister also informed the gathering that the government approved last week the Chattergala project built at an estimated cost of 30,345 crore rupees. As part of the ambitious project, the strategic tunnel costing 4245 crore rupees which will connect Kathua to Doda via Basohli Bani and Baderwah.

The Minister noted that the travel time between Doda and Kathua will be reduced significantly to only three hours. He said a DND is proposed to be built Doda and Dalhousie in Himachal Pradesh.

Talking about the achievements of the government in the past six months in other parts of this Lok Sabha constituency, the Minister highlighted many new key projects in the area that include Sudhmahadev Tunnel, in district Doda a new road link connecting villages like Humbal, Burgana and Dr Jitendra Singh's native village of Kalhota with under construction NH-224. He said these projects will be game-changers in the development journey of the entire region.

### Several deputations...

the need for employment opportunities for locals in ongoing and upcoming power projects, along with the upgradation of schools and health institutions to address critical shortages of teachers, doctors and paramedics.

They also brought attention to the need for improved public infrastructure, including better roads, reliable drinking water facilities and the establishment of banking services in remote areas.

The Chief Minister gave a patient hearing to the deputation and assured that all genuine demands would be addressed on priority emphasizing the government's commitment to ensuring equitable development in remote areas for upliftment of marginalized communities.

In a separate meeting, a deputation comprising former legislators of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly met the Chief Minister to discuss their concerns.

They requested for an enhancement of pension benefits, noting that the last revision occurred over a decade ago.

Besides they requested for an increase in medical allowance.

They also sought intervention of the Chief Minister in giving directions for smooth and hassle free entry of ex-legislators to the Legislative Assembly and Secretariat premises and to devise a simple mechanism to facilitate their easy access.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah assured the delegation that their issues would be taken up promptly.

CM Omar Abdullah said that his government gives due recognition to their contributions to public service and assured that a mechanism would be devised to facilitate their entry without any difficulty. KNO

## Comprehensive surveillance measures introduced in Health crisis hit Badhaal Village

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJOURI, JANUARY 22

To cope with the health crisis in Badhaal village, which led to 17 deaths in the area, the District Administration Rajouri has introduced an array of preventive measures to prevent the situation from escalating.

The authorities have replaced existing supplies with safe food and water to the households in the affected localities.

Designated officers are tasked with maintaining a log book with three daily entries documenting food distribution and consumption to safeguard public health and contain the spread of the situation.

The area has already been declared as the containment zone with implementation of comprehensive surveillance measures and imposition of Section 163 of the BNSS for immediate compliance.

To contain the situation and prevent further escalation, the area has been divided into 3 containment zones which include the locality of families which suffered deaths. The affected houses have been sealed and entry is strictly prohibited without permission from the designated officer.

The other two Zones are families identified as having contacts with the affected families.

Further, on the direction of Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma ordered immediate relocation of close contacts and high-risk contacts of affected families from Badhaal Village to Nursing College and Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri.

The decision forms part of a proactive approach to ensure the safety and well-being of the community amid prevailing concerns.

The Animal and sheep Husbandry Department has been tasked with deploying officials to manage and take care of domestic animals left behind in the village, ensuring their safety and proper upkeep.

The district administration is working round the clock to provide all necessary assistance and appeals to the public to cooperate fully with the containment measures.

## DDC Ganderbal reviews physical & financial progress under District Capex 2024-25



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 22

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Ganderbal, Shyambir today convened a meeting to take stock of the physical and financial achievements made under District Capex 2024-25 here in the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat Ganderbal.

During the meeting, it was informed that out of 1635 works, 1475 have been tendered, out of which 1331 are also allotted.

DDC took a detailed review of progress achieved in each department including RDD, Health, Education, R&B,

PDD, Jal Shakti & Agriculture allied departments.

While reviewing sector-wise position of allotment and completion of works, the DDC directed the concerned executing agencies to ensure that the implementation of all the works on ground is expedited so that they are completed at the earliest.

He stressed to utilize the remaining months of the financial year properly to complete projects well in time by spending all the released money.

Officers were stressed to put in best efforts for maximum and optimum utilization of funds under different schemes so that

no released expenditure would be surrendered.

Reviewing the sector-wise and work-wise progress, the DC emphasized the need for accelerating the pace of ongoing works to ensure their timely completion. He further directed all concerned executing agencies to meet both physical and financial targets for all approved projects within the stipulated timelines.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Commissioner Development, ACP, Executive Engineers from R&B, REW, Jal Shakti and I&FC, BDOs and other District and Sectoral Officers.

## Awareness on 'Swachhta Action Plan' organized by CBC at GHSS Chandak

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, JANUARY 22

Central Bureau of Communication, Field Office Poonch, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India (J&K, Ladakh) organized an awareness programme on 'Swachhta Action Plan' (SAP) at Govt. Higher Secondary School, Chandak, Block Nangali Sahab Sai Baba of district Poonch (J&K). The programme was held under the chairmanship of the Principal of the host institute.

The programme aimed at the participation of citizens in adopting the cleanliness habits. All the participants may dispose of garbage in a proper and sensitive manner. They may understand the need and urgency of clean and green India, 'Say No' to single use plastic and planting saplings under 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign and look after the growth of saplings.

While speaking on the occasion Principal Amil Hussain appreciated the efforts of Government of India and Central Bureau of Communication for organizing the awareness programme at the far flung & hilly area of Chandak. He reminded the students about their responsibility towards a clean and healthy Nation. He quoted the example of Mahatma Gandhi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding dedication for a clean and green India. He urged the students to spend one hour on cleanliness every week and save trees.

Naseer Choudhary Naib Tehsildar Chandak also addressed the students regarding aims and objectives of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). He



also enlightened the students about sensible and responsible disposing of waste. He spoke about segregation of waste and the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle mantra for waste management.

Himani Manhas, Panchayat Secretary, RDD & Panchayati Raj, Chandak-B also addressed the gathering and enlightened them about achievements of RDD in Chandak area. She informed that Segregation Sheds, composite pits and soak pits are made in panchayats. She mentioned a plastic waste management unit at Chandak built by RDD. Each panchayat has a special segregation shed and swachh grahi to collect, treat and dispose off solid waste, she added.

Vijay Mattoo I/c CBC Poonch in his address enlightened the gathering about working and organization of Central Bureau of Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India. He delivered a lecture regarding Swachhata saying that the activities like shramdaan, distribution of Jute Bags

& dustbins and seminars are aimed at preparing the young minds to contribute in making India clean and green. Such programmes are being organized by CBC in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh regions.

During the programme at GHSS Chandak 'Swachhta Pledge' was administered in which Principal, Staff members, locals and students participated. A shramdaan activity (Cleanliness drive) was also organized in the school premises to motivate the students for 'Swachh Vidhalay' (Clean School). Students, Teachers and local participated in the Shramdaan activity.

PRT of CBC J&K presented a theme based dance songs and skit to make the audience rethink their daily routines which pollute surroundings. Students also expressed their views about Swachhata through speech. Dustbins, brooms, Masks, Gloves, sanitizers and Jute Bags were donated to the school by CBC, Poonch, J&K. All the participants were honoured by CBC.

## Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: DC Doda flags off Cycle Rally marking 10th Anniversary of campaign

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, JANUARY 22

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative, a grand cycle rally was organized today here at the DC Office Complex.

The event, held under the guidance of the Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, aimed to empower women and promote gender equality. Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh flagged off the rally, which witnessed enthusiastic participation from individuals across the district.

The rally, which included girls and boys on bicycles and scooters, emphasized the importance of collective efforts in ensuring gender empowerment. Starting from the DC Office Complex, the rally served as a platform to spread awareness about the critical role women play in society and the need to support girls' education and empowerment.



A pledge ceremony was also conducted during the event, reaffirming the community's dedication to the cause. Organized by the District Social Welfare Officer Tariq Qazi, the event highlighted the decade-long impact of the BBBP initiative in creating opportunities for girls and women in the region.

Senior Superintendent of Police Sandeep Kumar Mehta, along with representatives from other government departments and officials from the Social Welfare Department, also graced the occasion, showcasing their support for the mission of 'Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child.'

## Mega Awareness Camp on PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana held at Kishtwar

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 22

To promote PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, Jammu Power Development Corporation Limited Kishtwar today organized an awareness camp for government officials of the district about the importance of utilizing non-conventional sources of energy.

The event was presided over by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan.

The event aimed to promote rooftop solar installations and spread awareness about the scheme's benefits among officers and employees of the District. AEE Sudheer Sharma, while giving a PowerPoint presentation, said that the scheme offers IKW to 10 KW rooftop solar setups for the consumers eligible to avail the scheme.

He highlighted that the initiative would help reduce monthly electricity bills of households and mentioned that the subsidy components range from Rs. 38,000 up to Rs. 94,800 depending on the capacity of the equipment opted by the consumer. He also shared plans to organise similar awareness camps across various blocks.

The DC, while addressing the gathering, encouraged officers and govt employees from across the District. The DC also shared a slogan on the occasion: "Let our officers and employees be smart enough to use solar electricity."

For facilitating the registration, a district-level control room will be established at the headquarters, comprising members from JPDCL, vendors, and the DC office. Additionally, control rooms will also be set up at the tehsil and block levels to assist consumers and raise awareness about the scheme.

The DC also directed all bank authorities to fast track the process and clear the cases related to the scheme within 24 hours. The DC mentioned that the scheme would be implemented in all 136 panchayats, including the 13 model panchayats of the district.

The DC set a timeline of

4 days for all officers/DDOs to register their employees for the scheme, 10 days for field staff, and 15 days for frontline workers. The DC also directed JPDCL authorities to provide house-to-house registration facilities.

It was further informed that a training camp for the scheme is going to be organized at Jammu from 14th January for ITI students, where they will be trained in the installation of roof-

top set up, providing them a lucrative career option.

The awareness camp was attended by CPO Kishtwar Shahnawaz Bali, ACD Kishtwar Phulail Singh, AD FCS & CA Kishtwar Shafiqat Ali Keen, Dy. Registrar Cooperative/EO MC Kishtwar Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal, AD Handicrafts, Ex-En JPDCL Kishtwar, CHO Kishtwar, DYSSO Kishtwar, along with other district officers and banking representatives.

## Government Polytechnic Jammu organises awareness seminar on PM Surya Ghar Muft Bilji Yojana



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

Government Polytechnic Jammu, in collaboration with Jammu Power Development Corporation Limited (JPDCL) organized a seminar cum workshop on PM Surya Ghar Muft Bilji Yojana here on the college campus.

The seminar was conducted under the supervision of the Principal of the Institution Talat Mahmood.

The main aim of the seminar was to create

awareness about the benefits of the rooftop solar plant and the subsidy given by the UT of J&K and MSRE to the applicants.

Assistant Executive Engineers Vinod Kumar, Rohit Gupta, Garu Ram and Accounts Officer Tirath Ram from JPDCL, besides faculty members Er Sukhdeep Singh HOD Civil Engineering Department; Er Raj Kumar HOD Mechanical Department and staff of Government Polytechnic Jammu were the part of the workshop.

## JKRERA, Revenue Department to conduct joint inspections to curb growth of illegal colonies

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

To curb the growth of illegal colonies in Jammu district, the Jammu and Kashmir Real Estate Regulatory Authority (JKRERA) will conduct joint inspections with the Revenue department.

The decision was taken today during a meeting of Deputy Commissioner,

Jammu Sachin Kumar Vaisya with Chairperson, JKRERA, Satish Chandra.

During the meeting, the issue of development of illegal colonies in the district was discussed in detail. The Deputy Commissioner apprised the Chairperson of the actions being taken by the district administration against unauthorised constructions.

**ENIT NO. 63OF 2024-25 DATED 20-01-2025**

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI**  
**PHE MECHANICAL DIVISION UDHAMPUR**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**E-NIT JSPHEM/UDHR/ 63OF 2024-25 DATED 20-01-2025**

Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mechanical Division, Udhampur, on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir UT, invites tenders by e-tendering mode from registered firms who have sufficient experience in the relevant field of electro-mechanical/ electrical works.

Sl.	Name of the work	Qty	Name of Division	Cost of Tender Document / Tender Fee (in Rs)	Earnest Money (in Rs)	Bid validity
1	Repair to 50000 GPH x 158 meter head HC pump set of unit no. 5 at pumping station Salmay stage-1 <sup>st</sup> and repair to 120000 GPH x 48 meter head HC pump set at pumping station Salmay stage-0 (Old).	01 job	Jal Shakti PHE Mech. Division Udhampur	Rs. 200.00 (Non-refundable in shape of treasury challan in favour of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mech. Division Udhampur)	(Rs. 2200.00) 2% (in case of non-registered firms) Or (Rs. 1100.00) 1% (in case of firms registered with DIC / SSI / MSME)	90 days

- Bid documents can be seen at and downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 20-01-2025 (18:00 Hrs.)
- The Bids shall be deposited on the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 20-01-2025 (18:30Hrs) to 29-01-2025 (3:00 PM).
- After opening tender only successful bidder shall be asked for submitting the hard copies of documents with CDR and tender fee
- The complete bidding process will be online <http://jktenders.gov.in>.
- The technical bid will be opened on line on 30-01-2025 at 11.00 A.M or any other subsequent date in the office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mechanical Division Udhampur.
- The Financial bids of the bidders shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mechanical Division Udhampur after evaluation of technical bids. The date shall be communicated separately.
- Bids must be accompanied by bid security and cost of Tender Document as specified in column 5 & 6 of the table (and for DIC/SSI/MSME registered firms as per Industrial Policy of J&K govt.) payable at Udhampur pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, PHE Mechanical Division, Udhampur.
- Bid security will have to be in form of CDR / FDR / BG of any scheduled bank and shall have to be valid for one year or more after last date of receipt of Bid. The cost of downloaded tender documents shall be in form of Treasury Challan / e-Challan in favour of Executive Engineer PHE Mechanical Division, Udhampur payable at Udhampur.
- Firms who will fulfill the following parameters are eligible to participate.
  - Average Annual financial turnover during the last 3 years, ending 31 March of the previous financial year, should be at least 30% of this estimated cost.
  - Experience of having successfully completed similar works during last 07 years ending last day of month previous to the one in which applications are invited should be either of the following:-
    - Three similar completed works costing not less than the amount equal to 40% of the estimated cost
    - Two similar completed works costing not less than the amount equal to 50% of the estimate cost.
    - One similar completed work costing not less than the amount equal to 80% of the estimated cost.
  - Definition of "similar work" should be clearly defined.
- The bid shall remain open for acceptance for a period of 90 days from the date of opening bids. If any bidder / tenderer withdraws his bid / tender before the said period or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid, the earnest money of the firm shall stand forfeited.
- The tenderers are advised to visit the site of work before uploading their tenders so as to acquaint themselves with exact site conditions.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding documents from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>

NO. JSPHEMUDHR/2024-25/3510-13  
Dated: 20-01-2025

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
Jal Shakti PHE Mech. Division  
Udhampur

DIP/J-9426/24  
Date: 22-1-25

## EDITORIAL

## The Enigma of Badhaal village

The shadow of uncertainty looms over Badhaal village in Rajouri district, where the tragic and unexplained deaths of 17 individuals have left the community in shock and despair. The ongoing investigations have yet to yield answers, amplifying the sense of unease and urgency in the region. The mysterious illness has affected multiple families, and with three more suspected cases reported, the situation demands immediate and comprehensive intervention. In response to this alarming crisis, the district administration has officially designated Badhaal as a containment zone, imposing restrictions on gatherings to curb any potential spread of the unknown illness. The District Magistrate's formal order mandates strict supervision, with designated officials ensuring the distribution of meals to families within the zone. Furthermore, houses of the affected families have been sealed, and their close contacts shifted to Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri for thorough medical examinations. Despite these measures, the lack of clarity regarding the cause of these deaths has only fueled widespread panic. The government's assertion that there is no viral outbreak or infection in the area has done little to assuage fears. The tragic events, which began on December 7, 2024, have claimed lives across three families, leaving the community grappling with both grief and uncertainty. The Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, during his visit to Badhaal, expressed profound sorrow over the loss of lives and assured the bereaved families of the government's unwavering support. While offering condolences, he emphasized that the administration is committed to uncovering the truth and ensuring justice. His assurances, while significant, underscore the critical need for swift and transparent action to restore confidence among the affected populace. Top-level experts and institutions from across the country have been mobilized to investigate the mysterious deaths. However, the lack of conclusive findings highlights a glaring gap in the region's healthcare and crisis management infrastructure. The government's inability to provide definitive answers, even after 50 days, is a stark reminder of the pressing need to enhance preparedness and response mechanisms for such emergencies. Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar, has taken charge of monitoring and supervising the situation in the neighboring Koteranka area, signaling the administration's intent to leave no stone unturned. Teams deployed to the village are working diligently, but the absence of tangible results continues to erode public trust. Effective communication from the authorities, coupled with visible progress in the investigation, is essential to alleviate fears and prevent misinformation from spreading. The tragedy in Badhaal serves as a wake-up call for the broader healthcare and administrative systems in Jammu and Kashmir. The unexplained deaths highlight the urgent need for investments in medical research, rapid diagnostic capabilities, and community awareness programs. While the immediate focus must remain on resolving the crisis and supporting the affected families, long-term measures to strengthen public health infrastructure cannot be overlooked. The coming days will be crucial as the government works to unravel the mystery surrounding the appalling deaths in Badhaal. The stakes are high, not just for the families and the village but for the entire region's confidence in its leaders and institutions. Transparency, accountability, and empathy must guide the administration's approach as it strives to bring closure to this harrowing chapter. Until answers are found, the enigma of Badhaal will continue to haunt not just the village but the conscience of all those tasked with safeguarding public health and safety.

## Empowering panchayats: The key to achieving Viksit Bharat 2047 through community actions

MANMOHAN SINGH

India's development trajectory has been shaped by significant contributions from the office of Prime Minister (PM), Chief Minister (CM) and District Magistrate (DM). To achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 empowering Panchayat leadership, headed by Village Mukhiya (VM) is a critical strategy.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 mandated the transfer of authority of 29 functions, underscoring their vital role in delivering services directly to the communities. Despite this mandate, Gram Panchayats (GP) lack functionaries and have limited infrastructure and capacity for planning and implementation. This often leads to either under-utilisation of allocated funds or prioritising local infrastructural projects decided by either the district or state. Addressing these challenges is crucial for India to meet its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and improve its Human Development Index (HDI) ranking. It requires building the capacity of GPs to adeptly identify, plan, and implement projects that align with the needs established through Gram Sabha.

The Panchayat Raj System established panchayats as the foundation of decentralised power, emphasising that sustainable development must



begin with our smallest unit of democracy: the Panchayat, led by the VM (Sarpanch). Elevating the role of the VM akin to the PM and CM at the centre and state, supported by a strong administrative structure, can drive effective grassroots decision-making. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has grouped the 17 SDGs into nine themes, demonstrating India's commitment to achieving these goals through the implementation of Localised SDGs (LSDGs) by Panchayats. GPs across India, are tasked with creating Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) that align with LSDG priori-

ties. However, a survey of 800 panchayats revealed that only 7 per cent of Sarpanches independently chose their LSDG themes using the Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitation Tool (GPPFT), while 34 per cent of themes were decided by Block officials, 22 per cent by Sarpanches or Sachivs, and 16 per cent were directed by the state, reflecting a need for strengthening planning at the panchayat level.

To develop Viksit Panchayats, four key actions are proposed: Support panchayat for last-mile convergence: When a 13-year-old girl drops out of school, the responsibility extends beyond the educa-

tion department, requiring collaborative efforts across health, social welfare, and community development. A central coordinating body at the village level, led by the VM can drive such convergence. For instance, Anita Devi, Village Mukhiya of Bhetaura Panchayat in Gaya, Bihar has embraced the 'Healthy Panchayat' LSDG theme. Collaborating with ASHAs, Anganwadi Didis, and Gandhi Fellows to achieve 'Zero Home Delivery' eventually boosting institutional delivery rates from 25 per cent to nearly 90 per cent in just one year. Replicating such successes requires empowering panchayat through

convergence of funds, and functionary and administrative support.

Reimagine development of Panchayat Leaders: India has 2.6 lakh elected VMs, dedicated to strengthening panchayat governance. Prime Minister's call to bring 1 lakh youth into politics is a great encouragement for local youths. To unlock their full potential, we need to reimagine the institutional framework that focuses on capacity building for elected 'VM and Ward Members'. For example, Jyoti Behar Devi, Mukhiya in Gumla, Jharkhand, banned alcohol in her panchayat, focused on livelihood

opportunities and also started the "Siti Bajo aur School Aao" campaign to boost school attendance, effectively transforming her community.

Democratise data through Panchayat: Village Mukhiyas, as key information providers of government schemes, need real-time access to comprehensive beneficiary data and scheme details. Implementing technology solutions that provide such access is paramount for informed decision-making and efficient governance. The Ministry of Panchayat Raj and the Ministry of Rural Development has taken some initiatives which need further integration with planning and execution at the panchayat level.

### Revitalise Village Committees

Village-level committees such as School Management Committees, Village Health and Sanitation Committees, Jan Arogya Samitis, and Village Water and Sanitation Committees, play a pivotal role in fostering decentralised governance and community participation in development efforts. To achieve Viksit Bharat, these committees need to align to avoid duplication of efforts and promote community ownership.

(The writer is Co-Founder and CEO Aspirational Bharat Collaborative; views are personal)

## Breaking the cycle of violence: Lessons from personal trauma

SANJAY CHANDRA

Violence against the weak is a timeless and universal phenomenon. Child abuse, bullying, ragging, eve-teasing, molestation and domestic violence are only a few that can result in irretrievable damage to the psyche or can even have tragic consequences. I joined the hostel for the first time as a 12-year-old adolescent. I was out in the world, away from the shelter of my parental love, trying to overcome my insecurities.

One time a senior shouted at me to fetch a packet of cigarettes from the dormitory. I still remember my tears as I was roughly

reprimanded for being tardy. I was scared of the hostel life. Three years later, I joined the college hostel. Ragging had not yet been banned and was openly indulged in by seniors. It was supposed to be a harmless fun activity to initiate the newly joined youngsters into college life. It had degenerated into something completely different.

One Sunday, we were forced to sit above the wardrobe and hurl choice profanities at each other. I mouthed words from my limited vocabulary. We were so traumatised that we started returning home over the weekends. When our parents questioned us, we started bicycling

into the desert on the weekends when ragging was at its peak. We slept in remote towns before returning to the campus at the start of the week.

We even spent a night in the waiting room of a railway station. We were particularly wary of one young man called the 'ragging king'. In time, after the freshers had been welcomed, I settled down. I forgot my earlier trauma and looked forward to the next year when I would be bestowed the dreaded title by the new arrivals. One incident changed my outlook. I was ragging a fresher, who was terrified and not responding to my questions.

Frustrated, I barked at

him to jump into a nearby well. Much to our horror, he turned around and ran towards it. Momentarily stunned, I must have run the fastest race of my life and managed to stop him in the nick of time. I was a changed person. The government stepped in to ban the practice. Sadly, it continues.

A recent news report mentioned ragging in several medical colleges where male seniors force fresh entrants to memorise and read aloud from booklets filled with profanities and promoting sexual violence against women, specifically against classmates and nurses.

The booklet also teaches freshers to look at

women of all ages, including those in the 0-15 years age bracket, as sex objects. Many of us may have been at the receiving end of the local or the school bully. It exists even at the workplace, sometimes in the guise of the rude superior who would not think twice before throwing the file back at you, or the one preying upon the junior female colleague. Women do not have a pleasant experience travelling on public transport. They are afraid to step out after sunset.

Every day we read of brutal assaults and deaths. The list is endless. Many are unable to bear the trauma and give up on life. I am not a psycholo-

gist. The reasons might be more complex than blaming it on not inculcating the right values in the children. But, that can be a starting point.

We can teach our young what English author Brian Jacques wrote in one of the Redwall series of fantasy novels for children, "Defend the weak, protect both young and old, never desert your friends. Give justice to all, be fearless in battle, and always ready to defend the right."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

## The legacy and survival of the Fourth Estate

SANTHOSH MATHEW

In 1780, James Augustus Hickey published India's first printed newspaper, 'Hicky's Bengal Gazette', also known as the Calcutta General Adv, normative power of print media.

It was the printing press that propelled humanity into a new era of knowledge dissemination. In India, newspapers have become an essential pillar of democracy, freedom of expression, and public discourse. The celebration of Indian Newspaper Day reminds us of the transfer of a potent tool in the freedom struggle, awakening the masses to issues of injustice and fostering a collective national consciousness. The legacy of stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi, who wielded publications like Young India and Harijan as instruments of change, underscores the unparalleled influence of newspapers in shaping society. Historically, the press has been

a mirror reflecting societal truths, a watchdog ensuring accountability, and a platform amplifying diverse voices.

Newspapers have been central to the articulation of ideas, the dissemination of information, and the fostering of debate and dialogue. The printed word has held power, credibility, and a permanence unmatched by fleeting digital narratives. Yet, the world of print media today faces an existential crisis. In an era dominated by smartphones, the internet, and instant news apps, the relevance of traditional newspapers is being questioned. Circulation and readership have declined sharply.

Advertisements, which once constituted the backbone of newspaper revenue, have shifted to digital platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this decline, as lockdowns disrupted distribution networks and readers turned to online alternatives.

The Fourth Estate, embodied by traditional media, has paved the way for the Fifth Estate, represented by social media, as youth increasingly gravitate toward digital platforms for their news and engagement. India, despite its rich newspaper history, has not been immune to these global trends.

While the country boasts a vibrant linguistic diversity in its press—with publications in Hindi, English and regional languages—even stalwarts like Dainik Bhaskar and Malayala Manorama are grappling with reduced readership. Legacy newspapers such as Deepika, India's oldest surviving Malayalam publication, and Mumbai Samachar, the nation's longest-running newspaper, now struggle to adapt to the digital age.

The shift is not merely technological but also cultural. The younger generation's preference for quick, digestible con-



tent over in-depth reporting signals a change in information consumption patterns. Traditional newspapers, with their rich investigative journalism and nuanced storytelling, are increasingly viewed as slow and outdated.

The immediacy of apps like Daily Hunt and platforms offering free e-papers has made paying for physical newspapers seem redundant. This decline, however, should not overshadow the irreplaceable value of print media.

Unlike digital platforms prone to misinformation and algorithmic biases, newspapers have long been trusted for their credibility and edito-

rial rigour. They offer a depth of coverage that ensures stories are not just told but examined and contextualised. Newspapers are archives of history, recording events with an accuracy and permanence that digital platforms, with their ephemeral nature, cannot replicate. Japan provides a remarkable case study in media literacy and the enduring power of print. Despite being at the forefront of technological innovation, Japan boasts the world's largest-circulated dailies, such as Yomiuri Shimbun with a circulation nearing 10 million and Asahi Shimbun not far behind. High literacy rates and a culture of respect for well-researched journalism have enabled newspapers to thrive even in a digital age. This example underscores the potential for print media to coexist with digital platforms when supported by an

informed and engaged readership.

Indian Newspaper Day is a reminder to recognise and preserve this legacy. While print media must innovate to survive, readers, too, bear a responsibility to support credible journalism. The rise of e-papers and hybrid models—combining print and digital—offers hope for the industry's evolution rather than extinction. Newspapers continue to play a vital role in fostering democracy.

They provide a platform for marginalised voices, hold power to account, and offer citizens the information they need to make informed decisions. At a time when digital echo chambers threaten the very fabric of public discourse, newspapers serve as a counterbalance, offering diverse perspectives and challenging groupthink.

The theme of survival is intrinsic to the narrative of Indian newspapers. Just as

Hicky's Bengal Gazette persevered despite colonial censorship and competition, today's publications must navigate the challenges of the digital age. The story of newspapers is one of resilience and adaptation. From the handwritten Acta Diurna of Julius Caesar's Rome to Gutenberg's printing revolution, and from Hickey's modest four-page to modern broadsheets like The Times of India, the medium has continually evolved to meet the needs of its time. As we celebrate Indian Newspaper Day 2025, it is an opportunity to reflect on the enduring significance of the printed word. While the medium may change, the principles of journalism—truth, accountability, and the public good—remain timeless. It is up to readers, journalists, and policymakers to ensure that these principles continue to thrive in an age of rapid technological change.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

# 7 BEST FOODS FOR PROMOTING HEALTHY HAIR GROWTH

A healthy and luscious mane is a crowning glory for many of us. While there are numerous hair care products available in the market, a balanced diet plays a crucial role in promoting healthy hair growth. Incorporating the right foods into your diet can help nourish your locks, making them stronger, shinier, and more resilient.

In this article, we will explore 7 foods that can help promote healthy hair growth.

- 1. Salmon: Omega-3 Fatty Acids**  
Salmon is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are very important for healthy hair growth. The fatty acids enhance the nourishment of the scalp, thereby causing strong and healthy hair to grow. Consume salmon at least two times a week to gain its advantages.
- 2. Spinach: Rich in Iron**  
Iron deficiency is a common cause of hair loss. Spinach is rich



in iron, making it an excellent addition to your diet. Iron helps carry oxygen to the hair follicles, promoting healthy hair growth. Add spinach to your salads, or smoothies, or sauté it with garlic as a side dish.

**3. Almonds: A Rich Source of Magnesium**  
Almonds are a good source of magnesium, which is an essential mineral for hair growth. Magnesium promotes blood flow to the scalp, and thus the hair follicles receive

the necessary nutrients for growth. Snack on almonds or add them to your oatmeal or yogurt.

**4. Sweet Potatoes: Rich in Vitamin A**  
Vitamin A is essential for healthy hair growth, and sweet potatoes are an excellent source of this vitamin. Vitamin A helps promote the growth of healthy hair follicles, ensuring that your locks are strong and resilient. Bake or boil sweet potatoes and enjoy them as a side dish.

**5. Avocados: A Rich Source of Healthy Fats**  
Avocados are rich in healthy fats, which are essential for healthy hair growth. These fats help nourish the scalp, promoting the growth of strong and healthy hair. Add avocados to your salads, and smoothies, or enjoy them as a healthy snack.

**6. Oysters: A Rich Source of Zinc**  
Zinc is an essential mineral for healthy hair growth, and oysters are an excellent

source of this mineral. Zinc helps promote the growth of healthy hair follicles, ensuring that your locks are strong and resilient. Include oysters in your diet at least once a week to reap its benefits.

**7. Eggs: A Rich Source of Protein**

Eggs are an excellent source of protein, which is essential for healthy hair growth. Protein helps promote the growth of strong and healthy hair, ensuring that your locks are resilient and shiny. Include eggs in your diet at least twice a week to reap its benefits.

Incorporating these 7 foods into your diet can help promote healthy hair growth.

Remember to also drink plenty of water, exercise regularly, and reduce stress to ensure that your locks are healthy and strong. With a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle, you can enjoy a luscious and healthy mane that turns heads.

## Stress during early pregnancy may affect kids' health later

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 22

High maternal stress hormone levels during early pregnancy can have a lasting effect on the health of the children, according to a long-term study on wild monkeys, published on Tuesday.

The study on wild Assamese macaques in Thailand provides important insights into the influence of early life stages on the development of the stress system under natural environmental conditions.

Researchers at the University of Gottingen and the German Primate Center - Leibniz Institute for Primate Research in Germany that the effects of stress were evident till 10 years of age.

The research is relevant as stress in early pregnancy can also have a long-term effect on health in humans and increase the risk of stress disorders and immune problems.

The study found that exposure to stress enhances the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The axis plays a central role in coping with stress and can significantly be influenced by exposure to



maternal glucocorticoids during development.

The early phase of organ differentiation in the first half of pregnancy proved to be a particularly critical period. "Our research results indicate that the timing of maternal stress hormone exposure during and after pregnancy crucially affects the consequences for the development and health of the offspring.

It is also important to note that these effects do not require catastrophic events, but that even moderate changes in environmental conditions are sufficient," said Oliver Schulke, a scientist at the University of Gottingen and the German Primate Center. However, the study published in the journal Proceedings of the

Royal Society B showed that elevated stress hormones later during pregnancy or after birth did not have the same effects.

"Our findings may help to identify the timing and mechanisms that preventive measures should address in order to reduce long-term health risks," Schulke said. In contrast to studies in the laboratory, the monkeys were observed in their natural habitat. Over nine years, the researchers repeatedly collected faecal samples from pregnant female monkeys and measured the concentration of glucocorticoid metabolites in them to understand the animals' exposure to environmental factors such as food scarcity, temperature fluctuations, and social interactions.

## AI boom to help tackle industrial challenges, low births: South Korea

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 22

South Korea's Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun on Wednesday said artificial intelligence (AI) presents the country with an opportunity to address lingering challenges, including low birth rates, noting the government will roll out a set of projects to foster the segment.

Ahn remarked during a meeting with AI experts in Seoul, where government and industry officials discussed the country's policies aimed at cultivating the AI sector, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, Yonhap news agency.

"Currently, South Korean industries face challenges both domestically and internationally, including a declining population, technological competition from rival countries, and an over-supply of products," Ahn



said.

"At this year's CES, we confirmed leveraging AI technologies is no longer a choice and the future of South Korea's industry depends on how promptly we adopt them," Ahn added.

The industry minister also emphasised the government will revamp the country's energy, financial, and other related policies to meet the growing demands from the AI sector.

"South Korea will establish an AI-friendly power supply system, raise AI-related funds, and reform

laws and policies to create a favourable business environment for companies," Ahn said.

During the event, the ministry unveiled a series of projects to boost the AI industry, including the establishment of a public-private consortium to support businesses' automated production lines.

South Korea will also build the necessary infrastructure to test and manufacture humanoid robots and support the development of self-driving automobiles and vessels, the ministry added.

With critically low birth

rates, South Korea has formally become a "super-aged" society.

According to the government data, the number of South Koreans aged 65 or older stood at 10.24 million, accounting for 20 per cent of the country's total population of 51.22 million, Yonhap reported in December last year.

The United Nations classifies countries where more than 7 per cent of the population is 65 or older as an aging society, and those with over 14 per cent as an aged society, and those with more than 20 per cent as a super-aged society.

However, there have been some signs of a recovery.

The number of babies born in South Korea increased at the fastest rate in 14 years in October. A total of 21,398 babies were born in October, up 13.4 per cent from the 18,878 newborns a year earlier.

## PRIVATE HOSPITAL IN HYDERABAD SEALED OVER KIDNEY RACKET

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, JAN 21

Health and police authorities in Hyderabad on Tuesday sealed a private hospital after busting an alleged kidney transplantation racket and arrested its managing director and some other employees.

Officials of Rachakonda police and the Department of Medical and Health conducted searches at Alkananda Multi-Specialty Hospital following complaints that the hospital was carrying out kidney transplants without mandatory permissions.

The hospital authorities were found to be allegedly luring kidney donors from other states and also calling doctors from outside the state to perform the transplants.

They were making huge money through this racket.

On receipt of the information, health department officials with the



help of police conducted a raid on Tuesday evening. A preliminary investigation by the police revealed that kidney transplants were done for two persons each from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Kidneys donated by two women from Tamil Nadu were transplanted in two patients from Karnataka. Police shifted the kidney donors and two patients

to the government-run Gandhi Hospital in Secunderabad by ambulance.

According to police, the hospital was inaugurated only six months ago and it had permission to perform minor surgeries by two doctors.

Police said to avoid any health complications for the two kidney recipients, they were shifted to Gandhi Hospital.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Saroornagar) Krishnaiah and Rangareddy District Medical and Health Officer B. Venkateshwar Rao along with other officials carried out the raid.

Hospital MD Sumant Chary and other members of the staff were arrested.

A case has been registered at Saroornagar Police Station on a complaint by Deputy District Medical and Health Officer Geeta.

According to DM & HO Venkateshwar Rao, Alkananda is a nine-bedded facility. Meanwhile, Minister for Health and Family Welfare Damodar Raja Narasimha has reacted to the busting of a kidney racket.

He said stringent action would be taken against those indulging in illegal activities.

The minister asked a Task Force constituted for checks at hospitals to work effectively.

## Cong alleges Rs 382 cr scam in health sector in Delhi under AAP govt

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The Congress on Wednesday levelled serious allegation of corruption against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), accusing the party-led Delhi government of a "scam of Rs 382 crore" in the health sector.

Addressing the media at the Delhi Congress headquarters here, senior party leader Ajay Maken along with Delhi Congress chief Devendra Yadav while citing CAG report said, "In more than 240 pages of the report, the CAG critically evaluated the performance of Delhi government in public health infrastructure".

Claiming that, 14 CAG reports were to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly, Maken said, "The reports did not see the light of day due to a slinging match between the Chief Minister and the



LG and an attempt to conceal corruption and delay, which the CAG has exposed in Delhi".

"The CAG report says that only three hospitals were built in Delhi in the last 10 years. One of these is an extension and was started during the Congress regime," he said.

The senior Congress leader also alleged that Rs 314 crores were wasted in building the Indira Gandhi Hospital, Rs 41 crores in building the Burari Hospital, and Rs 26 crores in building the Maulana Azad Hospital.

Maken claimed that according to CAG between 2007-15, fifteen plots were acquired by Delhi government, but no work was carried out in these plots. "Of the money received for infrastructure projects from 2016-17 to 2021-22, Rs 2,623 crore remained unspent and later lapsed," he alleged.

The senior Congress leader said that during the Covid pandemic, Kejriwal received Rs 635 crore from the central government, out of which he failed to spend Rs 360 crore, while at that time, people in Delhi were yearning for oxygen and beds.

Maken further alleged that there was shortage of manpower in Delhi public health including 21 per cent shortage of nursing staff, 30 per cent vacancies in 19 categories of paramedical staff and 30 per cent shortage in specialist doctors.

## Himachal CM lashes out at BJP for poor education and health policies

AGENCIES  
KANGRA JAN 22

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday announced the setting up of a division of the Jal Shakti Department in Kangra and assured the strengthening of water and electricity schemes in the Matour area.

The construction work for the Rajiv Gandhi Day Boarding School in Kangra would begin soon, while a new bridge would be built over Jalodi Khad.

Speaking of his deep-rooted connections with Kangra, Sukhu stated that despite the people generally supporting the Congress, a few have frequently shifted their political allegiance.

He expressed confidence that Kangra district would witness significant development over the next five years and that

the present state government would ensure the progress and prosperity of grassroots communities.

The people of the area would get improved water supply, healthcare and other essential facilities nearer to their homes.

The Chief Minister said that the government was committed to revitalising the rural economy, as over 80 per cent of the population of the state resides in rural areas and highlighted several measures to strengthen the rural sector. Apart from this the state has procured 4,000 metric tonnes of maize produced through natural farming at Rs. 30 per kilogram. From the next season, wheat will also be procured at Rs. 40 per kilogram.

He said the daily wage for MNREGA workers had been increased by Rs. 60, from Rs. 240 to Rs. 300. These efforts aim to

empower the rural community. He said that a milk processing plant with a capacity of 1.5 lakh litres was being established at Dhagwar in Kangra which would benefit approximately three lakh farmers. He reiterated the importance of good governance, stating, "Good governance requires Good Government." He criticised the previous BJP government's education policy, which led to the decline of enrollment in schools. He assured that the present government was working to improve the education system to meet future challenges. He said that the present state government has also made reforms in the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) norms to evaluate the performance of all officers and officials of the state government.

Necessary reforms were being made in the health sector.

## Cabinet apprised of achievements under National Health Mission between FY 2021-24

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was apprised of the progress made under the National Health Mission (NHM) during the years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24.

This included an accelerated decline in maternal mortality rate (MMR), infant mortality rate, under-five mortality rate, and total fertility rate and the progress in respect of various diseases programmes like tuberculosis (TB), malaria, kala-azar, dengue, leprosy, viral hepatitis, among others, as well as the new initiatives undertaken such as National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission.

"The NHM has significantly contributed to improving India's public health outcomes through

its relentless efforts in expanding human resources, addressing critical health issues, and fostering an integrated response to health emergencies," according to a Cabinet Communique.

Maternal and child health, disease elimination, and healthcare infrastructure were the key achievements of the NHM between FY 2021-24. MMR declined by 83 per cent since 1990, which is higher than the global decline of 45 per cent.

The country also demonstrated a higher decline of 75 per cent in the reduction of under-five mortality rates in comparison to the global reduction of 60 per cent since 1990. Notably, TB incidence reduced from 237 per 1,00,000 population in 2015 to 195 in 2023; TB mortality rate decreased from 28 to 22 in the same period.

# Sentinels at sea: Indian Coast Guard launches 10-day motorcycle expedition

AGENCIES

AMRITSAR, JAN 22

As part of its 49th Raising Day celebrations, the Indian Coast Guard has launched the 'Samudra Ke Prahari Sarhad Se Samandar' Motorcycle Expedition. The event was officially flagged off at the Attari Border in Amritsar by Inspector General Bishma Sharma, PTM, TM, Commander Coast Guard Region (West), and Dr Atul Fulzele, Inspector General, BSF Punjab Frontier.

Organised by the Indian Coast Guard Air Station in Daman in collaboration with Triumph Motorcycles Ltd, the expedition spans 2,300 km over 10 days.

The route traverses significant border towns and



coastal cities, including Sri Ganganagar, Bikaner, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Vadodra, and Daman, before culminating at the iconic Gateway of India in Mumbai on February 1, celebrated as Coast Guard Day.

The expedition honours the dedication and bravery of the Indian Coast Guard in safeguarding the nation's maritime borders. It underscores the critical role of the Coast Guard in national security, maritime vigilance, and high-

lights India's proud maritime heritage.

Promoting national integration, environmental awareness, and camaraderie, the rally showcases the collective strength of India's Defence forces.

Kalyani Potekar remarked, "This rally aligns with the Government of India's 'Fit India Movement', 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', and 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan', which will be prominently highlighted during the journey."

The rally aims to foster emotional resilience, teamwork, and well-being among participants. Coast Guard personnel will engage with students at various schools along the route, conducting awareness campaigns to inspire

young minds and promote India's rich maritime history.

The expedition also emphasises road safety, responsible driving, and environmental stewardship. It offers participants an opportunity to connect with India's diverse landscapes, people, and culture, reinforcing the country's shared values and traditions.

Sandeep Shukla of the Indian Coast Guard noted, "This rally begins at the Attari Border and concludes at the Gateway of India."

Though the journey spans land rather than sea, it aims to spread awareness of government initiatives and foster a deeper connection with the people."

# India's eSankhyiki data platform cruises to 134 mn records milestone in 7 months

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Wednesday announced that eSankhyiki, India's platform for statistical data dissemination, has reached the milestone of 134 million records in its repository within just seven months of its launch in June 2024.

"This achievement highlights India's commitment to leveraging data for evidence-based policy-making and its leadership in advancing global statistical practices," MoSPI stated.

The accomplishment aligns with India's role as a member of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), reinforcing its global commitment

to statistical excellence and open data.

eSankhyiki demonstrates India's adherence to international standards in data dissemination and its dedication to promoting data-driven governance and sustainable development.

It also underscores the ministry's commitment to making data accessible and useful for the public and decision-makers, the statement said.

As a member of the UNSC, India remains a global leader in data democratisation, ensuring that credible statistics serve as a foundation for governance and international collaboration, it further stated.

Developed using open-source tools and in-house expertise, eSankhyiki provides a comprehensive

repository of time-series data across key domains, including National Accounts Statistics (NAS), Price Statistics, NSS Surveys, Economic Census, and Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

The platform empowers researchers, policy-makers, businesses, and citizens with user-friendly dashboards that allow filtering, visualisation, and data export in multiple formats through APIs in line with the principles of data as public good.

Looking ahead, MoSPI plans to expand the repository with new datasets, introduce AI-powered search capabilities, and offer advanced features such as personalised dashboards and interactive infographics to further enhance user experience.

# Centre clears appointment of 6 judges in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh HCs

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The Centre on Wednesday cleared the appointment of four additional judges in the Telangana High Court and two additional judges in the Andhra Pradesh HC.

"In exercise of the power conferred by clause (1) of Article 224 of the Constitution of India, the President is pleased to appoint (i) Smt. Tirumala Devi Eada Alias Thirupathamma K., to be an Additional Judge of the Telangana High Court with effect from the date she assumes charge of her office till 01.06.2026 and (ii) Smt. Renuka Yam, (iii) Shri Narsing Rao Nandikonda, and (iv) Shri Madhusudhan Rao Bobbili Ramaiah, to be Additional Judges of the Telangana High Court, for a period of two years, with effect from the date they assume charge of their respective offices," said a notification issued by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice. Andhra Pradesh food

The Supreme Court Collegium, headed by CJI Sanjiv Khanna, in its meeting held on Janu-

ary 11, had approved the proposal for the appointment of four judicial officers as judges of the Telangana High Court, namely, Renuka Yara, Narsing Rao Nandikonda, Tirumala Devi Eada @ Thirupathamma K., and Madhusudhan Rao Bobbili Ramaiah.

Another notification issued by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice said, "In exercise of the power conferred by clause (1) of Article 224 of the Constitution of India, the President is pleased to appoint S/ Shri (i) Avadhanan Hari Haranadha Sarma and (ii) Dr. Yadavalli Lakshmana Rao, to be Additional Judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, in that order of seniority, for a period of two years with effect from the date they assume charge of their respective offices."

In its meeting held on January 11, the apex court Collegium approved the proposal for the appointment of judicial officers, Avadhanan Hari Haranadha Sarma and Yadavalli Lakshmana Rao, as judges of the Andhra Pradesh HC.

# CJI-led SC bench fixes Jan 29 to hear suo moto RG Kar case

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The Supreme Court on Wednesday fixed January 29 for hearing the matter where it has taken suo moto cognisance of the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata in August 2024.

"We will take it up at 2 pm next Wednesday (January 29)," said a bench of CJI Sanjiv Khanna and comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan as it deferred the hearing due to paucity of time.

The CJI Khanna-led Bench asked senior advocate Karuna Nundy, representing the associations of medical professionals, to provide a copy of interlocutory applications filed to the other side.

Meanwhile, the West Bengal government has approached the Calcutta High Court, challenging the verdict of a Kolkata special court awarding life imprisonment to Sanjay Roy, the sole accused and the convict in the rape and murder case of the woman doctor.

As the matter came up for hearing on Wednes-

day morning before a division bench of Justices Debangshu Basak and Shabbar Rashidi, the CBI challenged the petition filed by the state government and questioned the grounds on which it could make such an appeal.

Deputy Solicitor General, Rajdeep Majumdar, argued that it was only the CBI, which is the investigating agency in the case, and the victim's parents who could move such a plea at a higher court, and not the state government, which is not a party in the case.

To support his contention, Majumdar referred to a case filed by the CBI against former Bihar Chief Minister and Rashtriya Janata Dal Chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, where the state government's plea was not considered by the Patna High Court.

Whether the West Bengal government's petition will be admissible or not will be decided by the Calcutta High Court on January 27.

Earlier, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that the Bengal government would move the Calcutta High Court challenging the quantum of the sentence



and the state government would be seeking the death penalty for the convict.

"I am convinced that it is indeed a rarest of rare cases which demands capital punishment.

We want to insist upon the death penalty in this most sinister and sensitive case," the Chief Minister said.

While pronouncing the quantum of the sentence, special court judge Anirban Das said that the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) contention that Roy's offence in the matter was "the rarest and rare crimes" was not tenable.

Hence, the judge observed that instead of the "death penalty", Roy, an erstwhile civic volunteer attached to Kolkata

Police, be sentenced to "life imprisonment". Apart from that a fine of Rs 50,000 was also imposed on Roy.

The special court, at the same time, directed the West Bengal government to pay a compensation of Rs 17 lakh to the family of the deceased victim.

It observed that since the victim was raped and murdered at her workplace, which is a state-government entity, the West Bengal government is legally bound to pay compensation to the victim's family.

In an earlier hearing held in November 2024, the Supreme Court had remarked that it would not pass any direction to transfer the trial of the ghastly rape and murder case outside West Bengal.

A bench, headed by then CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, turned down the oral prayer made by a lawyer seeking transfer of trial outside West Bengal.

"Yes, we have transferred cases (of gender violence) in Manipur. But we are not doing anything like that here," it had remarked.

The apex court had noted that the trial would

commence on November 11 at a special court in Kolkata after charges were framed against the "sole prime accused" in the case, Sanjay Roy.

The process of the framing of charges was completed on November 4, exactly 87 days after the body of the woman junior doctor was discovered at a seminar hall within the state-run R.G. Kar premises on the morning of August 9, 2024.

In October, the CBI filed its first charge sheet against Roy, a civic volunteer with Kolkata Police, in the alleged rape and murder case.

In the charge sheet, the CBI did not rule out the possibilities of a larger conspiracy behind the macabre crime that prompted alleged events of tampering and altering of evidence during the initial phase of the investigation which was carried out by Kolkata Police.

Besides Roy, two others arrested by the CBI officials in the matter are RG Kar Medical College and Hospital's former Principal, Sandip Ghosh, and the former SHO of Tala Police Station, Abhijit Mondal. RG Kar comes under the jurisdiction of Tala Police

Station.

The main charges against Ghosh and Mondal are for misleading the investigation when the Kolkata Police were probing the matter before it was handed over to CBI by the Calcutta High Court. Both have been accused of tampering with evidence in the case.

Taking suo moto cognisance of the rape and murder case of the junior doctor at the state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, the Supreme Court had termed the incident "horrific," which raises the "systemic issue of safety of doctors across the country."

"We are deeply concerned about the fact that there is an absence of safe conditions of work for young doctors across the country, particularly, public hospitals," it had said.

The apex court had ordered the formation of the NTF (National Task Force) to suggest measures for the security of medical professionals across the country, observing that the safety of doctors is the "highest national concern".

# Sanskrit students of Varanasi schools thank PM Modi for free food initiative

AGENCIES

VARANASI, JAN 22

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative to provide free food for Sanskrit university students and hospital attendants in his parliamentary constituency of Varanasi has received heartfelt appreciation from the students of Rani Padmavati Tara Yog Tantra Mahavidyalaya.

The Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust has been serving free meals to thousands daily, and the students have expressed their gratitude for this thoughtful gesture, which has not only improved their well-being but also helped them focus better on their studies.

The initiative launched in October 2024 aims to support students and attendants by providing them with nutritious and easily digestible meals. For many students at the college, this has been a significant boost.

Pushpendra Pandey, a Sanskrit student, shared his joy about the initiative: "I am very happy about this. With Baba Vishwanath's grace, we get food

every morning, and in the evening, there is a special process after which we eat. The food is not only nutritious but also easy to digest. I would like to thank PM Modi and Baba Vishwanath for this kindness."

Another student, Kamal, echoed these sentiments, highlighting the convenience and benefits of the scheme. "Before this, we didn't have such facilities. But now, with easily digestible, pure food, we don't have to spend time cooking. We can focus more on our studies, and for that, we are very grateful to the Prime Minister."

Bablu Kumar Jha, who travelled nearly 500 kilometres to study in Varanasi, emphasised how the free food initiative has saved him valuable time.

"Earlier, I spent about three to four hours cooking my meals. Now, thanks to the prasad from Kashi Vishwanath, I can save that time and dedicate it to my studies. This initiative is especially helpful for poor students who cannot afford the expenses of cooking and buying ingre-

dients. This free arrangement is truly a blessing."

The initiative also provides significant support for students from across India and neighbouring countries.

Dr Kamlesh Jha, Principal of Rani Padmavati Tara Yoga Tantra Adarsh Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, expressed his deep gratitude to PM Modi for his foresight in preserving the cultural heritage of Kashi.

"The Prime Minister's efforts have revitalised Sanskrit schools, which have been weakening under the modern system. This initiative ensures that the traditional Gurukuls, which attract students from states like Bihar, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh, as well as neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bhutan, continue to thrive."

The students and faculty at the college are united in their thanks to Prime Minister Modi, recognising his efforts to ensure that no student, regardless of their background or financial status, is deprived of a nourishing meal while pursuing their education in Varanasi.

# BJP insulted Punjabis; Kejriwal over Pravesh Verma's remark

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday strongly criticized the BJP's claim that people driving Punjab-registered vehicles in Delhi pose a threat on Republic Day, terming it an insult to all Punjabis.

AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal said, "BJP leader Pravesh Verma alleged that Punjabis pose a threat to the country's security on Republic Day." "Are all Punjabis terrorists and traitors? Families and ancestors of millions of Punjabis living in Delhi have made countless sacrifices for the nation and

endured immense suffering. The statements made by BJP leaders today insult the martyrdom and sacrifices of Punjabis. Amit Shah and the BJP should apologize to all Punjabis for this," he added.

Taking to X, Kejriwal said, "Millions of Punjabis live in Delhi, whose fami-



lies and ancestors have made countless sacrifices for the country. Many Punjabi refugees also live in Delhi, who left everything behind and settled here during the painful Partition. Their families endured untold suffering. What BJP leaders are saying today insults their

martyrdom and sacrifices. This statement deeply pains me.

Punjabis have helped shape Delhi. By calling Punjabis a threat to the nation, the BJP has insulted millions of Punjabis living in Delhi. The BJP should apologize to Punjabis."

Meanwhile, Senior AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said, "On Tuesday, BJP leader Pravesh Verma claimed that vehicles with Punjab number plates roaming in Delhi pose a threat to the Republic Day celebrations. This is a very serious matter. BJP leaders are calling members of the Sikh community terrorists.

They are labeling the descendants of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh as terrorists, who sacrificed their lives to liberate this country."

"Across the country, BJP has settled Bangladeshi infiltrators, and they do not see them as a threat. But if vehicles from Punjab enter Delhi, they consider it a threat to the nation. This is a shameful statement. It insults the patriotism and sacrifices of Punjabis and Sikhs. During Partition, millions of Sikhs and Punjabis came to Delhi," he added.

This controversy has intensified the political clash between the BJP and AAP.

# Resolution process of JC Mill in final stage, says CM Mohan Yadav

AGENCIES

BHIOPAL, JAN 22

The process to ensure the payment of dues to nearly 8,000 workers of the defunct JC Mill in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior has reached the final stage, the government has said in a statement.

The statement was issued following a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during his visit to Gwalior on Tuesday. The late night review

meeting was attended by Gwalior District in-charge and Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat, Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar, senior officials of district administration, the representatives of Mill workers and others.

"The state government has earlier resolved the issues of workers of Hukumchand Mill in Indore and Vinod Mill in Ujjain and dues of JC Mill workers will be cleared at the earliest. The resolution process has reached the final stage," the Chief Minister said in a statement.

He also informed that the committee appointed to resolve the JC Mill issue has started the evaluation process of the dues based on old and new claims and presented the assessment before the High Court promptly.

The CM also instructed Additional Chief Secretary Rajesh Rajoura and Principal Secretary for Industries Raghendra Singh

to prioritize actions concerning the workers' payments.

Notably, following an inspection visit at JC Mills in Gwalior in November 2024, Chief Minister Yadav had said the state government would approach the High Court to provide justice to more than 8,000 labourers, which had been lying closed for the last 40 years. Hukumchand Mill, one of the largest mills in Indore, was closed by its management in 1991 without any prior notice.

## As US shuts door, thousands of Afghans in Pakistan have nowhere to go

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD, JAN 22

US President Donald Trump's executive order to suspend the refugee programme has put a big question mark on the fate of thousands of Afghans living in Pakistan who had fled from the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and have been waiting for years to resettle in the United States.

The US refugee programme, that would have eventually resettled in the US over 25,000 Afghan nationals currently residing in Pakistan after fleeing Afghanistan, was quashed by Trump on Monday, his very first day in office.

As per the agreement between Pakistan government and the Biden administration, it was agreed between the two countries that over 25,000



Afghans - most of them having served and worked with the US military and its contractors before Taliban's takeover in August 2021 - would later be resettled in the US.

Islamabad was initially expecting that the agreement would be for a temporary stay of Afghan

nationals in the country. However, no progress was made on it for the last three-and-a-half years.

"The Biden administration had assured Pakistan that the Afghans would be resettled through initiatives like the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) and the US Refugee Admission

Programme (USRAP). But now, after Trump's executive order, the entire process has been disrupted," said senior strategic analyst Kamran Yousaf.

It has also been reported that visas of at least 1,660 Afghans, cleared by the US government to resettle in the US along with their families, have been suspended and they are left with no option but to stay put in Pakistan.

"This is happening immediately after Trump's order suspending the US refugee programme," said an official.

Washington's decision has now put the fate of these Afghan nationals in Pakistan in jeopardy.

"These unfortunate Afghans are now faced with multiple problems and severe issues.

They are in Pakistan, a

country that is repatriating illegal Afghans back to their home country. In Afghanistan, these people are at risk of being arrested and killed because the Afghan Taliban are against all those who had worked with the US forces before August 2021," said Syed Liaqat Banori, Chairman, Society for Human Rights and Prisoners Aid (SHARP).

Sources in the Pakistan government have also expressed serious concerns over the latest development.

"We knew that this refugee programme could come under scanner once President Trump takes charge but the fastidious manner with which the new administration has acted has come as a big surprise," said an official.

## Regional, bilateral FTAs help foster Cambodia's growth, development: Ministry

AGENCIES  
PHNOM PENH, JAN 22

Regional and bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) have promoted market diversification, helping foster Cambodia's growth and development, a senior commerce official said here on Wednesday.

Tekreth Kamrang, a secretary of state at the Ministry of Commerce, said Cambodia is a signatory to the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) FTA, the ASEAN-plus-one FTAs with its dialogue partners, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement.

Furthermore, the kingdom has a bilateral FTA with China, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting Tekreth Kamrang.



"We continuously negotiate with other potential partners for new market access for our products," Tekreth Kamrang said in a speech at a Cambodia-Philippines business forum in Phnom Penh.

Kamrang said Cambodia's economy grew by 6 per cent in 2024 and is expected to reach 6.3 per cent in 2025.

"These positive trends are paving the way for Cambodia to graduate from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) status in 2029 and to achieve our vision of becoming a high-

income country by 2050," she added.

Hong Vanak, director of the international economics department at the International Relations Institute of Cambodia under the Royal Academy of Cambodia, said RCEP and other FTAs have played a crucial role in supporting Cambodia's sustainable trade and economic growth in the long run.

"These free trade pacts have provided Cambodia's products with access to a huge market of approximately 2.3 billion people," he told Xinhua.

## South Korea: CIO's attempt to search presidential office, residence falls through

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 22

South Korean investigators' attempt to search the presidential office and residence as part of the martial law probe fell through Wednesday, as officials refused to comply citing laws that restrict access to military-related areas.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) investigating the case against impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol said the presidential office disapproved the execution of the court warrant for the raid.

Yoon's office cited two clauses of criminal law that require the approval of the responsible authority to execute a search and seizure warrant at secured locations related to military secrets, the CIO said.



The Presidential Security Service (PSS) did not agree to give them access to the compound, as the acting head of the PSS -- who has the legal authority to approve entry -- was away attending a parliamentary hearing on Yoon's short-lived martial law imposition, Yonhap news agency reported.

The CIO withdrew from the presidential office around 3 p.m. and from the residence just before 5 p.m., hours after arriving

at the compounds earlier in the day.

Investigators sought to search the presidential office and residence on Wednesday as part of their probe into President Yoon Suk Yeol's failed martial law bid.

The CIO said the raid was aimed at seizing the server records of a secure phone used by Yoon, computers and other electronic equipment, and documents and minutes of meetings related to his

December 3 declaration of martial law.

Previous raids have largely failed, including those on a presidential safe house and the PSS office earlier this week.

Meanwhile, Yoon will appear before the Constitutional Court for his impeachment trial hearing this week for the second time, an official at Yoon's legal team said.

Yoon is scheduled to attend the hearing at the Constitutional Court on Thursday, the official told Yonhap News Agency. At the Tuesday hearing, Yoon denied ordering martial law troops to pull out lawmakers from the National Assembly during his short-lived martial law bid.

The impeached president's legal team has said that Yoon would be present at all remaining hearings if possible.

## Venezuela rejects US decision to put Cuba back on list of 'state sponsors of terrorism'

AGENCIES  
CARACAS, JAN 21

The Venezuelan government has expressed its strong rejection of US President Donald Trump's decision to reinstate Cuba in the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

"This unfounded and arbitrary measure represents an act of hostility that contradicts the principles of international law and undermines global efforts for peace and cooperation," the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry said in a statement late Tuesday, local time.

"Venezuela firmly condemns this unjust act and calls on the peoples and governments of the world to denounce and clearly reject such decisions, which violate the principles of sovereignty and seek to justify the inhumane blockade

against the Cuban people," the statement emphasised. The Venezuelan government reiterated its solidarity with the Caribbean nation and its commitment to defending "the self-determination of peoples against any attempt at imperialist domination," Xinhua news agency reported.

In the final days of his administration, Joe Biden removed Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, but Trump reversed the decision on his first day in office.

On January 14, Biden notified Congress that his administration would remove the designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism, the White House said, as part of a deal to free political prisoners in the Caribbean island country and those determined by Wash-

ington as being unjustly detained by the government in Havana.

Senior Biden administration officials said then that they expected Cuba to release "many dozens" of prisoners by the time Trump would be inaugurated again as president on January 20.

Biden had also signed a national security memorandum to rescind a 2017 Cuba sanction policy by Trump known as 'National Security Presidential Memorandum 5' effectively ending the restrictions on certain Cuban persons and entities conducting financial transactions with US persons and entities.

To further incentivize the Cuban government to release prisoners, the Biden administration issued a waiver for Title III of the Helms Burton Act for a period of six months, according to a statement released by the White House.

## Californian residents warned to avoid outdoors as wildfires continue to deteriorate air quality

AGENCIES  
CALIFORNIA, JAN 22

Millions of Southern Californian residents have been advised to limit outdoor activities due to bad air quality amid devastating wildfires, according to the US National Weather Service (NWS).

The NWS has issued several air quality alerts covering the South Coast Air Basin, Coachella Valley and eastern Riverside County, reports Xinhua news agency.

Very strong Santa Ana winds and extreme fire weather have been forecasted for portions of Los Angeles and Ventura counties starting Monday.

Stronger and more widespread Santa Ana winds are expected overnight to the typical wind-prone areas of Los Angeles and Ventura counties, according to the NWS Los Angeles.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District has issued a windblown dust and ash advisory due to strong Santa Ana winds expected throughout the region through Tuesday evening.

The NWS has issued Red Flag Warnings, High Wind Warnings, and Wind Advisories for much of the area.

Last week, local authorities confirmed that fierce wildfires across Southern California have killed at least 27 people and destroyed at least 12,300 structures after more than a week.

The Palisades Fire, the largest active wildfire in the Los Angeles region, has scorched 23,713 acres (95.96 square km).

The fire, which broke out on January 7, is 31 per cent contained, up from 22 per cent early Thursday.

## US senators, envoy nominee raise concerns over China's rising clout at UN

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 22

US Senators and the nominee for US ambassador to the United Nations have raised concerns about China's growing influence at the world body through the use of money to get votes and a strong push to put more of its nationals in key jobs.

"Many senators are raising this deep concern about CCP's [Chinese Communist Party] inroads," Elise Stefanik, President Donald Trump's nominee for US Permanent Representative - a cabinet-level post - said on Tuesday.

"It's no question", she said, "that the CCP has made strong inroads. We need to have strong American leadership working with our allies to push back on this".

Washington has to make "a significant effort to try to peel off" the votes of the Global South in the General Assembly from China,

she said. The China factor came up when Stefanik, a foreign policy hawk who was a Republican member of the House of Representatives, appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington for a hearing on her appointment.

The Permanent Representative's post, like many senior administration jobs, needs the Senate's approval.

Stefanik said she would project Trump's 'America First' policy at the UN.

When Senator Pete Ricketts complained about the "mismanagement, corruption, rot" at the UN and the need for reforms, Stefanik agreed with him that US contribution to the UN, which is 22 per cent of its budget, should be a "key tool for us to demand reforms and transparency".

Trump laid out the case against China when he made it one of his rea-



sons for the US to leave the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Paris Climate Accord.

He said that WHO was under China's influence and was repeating its "talking points" even though the US was its largest contributor.

The US paid a heavy price under the Paris agreement to cut carbon emissions despite China being a bigger polluter, he said.

Stefanik said, "The President shared with me that he sees great promise in the United Nations if it focuses on its founding mission of international peace and security".

It has failed in this mission and Trump's vision is for a UN reformed by a "strong. America First, peace through strength leadership", she said.

The Senate Committee Chair, James Risch said he was concerned that the US

was getting outvoted at the General Assembly.

"When you look at these countries that are voting against us, you look and find that you have the Chinese in there spreading money, and they buy their vote", he said.

Stefanik said, "We need to have a broader strategy reaching out to countries within the Global South, where China has made significant inroads".

"They've done it by building ports, through telecom, a whole government approach" and Beijing leverages these for votes at the UN, she said.

Ricketts said that between 2009 and 2021, China has increased the number of its nationals working at the UN by 85 per cent.

"It would be naive to think they are not driving Communist China's agenda to the UN, whatever role they have", he said.

Stefanik said that there was a problem with China

trying to capture key leadership positions at UN agencies and "we need to make sure we are running candidates, either American or allied nations, in the elections process".

"We need to pay close attention to technical organisations, whether it is telecommunications, civil aviation", she said.

She cited the 2020 defeat of China's candidate to lead the World Intellectual Property Organisation by a Singaporean backed by the US in a tough contest.

Democrat Senator Brian Schatz cautioned against the US withdrawing from UN agencies like WHO saying it would only empower China.

"We would be cutting off our nose to spite our face if we just go away from these international convenings", he said, "because China is not going away, they are trying to run the meetings and to the extent that we withdraw".

## World at a critical inflection point, 2025 a year of enormous consequence: WEF President

AGENCIES  
DAVOS, JAN 22

The world is at a critical inflection point and 2025 will be a year of enormous consequence, Borge Brende, President and CEO, World Economic Forum (WEF), has said, highlighting the need for new path-

ways to greater cooperation in an era of heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

Speaking at what he described as "one of the most uncertain geopolitical and geoeconomic moments in generations," Brende told a gathering of global leaders that the longstanding international order that existed

for the last three decades has receded.

"We need to find more effective ways to work together. It is the only way forward," he stressed.

Klaus Schwab, the founder of World Economic Forum (WEF) urged "constructive optimism", urging stakeholders from

all sectors - government, business, civil society and academia - to unite in crafting solutions to shared challenges.

"This transition from the Industrial to the Intelligent Age is occurring at an exponential pace, carrying unprecedented risks for humanity as we strive

to prepare and adapt for its complexities," he said.

"Yet, it also offers significant opportunities to transcend our current challenges and spark a new renaissance - one defined by advancements in knowledge, health, culture and societal welfare," added Schwab.

Reflecting on the changing world order, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, outlined Europe's plan to adapt to a new era of "harsh geostrategic competition" by increasing its competitiveness, strengthening global partnerships and maintaining its commitment to sus-

tainable development.

"To sustain our growth in the next quarter of the century, Europe must shift gears," she said. "We should not take anything for granted. We must look for new opportunities wherever they arise.

This is the moment to engage beyond blocs and

taboos. And Europe is ready for change."

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for renewed commitments to security and prosperity in the face of global challenges, emphasising that partnerships serve as the "engine for successful economic development."

## WEF: 5 new Indian industrial clusters commit to economic growth, jobs creation

AGENCIES  
DAVOS, JAN 22

Five industrial clusters from India, which includes the Mundra cluster in Gujarat, have joined the World Economic Forum's (WEF) "Transitioning Industrial Clusters" initiative, among 13 new members, to accelerate the deployment of clean-energy infrastructure at scale worldwide, it was announced here on Wednesday.

The new industrial clusters are from India, Australia, Brazil, Colombia, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Thailand and the UK, according to a WEF report, published in collaboration with Accenture and Electric Power



Research Institute (EPRI) during the Davos Summit.

Among the new industrial clusters from India, the fastest-growing major economy, the Mundra cluster integrates green power initiatives with infrastructure to support large-scale industrial projects.

Mumbai Green Hydro-

gen cluster (India) in Maharashtra is accelerating the green hydrogen economy, linking industries with sustainable energy sources, according to the WEF.

Another cluster, the Kerala Green Hydrogen Valley, is central to the country's decarbonisation efforts by scaling hydro-

gen-powered transport,

said the report. Strategically located, Gopalpur Industrial Park provides an exemplary ecosystem to attract investments from sectors leveraging cutting-edge technology, including green energy.

Coordinated by AM Green, the port-anchored Kakinada cluster in Andhra Pradesh works to provide industrial decarbonisation solutions, including green ammonia, hydrogen and sustainable aviation fuel. Andhra Pradesh real estate "Leading industrial clusters treat decarbonisation as a destination that must be reached collectively - one that has the potential to drive business growth and industry reinvention,"

said Stephanie Jamison, Global Resources Industry Practice Lead and Global Sustainability Services Lead at Accenture.

The shortest path to technology deployment is the one paved through collaborative innovation, added Neva Espinoza, EPRI SVP of Energy Supply and Low-Carbon Resources.

"The addition of 13 industrial clusters to this global initiative reflects the vital importance of bringing all stakeholders together to deploy the advanced energy technologies, low-carbon fuels and supporting infrastructure at the foundation of net-zero economies," Espinoza added.

## Tata Communications' Q3 profit surges 424 pc to Rs 236 crore

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 22

Tata Communications on Wednesday reported a net profit of Rs 236.08 crore in Q3 FY25, a significant growth of 424 per cent compared to Rs 45.05 crore in the same quarter last fiscal (Q3 FY24).

The company's revenue from operations for the quarter stood at Rs 5,798.07 crore, which is a 3.76 per cent increase year-on-year from Rs 5,587.78 crore reported in the previous fiscal.

The company reported a growth in its earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation (EBITDA), which stood at Rs 1,181 crore, a 4.1 per cent rise from Rs 1,134

crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

"Q3 has been a satisfactory quarter with strong growth in digital revenues, improved margins, and enhanced free cash flow. We are advancing well in our review of subsidiaries, with a clear focus on optimising their performance and unlocking value," said A.S. Lakshminarayanan, MD and CEO, Tata Communications.

In Q3, the company witnessed growth in data revenues, which amounted to Rs 4,903 crore, a 6.2 per cent increase compared to Rs 4,618 crore in the same period last year.

Furthermore, the company's digital revenues saw a 10.2 per cent year-

on-year rise, totalling Rs 2,313 crore.

In terms of consolidated financials, the company reported gross revenue of Rs 5,798 crore for the quarter, a 2.9 per cent increase from Rs 5,633 crore in the same quarter last year. The EBITDA margin improved slightly to 20.4 per cent, up by 23 basis points from 20.1 per cent. PAT margin also saw a sharp improvement, rising to 4.4 per cent, up by 363 basis points from 0.8 per cent in the year-ago quarter.

Additionally, the company's board has approved a proposal for investing in its step-down wholly-owned subsidiary, Tata Communications (Netherlands) B.V.

## India leads workplace digital transformation globally: Report

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, JAN 22

India, which is leading workplace digital transformation globally, could reach advanced levels in the next 10 years, according to a report on Wednesday. The report by software major Zoho said that around 71 per cent of employees in India are already at advanced levels of digital maturity, significantly higher than the global average of 61 per cent.

India's digital transformation maturity score stood at 64.6 per cent, surpassing developed nations and the global average of 62.3 per cent.

However, while India is making significant progress in workplace digital transformation, the country still struggles with cybersecurity readiness, it added.

"In India, government institutions and large enterprises must reassess their digital transformation strategies to address cybersecurity gaps and



enhance collaboration," said Rakeeb Rafeek, market strategy lead, Zoho Workplace.

Despite advancements, only 37 per cent of organisations offer cybersecurity training to employees, compared to 44 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region and 41 per cent globally.

The startups and enterprises embracing the digital transformation wave must adopt a forward-thinking approach, ensuring innovations like integrated suites, AI-powered analytics tools, and secure communication platforms are equipped to tackle both present and future challenges, according to Rafeek.

The report analysed the

digital maturity of workplaces across the globe.

India's digital transformation maturity score stood at 64.6 per cent, surpassing developed nations and the global average of 62.3 per cent.

The report further revealed that the secure remote work guidelines are followed by 33 per cent of organisations in India, and less than half of remote and hybrid workers adhere to these measures. While 74 per cent of Indian companies provide a system for reporting suspicious emails, only 17 per cent have advanced email security alerts, with the government and development sectors leading in adoption.

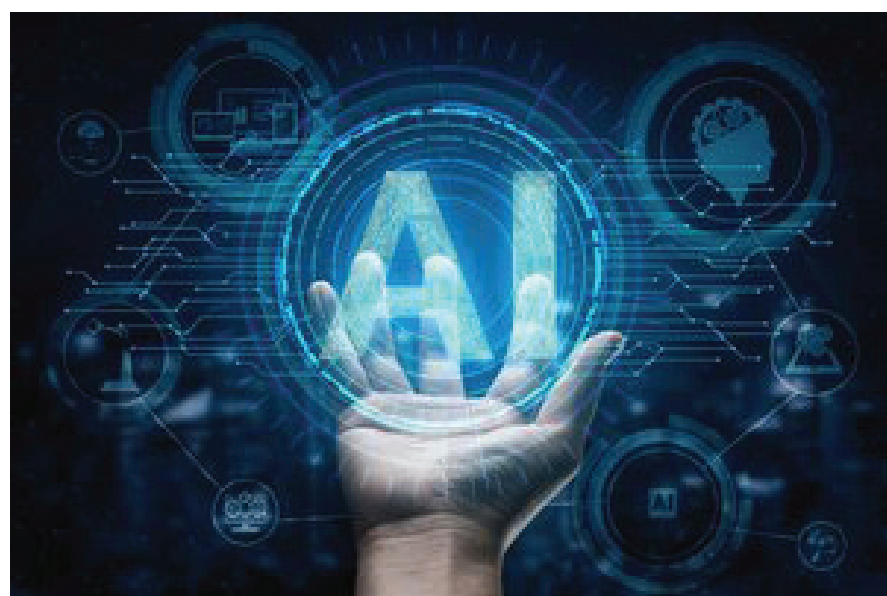
## USD 500 billion Stargate AI project in US presents golden opportunity for India: Industry

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The \$500 billion Stargate Project, a brainchild of OpenAI, Softbank, Oracle and others - presents a golden opportunity for India, to accelerate its AI ambitions by deepening partnerships with the US, industry experts said on Wednesday.

This can be achieved by leveraging India's role in the Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) agreement between the two nations and Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) - co-developing cutting-edge technologies and scaling its domestic capabilities.

"Proactive diplomacy, leveraging India's role in iCET and IPEF, strategic investments, and collaborative approaches will be key to ensuring that India not only benefits from the global advancements in AI but also establishes itself as a formidable player in the international AI landscape," said Ashok Chandak, President of India



Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA).

While the primary objective Stargate Project is to solidify the US' leadership in the AI ecosystem, it also presents opportunities for India to leverage.

Major companies supporting this initiative - such as Nvidia, Arm, Microsoft, Softbank, Oracle and OpenAI - already have a significant presence in India and actively utilise

Indian talent.

"This creates avenues for Indian professionals to gain exposure and contribute to such a monumental project, further enhancing their expertise in advanced AI technologies," said Chandak.

There is cautious optimism that the Trump administration might consider industry feedback during the 120-day review period, and adopt

a more relaxed stance on AI export controls, especially toward India and other strategic partners.

According to Dr Ajai Chowdhry, founder of HCL and chairman of the National Quantum Mission, this initiative shows serious intent to take a strong control of AI, in addition to having all the large language models (LLMs) owned by the US.

"For strategic autonomy, we must create our own AI doctrine and start controlling our own data strongly. Also, we must create our own domestic hardware for data centres as it is going to be very difficult to control our data," said Chowdhry.

The government and the industry must work together to create a fresh strategy for AI, he added.

The country launched the IndiaAI mission last year to enhance AI-related developments in the country.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved an allocation of over Rs 10,300 crore for the IndiaAI Mission, marking a significant step towards bolstering the AI ecosystem in the country.

According to the government, nearly 8.6 lakh candidates have enrolled in IndiaAI 'Future Skills' initiative, developed in collaboration with industry partners, to provide training aligned with the latest requirements.

## Essar Renewables signs MoU with Maharashtra govt to develop 2GW of renewable energy

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 22

Essar Renewables Ltd (ERL), Essar's venture into the green energy sector, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Maharashtra at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos.

The MoU paves the way for Essar Renewables' proposed investment in the state, with plans to develop 2 GW of renewable energy capacity for its green mobility initiative.

Under the terms of the agreement, Essar Renewables will invest approximately Rs 8,000 crore in



a mix of round-the-clock renewable energy projects, primarily aimed at supporting the Electric Vehicle truck charging ecosystem of Blue Energy Motors and Greenline.

This investment is expected to generate

direct employment for over 2,000 individuals, contributing to the state's transition to green energy and economic growth.

The proposed projects are slated to commence in the fiscal year 2026-27.

Commenting on the

partnership, Ankur Kumar, CEO, Essar Renewables said, "We are excited to embark on this transformative journey with the Government of Maharashtra. This collaboration represents a crucial milestone in our renewable energy projects and also establish us a formidable player in the sector."

Prashant Ruia, Director, Essar, added, "As we navigate the global energy transition, this partnership with the Government of Maharashtra is a critical step in reshaping the future of sustainable energy for green mobility. With our investment in renewable energy and

green mobility solutions, we are driving the state's growth while positioning India as a global leader in the green economy."

The partnership aligns with Essar Renewables' ambitious goal of surpassing 8 GW of renewable energy capacity over the next five years.

Essar Renewables has been at the forefront of India's green energy transition, specialising in solar, wind, and battery energy storage systems.

The company focuses on innovation and strategic partnerships to position itself as a leading player in the renewable energy sector.

## Centre disbursed Rs 964 crore to electronics sector under PLI scheme in H1 of 2024-25

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 22

The Centre disbursed close to Rs 1,600 crore under the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme in the first half of 2024-25 with the large-scale electronics manufacturing sector getting the biggest chunk of Rs 964 crore, a senior official confirmed on Wednesday.

The electronics sector was followed by the pharmaceuticals sector with Rs 604 crore. The beneficiaries in the other sectors include food products, telecom and drones.

Electronics goods have emerged as the fastest growing segment in India's

export basket as new manufacturing capacities have come up in the country driven by the success of the Centre's PLI scheme.

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

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

Besides, in January this year, the government approved a Rs 246 crore incentive under the

PLI scheme to Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors. This claim was for incremental production in the automobile and auto components industry.

Under the PLI scheme for automobile and auto components industry as of September 2024, an investment of Rs 20,715 crore and incremental sales to the tune of Rs 10,472 crore have been achieved.

The scheme that was launched with a budgetary outlay of Rs 25,938 crore, aims to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities for Advanced Automotive Technology (AAT) products, overcome cost disabilities, and build a robust supply chain.

## HDFC Bank clocks 2.2 pc net profit growth in Q3, gross NPA deteriorates

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 22

India's largest private lender HDFC Bank on Wednesday reported a 2.2 per cent rise in its net profit for Q3 this fiscal, as its gross non-performing assets (NPA) ratio rose during the quarter.

For the December quarter, the bank's profit stood at Rs 16,736 crore, com-

pared to Rs 16,373 crore in the same period last year.

Net interest income, or the bank's core income, rose nearly 8 per cent (year-on-year) to Rs 30,650 crore. Core net interest margin stood at 3.43 per cent for the bank and 3.62 per cent on an interest-earning asset basis.

In the September quarter, the respective figures were at 3.46 per cent and

3.65 per cent.

The bank also saw an increase in interest earned, which grew by 7.6 per cent. It earned Rs 76,007 crore in Q3FY25, up from Rs 70,583 crore in the same quarter last year.

At the same time, HDFC Bank paid Rs 45,354 crore in interest for the quarter, which was a 7.7 per cent rise from Rs 42,111 crore in Q3 FY24.

## Challenge Your Limits: BMW Motorrad India launches new BMW S 1000 RR

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 22

The new BMW S 1000 RR has been launched in India on the second day of Auto Expo 2025. This heavily popular super sport bike will be available in the country as a completely built-up unit. Bookings are open now throughout the BMW Motorrad dealer network and deliveries will commence from April 2025 onwards.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President and CEO, BMW Group India said, "The new BMW S 1000 RR continues with its endless strive for improvement and success securing its leading posi-

tion. It is a favourite amongst racing enthusiasts looking out for the next thrill. The new BMW S 1000 RR with even higher track performance is the Superbike icon. BMW Motorrad has once again set emphasis on the sporty aspirations and the BMW DNA, making what's good even better."

The introductory ex-showroom prices starts from:

The BMW S 1000 RR - INR 21,10,000. Riders can further customise with two optional packages - Dynamic and M. The Dynamic package sharpens the RR's racing qualities for added performance and comfort. The package includes: DDC electronic chassis,

which is exclusive to use in motor-sports here, for optimum damping and optimum road contact in every riding situation, additionally Electronic cruise control and heated grips are also included. The M package sharpens the sporty profile of the RR. Exclusive Light white/M Motorsport paintwork is only included in this package and gives the motorcycle a powerful look. The package includes: M Sport seat for optimum support on the hunt for crucial milliseconds. Weight-optimised M Carbon wheels with M Tapes for maximum riding dynamics. In addition, the M footrest system and the black fuel filler cap.

To enable customers to own BMW Motorrad motorcycles of their choice, BMW Financial Services India offers flexible and hassle-free finance solutions. What's more, it goes beyond just motorcycles - with accessories financing, ensuring that you're fully equipped for all your riding experiences. For complete peace of mind, all BMW Motorrad bikes come with a standard warranty for 'three years, unlimited kilometers', with an option to extend the warranty to fourth and fifth year. Road-Side Assistance, a 24x7 365 days package further ensures prompt services in case of breakdown and towing situations.

## Sindhu, Lakshya to lead 14-member Indian team in Asia Mixed Team Championship

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 22

Two-time Olympics medalist PV Sindhu and Paris Olympics semifinalist Lakshya Sen will lead a 14-member strong Indian team in the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships to be played in Qingdao, China from February 11-16. India bagged a bronze medal in the last edition of the championships held in Dubai in 2023 and will be hoping to change the colour in their latest outing.

The national selectors have given importance to the world rankings and current form of the players while selecting the squad that will have H.S. Prannoy and Malvika Bansod as the second men's and women's singles players, respectively.



"The Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships is a prestigious event where the depth and quality of teams are tested. We did well by winning the bronze medal two years ago, but the target this year is to reach the finals, and then anything is possible, and we will go all out," said Badminton Association of India (BAI) secretary general Sanjay Mishra.

India also have a strong outfit in doubles, with the former World No.1 combination of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty leading the men's doubles charge, while the women's doubles duties will be shouldered by the young duo of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly or Olympians Ashwini Ponnappa, and Tanisha Crasto.

Tanisha will also have

the responsibility of playing mixed doubles alongside Dhruv Kapila with Sathish Kumar K and Adya Variyath being the second combination in the squad.

The tournament will be played in two stages: the Stage (qualifying stage), where there will be a round-robin within groups, and the knockout stage. The top two teams from each group will advance to the knockout stage.

Each tie shall be decided by the results of two singles and three doubles matches. In the group stage, all five matches of each tie shall be played. In the knockout stage, each tie shall be stopped when the tie is decided. No player shall play more than two matches in a tie. Each team must nominate a minimum of four players

for each tie (two men and two women).

A draw of the knockout stage will be made after the completion of the last match of the group stage or when the final tie is conclusively decided.

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

India squad:

Men: Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Dhruv Kapila, MR Arjun, Sathish Kumar K

Women: PV Sindhu, Malvika Bansod, Gayatri Gopichand, Treesa Jolly, Ashwini Ponnappa, Tanisha Crasto, Adya Variyath

## MOHAMED SALAH HITS 50TH EUROPEAN GOAL FOR LIVERPOOL

AGENCIES  
LONDON, JAN 22

Another day, another Mohamed Salah goal and another Liverpool win.

The Egypt forward has now scored three Champions League goals this season and 22 in 31 games in all competitions.

He has also set up another 17 for teammates and his total of 39 goal involvements is the highest of any player in Europe's big five leagues.

His latest goal set Liverpool on their way to victory against Lille and to securing their place in the Champions League last 16, according to a BBC report.

It was a nonchalant finish as he latched on

to Curtis Jones' superb through ball and lifted over the advancing Lucas Chevalier.

It was his 50th goal in Europe for Liverpool - with 44 coming in the Champions League, five in last season's Europa League and one in Champions League qualifying.

His latest strike extends his record as the club's leading European goalscorer and he has now scored 20 Champions League goals at Anfield.

Former Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero (23 at Etihad Stadium) and ex-Manchester United forward Ruud van Nistelrooy (23 at Old Trafford) are the only players to score more goals in the competition

at a specific venue for an English team.

"There has always been a smile on Salah's face but it's just that belief in himself that he will score," said former Liverpool defender Stephen Warnock on BBC Radio 5 Live.

"That's what makes him so dangerous. That's the elite mindset of a player of his calibre."

He has also been directly involved in 18 goals in 15 appearances at Anfield this season (10 goals, eight assists in all competitions).

The 32-year-old's long-term future at Anfield has been a constant talking point, as he has yet to sign an extension to his contract that expires at the end of this season.

## Atletico Madrid & FC Barcelona both take vital Champions League wins

AGENCIES  
MADRID, JAN 22

Atletico Madrid came back from a goal down to beat Bayern Leverkusen 2-1 with a late goal from Julio Alvarez that puts the team very close to assuring its qualification for the last 16.

Alvarez won the game in the last minute when he ran onto a pass from Angel Correa as Bayer looked for a winning goal and was caught with men pushing forward.

Atletico began by allowing Bayer to control the ball while sitting deep and looking to play on the break. Atletico was reduced to 10 men after 24 minutes when midfielder Pablo Barrios was sent off after a VAR review for a high challenge that saw him leave his studs on Nordi Mukiele's calf.

Mukiele then provided the cross for Piero Hincapie to nod Bayer ahead on the stroke of halftime. Atletico was level against the run of play seven minutes into the second half when Alvarez ran onto a long ball, held off the defense and scored with his left foot.

It was 10 against 10 with 15 minutes left to play when Hincapie was shown a second yellow for a push on Giuliano Simeone, and with the extra space, Alvarez was able to score a goal that left Atletico with 15 points from seven games ahead of a visit to Salzburg next week.

FC Barcelona booked its place in the last 16 of the competition after a dramatic 5-4 win away to Benfica after trailing 4-2. Barca goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny had a first half to forget as Vangelis Pavlidis scored a hat-trick in the opening 30 minutes.

The Greek scored after a rapid counterattack in just two minutes. After Robert Lewandowski's penalty in the ninth minute made it 1-1, Szczesny's horrible error gifted Pavlidis his second of the night.

The striker ran onto a through ball as the Barca defense pushed onto the halfway line. Instead of clearing the ball, Szczesny smashed into Barca defender Alejandro Balde, leaving Pavlidis to run through and score an open goal. He was then harshly

penalized for bringing down Kerem Akturkoglu, with Pavlidis scoring from the penalty spot.

Benfica goalkeeper Anatolii Trubin then joined the goalkeeping comedy club when his clearance hit Raphinha on the head and bounced straight back into his goal to bring Barca back into the game, but it was quickly 4-2 when Ronald Araujo put the ball into his own net while trying to cut out a cross in the 68th minute.

Lewandowski's second penalty of the game (and his 19th in the Champions League in his career) made it 4-3 in the 77th minute after Lamine Yamal went down under a very slight contact in the Benfica area. Eric Garcia then stole in unmarked to head home a lovely cross from Pedri in the 86th minute.

Szczesny made a huge save to deny Angel Di Maria in injury time and Barca won the game with almost the last kick as Raphinha was sent clear from inside his own half to score, with the Benfica player appealing vehemently for a penalty.

## Union Minister Mandaviya felicitates winning teams of Kho Kho World Cup 2025

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 22

Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment, Mansukh Mandaviya felicitated the World Cup-winning Kho Kho teams here on Wednesday.

The Indian men and women teams scripted history after clinching the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup titles at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium on January 19. Both teams defeated Nepal in their respective finals.

Present today was the full squad of the men's and women's Kho Kho teams as well as the coaches, Sudhanshu Mittal, President of the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) and other officials from the Ministry and the Sports Authority of India.

Talking about the resurgence of traditional games in the nation, Mandaviya said, "Traditional games showcase the resilience, community spirit and most importantly, upholds our traditional sporting value. The world has so much



to learn from the richness of these traditional games."

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has mentioned across various national platforms that we have to give the best exposure to the traditional sports. Now our teams are not only getting the best exposure but also coming out with flying colours. I congratulate the spirit of our players and the traditional skills of both teams," Union Minister mentioned.

With the highlight being the 2036 Olympics which India has put forth a bid to host, the Union Minister added that the winning flow from all the stakeholders should continue, with the latest target being the Asian Games 2026, the official sources said.

"We did a splendid job of organising the Kho Kho World Cup and we need to make an effort that these players get a chance to

play at the Asian Games.

The Government's endeavour is also to take Kho Kho to Olympics in 2036. For this, the players and coaches need to keep performing well, the federation has to keep managing well and the Sports Ministry will carry on supporting and helping level up the players' performances," he said.

Out of the 23 countries that took part in the Kho Kho World Cup 2025 at

the national capital, India came on top. The credit has largely been given to the month-long camp at the Sports Authority of India JLN Stadium.

Sumit Bhatia, chief coach, India Women's Kho Kho team, explained, "On December 10, we started the camp at the SAI JLN Stadium with 60 players. Out of them, we found the best 15 players each for the men's and the women's team. The teams were composed of players from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and the camp helped them forge the team chemistry.

"The players went through sports science testing for the first-time ever and were provided the best diet and lodging facilities from the Sports Authority of India.

This has played instrumental in our success today. With the next edition of the World Cup coming up in England four years later, we will make it a point to unfurl India's flag again on top of the podium," Bhatia added.

## ISL 2024-25: Jamshedpur seek another away clean sheet, Hyderabad aim to convert draws into wins

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, JAN 22

Hyderabad FC will host Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 at the G.M.C. Balayogi Athletic Stadium here on Thursday with both teams going into the clash with different aims.

The hosts, who sit at the bottom of the table with 10 points from 16 matches, will want to end their four-match losing streak against the fourth-placed Red Miners, who have accumulated 28 points from 15 encounters.

The Red Miners will aim to maintain back-to-back clean sheets in away matches in a single season for the first time since 2017-18.

Jamshedpur FC emerged victorious in the reverse fixture on October 21 by 2-1 margin, and another win here would mark their second league double over Hyderabad FC, having previously done so in the 2023-24 campaign.

The Red Miners will aim to replicate their recent defensive solidity, coming off a 3-0 away win against



Mumbai City FC, which was their first away clean sheet of the season. They then drew 1-1 at home against Mohun Bagan Super Giant.

Jamshedpur FC are in a promising place in the competition currently. They have won thrice and drawn once in their last five games and are nine points off the top-placed Mariners (37). However, the Jose Molina-coached side has played two more games (17) than Jamshedpur FC, showing that Khalid Jamil and Co. can cut the deficit with a run of positive outcomes.

With a win on Thursday, Jamshedpur will displace the second-placed FC Goa

(30), and the visitors will be aiming for just about that against a Hyderabad FC unit that come into this game on the back of three draws in their previous four encounters.

Though the Red Miners have not lost in their previous three matches, defensive concerns against long-range strikes remain an issue, as Jamshedpur have given away a league-high eight goals from outside the box this season.

Jamshedpur FC head coach Khalid Jamil encouraged his players to perform well on the road. "Our preparation for this game is the same as it has been so far. We need to do well in away matches. It's

a must-win match of sorts for us tomorrow," he said.

Jamshedpur FC have scored 23 goals but have conceded 24 in the league so far. Jordan Murray has top-scored for them with five strikes, whereas Javi Hernandez and Javier Siverio have netted four times each, which also demonstrates their reliance on their foreign contingent in the frontline.

On Thursday, they will come up against a Hyderabad FC side that has a good home record.

Hyderabad have scored in each of their last three home games, finding the back of the net four times in the process. They will aim to further this streak, which, if realised, would be their longest since early 2023.

Hyderabad FC have been quick to get on the offensive up front, with 42% of their goals this season coming in the opening 15 minutes. However, they will need to address their defensive shortcomings, having conceded multiple goals in three of their last four meetings with Jamshedpur FC.

## U19 WC: Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Bangladesh, England and Ireland secure wins

AGENCIES  
KUALA LUMPUR, JAN 22

Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Bangladesh, England and Ireland had a day to remember by emerging victorious in the 2025 ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup.

The biggest development, though, was Ireland overcoming rain delays to beat Pakistan by 13 runs in a dramatic rain-affected contest and qualify for Super Six stage. Ireland posted 69/5 in a game reduced to nine overs and restricted Pakistan to 59/7 reply, ensuring they advance from Group B and pushed Pakistan to the 13th Place play-offs.

At Johor Cricket Academy Oval, Alice Walsh was the star with the bat for Ireland, by striking four fours in an innings of 31, while Ellie McGee took 2-13. In reply, Pakistan were in the drivers' seat at 24/0 in two overs but panic set in as three of their top four batters were run out while another four batters had their stumps uprooted.

In Sarawak, South Africa defied rain delays

to make it three out of three victories in Group C with a 41-run win over Nigeria, who also qualified for Super Six stage for the first time. Simone Lourens top scored with 25 and two boundaries in the last over from Karabo Meso helped them post 49/2 in the eight overs that were possible.

In reply, leg-spinner Seshnie Naidu starred with a double-wicket over as Nigeria crumbled to 23/8.

Just like the Proteas, Australia thrashed Nepal by 83 runs in Kuala Lumpur to maintain their perfect record in the tournament. Nepal have been the queens of powerplay bowling in the tournament and took a trio of early scalps for the third game in succession.

Captain Puja Mahato clean bowled Ines McKeon with an inswinger before watching Sabitri Dhama take two sublime catches at mid-on to reduce Australia to 14/3. Caoimhe Bray and Eleanor Larosa knuckled down and compiled a crucial stand of 72, before Hasrat Gill and Chloe Ainsworth took 29 runs from the last two

overs. In the chase of 140, Puja again led from the front with a stoical 18 from 42 balls but wickets fell around her with Gill, Juliette Morton and Lily Basingthwaite taking two apiece to wrap up victory for Australia.

Meanwhile, in Johor, a remarkable display of controlled hitting from England's Davina Perrin helped them chase down the target of 120 set by USA and win by eight wickets. Davina cleared the boundary three times while scoring a whirlwind 75.

She put on a stand of 117 runs for the second wicket with Trudy Johnson to guide her side home with more than five overs to spare. Both England and USA have managed to enter the Super Six stage, with the latter making it for the first time after missing out in 2023.

On the other hand, New Zealand recorded a comprehensive victory over Samoa in a must-win game to qualify for the Super Six stage. New Zealand were in deep trouble when they were reduced to 12/3, as Samoan seamer Olive

Lefaga Lemoe took her nation's first-ever scalps at the event.

But Eve Wolland hit two sixes and two fours in a brilliant 48, shepherding the tail to 107/9, a total which proved way beyond Samoa who were dismissed for 40. It meant New Zealand bounced back from a shock defeat to Nigeria and advanced to Super Six, while debutants Samoa head to the play-offs.

In Bangi, Bangladesh hold their nerve to beat Scotland by 18 runs. Anisa Akter Soba's leg-spin proved to be too tough a nut to crack for Scotland as she picked a remarkable 4-25. A good score looked out of reach as Bangladesh sunk to 50/5, with Scottish seamer Nayma Sheikh making hay. But skipper Sumaiya Akter masterminded a strong end to the innings through a composed 29. In the chase, openers Emma Walsingham and Pippa Kelly were both bowled in the fifth over, bamboozled by the leg spin of Anisa, and next five Scottish wickets fell for 26 runs.

## Sakeena Itoo reviews progress on implementation of ICDS (POSHAN), Mission Shakti, Mission Vastalya, PMMVY across J&K

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today chaired a meeting to review progress on implementation of various schemes of Social Welfare department like ICDS (POSHAN), Mission Shakti, Mission Vastalya, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna (PMMVY) and other schemes.

Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare department (SWD), Sanjeev Verma; Mission Director ICDS; District Programme Officers; representatives of Mission Shakti, Mission Vastalya and other concerned officers of SWD were present on the occasion.

During the meeting, the Minister reviewed the

status of fund utilisation under CAPEX, recruitment of Anganwadi workers and helpers, physical and financial position of Anganwadi Centres and other issues of the ICDS project.

Addressing the officers, Sakeena Itoo emphasised the critical role of POSHAN Abhiyan in addressing malnutrition and promoting holistic health among children, pregnant as well as lactating women. She highlighted that these schemes align with the Omar Abdullah led government's broader vision of ensuring sustainable development and health equity across Jammu and Kashmir.

While reviewing the functioning of Anganwadi Centres, the Minister stressed upon the DPOs for maintaining cleanliness and proper hygiene within the centres. She delved



upon the officers for maintaining regular supervision of these centres within their respective districts to maintain quality of nutrition provision for the beneficiaries.

"Conduct surprise visits on regular basis to ascertain the quality of nutrition as well as maintaining accountability of these centres", she asked the officers.

The Minister, while reviewing other aspects of these schemes, asked the Mission Director POSHAN for use of digital tools for real-time monitoring of beneficiaries. She advised

them to develop a mobile application for monitoring of beneficiaries as well as officials on ground.

Highlighting that the SWD has major contribution in upliftment of society, the Minister called upon all DPOs for amplifying the awareness regarding these schemes in their respective districts. "Use traditional media like Radio and TV for creating awareness among people, especially in far off areas regarding these beneficiary oriented schemes. Other means should also be used to generate awareness among people regarding

different schemes of the department", Sakeena Itoo said.

The Minister, during the meeting, also enquired about the functioning and performance of One Stop Centres, Balvidayalas, Early Childhood Care & Education programme and other schemes. She impressed upon the officers for maintaining transparency and financial discipline while implementing these schemes. She also delved on them for timely submission of utilisation certificates so that the financial viability can be maintained.

The Minister, on the occasion, also called upon the Mission Director for timely completion of recruitment process of Anganwadi Workers as well as Helpers besides other staff.

During the meeting, Mission Director POSHAN informed that J&K has been ranked 5th across the country on Poshan Tracker and upto December 2024, 28,179 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) have been registered on Poshan Tracker. He also informed that more than nine lakh beneficiaries have been registered on Poshan Tracker, out of which 99% are Aadhaar verified.

It was also informed in the meeting that 98% AWCs are with functional toilets and drinking water facilities while as 96% are with electricity connections.

## DC Kupwara provides uniforms to sanitation workers of MC Handwara

J NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, JANUARY 22

In a gesture to acknowledge and support the dedicated sanitation workers, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara Ayushi Sudan today distributed uniforms to 45 field staff workers including sweepers and drivers of the Municipal Committee Handwara.

The initiative aims to enhance the morale and working conditions of the sanitation staff that play a crucial role in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in the area.

The distribution ceremony was held in the meeting hall of D.C Office Complex Kupwara, in the presence of EO MC Handwara, Arshid Qadir Bhat. The uniforms, provided

by the District Administration, are designed to ensure the safety and comfort of the workers while they carry out their essential duties.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC commended the tireless efforts of the sweepers and emphasized the importance of sanitation workers in the development of a clean and healthy environment. She interacted with the municipal staff and assured that the district administration would continue to prioritize the welfare of the staff engaged in sanitation and other essential services.

## 100 days TB Campaign State TB Cell declares winner of slogan writing competition

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 22

As a part of 100 days TB Campaign, a Janbhagidari initiative was in Jammu District, under IEC head, State TB Cell, Director of Health Services Jammu organised a slogan writing competition on Tuberculosis and its prevention.

Scores of individuals participated in Slogan making and meaningful slogans on TB were received.

The 1st Prize was presented to Sonia Gupta (Teacher in Army Public School, Kaluchak) 2nd Prize was bagged by Dr. Nidhi Gupta (MLHP Ranjhan) while 3rd Prize went to Simranjeet Singh (Journalist). The consolation prize with certificate of merit was presented to Anju Gupta (Homemaker) and Pooja Langeh (Homemaker).

## Directorate Tribal Affairs organizes awareness camp on tribal welfare

J NEWS SERVICE  
SAMBA, JANUARY 22

Directorate of Tribal Affairs, Jammu and Kashmir today organised a day long awareness-cum-educational camp on the welfare of tribals at Gujjar and Bakerwal Boys Hostel, Samba.

The aim of the camp was to bridge the gap between the government and the tribal people who are not fully aware of various government schemes. Director Tribal Affairs, Ghulam Rasool who chaired the event said that in every sector including health, education, power and water supply, road connectivity, skill upgradation, etc special emphasis is being given to ensure that the benefits percolate to the deserving tribal communities.

Director impressed



upon the concerned officers to work in a synergy mode for improving the educational and living standards of the tribal community with a particular focus on Pre & Post matric scholarship to the ST students, providing residential facility to the tribal students by way of establishing Hostels and other developmental schemes.

Director Tribal Affairs also inspected and

reviewed the progress of various developmental projects and issued instructions for expeditious completion while maintaining the quality standards of the work.

Deputy Director Tribal Affairs, Mannu Hansa, Warden G&B Boys Hostel Samba, Rashid Alam and a large gathering of tribal leaders and other citizens of the adjoining tribal hamlets were present on the occasion.

## DC B'la conducts spot visit to DPL, reviews final arrangements for Republic Day celebrations

J NEWS SERVICE  
BARAMULLA, JANUARY 22

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today conducted an on-spot visit to the District Police Lines (DPL) Baramulla, the venue for the main function of the 26th January Republic Day celebrations.

The DC reviewed the final preparations and expressed satisfaction, noting that almost all arrangements are in place for the grand event.

During the visit, the DC inspected the venue and interacted with officers from various departments. He reviewed critical aspects such as security arrangements, stage setup, seating plans, sound systems and other logistical requirements. He passed several direc-



tions to the concerned officers to fine-tune the preparations and address minor gaps, ensuring a seamless event.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC highlighted a new initiative for this year's celebrations, stating, "For the first time, we are ensuring the dissemination of information regarding all government welfare schemes among

the locals during the Republic Day celebrations. This effort aims to raise awareness and encourage people to take advantage of various developmental and welfare programs."

He further said that the Republic Day celebrations symbolize our national pride and unity. "It is heartening to see that almost all arrangements are in place. I urge all

officers to remain vigilant and coordinated to ensure the event's successful execution," he added.

The DC also instructed officers to ensure cleanliness, uninterrupted power supply, proper traffic management, and medical facilities at the venue. He emphasized the need for flawless execution of the cultural programs and parades, which are key highlights of the event.

The Republic Day function at DPL will feature cultural performances, parades, and the ceremonial hoisting of the national flag. The administration, with its meticulous planning and innovative approach, is set to make the celebrations a memorable occasion for all attendees.

## Deputy Chief Minister conducts public darbar at Sana

J NEWS SERVICE  
RAMBAN, JANUARY 22

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today held a public darbar and laid foundation stone for improvement and upgradation of Galli to Kateri road project.

Spanning over a length of 2.60 kilometers, this vital project is being executed by the Public Works Department (PWD), R&B Division Ramban, at an estimated cost of Rs 872.84 lakh. The project aims to strengthen road connectivity from Nashri to Sanasar, a renowned tourist destination in Ramban district. This improved connectivity is expected to significantly boost tourism and local economic activities, benefiting the region's population.

The foundation stone laying ceremony was attended by Chairperson District Development Council (DDC), Dr. Shamsad Shan; MLA Ramban, Arjun Singh Raju; Chief Engineer PWD Batote, Ashok Kumar; ADC Ramban, Varunjeet Singh Charak; DDC members; senior officers and prominent citizens.



Speaking at the event, the Deputy Chief Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment, under the leadership of Chief Minister, to deliver governance at the people's doorstep. He stated, "the government is making every effort to resolve public issues and fulfil its commitments for betterment of Jammu and Kashmir."

Surinder Choudhary directed the officers to conduct frequent visits to rural areas to ensure effective implementation of government schemes. Stressing the tourism potential of the region, he assured that significant steps will be taken to enhance tourism infrastructure, including upgradation of Nashri-Sanasar road.

During the public darbar, the Deputy Chief

Minister addressed issues raised by locals, led by the DDC Chairperson and MLA Ramban. He issued strict instructions to the officers to resolve the concerns promptly and implement all directives in letter and spirit for welfare of the public.

Taking stock of implementation of various public welfare schemes and projects in sectors such as Education, Health, Labour, Jal Shakti, Animal Husbandry, PWD and PMGSY, the Deputy Chief Minister emphasised that any misappropriation of funds or lack of seriousness in duty will not be tolerated.

The dignitaries and locals appreciated the initiative, expressing hope for timely completion of the project and its positive impact on district's socio-economic development.

## Javed Rana chairs meeting of forest department; asks for streamlining of HR management

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting of all sectors of the forest department at Civil Secretariat Jammu.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment; Principal Chief Conservator of Forests J&K; PCCF/Director, Soil & Water Conservation Department; PCCF (WL)/Chief Wildlife Warden; Chairman, JK Pollution Control Committee; Director, Forest Research Institute; Secretary in Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment; Director, Forest Protection Force; Director, Social Forestry; Managing Director, J&K FDC; Director, Ecology, Environment & Remote Sensing Department; Chief Conservator of Forests, Jammu/Kashmir; Chief Conservator of Forests, Planning & Projects; Chief Executive Director, WUCMA, Kashmir; Regional Wildlife Warden, Jammu/Kashmir;



Director Finance, Forest, Ecology & Environment Department; Special Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment Department and Additional Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on Human Resource (HR) management in various wings of Forest Department.

Addressing the officers, Javed Rana sought details of sanctioned, in-position and vacant posts in the department and the steps taken by the HoDs to address the issues on this account. He urged upon all the HoDs to maintain accountability and transparency, ensuring administrative efficiency and timely resolution of employee related matters.

Emphasising the need for time bound promotion in the department to ensure career progression for the deserving employees, the Minister sought actionable solutions from the officers. He said there should be no unnecessary delay in appointment by promotion and filling of vacancies. He said that vacant posts should be immediately referred to the recruitment agencies for efficient running of the forest department. He said that there is a need to pursue court cases rigorously and end litigation which is hampering HR management.

During the meeting, physical and financial progress of key flagship schemes was also reviewed. Besides, detailed review of Green-

ing Jammu and Kashmir initiative was held and its impact on increasing forest cover as per the National Forest Policy was also deliberated upon.

The Minister also emphasised long term strategy for reducing dependence on external wood supplies and enhancing self-sufficiency. He also reviewed the enforcement actions including closure orders, environment compensations and compliance improvements. He said that significant focus should be given towards achieving Clean Air Action Plans in major urban centres.

Maintaining that steps need to be taken to strengthen forest dependent communities and tribal engagement, Rana

asked the officers to swiftly address pending claims under the Forest Rights Act, filed by forest dwellers. While reviewing the forest protection measures, Rana said that forest fire prevention and management mechanisms have gained added significance due to the adverse climatic conditions and mitigation measures need to be taken beforehand. He also directed the officers for optimum utilisation of available resources for revenue generation and sustainable livelihoods created through eco-tourism and forest recreation.

Discussions were also held on progress in developing high quality planting material through advanced research and capacity building programs for forest officers and frontline staff.

Rana said that saplings of important species should be raised every year for supply to the forest department and other user agencies for coverage of forest area.

During the meeting, detailed presentation was given highlighting the achievements of various wings of the department.