

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Severe and continuous headache
- Diarrhea
- Profound vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool, urine or stool

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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In address to Nation, Prez Murmu bats for 'One Nation One Election'

JINNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI, JAN 25

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday advocated for the "One Nation One Election" initiative, asserting it has the potential to redefine "good governance" in the country by promoting consistency in governance, preventing policy paralysis, mitigating resource diversion, and alleviating financial burdens on the state.

In her address to the nation ahead of the 76th Republic Day, she emphasised the government's ongoing efforts to "eliminate remnants of a colonial mindset that have lingered in the country for decades" and cited the replacement of the British-era criminal laws with three new modern laws.

"We have been witnessing concerted efforts to change that mindset... Reforms of such magnitude require an audacity of vision," she said.

Highlighting the significance of the proposed bill aimed at synchronising election schedules

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President approves Gallantry awards to 93 Armed & CAP forces personnel; 11 posthumous

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 25 (UND)

On the eve of 76th Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday approved Gallantry awards to 93 Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces personnel, including 11 posthumous.

The awards include two Kirti Chakras, including one posthumous; 14 Shaurya Chakras, including three posthumous; one Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry); 66 Sena Medals, including seven posthumous; two Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) and eight Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry), a Defence Ministry statement said.

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'Vibrant Village' programme reducing 'dil ki doori' between Delhi, rural population: Amit Shah

JINNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI, JAN 25

Lauding the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for hosting people from far-flung villages on national events, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said that "Vibrant Village" programme is a step towards reducing 'dil ki doori' between Delhi and rural population.

Addressing a group of sarpanchs, deputy sarpanchs, women entrepreneurs, and students from



remote areas who were invited as special guests for Republic Day celebrations, Shah, according to the news agency,

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Republic Day Address of LG Manoj Sinha to the people of J&K on 76th Republic Day

JINNEWSERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 25

My dear brothers, sisters and lovable children,

On the eve of the 76th Republic Day of our great nation, I extend my heartfelt greetings to every citizen of Jammu and Kashmir. This day reminds us of the enduring values enshrined in the Constitution of India. It is a day of pride, reflection, and reaffirmation of our commitment to democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Let us



honor our freedom fighters and martyrs who made the supreme sacrifice to

protect and preserve our motherland.

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J&K bags two Padma Vibhushan awards

JINNEWSERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 25

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Saturday announced two Padma Vibhushan awards for Jammu and Kashmir in the fields of Art and Literature & Education, ahead of Republic Day 2025.

As per the news agency,

Farooq Ahmad Mir has been recognized in the field of Art, and Lalit Kumar Mangotra in the field of Literature and Education.

The Padma Awards, one of the highest civilian honors in India, are conferred in three categories: Padma

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Rajouri Deaths

Mystery remains unsolved for 50 days

JINNEWSERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 25

The uncertainty and fear continues among the public in Badhaal area of Rajouri as the authorities are yet to ascertain the reasons behind 17 deaths in the hamlet in the last 50 days.

Officials, who spoke to the news agency, said

that all 14 patients from the affected village, who are under medical care in different hospitals are recovering.

He said that there is some breather at present as no fresh such case has been reported in the last three days while all people from the affected village are under proper surveillance so that they can get

treatment on time in case any of them are found symptomatic.

He said that this is a fight against an invisible enemy, and various measures have been implemented to manage the situation but people should not panic and co-operate with the government. Locals from Badhaal

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76TH

REPUBLIC DAY

GREETINGS TO THE PEOPLE OF
JAMMU & KASHMIR

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

DIP/J-9494/24
Date: 25-1-25

15th National Voters Day celebrated across Kashmir



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 25

The 15th 'National Voters Day' (NVD) was today celebrated across all the districts of Kashmir to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, established on 25th January 1950.

The National Voters Day is observed annually on 25 January to create electoral awareness amongst citizens and encourage them to participate in the electoral process. Dedicated to the voters, the National Voters' Day is also used to facilitate enrolment of voters, especially the newly eligible young voters.

The theme for this year, 'Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure,' resonated throughout the events, emphasizing the importance of electoral participation.

At Shopian, National Voters' Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm at encouraging voter participation and raising awareness about the importance of voting in a democracy.

At the outset of the event, MLA Shopian & Deputy Commissioner Shopian administered the NVD Pledge to participants, including officers, officials, the public, students, and new voters. This pledge aims to promote electoral awareness and encourage citizens to participate in the electoral process.

The event was attended by MLA Zainapora as the chief guest, who expressed commitment to accelerating public welfare and appreciated the people of Shopian for exercising their franchise in record numbers in Lok Sabha and Assembly Elections.

Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar expressed gratitude to voters and the election machinery for participating & conducting fair and peaceful elections.

The celebration included the felicitation of newly registered voters, distribution of Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPICs), and recognition of Officers and officials for their exemplary work during recently conducted elections.

A short documentary showcasing the impactful conduct of elections in the district was also telecasted on the occasion.

ADDC Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone; ADC,

Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; ACR, ACD, DTO, CEO, other district and tehsil officers also attended the function.

At Budgam, the main function for National Voters Day was held today at the Conference Hall Budgam which was chaired by the District Election Officer/Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Akshay Labroo.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC deliberated on the importance of celebrating the National Voters Day and said that the right to vote empowers citizens to exercise his/her franchise for nation building and for making the democracy strong.

He said that this day provides us an opportunity to reach out to the new voters for enrolment in electoral rolls so that they are able to take part in the Democratic process.

The DC lauded the tireless efforts of all Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and other field functionaries for their dedicated work during the Parliamentary and Assembly elections of 2024. He commended their unwavering commitment and zeal in ensuring a smooth and transparent electoral process. Their hard work played a pivotal role in strengthening democracy at the grassroots level, he said.

Labroo emphasised the importance of such dedication in upholding the elections and encouraged continued excellence in future endeavors.

On the occasion, ACR, CPO, CEO, Dy. Election officer, Dysp Hq, Officers from police and District administration, BLOs, and all other participants took pledge to participate in the election process free and fairly and vowed to contribute in making the nation strong by using their franchise.

Similar Functions were also held at Townhall Budgam, SDM offices, Tehsil Offices, PHE, Social welfare, District handicraft office, labour office, Chief Medical Officer's office and all other office's of the District, where in Pledges were taken with regard to the celebration of 15th National Voters' Day.

On the occasion, painting and essay competitions were also held in almost all schools of District Budgam, in which a huge number of student participants were enthusiastically seen participating to celebrate National voters day.

At Anantnag, National

Voters' Day was celebrated with grandeur across the district with events aimed to promote electoral awareness, encourage voter participation, and celebrate the democratic spirit of the nation.

The main event was organized at GDC Women, Anantnag, with the DEO, SF. Hamid presiding as the chief guest. The program witnessed active participation from various dignitaries, including the Deputy DEO, Nodal Officer SVEEP, electoral staff, Booth Level Officers (BLOs), students, and members of civil society.

Addressing the gathering, DEO emphasized the importance of National Voters' Day in strengthening democratic values. He urged the youth to actively participate in the electoral process, highlighting their role in shaping the future of the nation.

The celebrations began with a pledge-taking ceremony led by the DEO, where participants reaffirmed their commitment to upholding democratic principles and voting responsibly.

The event featured a variety of cultural programs, including folk dances, skits, and street plays, which effectively conveyed the message of electoral participation and were appreciated for their engaging presentations.

A special awareness drive targeting differently-abled voters was also launched to ensure inclusivity. Volunteers assisted them in understanding the voting process and accessing polling facilities, reinforcing the district administration's commitment to leaving no voter behind.

Similar celebrations were held at block and tehsil levels, ensuring district-wide participation. The collective efforts of the district administration, educational institutions, and civil society made the celebrations a resounding success.

At Pulwama, a grand celebration event was held at Pulwama to mark 15th

National Voters' Day (NVD) today, to commemorate the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, established on 25th January 1950.

The programme began with the Deputy District Election Officer emphasizing the importance of the day and the transformative power of each individual's vote in shaping democracy.

The event featured a variety of cultural performances, including folk songs, student speeches and traditional Ladisha, which inspired and motivated attendees to actively participate in elections.

Addressing the gathering, District Election Officer (DEO), Dr. Basharat Qayoom, commended the remarkable increase in voter turnout during the preceding Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections. He urged unregistered electors to enroll at the earliest and stressed the importance of fostering an inclusive and participatory democracy.

The DEO also shed light on the democratic values and the need for citizens, particularly the youth, to exercise their voting rights. Emphasis was placed on the role of voters in shaping the nation's destiny and the importance of electoral participation for a vibrant democracy.

Earlier, the DEO led participants in taking the Voter's Pledge, committing to exercise their right to vote without bias or discrimination based on religion, race, caste, community or language.

As a gesture of appreciation, mementos and certificates were distributed to Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), EROs, Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), election staff, trainers, supervisors, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) for their outstanding performance in the previous elections. Felicitations were also extended to First time voters and students.

The celebration served as a powerful reminder of the vital role each voter

plays in upholding and strengthening the democratic fabric of the nation.

At Ganderbal, the National Voters' Day (NVD) was today celebrated across district Ganderbal by holding pledge taking ceremonies and other activities at various levels.

In this regard, a main event was organized in the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat Ganderbal in which District Election Officer (DEO) Ganderbal, Shyambir administered the NVD Pledge to all the participants.

SSP Ganderbal, Ragav S, Assistant Development Commissioner Ganderbal, Gulzar Ahmad, CPO, SDM Kangan, ACD and other district and sectoral officers were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC commended the efforts of the officers and officials engaged in the year, 2024 election process in Ganderbal, highlighting their dedication to ensuring a smooth and transparent electoral process without any complaints of irregularities.

The event also featured speeches by students, who underscored the importance of voting in a democracy. They encouraged the youth to recognize their role as architects of the nation's future and highlighted the transformative power of casting a vote.

Later, a felicitation ceremony was also held during which several officers engaged with the election process in the district were felicitated. The students who spoke during the event were also felicitated.

At Kulgam, a grand function was held at New Conference Hall mini-secretariat Kulgam to commemorate the 15th National Voters Day.

The District Election Officer, Athar Aamir Khan presided over the event. He deliberated on the importance of celebrating the National Voters Day and said that the right to vote empowers citizens to exercise his/her franchise for nation building and for making the democracy strong.

DEO added that every single vote counts and is important for the government formation, and

people must exercise this right responsibly and realize the power at their hands.

Earlier the DEO appreciated the role of the District Election Cell for conducting the Lok Sabha and Assembly Election smoothly.

The best performing Officers including Returning Officers, ARO's Master trainers, BLO's and Operators were given certificates & mementos.

DEO also administered the pledge to the participants for casting their vote free and fairly.

The event was attended by Dy-DEO, ACR, ACD, ACP, CEO District/Sector Officers senior citizens, BLOs, Newly enrolled voters and students.

At Kupwara, 15th National Voters Day was today celebrated with great zeal and enthusiasm across various locations in district Kupwara with the main function held at the Boys Higher Secondary School Kupwara, where Deputy Commissioner (DC), Kupwara, Ms. Ayushi Sudan presided over the event.

Senior officials, including Additional Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, M Rouf Rehman; Dy. DEO, CEO, ROs of AC Kupwara & AC Trehgam and other senior officers, besides, electoral staff, large number of students and newly registered voters were present on the occasion.

On the occasion, the DC administered the Voters' Pledge to the participants including officers and students.

In her address, the DC highlighted the significance of voting in a democracy and the role of citizens in strengthening the democratic fabric of the nation. She also highlighted the efforts of the District Administration for ensuring successful conduct of the recent elections of Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in the district and expressed gratitude towards all stakeholders including officers and employees of different departments for fair and transparent conduct of the elections.

Various other speakers including ADC Kupwara, Dy. DEO, ACR, CEO and

first time voters also spoke and emphasized the importance of NVD and the voting process in the democracy.

Cultural variety programmes were also presented by the students of different schools.

Events under National Voters Day were also held in subdivisions, tehsils, Block and panchayat levels to uphold democratic values and participate responsibly in the electoral process.

At Bandipora, National Voters' Day-2025 was today celebrated with great zeal at the Auditorium N.M. Higher Secondary School Kaloosa.

The programme was presided over by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, and witnessed the participation of Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Mohammad Ashraf Bhatt, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Zaffar Husson Shawl, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, District Information Officer, Nodal Officer SVEEP, Youth, students and other district and sectoral officers.

Padmashree Faisal Ali Dar and Nazir Ahmad, Brand Ambassadors for SVEEP activities, also marked their presence at the event.

The programme commenced with the administration of the National Voters' Day pledge, which was taken by all attendees to reaffirm their commitment to democratic principles.

Speaking on the occasion, DC highlighted that National Voters' Day is a celebration of democracy and an opportunity to inspire citizens, especially the youth, to actively participate in the electoral process.

Qadri acknowledged the dedication of election workers, including BLOs and Anganwadi workers, whose tireless efforts ensure the smooth conduct of elections and reiterated the importance of National Voters' Day as a platform to educate and inspire citizens, particularly the youth, about the value of their vote in fostering a strong and vibrant democracy.

On the occasion, a multilingual National Voters' Day song was showcased to raise awareness about the importance of voting besides EPIC (Electors Photo Identity Cards) were distributed among newly registered voters.

The programme also witnessed distribution of mementos among BLOs and officers in recognition of their commendable work during the General Elections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly.

During the programme,

the DC along with other senior officers released a coffee table book which highlighted the various election related activities carried out in the District.

Following the National Voters' Day celebrations, DC flagged-off a marathon to promote voter awareness and inspire citizens, especially the youth, to understand the power of their vote.

The marathon, which started from N.M. Higher Secondary School Kaloosa, concluded at S.K. Stadium Bandipora.

The National Voters' Day pledge was also administered across all government offices in Bandipora, ensuring comprehensive participation in the celebration of this significant day.

At Baramulla, the event marked with a series of vibrant activities aimed at promoting voter awareness and encouraging greater participation in the democratic process.

A mega Tiranga Rally was the highlight of the celebrations, organized from the DC office to Dak Bungalow. The rally witnessed enthusiastic participation from new voters, officers, officials, and local residents, showcasing unity and the spirit of democracy.

The event at Dak Bungalow began with Deputy District Election Officer, Ab Rehman Bhat, administering the Voters' Pledge to newly enrolled voters and other participants.

The function was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Sopore, S.A. Raina, Superintendent of Police Baramulla, Feroz Yahya, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Arshad Ahmad Khan, and other officers and officials, along with an impressive gathering of new voters.

The celebration featured a painting competition, a quiz competition, and skits and cultural performances by new voters, all centered on the importance of voting and democracy.

On the occasion, a Coffee Table Book was formally unveiled, showcasing the district's efforts toward voter awareness and the importance of active democratic participation.

Several speakers highlighted the significance of voting as a fundamental right and a powerful tool in shaping the nation's future.

Later, a felicitation ceremony was held to honor individuals and participants who excelled in various activities and contributed to the electoral process.

National Voters Day was also observed in all Government offices and Schools of district Kupwara where senior officers administered the Voters' Pledge to their staff and importance of NVD was highlighted.

Secretary DLSA Ganderbal visits various legal aid clinics/ village legal care

JI NEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 25

Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Ganderbal, Sheikh Babar Hussain today conducted a thorough visit to various legal aid clinics/village legal care and support centers in District Ganderbal.

The visit was conducted as per the calendar of activities for the month of January, 2025 on the directions of Chairman District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ganderbal and Member Secretary of J&K Legal Services Authority.

It aimed to review the functioning and operation of legal aid clinics/village legal care and support centers and to assess the performance of Front Offices and the effectiveness of Adhikaar Mitras



(PLVs) in delivering legal services to the public at large.

During the visit, the Secretary reviewed the performance of Adhikaar Mitras (PLVs), front offices, and the overall functioning of legal aid clinics/village legal care and support centers.

He also inspected their case registers, attendance records, and other related registers in order to assess their overall functioning

and effectiveness in delivering legal services to the poor and marginalized sections of society.

Additionally, Secretary interacted with the teaching staff of the concerned schools where the legal aid clinics/village legal care and support centers are functioning and also engaged with the general public and enquired about the functioning of the legal aid clinics and the availability of Adhikaar Mitras

(PLVs), and gathered first-hand feedback on the services provided to the marginalized sections of society as per the mandate of legal services authorities act, 1987.

The Secretary DLSA, made general public aware about NALSA's helpline 15100 toll-free and its role in providing legal assistance and encouraged individuals in need of legal help to use the helpline for legal advice, especially in urgent situations and also installed NALSA 15100 help line banners at all legal aid clinics/village legal care and support centers for the benefit of the people of that particular area. The visit is part of the authority's efforts to ensure that legal services are accessible and effective for the people of District Ganderbal.

CUJ signs MoU with Garuda Aerospace Chennai to Establish Centre of excellence on Drone Technology

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 25

The Department of Electronics and Communication at Central University of Jammu organized Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony at ISRO Building, CU Jammu. This MoU was signed between Central University of Jammu and Garuda Aerospace Pvt.Ltd., Chennai under the visionary and dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Vice chancellor Prof. Sanjeev Jain.

On the occasion, Registrar Central University of Jammu Prof. Yashwant Singh, Chief Operating Officer of Garuda Aerospace, Dr. Vijay Kumar, HoD ECE Prof. Rakesh Kumar Jha, Faculty members, staff and students were present.

Prof. Yashwant Singh highlighted the infrastructure and facilities available



at the Central University of Jammu. He also highlighted the importance of such MoU and Collaborations to develop the solutions for the society and nation as per industry 5.0.

Dr. Vijay Kumar, Chief operating officer of Garuda Aerospace showed keen interest to establish their Centre of excellence (CoE) on drone technology at Central University of

Jammu. The aim of the CoE is to provide the training & internships to the students, develop the UAV lab, and to develop the research & development facility on drone technology at Central University of Jammu to develop the solutions for agriculture sector, defense sector and space technology.

The event was coordinated by Dr. Sunil Datt Sharma,

Associate Professor & Dr. Haneet Kour, Research Associate at Satish Dhawan Centre of Space Sciences (SDCSS). At the end of the event, Prof. Rakesh Kumar Jha delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to Registrar Prof Yashwant Singh, COO Garuda aerospace Dr. Vijay Kumar, faculty members and students present during the MoU ceremony.

Indian Army conducts Lecture on International Day of Education for Students at Chassana, Reasi

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI : 25 JAN 2025

In observance of the International Day of Education, the Indian Army organized an inspiring lecture at the remote location of Chassana, District Reasi. The event aimed to highlight the importance of education in personal and community development, particularly in remote regions. The lecture was attended by students, teachers, and community members, emphasizing the pivotal role education plays in shaping a brighter future. The theme of the session was "Empowering Individuals through Education" and underlined the value of literacy, skill-building, and knowledge sharing in achieving long-term development goals.



The Indian Army personnel, in collaboration with local educators, delivered engaging talks on the transformative power of education and encouraged the youth to pursue academic and vocational opportunities. The session also included discussions on the significance of education for girls and the importance of creating an inclusive environment for learning. A senior Army official stated, "Education is the cornerstone of progress, and it is our

collective responsibility to ensure that no child is left behind. The Indian Army remains committed to promoting education and providing opportunities for holistic development in the region. Participants expressed their appreciation for the Indian Army's proactive role in supporting education and fostering awareness. The initiative served as a reminder of the power of education to overcome barriers and build a stronger, more resilient society.

CSIR-IIIM conducts Farmer Trainings and Quality Floriculture Mission in Jammu and Samba

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 25

In a significant outreach for floricultural farmers of Jammu and Samba, CSIR Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Jammu under CSIR Floriculture Mission conducted two awareness, training and seed distribution programmes imparting the farmers scientific knowledge of advanced crop production and management practices. In two separate programmes conducted at CSIR IIIM Jammu and KVK Samba 255 farmers from various agricultural zones of Jammu and Samba were trained in scientific crop cultivation, nursery production, management of diseases and pests, marketing and economic

potential in marigold and other floricultural crops through technical presentations and on-farm practical demonstrations. The participating farmers were also provided with high yielding quality seed of marigold. The events were conducted under the patronage of Dr Zabeer Ahmed, Director CSIR IIIM Jammu. While speaking to our correspondent Dr Ahmed informed that the Institute through various initiatives under the CSIR Floriculture Mission targets to tap the huge business and market opportunity in the floriculture sector of the J&K UT and the adjoining States through sustained production of quality flowers and enhancing the acreage under the cultivation of different crops suitable to varying agro-climatic conditions. The seed distribution ceremony was presided by Er Abdul Rahim Chief Scientist, CSIR IIIM who while interacting with the farmers emphasized on cluster based farming to streamline the value chain for optimal marketing of the flowers produced. He further encouraged young entrepreneurs to develop innovative business ideas, assuring them that such initiatives would be nurtured and supported through their incubation at CSIR-IIIM Jammu. While interacting with the trainees and participating stakeholders, Dr Shahid Rasool, Nodal Scientist, CSIR Floriculture Mission stressed upon the importance of diversifying mar-

keting strategies through value addition in floricultural crops. He urged the participating farmers to involve women in floricultural farming by forming Self-Help Groups who can be trained in value added techniques such as resin art, floral hammer press printing, perfume-making, floral jewelry, dehydrated floral art and making of various flower arrangements. Dr Rasool highlighted that the mission aims to focus on the diversification of floricultural crops to ensure a consistent supply and meet market demand throughout the year. He expressed his appreciation for the officers of Department of Agriculture, Jammu for their coordination in successful conduct of the events.

DLSA Pulwama organizes awareness programme on 'National Girl Child Day'

JI NEWS SERVICE
PULWAMA, JANUARY 25

In compliance to the directions of Legal Services Authority UT of J&K, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Pulwama organized an Awareness programme on 'National Girl Child Day' in collaboration with District Social Welfare office Pulwama at Circuit House Pulwama.

The programme was organized under the chairmanship of Manzoor Ahmad Zargar, (Special Judge NDPS) Incharge, Chairman District Legal Services Authority (Pr. District & Sessions Judge), Pulwama and under the supervision of Mudasar Farooq Secretary DLSA Pulwama.

On the occasion, the main resource person M Sameer Yattoo Advocate from DLSA Pulwama raised awareness about the schemes pertaining to girl child, and legal rights and protection from discrimination, child marriage and violence.

Furthermore, Waheeda Anjum, Advocate also spoke on the occasion about the importance of education to girl child and laid emphasis on the challenges faced by girls in Indian society. The day is dedicated to raising awareness about the inequalities girls encounter and advocating for equal opportunities in education, healthcare, and nutrition.

A similar programme was also organized at Sub District Hospital Tral in collaboration with TLSC Tral.

The aforesaid awareness programmes were also attended by PLVs of District Pulwama and staff members Social Welfare Officer Pulwama.

Govt urges artisans, weavers to avail subsidized loans under Credit Card Scheme

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 25

Reaffirming its commitment to safeguard the interests and welfare of the highly-skilled craftsmen, the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir, today urged the registered artisans and weavers to apply online for availing the soft loans under its Credit Card Scheme, which offers interest subvention of 7% for a five-year payback period, on a loan of Rs.2.00 lakh.

Nearly 97,000 artisans and weavers have already availed the loan facility to meet their credit requirements of both investment and working capital in a flexible and cost-effective manner. The department has borne an expenditure of Rs.5.62 Cr as interest subvention, payable to the banks and other financial institutions, in a bid to support the artisans and weavers to set up independent units.

Highlighting the main takeaways of the scheme, an official spokesperson from the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, stated that the beneficiary's contribution against a loan of Rs .2.00 lakh shall only be Rs .20,000 and no collateral security is required to be deposited in the financial insti-



tution. "The selection of the beneficiary artisan and weaver is made by a District-level Committee, headed by the concerned General Manager of the District Industries Centre," he said, adding that the beneficiary shall be issued a Photo Card indicating therein the sanctioned limit and validity period of the credit facility.

Seeking support from the banks and financial institutions in the saturation of artisans and weavers under the subsidized scheme, the spokesman

called for real-time sanction and disbursement of the beneficiary cases, after they are sponsored as per targets fixed by the Government.

The spokesman further stated that the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir, monitors the implementation of the Credit Card Scheme and puts on notice those beneficiaries who become NPAs and fail to pay their monthly instalments on time, in coordination with the financial institutions.

ADG BSF Chandigarh, Satish Shriramaji Khandare, IPS, felicitates meritorious students of BSF School

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 25

ADG (Western Command) BSF Chandigarh, Shri Satish Shriramaji Khandare, IPS, felicitated meritorious students of BSF School Jammu in a solemn ceremony held at the BSF Jammu Frontier.

The event was organized to honor students who have excelled in academics and sports at both national and international levels.

The presence of Shri D.K. Boora, Inspector General (IG) BSF Jammu Frontier, Shri O.P. Upadhyay, IG BSF Chandigarh, and Shri Sukhdev Raj, DIG/PSO, added prestige to the occasion. Several officers from the Border Security Force (BSF), along with Dr. S.K. Shukla, Principal of BSF School Jammu, and the school's faculty and students, were also in attendance to celebrate the remarkable achievements of the school's top-performing students.

During the event, Shri Satish Khandare was provided with an overview of the school's numerous accolades, covering both academic achievements



and its remarkable record in sports events. The briefing highlighted the school's continuous efforts and important initiatives aimed at fostering a well-rounded education. BSF School Jammu is known for its emphasis on excellence in both scholastic and extracurricular pursuits, which has contributed to its distinguished reputation across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The students of the school presented an enchanting cultural program, which added a lively and celebratory atmosphere to the ceremony. Through their performances, the students showcased the rich cultural heritage of the region while also underscoring their talents beyond academics and sports. This cultural presentation was a testament to the school's

holistic approach to education, encouraging creativity, discipline, and teamwork.

Shri Satish Shriramaji Khandare, in his address to the gathering, expressed his deep appreciation for the school's exemplary performance in various arenas. He praised BSF School Jammu for its outstanding goodwill and reputation, not only within Jammu and Kashmir but also at the national level. He attributed the success of the school to the dedication and hard work of the school management, the principal, and the staff, whose collective efforts have fostered a nurturing environment for students to excel.

In his commendation, Shri Khandare applauded the efforts of the prize-winning students, acknowledging their commitment to excellence. He encour-

aged them to continue their pursuit of knowledge and skill, urging them to stay focused on achieving even greater milestones in the future. His motivational words were aimed at inspiring the young achievers to push the boundaries of their potential and maintain their drive towards success in all their future endeavors.

The ceremony served as an important platform to recognize and encourage the young talents of BSF School Jammu, further strengthening the school's commitment to nurturing future leaders and achievers. The felicitation not only acknowledged the hard work and determination of the students but also highlighted the school's role in contributing to the overall development of young minds through a balanced emphasis on academics, sports, and cultural activities.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks, marking yet another proud moment for BSF School Jammu, which continues to be a beacon of academic and extracurricular excellence in the region.

Lieutenant Governor attends 15th National Voters' Day celebration at Jammu

JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 25

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha attended the 15th National Voters' Day Celebrations at General Zorawar Singh Auditorium, University of Jammu, today.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated the Chief Electoral Officer J&K and his team for the prestigious Best Performing State/UT Award from Election Commission of India.

He expressed his deep gratitude to the people of J&K, officials of the National Election Commission and Election department, Police & security forces, officials and all the stakeholders for the fair, transparent and successful conduct of Lok Sabha and J&K Legislative Assembly elections.

"Historic voter turnout in Lok Sabha and Assembly elections reflects strong faith of people of J&K in democratic values and a renewed spirit of civic participation and hope for a new era where democracy is taking root more profoundly than ever before, driven by the will of people," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Highlighting the valuable contribution of the Election Commission, the Lieutenant Governor said the meticulous planning and constant vigil by the election commission and their officers have ensured that the J&K elections this time have been smooth and streamlined, with no repolls.

All political parties unanimously accepted



that this was the most fair, transparent, peaceful and spectacular elections in Jammu Kashmir, he added. "Our cultural ethos focuses on democratic values of freedom, equality and inclusiveness and gives its common citizens an opportunity to live a quality and dignified life. Will of the people in our country is an age-old concept and that's why India is called the 'Mother of Democracy'," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the theme for this year's National Voters' Day "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure" underlines the power of every vote and emphasizes that voting transcends all barriers, reflecting the true spirit of voting rights.

"Indian democracy is truly a festive proclamation of cooperation, collaboration, peace and collective strength of the people. India is among the select few countries where democratic ideals are strongest and foremost. I am proud that today many

countries in the Global North and Global South are learning from India the ways of conducting fair and transparent elections," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor appreciated the efforts of the Chief Electoral Officer for successful summary revision of electoral rolls, after delimitation and preparing the voters list of 89 lakh voters and ensuring that transparent and fair voting took place at all 11,838 polling stations.

He said the significant increase in the voter turnout during these elections is testament to the dedicated efforts of the election machinery of the Union Territory.

He further emphasised that awareness campaigns should continue to make all sections of the society aware of the power of their vote. He said the biggest objective of the celebration of National Voters' Day is to motivate the eligible youth to participate in the voting process.

The Lieutenant Governor also congratulated Sh. Harvinder Singh, Deputy Commissioner Doda and Ms PD Nitya, SSP Pulwama who have been awarded for best electoral practices.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor administered the National Voters' Day pledge to the officials and the people.

The Lieutenant Governor felicitated Ms Sara Rizvi, DIG IR Jammu; Sh Minga Sherpa, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla; Sh Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar; Sh Devansh Yadav, Commissioner JMC, Sh Sahil Sarangal, SSP; Sh Randeep Kumar, SSP; Sh Anil Salgotra, Joint CEO and senior officials of Police and other stakeholder departments with the UT-level awards for their contributions in successful conduct of Lok Sabha and J&K Legislative Assembly elections.

The Lieutenant Governor

flagged off a mobile vehicle "Democracy on Wheels", which will serve as an innovative tool to educate students about the importance of voting and the election process.

He inaugurated Regional EVM warehouse at Jammu and also felicitated the newly registered voters.

Enthralling performances by the artists of Natrang, members of NGO Muskaan, Jigar Foundation, School for Blind and college students, highlighting the importance of casting vote, received special appreciation from the Lieutenant Governor.

Sh Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner of India congratulated the people on the occasion, through a video message.

Sh B R Sharma, Election Commissioner, J&K, Sh Shaheen Kabra Additional Chief Secretary; Sh Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary, Home, senior officials, heads of departments and prominent citizens were present.

CS administers oath to Officers on 15th National Voters' Day

JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 25

On the eve of the 15th National Voters' Day today an oath-taking ceremony was held at Civil Secretariat here in which Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo administered oath to the officers and officials including the Administrative Secretaries of the UT.

The officials vowed that they being citizens of India take oath on keeping firm faith on democracy and

strive for the independent, impartial and peaceful election and will cast their votes fearlessly irrespective of religion, community and language.

This Year's Theme "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure" is similar to last year. It highlights the significance of voters to participate in the electoral process independently without any fear or favour on the basis of religion, race or language.

Moreover, 25th January

is the foundation day of the Election Commission of India (ECI) which came into existence in 1950 and 2025 marks the 75th year of its existence. This day was first celebrated in 2011 to encourage young voters to take part in the electoral process

The Election Commission's main objective is to increase the enrolment of the voters especially the youngsters who had recently attained eligibility at the age of 18 years or more.

Lieutenant Governor attends Laser & Sound Show on the eve of Republic Day at Blue Green Project, Ranbir Canal Jammu



JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 25

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today attended the Laser and Sound show, on the eve of Republic Day, at Blue Green Project, Ranbir Canal, Jammu.

The Laser and Sound Show, organised by Jammu Smart City Limited and Jammu Municipal Corporation, depicted India's his-

tory, contribution of our freedom fighters and the developmental journey of the nation.

Inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the eco and pedestrian-friendly Blue Green Project executed by Jammu Smart City is shaping a happier life for the residents.

The project stretch at Ranbir canal has been

developed into a vibrant public space with facilities like walkways, seating space, children park, high-quality lighting, water ATMs, open-air gym, selfie point and public utilities.

The Lieutenant Governor also visited the stalls set up by various departments and self-help groups showcasing the rich art and crafts of Jammu Kashmir.

FROM THE PAGE 1...

In address to Nation...

across the country, Murmu noted, "The 'One Nation One Election' plan can offer numerous benefits, including enhanced governance and reduced financial strain."

In discussing legal reforms, she pointed out the need to replace the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Indian Evidence Act with new laws reflective of Indian traditions.

She mentioned the introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, which prioritise the delivery of justice over mere punishment and place a strong emphasis on addressing crimes against women and children.

Reflecting on the significance of the Constitution, the President highlighted the progress achieved over the past 75 years.

"At the time of Independence, many parts of the country faced extreme poverty and hunger. However, we maintained a belief in ourselves and created conditions for growth," she said.

Noting the contributions of farmers and labourers, she said India's economy now plays a pivotal role in global economic trends, asserting that this transformation is rooted in the framework established by the Constitution.

The President also pointed to the persistently high economic growth rate in recent years, which has generated job opportunities, increased income for farmers and labourers, and lifted many out of poverty.

She underscored the importance of inclusive growth and the government's commitment to welfare, making basic necessities such as housing and access to clean drinking water entitlements for citizens.

Efforts to support marginalised communities, particularly those belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC), were also highlighted.

Murmu mentioned various initiatives, including pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, national fellowships, and dedicated schemes aimed at the socio-economic development of these communities, such as the Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan.

The President's address underscored the government's commitment to fostering inclusive growth and redefining governance standards in the country, creating a vision for a more equitable and prosperous future for all citizens.

She emphasised that this occasion is a collective celebration of joy and pride for all citizens and remarked that while 75 years may seem like a brief moment in the life of a nation, it has been a significant period for India, marked by the revival of its long-dormant spirit and its journey to reclaim its rightful status among the world's civilisations.

Reflecting on India's historical journey, she urged citizens to remember the brave souls who sacrificed their lives for the nation's freedom, highlighting the 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, whose contributions to the freedom movement are now receiving due recognition.

The President praised the early 20th-century freedom fighters for uniting the nation in a well-organised independence movement and credited iconic figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Babasaheb Ambedkar for

helping India rediscover its democratic values.

"Justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity are not just modern concepts; they have always been integral to our civilisational heritage," she asserted, noting that skeptics of the Constitution's future were proven wrong.

Murmu highlighted the inclusive nature of the Constituent Assembly, which represented diverse communities across the nation, including 15 women members who played pivotal roles in shaping the country's democratic framework.

"When women's equality was a distant goal in many parts of the world, Indian women were actively engaged in the nation's destiny," she said.

The Constitution, according to the President, has evolved into a living document that serves as the foundation of India's collective identity and has guided the nation's progress over the past 75 years.

Shifting focus to present-day advancements, she highlighted the government's emphasis on physical infrastructure development, which has laid the groundwork for sustained growth.

She commended the innovative use of technology in finance, noting that digital payment systems and direct benefit transfers have enhanced inclusion and transparency in the economy.

The health of the banking system has improved due to reforms like the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, which significantly reduced non-performing assets in commercial banks. Looking towards the future, the President underscored the importance of education in shaping the next generation.

The government has increased investments in the education sector, resulting in substantial improvements in learning quality and digital inclusion, especially in regional languages.

Murmu noted that women teachers have played a crucial role in this educational transformation, with over 60 per cent of new teachers being women.

As India marches confidently towards the future, the President affirmed that the dreams of today's youth, particularly young women, will shape the nation by the time it celebrates a century of independence.

She expressed hope that future generations will recognise the pivotal role of the Constitution in guiding their journey. Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, she reiterated the importance of morality in governance and civic life, stating, "If Swaraj was not meant to civilize us, it would be nothing worth."

The President called for a renewed commitment to Gandhiji's ideals of truth, nonviolence, and compassion - not just towards fellow humans but also towards nature.

She urged all citizens to reaffirm their dedication to realising the dreams of a prosperous, inclusive, and morally conscious India as the country looks forward to its future. (Agencies)

'Vibrant Village'...

said, "When the Prime Minister personally invites people from distant areas to participate in national celebrations and acts as a host, it sends a strong message of unity and inclusion. It reflects his desire to bring people closer to his heart."

He said that the "Vibrant Villages" programme is a significant step toward bridging the emotional and developmental gap between Delhi and the far-flung villages of India. "This

programme is not only about building roads or infrastructure—it is about reducing the 'dil ki doori' (emotional distance) between Delhi and your villages," said Shah. "This initiative marks the beginning of a shift in mindset and how we approach development in remote areas."

He noted that the programme aims to improve connectivity while fostering a sense of inclusion among residents of far-off regions. "When roads are constructed, they reduce physical distances, but this programme goes beyond infrastructure to enhance communication and bring people closer to the heart of the nation," Shah added. KNO

J&K bags two...

Vibhushan for exceptional and distinguished service, Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order, and Padma for distinguished service in any field.

These awards cover various disciplines, including art, social work, public affairs, science, medicine, sports, literature, and civil service.

The awards are announced annually on Republic Day and conferred by the President of India in ceremonial functions held at Rashtrapati Bhawan, usually in March or April—(KNO)

Mystery remains...

village told KNO that they are in constant fear as the government is yet to get any clue about 17 deaths.

They said that they are dependent on their livestock that has been locked at Badhal where government officials have been taking care of them but they want the mystery to be solved so that they can start anew.

MLA Budhal, Javed Iqbal Choudhary told KNO that all 12 deaths at GMC Jammu were due to carelessness and casual approach at the hospital. He said these lives could have been saved had the authorities at GMC Jammu been proactive.

He demanded proper investigation in this regard and action against the officials, who were casual in their approach.

Meanwhile, an official of the health department told KNO that that FSL report from Chandigarh may take 4-5 days more and will bring any clarity on it as well.

He said that the government has been waiting for a proper report investigation so that necessary steps can be taken and such things can be avoided in future, adding that investigations to check all angles are going on and hopefully any conclusive evidence in this regard will be available soon and till then there is need to be very proactive.

The Jammu & Kashmir Police have formed an 11-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the mysterious illness. Investigations at multiple levels are ongoing, with all departments on high alert and working around the clock to handle the situation.

Authorities have also implemented measures to "break the food chain" in the affected village by providing residents with monitored food and water supplies.

While the cause of the 'mysterious illness' remains unknown, the recovery of patients offers hope for the people of Badhaal. Authorities, along with national health agencies, are working tirelessly to identify the root cause and prevent further incidents. KNO

President approves Gallantry...

Kirti Chakras have been awarded to Major Manjit, Punjab 22 RR and Naik Dilwar Khan, Arty, 28 RR (Posthumous).

The Shaurya Chakra awardees include Major Ashish Dahiya, Engrs, 50 RR; Maj. Kunal, ASC, 1 RR; Maj Satender Dhankar, Armd, 4 RR; Capt. Deepak Singh, Sigs, 48 RR (Posthumous); Asstt Commandant Eshenthung Kikon, 4 Assam Rifle; Subedar Vikas Tomar, 1 Para (SF); Sub. Mohan Ram, 20 Jat; Hav. Rohit Kumar, Dogra, Haws (Posthumous); Hav. Prakash Tamang, 9 GR, 32 RR; Flight Lieutenant Aman Singh Hans (36412), Flying (Pilot) IAF; Corporal Dabhi Sanjay Hiffabai Essa, IAF; OEM Gde-1 Vijayan Kutty G (Posthumous) BRDB; Vikrant Kumar, Dy Commandant, CRPF and Jeffrey Hmingchullo, Inspector, CRPF.

The President also approved 305 defence decorations to Armed Forces and other personnel. These include 30 Param Vishisht Seva Medals; five Uttam Yudh Seva Medals; 57 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals; 10 Yudh Seva Medals; one Bar to Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 43 Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); eight Nao Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 15 Vayu Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); four Bar to Vishisht Seva Medal and 132 Vishisht Seva Medals.

The Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry) has been conferred on Lt. Col KH Shem, 20 Jat.

A total of 66 personnel from the Army have been conferred with Sena Medal, including seven posthumously.

Two Indian Navy personnel have been awarded the Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry), eight Indian Air Force personnel with Vayu Sena Medal (Gallantry), 30 Armed Forces personnel have been awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal.

Besides, five Armed Forces personnel have been conferred with Uttam Yudh Seva Medal; 57 personnel with Ati Vishisht Seva Medal; 10 personnel with Yudh Seva Medal; one official with Bar to Sena Medal (Devotion to Duty); 43 personnel with Sena Medal (Devotion to Duty); eight with Nao Sena (Devotion to Duty); 15 with Vayu Sena Medal (Devotion to Duty); four Bar to Vishisht Seva Medal; and 132 personnel with Vishisht Seva Medal.

10TH DAY

With profound grief & sorrow, we inform the sad and untimely demise of our beloved **SH. DHANI RAM**, R/o Amit Nagar, Muthi, Jammu, left for heavenly abode on 19th January 2025.

TENTH DAY will be performed on **28/01/2025 (Tuesday)** at our residence Amit Nagar, Muthi, Jammu.

GRIEF STRICKEN
Smt. Parsino Devi (Wife)
Sons and Daughters in law
Sh. Swarn Lal and Smt. Santosh Kumari
Sh. Ajeet Kumar and Smt. Anuradha
Daughters and Sons in law
Smt. Suman Devi and Sh. Ajay Kumar
Smt. Chintia Devi and Sh. Jeet Lal

Grandchildren
Mrs. Supriya Mehra and Mr. Rohit Mehra,
Mr. Sunil Mehra and Mrs. Surbhi Bogal,
Mrs. Shivani Mehra and Mr. Raman Mehra,
Rohit Mehra, Palvi Mehra & Nitish Mehra
Mob: 7006803908, 9419840124

Indian Army inaugurates Tailoring, Stitching Course for Women Empowerment at Phagsoo Thatri, Doda

JI NEWS SERVICE
DODA : 25 JAN 2025

The Indian Army has always been "true to its commitment" in providing a helping hand to empower women in the far-flung areas of the region. In continuation of this spirit, the Indian Army inaugurated a 30-day tailoring and stitching course to provide vocational training for the women of Phagsoo village, Thatri, under Operation Sadhbhavana. A total of 8 women will undergo the tailoring and stitching training at Phagsoo village. The beneficiaries include women from Priority Household and Below Poverty Line categories. The Indian Army has provided sewing machines along with other facilities for this training. This educa-



tional project is a leap of faith, aiming to empower these women and serve as an invaluable resource during difficult times. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, a representative of the Indian Army said that this virtuous effort will go a long way in alleviating hunger and poverty, while also fostering greater communal and social harmony in the region. It was also emphasized that the women of

underdeveloped, remote areas are eager to become self-reliant and strive to improve both their lives and the quality of life for their families. The villagers present at the event expressed their gratitude for this enterprising initiative, which aims to create a positive environment for the women of the region to pursue a profession with better opportunities and aspire for a brighter and more prosperous future.

Pre-Republic Day-2025 celebrations: SMC concludes Swachhanta activities successfully

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 25

The Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has triumphantly wrapped up a series of Swachhanta-themed initiatives as part of the lead-up to Republic Day 2025, fostering a spirit of community engagement and environmental responsibility.

From January 21 to January 24, the campaign, aptly titled 'Swachhanta - Gantantra Ki Shaan, Swachhta Se Bane Mahaan,' focused on highlighting the importance of cleanliness in nurturing national pride and social progress.

Throughout the four-day event, a variety of dynamic activities were organized, engaging citizens of all ages in the pursuit of a cleaner Srinagar.

Key highlights of the

campaign included Plogging Run, Swachhanta Pledge, Nukkad Natak, Quiz Competition and Painting Competition.

The innovative fitness and cleanliness initiative of 'Plogging Run' encouraged participants to jog along the picturesque Jehlum River Front at Raj Bagh while simultaneously collecting litter. It besides promoting physical fitness also fostered a sense of civic duty among the participants.

Similarly under Swachhanta Pledge, citizens and local officials gathered to take pledge, committing themselves to uphold cleanliness in their surroundings. This collective vow reinforced community solidarity and the shared goal of a cleaner environment.

Through Nukkad Natak,

local artists captivated audiences with street performances at the renowned Ghanta Ghar Lal Chowk, using the medium of theatre to communicate the critical message of waste management and community responsibility. These dramatizations effectively engaged the public in conversations about environmental issues.

Quiz Competition proved to be another attractive activity in which students from various coaching centers showcased their knowledge and enthusiasm for environmental issues through a competitive quiz focused on the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and related topics. This activity served to educate and inspire the younger generation about the importance of cleanliness. Also through Painting

Competition, young artists capitalized the opportunity to express their creative visions of a cleaner and greener India through an art competition. Their imaginative works underscored the role of creativity in advocating for environmental awareness.

The events witnessed enthusiastic participation from local citizens, students, and various organizations, reflecting a strong community commitment to cleanliness and sustainability.

Commissioner of SMC, Dr. Owais Ahmed expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all participants during his closing remarks. He emphasized the corporation's ongoing dedication to making Srinagar a model city for cleanliness and environmental consciousness.

Indian Army organizes Lecture on National Girls Child Day of India at Balmatkote, Reasi

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI : 25 JAN 2025

In celebration of National Girl Child Day, the Indian Army organized an enlightening lecture at the remote location of Balamatkote, District Reasi. The event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of empowering and supporting the girl child for a brighter and more equitable future. The lecture focused on the theme of "Empowering Girls for a Stronger Nation" and highlighted issues such as the importance of education for girls, gender equality, and the role of the community in fostering a safe and inclusive environment. Students, parents, and local residents actively participated in the session, making it an interactive and impactful experience. Speakers emphasized the significance of eradicating social stigmas, promoting health and education for girls, and encouraging them to achieve their full potential.

The lecture also underscored various government initiatives and schemes designed to uplift and support the girl child in India. A senior Army official commented, "The girl child is the foundation of a progressive society. On this National Girl Child Day, the Indian Army reaffirms its commitment to promoting gender equality and ensuring that girls in the region have access to opportunities that empower them to succeed."

Indian Army distributes Stationery on Occasion of National Girl Child Day in Kalali, Poonch

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH : 25 JAN 2025

The Indian Army hosted a National Girl Child Day event at Government High School, Kalali, Mahal, Poonch District. The event aimed to promote the empowerment of girls and protect their rights, while raising awareness about the issues they face, including access to education, healthcare, and personal safety. A total of 37 participants, including 20 girls, 15 boys, and 2 teachers, attended the event. The Indian Army organized various activities to promote girls' empowerment, with a focus on creating a society where girls are valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential. The main focus of the event was the pledge to promote girls' rights and empowerment, and to work together to create a society where girls are valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential. The event served as a reminder of the importance of promoting



girls' rights and empowerment, and the Indian Army's commitment to creating a brighter future for girls in remote areas. The Indian Army's efforts to promote girls' empowerment and protection are in line with its commitment to serving the nation and supporting the local population. By working together with local communities, the Indian Army aims to create a society where girls are valued, respected, and

empowered to reach their full potential. The event was a resounding success, with participants expressing their gratitude for the Indian Army's initiative in promoting girls' empowerment. The distribution of stationery items and other educational materials will go a long way in supporting the educational endeavours of the students and promoting a culture of learning and empowerment.

Dy CM, Advisor to CM visit Budgam

JI NEWS SERVICE
BUDGAM, JANUARY 25

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, along with Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, today conducted a comprehensive tour of Budgam district.

Member Parliament, Aga Syed Ruhullah and MLA Chadoora Ali Mohammad Dar accompanied them.

DC Budgam, Akshay Labroo, Chief Engineers and other senior officers of different departments were also present. While addressing a huge gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government has undertaken a massive development programme with special focus on far flung



and neglected areas." We have already directed for fast paced the initiatives meant for changing the socio-economic profile of people besides upgrading the basic infrastructure", he added

"We are committed to fast paced and sustained development with regular monitoring for ensuring quality works. This has been done in accordance with the local needs and area specific develop-

ment", he maintained. Responding to public demands, the Deputy CM announced the provision of 4 lane roads to Budgam. He also directed for conducting a survey of road from DC office to Humhama besides preparation of DPR for 4 lane widening of road from DC office to New bus Adda in phase -I. Advisor to Chief Minister, while speaking on the occasion, highlighted various develop-

mental initiatives undertaken by the present government since its formation. He said that a holistic developmental agenda is underway which would ensure transformation of Jammu and Kashmir. MP Aga Ruhallah also enumerated various initiatives undertaken and assured for furthering the developmental agenda of the present dispensation. The Deputy Chief Minister conducted a comprehensive tour of district and inspected several development works as well. While interacting with scores of deputations, the Deputy Chief Minister assured them that the issues projected by them would be redressed within the shortest possible time.

DC Kulgam distributes Fishing equipment among beneficiaries

JI NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, JANUARY 25

In order to boost the morale of fishing community, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan today distributed incentives in the form of fishing equipments including Handle Nets, Covering Nets, Weighing Balances etc among 11 beneficiaries covered under HADP for the year 2024-25.

The event held in the lawns of Mini-Secretariat witnessed participation by a number of beneficiaries. Interacting with the beneficiaries, the DC emphasized on the importance of generation of employment avenues in the Fisheries sector by way of adopting fish culture practices to achieve gainful employment.

The concerned officials of the Department were directed to increase the awareness among the masses to create such employment generation units and proper utilization of water resources in



the District. Besides, 02 three wheeler vehicles for the transportation of fish stocks were also distributed to the beneficiaries covered under PMMSY during this year. The provision aims to boost fish cultural practices and transportation of livestock procured from the wild.

It is worth to mention that during 2024-25, 21 fish rearing tanks for culture of Trout stand were established while, 01 Trout Hatchery was also provided to entrepreneurs in the fisheries sector during

2024-25 under PMMSY & HADP.

Being the downtrodden community, under Nutritional and livelihood support a sub component of PMMSY 550 registered fishermen were benefitted and Rs 3000 each were transferred through DBT mode, he added.

The cultural fish production, both in private and government farms stands at 220MTs from 160 units in the district. These units in the private sector have provided employment to 480 families directly or indirectly.

Tourism Department organizes Heritage Walk in Akhnoor to Celebrate National Tourism Day

JI NEWS SERVICE
AKHNOOR, JAN 25


Department of Tourism J&K, under the able leadership of Ms. Yasha Mudgal, IAS, Commissioner Secretary to the Government, celebrated National Tourism Day with a series of impactful events. These initiatives highlighted Jammu's rich cultural heritage while emphasizing the significance of sustainable tourism, civic responsibility, and environmental conservation. The day's main highlight was a Heritage Walk organized by the Directorate of Tourism, Jammu, commencing at the internationally renowned Buddhist site of Ambaran. Situated on the right bank of the Chenab River near Akhnoor.

Participants visited key historical landmarks, including TRC Akhnoor, Gurudwara Baba Sunder Singh Ji, Parashuram Temple, Pandav Gufa, Akhnoor Fort, and Durgamandir, culminating at Jia Pota Ghat. This site is historically significant as the location where Maharaja Ranjit Singh coronated Sh. Gulab Singh on June 17, 1822. Sh. Vikas Gupta, JKAS, Director Tourism, Jammu, highlighted the transformative role of tourism in fostering social, economic, and cultural growth. Emphasizing the Heritage Walk as a powerful way to connect people to Jammu's rich history, he stressed the importance of making such initiatives a

regular feature. Involving students in these activities would not only deepen

their understanding of heritage but also instill a sense of inclusivity, sustainability,

and responsibility towards preserving and promoting cultural assets.



GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL DIVISION, DODA.
medkhellani@gmail.com

e-NIT No. - MHDD/TS/2024-25/69 DATED: 23.01.2025 Due on: 10.02.2025
Establishment of Indoor Shooting Range (4.57 x 16) metre with 3.65 mtr height at Drabshalla

Kishtwar

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Union Territory of J&K tenders through e- Tenders in two cover system on turnkey basis are invited from Authorized Registered Contractors having sufficient experience for the Indoor Shooting Range: -

Status of AAA: - **Accorded by District Development Commissioner Kishtwar vide order No. 03 DCK(PS) of 2025**
Dated: - 20-01-2025.

Status of TS: - **Accorded 171 of 01/2025**

Intending Authority: - District Development Commissioner Kishtwar.

The critical dates for the tendering process are:

S.No.	Description of work	Earnest Money Deposit(EMD)	Cost of tender document	Time of Completion	Estimated Cost	Eligibility Criterion of bidder
01.	Establishment of Indoor Shooting Range (4.57 x 16) metre with 3.65 mtr height at Drabshalla Kishtwar	@2% of the estimated cost	Rs.500.00	45 days	18.41 Lacs	Authorized / Registered Contractors having established at least 02 Indoor Shooting Range in Govt / Semi Govt Departments

All other details/eligibility criteria and terms and conditions can be downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in. And Queries if any may be made by email at medkhellani@gmail.com and should be made by or before 08/02/2025 upto 04:00 PM.

No:-MHDD/TS/23-24/3302-06
Dated. 23-01-2025

DIP/J-9542/24
Date: 25-1-25

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Mechanical and Hospital Division
Doda

EDITORIAL

Chinks in healthcare claims

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which prides itself on delivering “world-class” healthcare facilities in Delhi and Punjab, finds its tall claims under scrutiny yet again. The recent incident at Rajindra Hospital in Patiala, a premier health facility in Punjab, has starkly exposed the cracks in the healthcare infrastructure. The episode, which has since gone viral, has not only left the public alarmed but has also provided fodder for political opponents to question AAP’s governance. A surgeon at Rajindra Hospital, while performing an operation, faced a harrowing ordeal as electricity in the operation theatre abruptly went off. The situation turned dire as the ventilator supporting the intubated patient ceased functioning. In sheer frustration and disbelief, the surgeon recorded a video of the incident, highlighting the gravity of the situation. “It has been 15 minutes since power went off. How do we perform the surgery? If something happens to the patient, who would be held responsible?” the surgeon questioned in the video. The video also captured junior doctors stating that this was not the first instance of power outage in the hospital’s main emergency ward. Such recurring incidents raise serious concerns about the hospital’s preparedness and the reliability of its infrastructure, particularly in critical areas like the operation theatre. The video quickly snowballed into a political controversy. BJP leader and Minister of State Ravneet Singh Bittu seized the opportunity to target AAP’s claims of providing quality healthcare, questioning Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and party convener Arvind Kejriwal over the state of affairs. Punjab Health Minister Dr. Balbir Singh attempted damage control by issuing a video statement. He confirmed that the operation had been successfully completed and the patient was recovering. However, his comments about a young doctor “panicking” and recording the incident instead of addressing the power outage seemed to deflect accountability rather than acknowledge systemic failures. Dr. Singh added that there were already three hotlines installed for uninterrupted power supply at the hospital and attributed the outage to a local-level fault in the operation theatre, which he claimed had been rectified. This is not the first time Rajindra Hospital has made headlines for the wrong reasons. In July last year, doctors had to perform a caesarean section using a mobile flashlight due to a power cut. Such incidents point to deeper structural issues within Punjab’s healthcare system, which cannot be dismissed as one-off occurrences. While the Health Minister urged the public to not escalate the issue, it is imperative to ask why such lapses continue to occur despite repeated assurances and funding. Healthcare facilities, especially those designated as premier institutions, must have robust systems in place to ensure uninterrupted services. Power cuts in critical areas like operation theatres are not mere inconveniences; they are potential life-threatening situations. AAP’s narrative of transforming healthcare in Punjab and Delhi has been a cornerstone of its political strategy. The party’s mohalla clinics in Delhi have been widely publicized as a model for affordable and accessible healthcare. However, incidents like the one at Rajindra Hospital reveal a disconnect between rhetoric and reality. The opposition’s critique of AAP’s governance gains traction when such glaring lapses are exposed. The government’s response to such incidents must go beyond patchwork solutions. It is not enough to install additional hotlines or provide emergency funds after the damage has been done. A thorough audit of infrastructure, proactive maintenance, and accountability mechanisms are necessary to prevent such failures in the future. Moreover, training and empowering medical staff to handle emergencies without resorting to panic are equally important.

Winter’s tale in Northern India: A season of discontent

HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Of freezing marrows and choking breaths William Shakespeare, emperor of narratives, master of metaphors, celebrated craftsman of sentences and acclaimed presenter of deep insights into human nature, had a way of coming up with expressions surviving the passage of time. One of them is “winter of our discontent.” Richard, Duke of Gloucester, says in Richard III, “Now is the winter of our discontent/ Made glorious summer by this sun of York;/ And all the clouds that lour’d upon our house/ In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.” The expression, which adorns one of John Steinbeck’s most famous novels as its title, should resonate particularly strongly with people in northern India still in the grip of a winter that is cold, damp and utterly polluted. The chances of things improving in the next few years, are, to put it mildly, bleak.

As the chilling flipside of global warming, the cold months will continue to be increasingly marrow-freezing, since, with Donald Trump taking over as the United States’ president, the chances of a deceleration in the pace of climate change, have diminished significantly. This is not to look wistfully back over one’s shoulder to a mythical place like the island valley of Avilion, where,

pace Alfred Tennyson in a very different context, “falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, / Nor ever wind blows loudly.” Climates and the weather have been notoriously fickle cousins throughout history. If any part of the past seems golden, it is because of the distance in time which lends it enchantment.

It had, when it was the present, its warts, some of them rather large and ugly. Floods and droughts took very heavy tolls when meteorological devices and skills for predicting their advent and coping with their aftermath, were far less advanced. In the absence of electrical heating devices, which we have, life could not have been terribly pleasant during the last ice age which had covered about 30 per cent of the earth’s surface and ended 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. On a more specific note, slavery was legal in most parts of the world-including the chest-thumping demagogues of the West-as late as the second half of the 19th century. The weather, doubtless, has an impact on life and its moods, which influence thought, speech and feeling which, in turn, trigger action.

All of these, at a certain elevated level, power the wheels of history. These also affect inter-personal relations, causing friction and hostility arising from anger and discontent, or cordiality and warmth caused by harmony. The



sum total of the interaction among these factors determines the quality of a community’s social existence in terms of tensions between collective bodies like class and caste, and stress caused by individual actions like crime, which is often caused by alienation resulting from marginalisation, poverty and anonymity in impersonal societies. A crime can be a perverse act of self-assertion, a subconscious statement like, “I kill, therefore I exist”—a variant of Rene Descartes much-quoted assertion, “Cogito ergo sum (literally, “I think, therefore, I am”).

Another form of self-assertion can be participation—to say nothing of playing a leading role—in a mass movement. Eric Hoffer writes in *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, “There is in us a tendency to locate the shaping forces of our existence outside ourselves. Success and failure are

unavoidably related in our minds with the state of things around us. Hence it is that people with a sense of fulfilment think it a good world and would like to conserve it as it is, while the frustrated favour radical change. The tendency to look for all causes outside ourselves persists even when it is clear that our state of being is the product of personal qualities such as ability, character, appearance, health and so on.” What is the result? Hoffer quotes Thoreau as saying, “If anything ail a man, so that he does not perform his functions, if he has a pain in his bowels even ... he forthwith sets about reforming — the world.” (Italics by Hoffer; Thoreau has used the plurals “ail” and “have” as it was done by many in his time in such contexts).

Attempts to reform the world invariably lead to struggles with status quoists. Besides, social

tensions and conflicts will increase following rising ocean levels, caused by global warming, submerging coastal areas. Inward migration of people from these regions would trigger clashes over land and resources in the interior areas. The same factors will also be in operation in other areas to which people may escape from regions made uninhabitable by temperatures rising too high to support life.

One can, of course, argue that people would be kind to global warming refugees, realising that they may have to leave their homes someday for the same reason. But then, kindness is not what a person encounters frequently in life; it is the same with gratitude, the lack of which weighed heavily on the Bard of Avon. “Ingratitude,” he lamented in *King Lear*, “thou marble-hearted fiend...” He bewailed in *As You Like It*, “Blow, blow, thou winter wind, / Thou art not so unkind/As man’s ingratitude.” And he says in *Twelfth Night*, “I hate ingratitude more in a man/ Than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness, / Or any taint of vice whose strong corruption/ Inhabits our frail blood.” Character attributes like prudence towards gratitude are rooted deep inside one’s DNA and are modified by the environment as one grows up. Seasonal changes can impact their inten-

sity, as discomfort caused by extreme heat or cold can put one’s temper on a short leash.

On the other hand, as Anton Chekhov put it, “People don’t notice whether it’s winter or summer when they’re happy.”

This brings us back to our starting point—northern India’s butt-freezing, breath-choking winter. Can one be happy in its midst? The answer will be in the affirmative, as the news of a progeny scaling new heights at work or being gifted with a baby, will warm the cockles of one’s heart. This, however, is most likely to be a passing phase, overwhelmed, sooner than later, by the many worries and sadnesses that quotidian existence brings and that, again, are ephemeral.

The more relevant question will be whether one can survive northern India’s winter and for how long. The transition to the hereafter caused by pollution stalks one silently but lethally. The final truth in life is mortality.

All this has been said before, and will be said again, as one will hear the much-quoted proverb, “What can’t be cured must be endured.” It has joined the ranks of venerable cliches blessed with eternal life.

(The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

Seeking True Shelter in the divine

AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We are small, ignorant, helpless and unsafe. There should not be any doubt about our smallness with eight billion of us on the earth’s planet itself. How knowledgeable we are or can be? Knowledge is unlimited. How much can we learn in one lifetime? Helpless we are from the time we are born till the time comes to dispose of our bodies. Just count how many people we need daily to survive well. And unsafe all of us are, as the Covid-19 pandemic proved. Therefore, we instinctively seek shelter all the time. An infant needs his parents. As one grows, one takes shelter from education to maintain oneself. Education / training over, time comes

to seek shelter in a job or a business.

The idea is to have the shelter of enough money to be able to survive decently. Sex overpowers thinking beginning from a young age. Some are drawn towards fame like a sportsperson, while others get into politics, etc. for power. The most fortunate seek the shelter of God. Shelter of God is crucial to exist well. Let us see the degree of difficulty for a quality life. Our nature (‘svabhava’) is a huge handicap. Something or other from lust, anger, greed, jealousy, ego, etc. predominates if not more than one.

What chance is there to have a quality life? Lust derails almost everyone. One assumes that sex is pleasure, and it has so many forms. The worst



thing is it’s possessing our minds. Ego is not far behind. Have you met anyone who does not feel his or her superiority vis-à-vis others? Greed does not allow us to assess our needs sensibly. More is better is the desire and there is no satisfaction. Anger is always lurking near the surface. It

surfaces at the drop of a hat, literally. Then, there are karmaphalas always ready to manifest. We know how bad ones hurt. What most people don’t realise are the ill effects of good karmaphalas. This is when one gets the feeling of invincibility and makes big mistakes. People look for rewards

during success, and we know what these rewards do to us. The third big enemy is old age, when we become weak and are mostly written off. Are we stuck? Far from it. God would not have made such a sorry Creation. Guidance and help are available to all of us if we accept the role of God in our lives. Ignorance, false pride or laziness stops us from taking God’s help, who is the owner, controller and everything. You seek guidance sincerely and see what happens. But we don’t; we prefer to be in cyclic thinking short-circuiting our own lives. We condemn ourselves by our obstinate attitude. God is prepared to help all of us at any time, but there is a rider.

We must deserve such help. How to determine

who should get or who shouldn’t? Therefore, the question everyone should be asking is: how do we become deserving of God’s ‘kripa’ (favour)? Simply, you recognise yourself as a soul - part of God. Then, all spiritual activities will make sense.

Shouldn’t parts take shelter from God? Shouldn’t we be very respectful to God and pay obeisance to Him? What about the ‘dhyān’ (meditation) of the entity, who is everything? How about thanking God for all that He does for everyone like providing air, water and sunlight free. In short, we should stop taking shelter of anyone or anything except God, and remain there.

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

Cultural heritage tourism: A path to sustainable growth and mutual understanding

SUKHDEV SINGH

Cultural tourism, as defined in the 22nd session of the UN Tourism General Assembly in 2017, is an activity where a visitor’s primary motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and engage with the tangible and intangible cultural attractions and products of a destination. These motivations shape the agendas of both the visitor and the tour guide at cultural heritage destinations, bridging the gap between the historical and the contemporary.

The Evolution of Cultural Heritage and Tourism

Cultural heritage has undergone a significant shift in perception, moving from an archaeological focus to the concept of “living heritage” and its reuse. Similarly, tourism

has evolved from being largely centered on pilgrimage to a multifaceted industry encompassing learning, entertainment, experiences, and relaxation. This transformation has elevated tourism as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth and job creation across diverse sectors, such as hospitality, transportation, and entertainment. The industry’s ripple effect benefits individuals and communities alike, engaging local businesses, transport operators, craftspeople, tourist guides, and the hospitality industry in a symbiotic relationship.

For these benefits to be fully realised, collaboration among stakeholders is essential. They must work collectively to offer authentic and meaningful experiences that resonate with travelers while preserving the integrity of

cultural sites.

Cultural Heritage as a Driver of Tourism

A rapidly growing segment within the tourism industry is cultural heritage, which encompasses natural and architectural sites, traditional crafts, cultural events, performances, and intangible knowledge. Recognised as both a commodity and an experience, cultural heritage attracts market players, planners, and governments aiming to expand the scope of tourism. It promotes inclusive growth, intercultural exchange and mutual understanding.

The relationship between tourism and cultural heritage is built on mutuality. While cultural heritage serves as a key attraction for tourism, the latter provides the financial and structural support



required for its preservation and promotion.

Navigating Contradictions Tourism operates on the principle of profit and economic growth, while cultural heritage centers on identity and inheritance. These differing foundations can create contradictions. For the tourism industry, cultural heritage is often commodi-

fied, whereas for heritage conservation, tourism acts as a feeder for sustainability. While these sectors can support one another to an extent, unchecked tourism practices can lead to significant challenges, including overcrowding, environmental and degradation.

To mitigate these issues, regulated practices in cul-

tural heritage tourism must prioritise the symbiotic relationship between factors influencing tourist experiences and those fostering cultural understanding. Tour operators and tourists must respect the sanctity and protocols of cultural heritage sites. Travelers should be encouraged to appreciate local customs without overstepping boundaries, ensuring a balance between immersion and respect. Sustainable cultural heritage tourism, thus, becomes a pathway to fostering “culture for peace.”

Economic and Cultural Benefits of Heritage Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism creates opportunities for income generation and employment. This is achieved by maintaining and showcasing heri-

tage structures, sites, and products. Preservation efforts, such as cataloging and storytelling, directly benefit from tourism revenue. Simultaneously, the broader economic ecosystem, including hospitality, transportation, and entertainment, flourishes through increased visitor engagement.

However, cultural heritage is far more than a revenue-generating commodity. It serves as a repository of customs, values, and artifacts, connecting communities to their past and reinforcing their identities. Tourism, when responsibly managed, can amplify the significance of heritage sites by fostering research, introducing new narratives, and raising awareness. Reinvestment of economic returns into preservation ensures the longevity and authenticity

of cultural heritage.

Challenges of Cultural Heritage Tourism

While tourism can elevate the value of cultural heritage, it also introduces challenges. Overcrowding, environmental degradation, and disruptions to the local population’s way of life are common issues.

Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

To maintain a harmonious balance between tourism and cultural heritage, sustainable practices are essential. These include regulating visitor numbers, promoting eco-friendly initiatives, and ensuring that tourism revenue is reinvested into preservation efforts.

(The writer is retired professor of Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar and Vice-Chairman, INTACH; views are personal)

Republic Day address...

I extend my deepest tribute to the valiant soldiers of the Indian Army, Para Military Forces, and Jammu and Kashmir Police, whose relentless dedication and sacrifices ensure the unity, integrity, and security of our nation. Beyond safeguarding our borders, they stand as pillars of peace and stability for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Their extraordinary valor and service inspire us to work towards a united, secure, and prosperous India. On this momentous occasion, I would like to express my gratitude to every individual contributing to the progress of our Union Territory - farmers, artisans, teachers, healthcare workers, security forces, sportspersons and government officials. Your dedication and hard work are the cornerstone of our collective success. Jammu and Kashmir has always been a land of unity in diversity. We take immense pride in our composite culture and centuries-old traditions of brotherhood. It is our collective responsibility to maintain peace and harmony, ensuring that the dreams of our youth are not hindered by divisive forces. Our journey has been one of resilience and determination, marked by unparalleled achievements in every sphere. Jammu and Kashmir, with its rich heritage, natural beauty, and vibrant culture, has always been a vital part of this journey.

The successful conduct of Assembly Elections underscores the positive change and this achievement is credited to all the citizens who participated in this democratic exercise, demonstrating their faith in our democratic values and future of Jammu and Kashmir. The people now look to the Government with renewed expectations, aspiring for an environment that promotes meaningful employment, sustainable development, social inclusivity, and robust economic growth - paving the way for an enhanced quality of life for all. For further strengthening and ensuring peoples' participation at a broader level, elections for Local Bodies will be conducted for establishing 3-Tier Governance structure.

Good governance is the cornerstone for a prosperous and harmonious future and is pivotal to fostering peace, development, and inclusivity in the region. By focusing on transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric policies, the government has prioritized empowering local communities through participatory decision-making and equitable resource distribution. Initiatives like digital governance, streamlining public services, and promoting socio-economic programs aim to bridge developmental gaps and strengthen public trust.

J&K has taken lead in making 1,166 online public services available on e-Unnat portal and 501 e-services have been integrated with Rapid Assessment System (RAS). 387 services are covered under the Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA), and 104 Government services have been integrated with DigiLocker for enhanced document security and accessibility. J&K is targeting to achieve 100% compliance of reforms for ease of doing business. Jammu and Kashmir has created JK SAMADHAN platform, for online redressal of public grievances. About 300 grievances are processed per day. Another initiative launched by the Government, Raabta, is a landmark program aimed at fostering stronger connections between the government and the people.

Jammu and Kashmir's economy has recorded a growth rate of 9.5% which is driven by sustained government initiatives and strategic policy measures. GSDP of J&K is estimated at Rs 2.45 lakh crore for 2023-24, up from Rs 2,20 lakh crore in 2022-23. This positive trajectory highlights the effectiveness of ongoing economic development strategies, infrastructure advancements, and business-friendly policies.

We have made remarkable strides in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation and rank 2nd among UTs in the SDG India Index 2023-24. Specific policy interventions by the Government have enabled to improve the overall score and ranking of Jammu and Kashmir. Data-driven monitoring and policy intervention ensures effective resource allocation and decision making. Alignment of SDGs with the budget and facilitating Outcome-Based Monitoring is being planned as a next phase.

For enhancing legal and judicial consistency and for establishment of robust and unified criminal justice system, ensuring fairness, equality, and the rule of law, three criminal laws have been implemented in Jammu and Kashmir. The implementation of these Criminal Laws are backed by technological upgradation, capacity building of investigators/prosecutors, data analysis, evidence collection, cyber security and procurement of new technological devices for giving effect to various provisions of the new criminal laws.

Our Union Territory has witnessed remarkable progress in various sectors of development. From infrastructure development to social welfare, from education reforms to healthcare advancements, our administration has been relentless in its pursuit of growth and equity.

Significant strides have been made in road connectivity. Work on Jammu-Akhnoor-Poonch National Highway, Srinagar-Baramulla-Uri National Highway

and Chenani-Sudmahadev-Khellani-Kishtwar-Khanabal National Highway is under progress. Work on Banihal bypass on Srinagar-Jammu NH has recently been completed and opened for traffic. Work on Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway is under progress, which will reduce the distance between Delhi and Katra to 6 hours only. Srinagar and Jammu Ring Roads are in advanced stages of completion. Z-Morh tunnel has been completed and is being dedicated to the nation soon. Construction of Zojila tunnel is also under progress.

Works on development of Baramulla-Kupwara-Trehgam National Highway, Baramulla Uri NH, Pattan Bypass and Baramulla Bypass have been started. 8 tunnel projects are in the advanced stages and are likely to be completed by December 2025. Sudmahadev Dranga tunnel and Singhpora Vailoo tunnel are being taken up. Unconnected habitations having population more than 250 as per 2011 census are being taken up under the newly launched PMGSY-IV programme. 144 Road and Bridge projects are being taken up under NABARD.

In a historic stride towards progress, the Railway is set to connect the Kashmir Valley with the rest of the nation, heralding a new era of development, economic growth, and unity.

J&K is witnessing rapid development in hydropower generation. Mega hydro projects like Pakal Dul, Kiru, and Ratle shall be ready by 2026 and Kwar by December 2027 collectively adding 3,014 MWs generation capacity. Another four hydropower projects having 1818 MWs generation capacity (Dulhasti-II, Kirthai-I, Kirthai-II and Uri-II) are in pipeline. Sawalkote HEP is in the techno economic study phase which is being conducted by NHPC. In the transmission sector, a total capacity addition of 310 MVA has been achieved at 220 kV & 132 kV voltage level. In the distribution sector also, 28 No. of Receiving Stations and 503 Sub-stations with capacity addition of 211.44 MVA have been created/augmented. Holy shrine of Shri Amarnathji Baba shall be provided Grid connected uninterrupted power supply through underground cabling during this year.

3266 water supply schemes are under execution under Jal Jeevan Mission with the objective of providing 100% piped water connections to each and every rural household. 81% households have already been covered with household tap water connections and the remaining 19% (3.71 lakh) households shall be covered during the mission period. Work on Shahpur Kandi Dam Project is in advanced stage and J&K is likely to add irrigation potential of more than 32,000 hectares which will benefit catchment areas of Samba and Kathua Districts. Work on Tawi Barrage (Artificial Lake) conceived for tourism purpose in the heart of the Jammu city, is expected to be commissioned this year.

Major steps have been taken to improve and strengthen agriculture in Jammu & Kashmir, focusing on creating a sustainable and strong farming economy. The government has introduced the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP), an ambitious initiative aimed at mitigating the challenges faced by our farmers and creating a robust and diversified agricultural economy. This comprehensive program covers all key aspects of agriculture, including horticulture, livestock, fisheries, sericulture, and medicinal & aromatic plants, among others. A significant development in the agriculture sector is the notable boost in investment and credit flow. Government will also implement JK Competitiveness of Agriculture & Allied Sectors Project (JKICP) focusing on four key components: Climate-smart and market-led production, Agri-business ecosystem development support, Support to vulnerable communities, and Project Management. This initiative will benefit about 3 lakh Households.

The Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs) is empowering our farmers, boosting productivity, and laying the foundation for sustainable agricultural growth. More than 2 lakh farmers are part of this growing ecosystem, benefiting from seamless access to services, schemes, and expert advisories. This initiative is further being carried forward to bring more farmers under the ambit. Under DAKSH KISAN, 93 thousand farmers have enrolled in skilling courses across agriculture and allied sectors. A major milestone was achieved with the implementation of the PM Fasal Bima Yojana which covers important crops such as paddy, maize, wheat, and oilseeds, ensuring financial security and resilience against crop losses. Over 1.45 lakh farmers have been registered under this scheme, covering 60,200 hectares, providing much-needed protection to our farmers in times of adversity.

For the preservation and promotion of region-specific agricultural heritage, G.I. tags have been secured for 07 agricultural products, including Solai Honey from Ramban, Rajma from Bhadarwah, Kalari from Ramnagar, Anardana from Ramban, Basmati from Jammu, Muskbudji and Saffron from Kashmir. 64 patents have also been registered over the past four years by the Agriculture Universities.

Under the Horticulture sector, the government aims to enhance the coverage under high-density, a project that will significantly increase the production and

productivity of fruit crops. With this initiative, Government aims to raise yields from 10 metric tons per hectare to an impressive 60 metric tons per hectare, setting a new benchmark for horticultural output in the region.

Jammu and Kashmir has made significant strides in industrial development, investment, and employment generation in recent years. New policies, including the J&K Export Policy, J&K Logistic Policy, and J&K Procurement Preferences Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), are under preparation to further boost economic growth. The Government of India launched a New Central Sector Scheme in 2021 with an outlay of Rs 28,400 crore to boost industrial development in J&K. New Central Sector Scheme package which offers Capital Investment Incentive, Capital Interest Subvention and Working Capital Interest Subvention has encouraged the industrial investment in the UT. 889 units have commenced groundwork out of which 324 industrial units are expected to begin production this year. 46 New Industrial Estates with all the modern facilities are being developed to attract industries and enhance job opportunities.

The government is also exploring establishment of business units in new sectors such as Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled Services (ITeS), renewable energy, biotechnology and incubation centers, with the goal of creating technology parks to foster innovation. The J&K Startup Policy 2024-27, notified in February 2024, aims to establish 2,000 startups in the UT by 2027 and includes the creation of a Rs. 250 crore Venture Capital Fund, with an initial infusion of Rs. 25 crore.

For the first time, startups with J&K have begun receiving equity funding from institutional investors. PM Ekta Malls are coming up at Srinagar and Jammu for empowering local artisans and providing forward market platforms/linkages. A significant GoI initiative called Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) aims to improve the access of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises to finance, technology and markets shall be implemented in J&K for the welfare of MSME entrepreneurs. Handicraft and Handloom Sector provides direct and indirect employment to nearly 4.22 lakh individuals, primarily from economically weaker sections. Srinagar has been recognized as a 'World Crafts City' by the World Crafts Council and designated as part of the Creative City Network in the field of Crafts and Folk Arts by UNESCO.

Efforts are being made to promote 'Brand J&K', focusing on products like pashmina, saffron, and other handicrafts. Emphasis shall be further laid on facilitating the Geographical Indication (GI) tagging of traditional products. 13 crafts are in advanced stage for GI registration during current financial year viz; Crewel, Chain Stitch, Namdha, Willow Bat, Gabba, Shikara, Tweed, Wagoo, Samba Calico Printing, Kishtwari Loi, Jammu Phulkari and Kishtwari Binna (Wheat Straw). Besides, 07 New Crafts are targeted to be registered namely Houseboat, Jammu Copper Ware, Jammu Dogri Suit, Jammu Brass Ware, Doda Bhaderwah Narsingha, Doda Dadli, Doda Wooden Racksack.

A comprehensive package for the development of handicrafts is currently under discussion with the Ministry of MSME, the Ministry of Textiles, shall be further taken ahead. Under Vishvakarma, J&K is ranked 7th in registrations and 2nd leading performer among States/UTs in trainings and effective implementation of the Scheme. 1.24 Lakh artisans have been trained and assessed, leveraging a robust network of 74 Government Training Centers and 117 centers affiliated with National Skill Development Corporation.

J&K is an all-weather tourist destination, offering a diverse range of experiences that cater to every type of traveler. One of the most exciting milestones in our tourism journey was the successful launch of the first edition of the Kashmir Marathon, held on 20th October, 2024. With over 1800 runners from across the globe, the event has firmly placed Jammu & Kashmir on the map of international marathons. The participants included from a common name to Chief Minister of the UT. The tourism sector holds the potential to transform our entire economy, as it plays a pivotal role in generating employment and boosting local businesses. This year, J&K has witnessed a record-breaking 2.36 crore tourist visits till November, 2024. Gulmarg Gondola has witnessed 7.68 lakhs tourists and earned a revenue of Rs. 103 Crore during 2024.

To further build on this momentum and enhance the tourism experience, several significant projects are underway. A state-of-the-art water park is being constructed at Dwara Village, near the Sidhra Golf Course, under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode. Basohli is also being developed as an adventure tourism hotspot. A vertical lift project is being installed to connect Peerkho to the Mubarak Mandi Complex, enhancing accessibility and making it easier for tourists to visit this historic site.

Our winter sports infrastructure has also seen significant improvements. Drag lifts are now operational in Sonamarg and Gulmarg, two of our premier winter sports destinations. In line with our vision to distribute tourist traffic more evenly across

the region and ensure sustainable tourism growth, the Government is working to secure Multilateral funding under the Sustainable Promotion of Emerging Alternate Destination (SPREAD) initiative to develop alternate tourism destinations across J&K, adhering to international standards and easing the pressure on our most popular locations.

To preserve and promote the rich cultural legacy of Jammu & Kashmir, "Writers & Artists Welfare Fund" has been created with a seed money allocation of Rs. 50 lakhs, aimed at reaching out to artists and their dependent family members who find themselves in distress. For preservation of cultural heritage, new archival repository is being operationalized and a fresh survey of heritage monuments and sites will be conducted. Modernization of the SRS Library in Jammu and the construction of the Library-cum-Café building and Dogra Art Museum in the Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex are in the final stages of completion. SPS Museum will be made fully functional, adding to the region's cultural offerings. Moreover, the Sufiyana School in Srinagar and the Culture Centre in Kathua are both set to be completed soon, further enhancing our cultural and artistic infrastructure.

1.50 crore saplings have been planted this year under the scheme "Maa ke naam ek ped". 36 Nagar Vans are being established. 5 KMs of critically silted Wular Lake has been restored. Second phase of Jambu Zoo is under progress which will have more enclosures enriching the wildlife experience for visitors.

Dear brothers and sisters, there has been remarkable progress in strengthening the healthcare infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir. AIIMS Jammu is now providing services to the people, and work on AIIMS Kashmir is progressing rapidly. Seven new medical colleges and two cancer hospitals have been established. A Bone and Joint Hospital in Jammu and a 500-bed Pediatric Hospital in Srinagar have been inaugurated. The number of MBBS seats has increased from 500 to 1,300. Additionally, 297 PG seats, 344 DNB seats, 143 M.Sc. Nursing seats, 1,485 B.Sc. Nursing seats, and 1,660 B.Sc. Paramedical seats have been added. Furthermore, 26 new B.Sc. Nursing Colleges and 19 B.Sc. Paramedical Colleges have been started. To provide financial assistance to needy patients for terminal surgeries, the Mukhyamantri Swasthya Trust will be established.

Government will focus on increasing MBBS, PG and Nursing seats and will add new tertiary care services and advanced courses for strengthening the health care facilities at tertiary level. Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) screening initiatives shall be further strengthened for early detection and treatment of diseases. 10 districts are expected to be TB free by the end of year 2025.

The Government of India is implementing a Whole of Government Approach to eliminate co-terror networks and drug syndicates, ensuring that future generations are freed from the vicious cycle of drug addiction. For this purpose, the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) and the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan have been implemented. To make J&K Nasha Mukh, various initiatives are being taken up through monitoring and counseling to combat drug menace which includes Aadhaar-based dispensing systems, enhance surveillance, and ensure strict enforcement to prevent misuse of medicinal preparations in coordination with NGOs & other stakeholders. Drug De-addiction infrastructure has been created in all 20 districts with availability of anti-drug treatment facilities. 377 Panchayats have been made Nasha Mukh. Drug awareness camps are being organized in villages, schools and colleges. Strict action is being taken against drug peddlers and contraband substances are being seized, FIRs registered and property of peddlers seized.

Recognizing Telemedicine as a solution to geographical challenge, Government aims to integrate Telemedicine services across various medical specialties, enhancing health care access for residents. Government will create a Chief Minister's Medical Trust for providing financial assistance to the needy for terminal diseases.

Under the School Education, the government is promoting collaboration for research and quality education by embracing technology and digitization. Key initiatives include the establishment of smart classrooms, tinkering labs and the integration of digital resources to enhance the learning experience. To improve teaching standards and educational outcomes, there is a strong focus on capacity building for teaching faculty. The "School Complex" System will be implemented across 746 schools, fostering collaboration and better resource sharing.

Under the PM Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) Scheme, 396 schools have been approved for upgradation, aimed at enhancing educational infrastructure across Jammu & Kashmir. 45 Tinkering Labs and 159 STEM Labs are nearing completion. 600 ICT Labs, 2000 Smart Classrooms, and 500 Atal Tinkering Labs are being further set up to enhance the educational ecosystem and promoting innovation.

The government has prioritized the

higher education sector to transform Jammu & Kashmir into an educational hub that attracts investment and provides employment opportunities. Key developments include operationalization of IIT, Jammu and IIM, Jammu. Jammu University has been granted A++ status, while the Islamic University of Science and Technology is emerging as a leader in skill development and innovation. Faculty from University of Kashmir have been recognized among the top 2% of global scientists by Stanford University, and institutions like Cluster University of Jammu and Islamic University of Science and Technology have secured patents which have contributed to high-impact research.

67 degree colleges have received NAAC accreditation, and efforts are being made to ensure that all colleges achieve this standard for quality education. Two architecture colleges are under construction in Jammu and Srinagar, enhancing higher education options. Under the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), 44 infrastructure projects are underway for degree colleges and universities, and 17 new college buildings are being constructed to accommodate the growing student population. As part of the 'Beti Padhao Beti Bachao' programme, 91 female students underwent a month-long internship at IIM, Rohtak, promoting women's education and empowerment.

Under the Smart City Mission, Jammu & Kashmir has successfully completed 260 projects, focusing on key urban infrastructure like the Lal Chowk redevelopment, Jhelum Riverfront and Polo View High Street. Development of Tawi Riverfront, Ranbir Canal Walkway and Heritage Market Upgrades are also underway.

Intelligent Traffic Management System has been established for better traffic control and road safety, with features like surveillance, e-Bill Pay, e-challans for violations, GIS-based digital door numbering, etc. To promote green transport initiatives, the government have introduced 200 e-buses which are being supplemented with additional 200 e-buses for better eco-friendly public transport facility. E-rickshaws have been also introduced to provide last mile connectivity.

Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) has been established to regulate the real estate sector, and land has been identified for mass housing colonies, including Shaljar Heights and Satellite Township at Rakh Gundaksha. Under PMAY, 27,793 housing units have been completed, with PMAY-II registration underway for EWS/LIG/MIG families.

33 Urban Local Bodies have been made Solid Waste Management friendly whereas Solid Waste Management Centers are being established in 45 Urban Local Bodies. 153 projects have been taken up under AMRUT 2.0 for improving water supply, sewerage, and water body rejuvenation, benefiting 2.24 lakh households. Pollution abatement projects for Dal Lake, River Devika, Tawi, Jhelum, and Banganga are progressing.

2.68 lakh houses have been completed under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) Scheme whereas work on 68,000 houses sanctioned is under progress. 1.50 lakh works are likely to be completed this year under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Act (MGNREGA). 487 deserving landless families have been allotted 5 marlas of land to support their housing needs. Rs 1,300 crore resource envelope has been made available to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) annually.

25 lakh families (about 99 lakh individuals) are being provided ration under NFSA. Under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), free ration is being provided to 16.62 lakh households, encompassing 66.51 lakh beneficiaries. Pensionary benefits (Old Age, Widow, Specially Aabled) are being provided to 9.09 lakh beneficiaries. About 8.77 lakh individuals (Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers, Adolescent Girls and 0-6 yrs. old children) are provided supplementary nutrition. Under Ladli Beti, 33,591 girls and under Marriage Assistance 25,900 women have been covered during 2024-25, with mandatory Aadhaar authentication. One Stop Centers have been established in all districts of the Union Territory.

Jammu and Kashmir has pioneered the establishment of 20 Hubs for Empowerment of Women, which serve as vital centers for supporting women's empowerment by offering comprehensive information on a wide range of women-centric schemes. More than 550 disabled persons have secured employment in the government sector due to change in reservation policy and notification of posts suitable for various bench mark disabilities. 357 SC dominated villages have been selected for development under PM Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PMAJAY) to provide various basic services so that the minimum needs of all the sections of the society are fully met and disparities are reduced to a minimum.

For providing transit accommodation to Kashmiri Migrants employees, 6,000 flats have been sanctioned out of which 2,832 have been completed and 2,016 are at various stages of development. 33,636 displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) and Chhamb

from the conflicts in 1947 and subsequent years have been provided financial assistance of Rs 1,452 crore. 3541 West Pakistani refugees have been allocated a financial support of Rs. 89 crore.

The prestigious J&K Tribal Research Institute at Khimber, Srinagar, a think tank in the field of socio-economic development, capacity building and research for the welfare of the tribals has been completed. 26 new ST/G&B hostels are at different stages of construction and are expected to be made functional during the year 2025-26. Currently, six Eklavya Model Residential Schools are functional in various districts, with aim to provide quality education to Scheduled Tribe (ST) children in remote areas. Smart Class rooms have been set up in 64 schools and 164 additional smart classrooms are being set up during current financial year.

The Government has provided transport facility to the tribals along with their livestock for their migration from one place to another. Government has approved a project to establish transit accommodations at 8 places which will cater to the needs of trans-human tribal Populations. Government is in the process of recommending 604 new villages under Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA) aims to fill critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood.

Urban youths are being provided self-employment opportunities under various self-employment programmes which include National Urban Livelihood Mission, National Rural Livelihood Mission besides creation of Self Help Groups and Skill Development/Training under HIMAYAT. Government plans to transform 40,000 Potential Lakhpati Didi's (PLDs) into Lakhpati Didi's which shall promote the livelihood and empowerment of rural women.

Government is working on Mission YUVA, which aims to establish Jammu & Kashmir as a hub of entrepreneurial excellence and employment generation. Designed to address the region's educated unemployment, particularly among youth and women, the initiative envisions creating a dynamic ecosystem for enterprise development. This comprehensive strategy capitalizes on the region's socio-economic potential and cultural heritage, driving a transformative journey towards inclusive prosperity.

The program aims for fostering nano-entrepreneurs, with a special focus on first-generation entrepreneurs, women, and youth from remote areas; establishing new MSMEs in growth and sunrise sectors; scaling existing businesses towards sustainable growth; and promoting innovative startups and knowledge-based enterprises. The initiative seeks to create over 1,37,000 enterprises and generate about 4,25,000 jobs over five years.

The administration has also taken necessary steps for fast-track recruitment in government jobs. In the past four to five years, 40,000 appointments were made based on transparency and merit. The process for compassionate appointments has also been expedited. A total of 10,616 positions have been referred to JKPSC and JKSSB, out of which notifications for 7,376 positions have been issued. Examinations for 6,090 positions have already been conducted. This year, 1,116 cases under SRO-43 have been approved, while 150 cases are under review.

4500 children have been provided free training at 92 Khelo India Centers, who are now shining on national podiums. 15,000 sports persons represented J&K in National & Zonal level competitions in different disciplines during this year. Special focus has been given to women's participation, with our women athletes winning medals and earning accolades at national and international levels. One of our crowning achievements is the revival of international cricket through the Legends League, hosted in J&K for the first time since 1988, drawing global attention and massive crowds. Water Sports Academy at Nehru Park in Srinagar and the Fencing Academy at MA Stadium, Jammu have been established. Prestigious Khel Gaon in Nagrota, a multi-sports hub with world-class facilities, will soon be completed.

High-Performance Training Centers shall be developed in every district in phased manner to enhance athlete training and performance. Gymnastics Academy shall be established at the GINDUN Stadium in Rajbagh, Srinagar for providing specialized training to the aspiring gymnasts. After successfully hosting 04 editions of Khelo India Winter Games at Gulmarg, we look forward to host the 5th Edition in February, 2025.

The digitization of revenue records and maps is currently in the finalization stage, having achieved 100% scanning of legacy data. The digitization of Jamabandi records stands at 99.84%.

As we look to the future, let us pledge to work together for a prosperous Jammu and Kashmir. Our focus remains on sustainable development, fostering innovation, and empowering every citizen to realize their potential. The essence of democracy lies in the participation of its people, and your involvement is vital in shaping a brighter tomorrow.

Jai Hind !

Committed to promoting closer cooperation with India: Indonesian Prez on his State Visit

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 25

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto was accorded a ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Saturday by President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

His visit marks a significant chapter in India-Indonesia relations, with President Prabowo set to be the Chief Guest at India's 76th Republic Day celebrations on Sunday.

President Prabowo arrived in New Delhi on Thursday evening and was greeted at the airport by Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita.

Speaking to reporters after the ceremonial welcome, he expressed deep gratitude for the honour.

"I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the great honour I received today. Indonesia considers India a very close friend. India was one



of the first countries, perhaps the first, to recognise our independence and support us in our struggle for freedom. We will never forget what India did to help us."

"I am very honoured today, and I am doubly honoured that tomorrow, I will be the chief guest at your Republic Day parade," the Indonesian President said, adding, "I'm committed to promoting closer cooperation, closer partnership with India. That is my determination."

This is Prabowo's first official visit to India since assuming office in October 2024.

Later in the day, he will participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at Rajghat and hold a meeting with PM Modi at Hyderabad House at noon. The meeting will include the exchange of MOUs and press statements.

He is also scheduled to meet Vice President Jagdeep Thakkar at the Taj Mahal Hotel, followed by a meeting with President Droupadi Murmu at Rash-

trapati Bhavan.

On Friday, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called on President Prabowo. Sharing the moment on X, Jaishankar said, "Pleased to call on President Prabowo Subianto of Indonesia at the start of his State Visit to India. Value his guidance and positive sentiments for the development of our multifaceted bilateral ties."

In his departure statement, ahead of his state visit to India, President Prabowo had acknowl-

edged India's historic support for Indonesia's independence, stating, "India is a very important friendly country for Indonesia. During our war of independence until 1949, India provided medical aid, financial aid, and other support. For us, India remains a very important friend and partner."

Interestingly, Sukarno, Indonesia's first President, was the Chief Guest at India's inaugural Republic Day celebrations in 1950. Continuing this tradition of camaraderie, Indonesia has sent a 352-member contingent of troops from its National Armed Forces, including defile troops and a drum band, to participate in this year's celebrations.

President Prabowo's visit underscores the deep-rooted friendship and growing collaboration between the two nations, highlighting shared historical ties and a vision for enhanced bilateral relations.

Odisha govt approves industrial projects worth Rs 32,736 crore

AGENCIES

BHUBANESWAR, JAN 25

Ahead of the Utkarsh Odisha - Make in Odisha conclave 2025 scheduled to begin on January 28, the Odisha government on Friday approved several industrial projects with investment worth Rs 32,736 crore spanning various sectors.

The investment projects were approved during the 39th High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA) meeting here on Friday.

"In the 39th HLCA meeting, the state approved investments worth Rs 32,736 crore across eight transformative industrial projects.

These projects span across sectors such as Chemicals, Green energy equipment, Ship building & repair & steel. These investments are set to generate employment for over 18,688 individuals, reinforcing Odisha's industrial and economic foundation," the state gov-

ernment said in a press note on Friday.

The HLCA meets for the second time in this month ahead of the much-anticipated Utkarsh Odisha 2025.

The state government further claimed that the success of numerous roadshows organised by the state in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Singapore has resulted in significant investor interest, with several companies now looking to invest in Odisha.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said: "The approval of these big projects before Utkarsh Odisha 2025 is a clear sign of our state's growing industrial strength. These investments will create thousands of jobs and will directly benefit the people of Odisha. Our focus is to ensure that Odisha remains a top investment destination, driving progress and prosperity for our people."

The approved projects

are spread across key districts like Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Ganjam, Sambalpur and Bhubaneswar, helping to strengthen Odisha's industrial base.

With these projects, Odisha is entering a new phase of industrial growth and further establishing itself as a major player in India's economic development.

Notably, The Odisha government will host the two-day conclave in Bhubaneswar on January 28-29 to attract investors from across the globe.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the mega event on January 28.

The conclave will focus on five key sectors -- IT, renewable energy, textiles, chemicals, and food processing.

Twelve countries, including Australia, Malaysia, Japan, Germany, Poland, and Cuba, have been invited as 'Countries of Focus' to participate in the conclave.

Over 100 International delegates to attend Make in Odisha Conclave: CM Majhi

AGENCIES

BHUBANESWAR, JAN 25

More than 100 international delegates from 20 countries will attend the Make in Odisha Conclave-2025, which will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Bhubaneswar on January 28.

Describing the two-day conclave as historic in every respect, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said it would serve as a milestone in building a strong economic and industrial infrastructure for Odisha.

"Our goal of being among the top five state economies in India will certainly be achieved," the Chief Minister stated while reviewing the event preparations during a high-level meeting on Friday.

The Chief Minister further mentioned that investment proposals worth more than Rs 5 lakh crore are expected during the investors' meet, which

is anticipated to generate over 3.5 lakh employment opportunities. He added that Odisha is emerging as a state of immense potential, with over 100 investors scheduled to sign MoUs during the event.

Apart from the Prime Minister, Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Jewel Oram, and Ashwani Vaishnav will also attend the conclave.

The Chief Minister highlighted that more than 7,500 delegates have registered on the Make in Odisha website, including over 100 international delegates from 20+ countries. Additional participation is expected from partner countries like Singapore, Australia, and Malaysia.

He revealed that there will be special "Country of Focus" sessions, where delegates from approximately 20 countries will engage in discussions aimed at enhancing Odisha's profile on the global industrial stage.

A 'Make in Odisha Expo' will also be held as part of the conclave. Approximately 150 exhibitors will showcase their products, services, and innovations. The expo will be exclusively open to delegates on January 28-29 and will be accessible to the public on January 30.

The event will feature three thematic sessions, focusing on 'Startup Odisha,' 'Skilled in Odisha,' and 'Women Entrepreneurship through Subhadra.'

Additionally, various roundtable meetings, such as the 'Women-led Roundtable,' 'CEO Roundtable,' and 'Editors Roundtable,' will foster knowledge exchange among industrialists and experts.

The State Culture Department has arranged cultural programs, including dance performances by renowned Odissi dancer Padma Shri Aruna Mohanty, a drone show, and other activities.

NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY IS ABOUT CELEBRATING INDIA'S VIBRANT DEMOCRACY: PM MODI

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 25

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday emphasised the significance of National Voters' Day, describing it as a celebration of India's vibrant democracy.

Taking to social media platform X, PM Modi highlighted the importance of every citizen exercising their right to vote and acknowledged the crucial role of participation in shaping the future of the nation.

"National Voters' Day is about celebrating our vibrant democracy and empowering every citizen to exercise their right to vote. It highlights the importance of participation in shaping the nation's future. We laud the Election Commission of India for their exemplary efforts in this regard," the Prime Minister wrote, express-



ing his gratitude to the poll panel for its continuous efforts in strengthening the democratic process.

National Voters' Day, observed on January 25 each year, is a reminder of the establishment of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Prime Minister Modi

pointed out that this day holds special significance as it marks the foundation of the ECI. He also reflected on the historical context, recalling how, during the first general elections in 1951-1952, there were doubts about the sustainability of India's democracy. "Some people were

sceptical, whether the country's democracy will survive," he said.

However, the Prime Minister emphasised that India's democracy had proved all doubts wrong, asserting, "India is the mother of democracy."

PM Modi further acknowledged the progress made over the decades in strengthening and prospering India's democracy.

He lauded the Election Commission for its consistent modernisation efforts and technological innovations in the electoral process. "The commission has used the power of technology to strengthen people's power," he said, congratulating the ECI for its unwavering commitment to conducting fair elections.

The Prime Minister also appealed to citizens to participate in the democratic process by voting

in large numbers. "I urge the countrymen to vote in large numbers and participate in the country's democratic processes and also strengthen this process," he said in a video post, which was part of his "Mann ki Baat" radio show.

Since 2011, the National Voters' Day (NVD) has been celebrated on January 25 every year to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India (ECI), which was established on this day in the year 1950.

The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate, and maximise voter enrolment, especially the new voters.

Dedicated to the country's voters, the day is celebrated to spread awareness among them to promote informed participation in the electoral process.

R-Day: 942 personnel to be honoured with Gallantry, Service Medals

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 25

On the eve of Republic Day, names of 942 personnel from police, fire, civil defence, home guard, and correctional services were announced for the various categories of gallantry and service medals, as per a government statement issued on Saturday.

According to the statement issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), this includes 95 gallantry medals awarded to personnel for their exemplary courage and valour.

Among the gallantry awardees, 28 personnel



were deployed in Left Wing Extremism-affected areas, 28 in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and three in the northeast, as well as, 36 in other regions of the country.

Additionally, 101 President's Medals for Distinguished Service (PSM) were conferred, with 85 awarded to police personnel, five to fire services personnel, seven to civil

defence and home guard personnel, and four to those in correctional services. Of the 746 Medals for Meritorious Service (MSM), 634 went to police service personnel, 37 to fire service, 39 to civil defence and home guard, and 36 to correctional service.

The Medals for Gallantry (GM) are granted for "exceptional and noteworthy acts of bravery in saving lives and property, or in preventing crime and apprehending criminals," according to a statement from the central government.

Additionally, the level

of risk involved is also assessed with careful consideration of the responsibilities and duties of the officer in question.

The President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM) is awarded for exceptional service records, while the Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM) acknowledges valuable service marked by resourcefulness and dedication to duty.

The awards reflect the commitment and bravery of the personnel in safeguarding lives, and property and maintaining public order in challenging circumstances.

Congress high command unlikely to replace party chief K. Sudhakaran in Kerala

AGENCIES

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 25

After days of speculation in the Kerala unit of the Congress party, the air has finally cleared -- state president K. Sudhakaran is set to continue in his position.

Sources close to Sudhakaran revealed that the party high command has assured him that he will not be replaced and that any major decisions will involve his opinion.

The uncertainty began

after Deepa Das Munshi, the AICC General Secretary in charge of Kerala, held one-on-one meetings with several top state leaders. This fueled rumours that Sudhakaran, also the Member of Parliament from Kannur, might step down due to health concerns.

One of the key reasons behind the speculation was the growing friction between Sudhakaran and Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan. At one point, discussions about leadership change even

included the possibility of replacing both top leaders.

However, Satheesan has dismissed such reports, insisting that there is no rift in the party.

"There is absolutely no difference of opinion between Sudhakaran and me.

Just yesterday, we spoke about these rumours and laughed them off. In the Congress party, unlike the CPI(M), even top leaders face criticism. If I'm criticized, I provide an explanation.

Parvesh Verma promises to clean Yamuna, criticises Kejriwal's failed cleanliness claims

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 25

Pravesh Verma, the BJP candidate from New Delhi Assembly, made bold promises to clean the Yamuna River if the party forms the government in the upcoming Delhi elections.

Speaking about the importance of the Yamuna River for Delhi, Verma emphasised that the river could be a great

resource for the city if properly cleaned and managed.

He argued that cleaning the Yamuna is not a complex task, stating, "It's not rocket science. The river has accumulated 88 metres of sludge, which can be cleared using machinery."

Verma outlined his vision for the riverfront, mentioning plans to build water treatment plants along the 28 kms of the

river where drains empty into it.

He also proposed creating permanent ghats on both sides of the river and planting nearly 10 lakh trees to purify the water.

Drawing a comparison with the development of the Sabarmati Riverfront, he said, "Just as our Prime Minister created the Sabarmati Riverfront, we can do the same here in Delhi."

Bengal: Tight security in place for Republic Day celebration

AGENCIES

KOLKATA, JAN 25

Amid the continuing political crisis in neighbouring Bangladesh and the frequent reports of illegal Bangladesh infiltrators being nabbed from different pockets in the state, security has been tightened in the state for the Republic Day celebration on Red Road in Kolkata on Sunday. Insiders from the city police said that considering the security aspect

for the annual event this time, two officials in the rank of Additional Commissioner will be on the streets, supervising the security arrangements at the ground level.

They will be assisted by four Joint Commissioners, 22 Deputy Commissioners, 46 Assistant Commissioners and 119 Inspectors.

A total of 2,300 policemen will be deployed at Red Road, a city police official said.

The entire Red Road

will be divided into four security zones. A total of 11 watchtowers have been installed," the city police official said.

At the same time, during the entire parade period, traffic movement will be restricted at several important roads adjacent to the Red Road, the venue of the parade.

The traffic movement restriction on these roads will start from 5 a.m. on Sunday. The credentials of the visitors lodged at dif-

ferent hotels and lodges in the state are being checked regularly for the last few days, to ensure that unwanted elements have not taken shelter there.

Meanwhile, the Border Security Force (BSF) has already issued an 'Operations Alert' at all the border outposts at the international borders with Bangladesh which will be in effect till January 31.

This week BSF's Special Director General (Eastern

Command) Ravi Gandhi visited several border outposts in the zone reviewing the security arrangements there.

Meanwhile, sources said, that intelligence agencies are keeping a special watch on the villages adjacent to the international borders with Bangladesh in West Bengal in anticipation that illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators might have taken shelter there to instigate local people against the country.

Intensified DRC fighting displaces 35,000 civilians, injures 9 peacekeepers: UN

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 25

Intensified fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has triggered significant new displacement of civilians and injured nine peacekeepers, a UN spokesman said.

Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said on Friday that UN humanitarian reporters reported clashes between DRC government forces and the March 23 Movement (M23) rebels in the last three weeks sent more than 35,000 people fleeing violence in Masisi into displacement sites in and around Goma, the capital of North Kivu province.

Haq said the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, known as MONUSCO, reported beefing up its support to the Congolese armed forces, conducting



day and night joint patrols in efforts to reduce the threat to civilians, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Unfortunately, during these clashes, nine UN peacekeepers were injured," the spokesman said. "They are currently receiving medical treatment."

Haq said that MONUSCO's Quick Reaction Forces have directly supported the Congolese armed

forces since Wednesday and continue providing essential medical and logistical support to the Southern African Development Community Military Mission in the DRC.

"Shelling in areas where displaced people are sheltering on the outskirts of Goma, including Mugunga, Bulengo, and Lushagala, has caused people to flee toward the city," the UN Office for the Coordi-

nation of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said. "This latest escalation follows intense fighting in Minova in South Kivu, three days ago, which displaced thousands of people."

Humanitarians said access to the area remains restricted due to the ongoing insecurity.

"The situation in Goma is dire, with the territory of Goma and neighbouring Nyiragongo territory already hosting more than 700,000 displaced people," OCHA said.

The office warned that the recent surge in violence only aggravates an already critical humanitarian situation, further increasing the suffering of thousands of men, women, and children who are experiencing displacement and inhumane conditions.

OCHA said humanitarian partners are also concerned about the increas-

ing numbers of wounded people arriving in already-overwhelmed health facilities.

"The humanitarian community calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urges all parties to respect international humanitarian law, ensure the protection of civilians, and allow unhindered and safe access to humanitarian assistance," OCHA said.

Guterres issued a similar call in a statement on Thursday, expressing his alarm at the resumption of hostilities, condemning "in the strongest terms" the offensive launched by the M23, the devastating toll on the civilian population and heightening the risk of a broader regional war.

He called on the M23 to immediately cease its offensive, withdraw from all occupied areas and abide by the ceasefire agreement reached last July.

US Supreme Court clears extradition of 26/11 attacks convict Tahawwur Rana to India

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, JAN 25



In a major development, the US Supreme Court on Saturday approved the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, a key accused in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, to India.

Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, has been declared a fugitive by India and faces multiple criminal charges related to the attacks that left 166 people dead, including six US citizens.

The US Supreme Court dismissed Rana's review petition against his extradition. He had filed a "petition for a writ of certiorari" in November last year, which was rejected on January 21.

This decision came a day after Donald Trump was sworn in as the 47th US President.

"Petition denied," the court stated.

Rana's plea followed a series of failed legal battles in lower and federal

courts, including the US Court of Appeals for the North Circuit in San Francisco.

US Solicitor General Elizabeth B. Prelogar had urged the Supreme Court to reject Rana's petition, a recommendation challenged unsuccessfully by Rana's counsel, Joshua L. Dratel.

Rana, currently detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles, is also a close associate of David

Coleman Headley, the Pakistani-American Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist who played a key role in planning the Mumbai terror

attacks. Headley, who turned approver in the case, is serving a 35-year prison sentence in the US for his involvement in the brutal terror attacks on Indian soil.

India has been pursuing Rana's extradition to hold him accountable for his alleged role in facilitating the deadly attacks, which targeted iconic locations in Mumbai over four days in November 2008.

The attacks, orchestrated by the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, are among the worst terror incidents in India's history.

South Korea's arms exports expected to rebound this year

AGENCIES
SEOUL, JAN 25

South Korea's arms industry exports may rebound this year after a slip for a second consecutive year, with its annual target set at over at least \$20 billion, officials said on Saturday.

The country's annual arms exports came in at \$9.5 billion last year following the \$13.5 billion the previous year. In 2022, the country's arms exports hit the highest of \$17.3 billion, reports Yonhap news agency.

Last year, the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) initially aimed to sell \$20 billion in arms exports for 2024 but failed to meet the target.

The officials at the

agency said they hope to export over \$23 billion worth of arms this year backed by the Poland deal, as well as a \$1 billion deal with Saudi Arabia.

South Korea aims to carve out a 5 percent share of the global arms export market by 2027 to become the world's fourth-largest defense exporter.

Meanwhile, the government will prepare for Washington's possible implementation of universal tariffs on South Korean goods following the launch of the second Donald Trump administration, a senior trade official has said.

"President Trump has been mentioning the issue, so I believe we need to stay vigilant and make thorough preparations,"

the official told reporters under the condition of anonymity.

The remark came as Trump has been proposing to impose blanket tariffs of 10 to 20 per cent on all imports. Shortly after taking office, the new U.S. president also vowed to impose a 25 per cent tariff on goods imported from Canada and Mexico beginning as early as the start of February.

The official said as the new U.S. administration is pursuing balanced trade with its partners, South Korea is reviewing ways to expand imports from the U.S., rather than seeking to reduce exports.

"We should be expanding the combined trade volume, not reducing it," the official said.

SYRIAN AUTHORITIES ARREST DOZENS AFTER ALLEGED EXECUTIONS IN HOMS PROVINCE

AGENCIES
DAMASCUS, JAN 25

Syrian security officials have arrested dozens of fighters following reports of widespread abuses in the central Homs province, a war monitor reported.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the arrests come amid mounting efforts to stem sectarian tensions and restore stability in territories once held by pro-regime elements before the downfall of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in December, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Military Operations Administration, under Syria's new leadership, reportedly appre-



hended members of factions involved in security operations in northern and western Homs, the Observatory said.

The detained fighters face accusations of carrying out summary executions and harassing minority communities in several villages.

Meanwhile, the state-run Al-Thawra online

Authorities say they have already arrested several suspects and referred them to the judiciary, with investigations ongoing to identify all those involved, according to the newspaper report.

"We affirm our commitment to restoring rights to their rightful owners and compensating those harmed by these transgressions," the Homs governor's office was cited by Al-Thawra as stating, pledging to form a specialized committee to assess damages and ensure a transparent compensation process.

Governor Abdul Rahman al-Ama, accompanied by the regional police chief and other provincial officials, visited Maryamin to hear residents' concerns

and promise tighter security measures.

The new interim government has repeatedly stressed it would confront any acts of sectarian violence with equal vigor to safeguard communal harmony.

In a separate development, the Observatory noted a withdrawal of certain foreign fighters from coastal areas on Friday, an apparent bid to ease tensions after repeated complaints of harassment and intimidation targeting religious minorities.

The clampdown on rogue armed elements is part of the new government's efforts to consolidate control, unify security forces, and prevent the region from sliding into sectarian conflict.

Putin says Russia prepared for talks on Ukraine issue

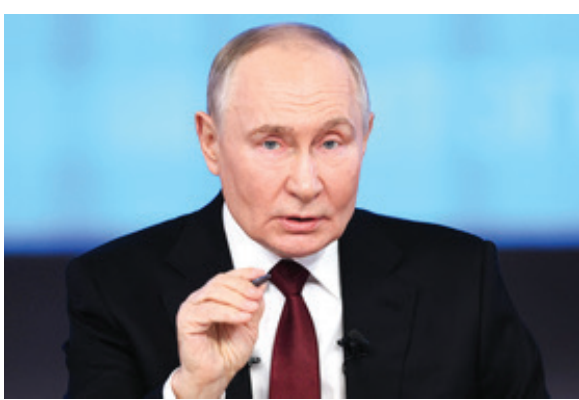
AGENCIES
MOSCOW, JAN 25

Moscow is open to talks on Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

"We have always said this, and I would like to emphasise this once again, we are ready for negotiations on the Ukrainian issue," Putin said on Friday.

In the meantime, the Russian president said that certain issues require special attention. He recalled that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had previously issued a decree prohibiting such negotiations, Xinhua news agency reported.

"How can negotiations be resumed now when they have been banned?" Putin questioned, adding



that if talks were to resume, they would be illegitimate under Ukraine's current legal framework.

Putin said that as long as the decree remains in place, it will be difficult to talk about whether these negotiations can begin, or whether they can be properly completed. He noted that while some

preliminary discussions can happen, serious negotiations would be difficult given the existing ban from the Ukrainian side.

The Russian leader said Zelensky "was in no hurry" to lift the decree banning negotiations, and follow the orders of his sponsors. He said that those who are funding Kiev should pres-

sure the Ukrainian leader to do so.

During his speech at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos on Thursday, US President Donald Trump said US efforts to secure a peace settlement between Russia and Ukraine were "hopefully underway," adding that Ukraine was ready to make a deal.

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday that Moscow is ready for nuclear disarmament talks with Washington, although it would be necessary to take into account the nuclear arsenals of US allies.

During his virtual address to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, US President Donald

Trump called for denuclearisation, adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin supported this idea.

"In the interests of the entire world and the peoples of our countries, of course, we are interested in starting this negotiation process as soon as possible," Peskov said.

"In the current conditions ... it is necessary to take into account all nuclear potentials," Peskov stressed, adding that it would be impossible to discuss disarmament without addressing the nuclear potentials of France and Britain.

Peskov said that while such negotiations are important, time has already been lost, and the "ball" was currently in Washington's court.

Israel strikes Hezbollah targets in Lebanon as ceasefire deadline nears

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM, JAN 25

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said that it has carried out strikes against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon in recent days, targeting weapons storage facilities and observation posts used by the group.

In a statement, the IDF said its Northern Command forces conducted the operations to "remove threats" while adhering to the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon. The military remains deployed in southern Lebanon, monitoring Hezbollah's activities and prepared to respond to any threats to Israeli troops or



the country, the statement added.

The ceasefire agreement, which took effect on November 27, 2024, requires Israel to withdraw all troops from southern Lebanon by Sunday. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Friday that forces would remain beyond the dead-

line, citing the Lebanese military's failure to establish full control over the area and Hezbollah's incomplete withdrawal north of the Litani River, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Lebanese side has repeatedly accused Israel of violating the ceasefire during the past two months.

Top Egyptian, US diplomats discuss situation in Gaza, regional developments

AGENCIES
CAIRO, JAN 25

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio held discussions on issues including the situation in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, Libya, and the Horn of Africa. During a phone conversation on Friday, the two diplomats also addressed concerns regarding Red Sea security, freedom of navigation, and the impact of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on Egypt's water security, the Egyptian foreign ministry said in a statement. The meeting highlighted the importance of enhanced cooperation

between the two countries to de-escalate tensions and promote peace and stability in the region, Xinhua news agency reported. Abdelatty emphasised the need for continued coordination among Egypt, Qatar, and the US to ensure the full implementation of the recent Gaza ceasefire agreement. He stressed the importance of all parties adhering to the agreement's terms and timelines. The top Egyptian diplomat reiterated Egypt's commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, emphasizing the need for a final settlement that establishes an independent Palestinian state and prevents future episodes of violence.

WEF calls for cooperation to address global challenges, uncertainty

AGENCIES
DAVOS, JAN 25

The World Economic Forum (WEF) concluded its annual meeting, calling for increased cooperation in the face of global challenges and uncertainty.

Amid ongoing conflicts, economic instability, and rapid technological advancements, the WEF Annual Meeting 2025 served as a crucial platform for fostering dialogue, encouraging collaboration, and driving sustainable solutions

to shared global challenges, Xinhua news agency reported.

In his closing remarks, WEF President Borge Brende said, "We all realise during this week that we came together in Davos, at the time of immense consequence and uncertainty. Political, geopolitical, and macroeconomic landscape - all are shifting under our feet."

He emphasised that critical political priorities such as driving economic growth, reducing carbon emissions, and finding

ways to end conflicts require urgent attention. "All of these challenges cannot wait, and the only way to make progress on these issues is by working together," he added.

Brende further noted that leaders from around the world, representing both the public and private sectors, had gathered to demonstrate how collaboration can be achieved.

Even though nations compete, there are areas where interests overlap. In these areas, "we really need to strike and find

deals to make the world a better place."

During the Economic Outlook session, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva highlighted that the evolving geopolitical landscape will reshape trade and economic relations. She said, "I think that there is no way we can wipe out collaboration from the future of humanity."

Nearly 3,000 participants from various regions and industries convened in Davos to address key

global and regional challenges.

They include responding to geopolitical shocks, stimulating growth to improve living standards, and advancing a just and inclusive energy transition.

The annual meeting, under the theme "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age," focused on five pivotal areas: reimagining growth, industries in the intelligent age, investing in people, safeguarding the planet, and rebuilding trust.

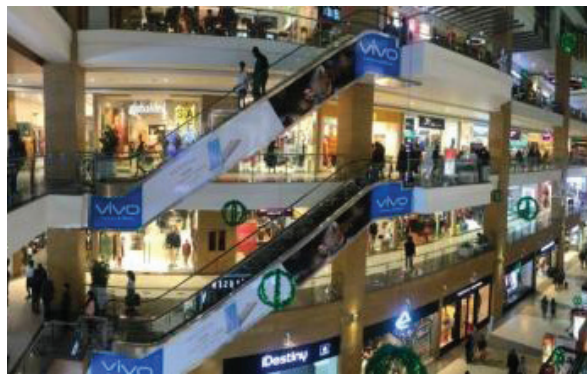
Retail sector leasing remains resilient as 27 new global brands enter India in 2024

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, JAN 25

The Indian retail sector leased 8.1 million square feet of area in shopping malls and prominent high streets across top seven cities in 2024, overcoming limited new supply, according to a report on Saturday.

The year witnessed new retail space additions of nearly 1.7 million square feet across seven retail developments in Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Pune and Hyderabad, according to a JLL India report.

Despite limited infusion of new spaces of superior quality, momentum in retail sector's gross leasing remained unaffected as retailers continued to



expand footprint across retail formats throughout the year.

Bengaluru accounted for 34 per cent share of the total leasing activity, followed by Delhi NCR (14 per cent) and Mumbai (14 per cent).

The concentration of 62 per cent of total retail space take-up in these three Indian megalopolis-

es underscores the strong consumption demand in prime retail centres and key high streets in these markets, said the report.

"Retailer appetite for prime retail locations remained firm throughout 2024 and categories such as fashion and apparel continued to amass the highest percentage share

in the total retail leasing pie," said Dr Samantak Das, chief economist and head of research and REIS, India, JLL.

With a significant 2.8 million sq ft share in leasing activity, Bengaluru surpassed the combined leasing volume of Delhi-NCR and Mumbai.

In 2024, 27 new brands of international origin entered India, nearly doubling from 14 in 2023.

In the past four years, 60 retailers of international origin have forayed in the country to cater to Indian consumers' perpetual preference for global brands.

"The entry of these brands in 2024 represents a 45 per cent share of the total international brands that entered India since

2021," the report mentioned.

Despite continued interest from international retailers, domestic retailers dominated the gross leasing with more than 80 per cent share, leasing approximately 6.5 million sq ft in 2024.

"Delhi NCR emerged as the preferred location for over half of these international retailers to open their inaugural stores, followed by Mumbai. The luxury retail sector maintained its strong momentum, with high-end brands leasing approximately 190,000 square feet of space in 2024," said Rahul Arora, head (office leasing and retail services), and senior managing director-Karnataka, Kerala, India, JLL.

India remains bright spot supported by strong macro fundamentals: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 25

India continues to remain the bright spot globally, supported by its strong macro fundamentals and the government should focus on adherence to fiscal prudence and continue the fiscal consolidation path, a new report has suggested.

Nominal GDP growth for FY26 is expected at 10.2 per cent, "assuming a real GDP growth of 6.2 to 6.4 per cent and inflation of 4 to 3.8 per cent," according to the report by SBI Research ahead of the Union Budget 2025-26.

"So, the Nominal GDP would be Rs 357.2 lakh crore," the report predicted.

The fiscal deficit as per cent of the GDP may come at 4.5 per cent in FY26 (Rs 15.9 lakh crore).



"However, we must also appreciate that in a world of uncertainties mostly for the external sector, there is no harm in the glide path being tinkered a bit to give growth a leg up," the report argued.

Gross market borrowing (Rs 14.4 lakh crore) can be expected in FY26 due to an increase in redemptions, when part of the Covid-19 pandemic borrowings are due for repayment, resulting in a net borrowing of Rs 11.2 lakh crore (Rs 4.05 lakh crore redemption in FY26

and expected switch of Rs 75,000 to 100,000 crore).

The government has already conducted Rs 1.1 lakh crore buyback and Rs 1.46 lakh crore switches so far in FY25.

"Communication from policy-makers as also the regulators needs to be crystal clear, and front loaded in market participants expectations. Schemes like Just-In-Time (JIT) that may have an effect on systemic liquidity need careful recalibration, keeping in mind the first order, as also the second order impacts," according to the report.

When it comes to GST, there is a need for second round of reforms in GST (GST 2.0) with the rationalisation of tax rates and inclusion of electricity tariff, then Aviation Turbine Fuel and finally petrol/diesel, the report said.

Gold prices touch record high amid global uncertainties

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, JAN 25

Gold prices continued to rise for the eighth day this week, increasing by Rs 200 to cross the Rs 83,000 mark per 10 grams for the first time in the national capital, as market concerns about policy uncertainty under US President Donald Trump pushed demand for the yellow metal.

As per the All India Sarafa Association, gold with 99.9 per cent purity reached a new record high of Rs 83,100 per 10 grams on Friday, up from Rs 82,900 on Thursday.

International gold prices also jumped to a near three-month high on Friday as it is trading around \$2780, marking their fourth consecutive weekly gain.



Several factors are driving the rise in gold prices, including strong demand in the spot market, and positive global cues.

Experts believe that gold could continue to rise as uncertainty surrounding US President Trump's trade policies and a flight to safe-haven assets ahead of key central bank policy meetings are keeping the metal in high demand.

"Markets continue to wait for Trump Tweets to gauge direction and till then it is likely that Gold

will continue to remain in a band with a slightly upward bias," said Sandip Raichura, CEO - Retail Broking and Distribution, Director - PL Broking and Distribution.

The next big trigger is the coming week's Federal Reserve meet where any upward bias on yields could further dampen gold prices, he added.

Dr. Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont Gold said that the gold has given a breakout from its symmetrical triangle, and prices have sustained above \$2,750 (Rs 79,100), so we can see further momentum towards \$2800 (Rs 80,500) this week.

On January 23, gold prices in the national capital touched a fresh record high of Rs 82,900 per 10 grams.

WEF 2025: India grabs investment commitments worth over Rs 20 lakh crore

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 25

In a clear show of its economic strength amid geopolitical uncertainties, India bagged investment commitments worth more than Rs 20 lakh crore at the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Davos this week.

Maharashtra managed to get the biggest pie of almost 80 per cent investments proposals at the global event.

Led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Maharashtra signed at least 61 MoUs worth Rs 15.7 lakh crore, with the potential to generate over 16 lakh jobs. Telangana delegation, led by CM Revanth Reddy, grabbed 20 MoUs worth at least Rs 1.80 lakh crore.

Kerala and Uttar Pradesh also showcased



their ambitious future plans and secured significant investment commitments.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held fruitful discussions with chief executive officers (CEOs) of various globally-renowned compa-

nies and representatives of different nations. During meetings with heads of different business houses, the Chief Minister explained in detail the opportunities available in the state for making their investments.

At the event, IT major

Infosys also announced to expand its presence in Hyderabad and create 17,000 jobs.

Union Railways and Electronics and IT Minister, Ashwini Vaishnav, highlighted India's balanced approach to economic development with both manufacturing and services driving the nation's growth in his speech at the World Economic Forum. He emphasised India's transformation from focusing solely on import substitution to adopting a "Make in India, Make for the World" approach.

Vaishnav highlighted India's ascent in the semiconductor and AI sectors, stating that "most semiconductor industry leaders believe today that India will soon join the top three destinations for semicon-

ductors".

"With nearly 2,000 Global Capability Centers (GCCs) working on advanced designs, India is poised to be a major player in global manufacturing," he said at the WEF Summit.

He emphasised India's potential to become the "use case capital" of the world, creating innovative applications for industries globally. He noted that while AI models are becoming increasingly commoditised, the focus should shift to developing use cases, applications, and solutions that cater to global industries.

Vaishnav also underscored the government's focus on skilling to prepare India's workforce for emerging technologies, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI).

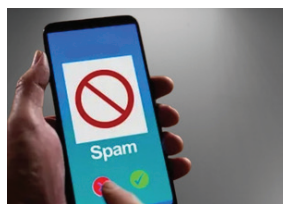
Centre cracks down on spoofed international calls, telcos block over 20 carriers

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 25

An indigenously-developed system to identify and block international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers has significantly brought down such calls to about 4 lakh per day, the government has informed.

Further, the government asked Indian Telcos to initiate drive against foreign carriers or aggregators who are handing over spoofed international calls, and they have blocked more than 20 such carriers to date.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) recently launched an indigenously-developed International Incoming



Spoofed Calls Prevention System, along with all telecom service providers (TSPs).

The tool proved to be a formidable barrier that blocked 90% of all the incoming international calls which were identified as spoofed calls - approximately 1.35 crore, in just 24 hours, indicating that the system's success in tackling the issue of cyber-crimes using spoofed calls from abroad.

Fraudsters were earlier using international

spoofed calls that displayed Indian mobile numbers (+91-xxxxx) to deceive Indian citizens and carrying out cyber-crimes and financial frauds.

Though these calls appear to originate from within India, they are actually made from abroad through manipulation of the Calling Line Identity (CLI), commonly referred to as phone number.

With the successful implementation of the system, scammers abroad changed their modus operandi and now they have started spoofing using international numbers.

To counter this, DoT has asked telecom service providers to display "International Calls" on all calls coming from outside

India. This helps the citizen to understand that since the incoming calls is an "International Call", it cannot be from organisations like DoT, TRAI, police, RBI, customs, UIDAI etc.

One of the major service providers has already implemented this in its network and others are in process of doing so, according to Ministry of Communications.

In order to further tackle the menace of international spoofed calls from reaching Indian citizens, DoT has asked telecom service providers (TSPs) to block traffic from such international carriers, which are repeatedly sending spoofed CLI call traffic to India.

FabHotels' losses widen 23 pc in FY24 amid rising employee costs

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, JAN 25

Budget hotel chain FabHotels, operated by Casa2 Stays, has reported a 23 per cent spike in its net losses for the financial year ending March 2024 (FY24).

The losses widened to Rs 114 crore, up from Rs 93 crore in FY23, primarily due to a sharp increase in employee benefit expenses, as per its filings.

However, the company's gross revenue, grew 34 per cent to Rs 552 crore in FY24, compared to Rs 412 crore in the previous year.

FabHotels generated nearly all its revenue - Rs 549 crore - from accommodation bookings under



its "FabHotel" and "Travel-Plus" brands.

Additional revenue of Rs 3.3 crore came from other sources, while non-operating income, including interest and liabilities written off, added Rs 11 crore, pushing the overall revenue to Rs 563.6 crore for the year, the filing read.

The company's total expenses increased by 38.5 per cent to Rs 588 crore in FY24, up from

Rs 424.7 crore in FY23, according to an Entrackr report.

Accommodation expenses, which account for 74 per cent of the total costs, rose 32 per cent to Rs 435 crore. Meanwhile, employee costs doubled to Rs 92 crore, including Rs 15 crore attributed to non-cash ESOP costs, the report mentioned.

Commission expenses grew modestly by 8 per

cent to Rs 27 crore, while other costs totalled Rs 34 crore. Despite the revenue growth, the steep rise in costs led to a net loss of Rs 114 crore, compared to Rs 93 crore in FY23.

FabHotels recorded an EBITDA margin of -19.52 per cent and a return on capital employed (ROCE) of -84.09 per cent.

For every rupee earned in revenue, the company spent Rs 1.06. As of March 2024, its current assets stood at Rs 172 crore, including Rs 94 crore in cash and bank balances.

The company has raised \$70 million to date, including \$15.6 million in funding led by Panthera Growth Partners in October 2023, which valued the company at \$141 million.

Godrej Enterprises Group targets over 20 pc growth for its Power Infra business

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, JAN 25

The Energy Solutions business of the Godrej Enterprises Group has announced its strategic focus on driving significant investments towards power infrastructure projects supporting India's clean energy drive.

Aligning with company's broader vision of "Nation Building" to accelerate the adoption of renewable energy solutions, the business will prioritize Maharashtra,

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh for its Power Infrastructure and green energy projects, according to a media statement here on Saturday.

With a strong focus on these states, Godrej Enterprises Group seeks to play a key role in building power infrastructure for renewable energy, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and supporting the country's commitment to achieving 500GW of non-fossil fuel-based power by 2030. The business is tar-

geting to grow at a CAGR of over 20 per cent in the next 3-5 years, driven by its growing portfolio of Extra High Voltage Power Transmission Projects up to 765kV and strategic investments in solar power and green energy infrastructure.

Raghavendra Mirji, Executive Vice-President & Business Head, Energy Solutions business of Godrej Enterprises Group, said, "As the world accelerates its transition to clean energy, India's ambitious climate goals

are setting the stage for an unprecedented shift. At Godrej Enterprises Group, we are proud to contribute to this movement through our strategic investments in Power Infrastructure projects across key states. These states are key to India's ambitious goal of achieving 500GW of non-fossil fuel-based power by 2030. Through our innovative solutions & capabilities, we aim to reduce carbon emissions, foster energy independence, and play a leading role in shaping

India's energy landscape for the future."

Maharashtra, one of the states in focus, has already seen a major boost in renewable energy initiatives. Godrej Enterprises Group recently commissioned a 25MW AC solar project in Dhule, in partnership with the Maharashtra State Power Generation Company Limited (MahaGenCo).

The business is executing one of the largest greenfield 765/400kV GIS in Maharashtra.

Gujarat has set a target

to achieve 50 per cent renewable energy capacity by 2030, and in line with this goal, GEG is executing a 765kV GIS & 400kV GIS substation projects in Khavda. Madhya Pradesh state also aims to generate 50 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2030, with a focus on solar.

In line with this vision, GEG has already commissioned a 12.5MWp rooftop solar project at a textile facility in Madhya Pradesh, covering over 1 million square feet,

making it one of the largest installations in India and the largest in Madhya Pradesh.

Godrej has successfully commissioned over 5.2 MW of rooftop solar projects for an automobile company in Jaipur, Rajasthan, and multiple rooftop installations exceeding 2 MW for real estate companies and malls in Gurgaon, Haryana. Additionally, it is executing large-scale greenfield 765kV AIS substation projects to evacuate power from renewable energy source from a GW-

scale solar parks, reinforcing its commitment to advancing India's renewable energy infrastructure both in Haryana and Rajasthan. The scope of work will encompass the design and construction of solar power plants and the creation of substations up to 765kV to ensure efficient evacuation of renewable energy. The business plans to undertake major power infrastructure projects in the five states mentioned above, which are contributing majority of the RE projects in India.

Smriti, Richa, Deepti included in ICC Women's T20I Team of the Year

AGENCIES
DUBAI, JAN 25

India's Smriti Mandhana, Richa Ghosh and Deepti Sharma have been included in the ICC Women's T20I Team of the Year following their stellar contributions in 2024.

Laura Wolvaardt-led side is dominated by three Indian players followed by two from South Africa and one each from Sri Lanka, West Indies, England, New Zealand, Ireland and Pakistan.

Smriti Mandhana kicked off the year with a stellar 54 against Australia at DY Patil Stadium, a performance that propelled the left-handed batter to a year of outstanding T20I performances.

In a testament to her consistency, Mandhana



closed out the year in a similar fashion, making three half-centuries on the trot against West Indies at home, only emphasising her reliability in the format.

Her outstanding performances propelled her to the second spot in the ICC Women's T20I Batting

Rankings.

The Indian wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh stands out for her ability to score runs in an extremely aggressive manner, consistently leading the charge with her attacking style of play.

Ghosh was in explosive form whenever she had

the chance to bat, smashing a blistering 64* off 29 balls at an incredible strike rate of 220.68 against UAE in Dambulla.

The right-handed batter maintained an impressive strike rate of 156.65 in 2024, in a year that included another rapid fifty, scoring 54 off just 21 balls against West Indies at DY Patil Stadium.

Deepti Sharma proved to be a consistent performer, with her reliable batting and outstanding bowling spells, playing a key role for India.

Her tally of wickets includes 30 scalps at an average of 17.80 and an economy rate of 6.01 across T20I matches in 2024.

The 27-year-old claimed wickets in almost every match, with standout per-

formances such as 3/13 from 4 overs against Nepal in Dambulla and 3/20 from 4 overs against Pakistan in the Women's Asia Cup, solidifying her spot in the team.

Smriti and Deepti were also named in the ICC Women's ODI Team of the Year which was also led by South Africa batter Laura Wolvaardt.

The other members of the ICC Women's T20I Team of the Year include - Wolvaardt (673 runs), Chamari Athapaththu (720 runs), Hayley Matthews (538 runs), Nat Sciver-Brunt (423 runs), Melie Kerr (387 runs and 29 wickets), Marizanne Kapp (399 runs and 11 wickets), Orla Prendergast (544 runs and 21 wickets), Sadia Iqbal (30 wickets).

Rohit, Kohli are being targeted and forced to play domestic cricket: Rashid Latif

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 25

Former Pakistan cricketer Rashid Latif claimed that Indian senior duo Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are being targeted for their red-ball form and are forced to play domestic cricket ahead of the crucial white-ball assignments.

India Test and ODI captain Rohit turned up for Mumbai in their ongoing Ranji Trophy match against Jammu & Kashmir. He scored three and 28 runs in the match. On the other hand, Kohli will join Delhi's squad for the match against Railways at Arun Jaitley Stadium from January 30.

Other than the star duo, members of the Test squad that faced a 1-3 defeat in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against Australia are also featuring

for their respective state sides for the latest round of Ranji Trophy matches. The other notable players include Yashasvi Jaiswal (Mumbai), Rishabh Pant (Delhi), Ravindra Jadeja (Saurashtra) and Shubman Gill (Punjab).

According to former Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter, Rohit and Kohli should focus on their upcoming white-ball assignments against England and next month's Champions Trophy in Dubai.

Latif said that due to the busy international calendar, players don't get much time to play domestic cricket. He went on to say that the star duo played two World Cup finals in the last two years without playing domestic cricket.

"There is no time for players to play domestic cricket due to the packed

international calendar. If needed they should play domestic cricket but due to the targeting of Rohit (Sharma) and Virat (Kohli), they're forcing everyone to play domestic cricket. In the past, barring Sachin Tendulkar, others have not played much domestic cricket... Rohit and Virat have won the T20 World Cup and reached the final of the ODI World Cup without playing domestic cricket. They will next play the ODI series against England so they should prepare for it as white-ball is a totally different game," Latif told IANS.

Rohit and Kohli will be seen in the three-match ODI series against England starting on February 6. Both teams are currently playing the five-match T20I series, India started with an emphatic win at Eden Gardens in Kolkata in the first T20I.

Pakistan to host New Zealand, South Africa for ODI tri-series ahead of Champions Trophy

AGENCIES
LAHORE, JAN 25

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday announced the schedule for the tri-nation ODI series, featuring New Zealand, South Africa and host Pakistan ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy.

"The series will be played on a single-league basis from February 8 to 14, with Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosting the opening two matches and Karachi's National Bank Stadium staging the final league match and the final," the PCB said in a statement.

Pakistan and New Zealand will kick off the series at the iconic Gaddafi Stadium on February 8. New Zealand will then face South Africa on February 10 in a day match.

The action will shift to Karachi, where Pakistan will take on South Africa on February 12 in a day/night match at the National Bank Stadium. The final will be played on Febru-



ary 14.

Both Pakistan and New Zealand are scheduled to train at the Gaddafi Stadium on February 6 under lights while South Africa's first outing at the historic venue will be on the morning of February 9.

While the four matches at Gaddafi Stadium and National Bank Stadium will provide the three sides with an excellent opportunity to finalise preparations for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, it will also be a perfect

occasion for the PCB to showcase its redesigned and redeveloped venues to the world through its world-class broadcast.

"At the Gaddafi Stadium, the spectator capacity has been increased, with new chairs installed throughout the venue. Additionally, 480 state-of-the-art LED lights have been installed to enhance broadcast LUX levels, ensuring a superior viewing experience for fans worldwide. To further elevate the spectator experience, two giant digital

replay screens - measuring 80 feet x 30 feet and 22 feet x 35 feet - have been installed. A brand-new hospitality enclosure for players and officials is near completion, ensuring that the iconic stadium is fully operational to deliver an unparalleled experience for all stakeholders," the PCB said.

"At the National Bank Stadium, significant enhancements have been made, including the creation of a new hospitality enclosure for players and officials at the University End. To improve broadcast coverage, 350 LED lights have been installed, ensuring optimal visibility for global audiences. Two digital replay screens have already been fixed and 5,000 new chairs have been installed to enhance spectator comfort," it added.

Defending champions Pakistan will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against New Zealand in Karachi on February 19.

Bruzon on East Bengal FC midfield dominance in win over Kerala Blasters FC

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, JAN 25

East Bengal FC head coach Oscar Bruzon commended his side's tactical discipline and midfield dominance in their 2-1 victory over Kerala Blasters FC in the Indian Super League (ISL) match at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan here.

The win brought relief after weeks of struggle for the Red and Gold Brigade.

The goals for East Bengal FC came through PV Vishnu in the 20th minute and Hijazi Maher in the 72nd minute. Despite Danish Farooq pulling one back for Kerala Blasters FC in the 84th minute,

East Bengal FC held firm to secure the win on Friday night.

Reflecting on the challenges of the season at the post-match press conference, Bruzon detailed the difficulties his team had faced in recent weeks and the significance of the vic-



tory. "A lot of suffering in the last weeks. Football was not fair to us. We were competing well with some of the best clubs of the ISL, like FC Goa, Mohun Bagan SG, and Mumbai City FC. But we came here with empty pockets.

So, today was an exercise of resistance. Good fighting spirit from the guys. But the most important is that the team was controlling the central area of the pitch," he said.

"Except maybe for the first 10 minutes that we started a little bit shaky

and sloppy. And the last 15 minutes when Kerala Blasters FC put all their resources up front. But overall, I think that the guys played a beautiful game. And yes, it's a big relief winning this game," he added detailing his team's performance.

The win comes as a breath of fresh air for East Bengal FC and they are in the 11th position with 17 points.

Speaking about Vishnu's performances and his potential to break into the national team, Bruzon shared his thoughts candidly, he said, "I cannot

hide that. Last week I had a conversation with the national team coach about this. He has to decide. But Vishnu is no doubt a contender to go there. He is one of the players more informed. Not only of our club but of the ISL. And we just need to keep supporting him."

Bruzon also highlighted the importance of midfield dominance in the victory, emphasizing the contributions of Naorem Mahesh Singh, he said, "I think that the key of this game was the central [midfield]... And for the most part of the game, controlling the central [midfield] was one of the secrets to create more chances and to win this game....Probably, the abilities of Mahesh can optimise a lot in these central or intermediate positions in the pockets in the midfield. And he was one of the players, as you say, linking and creating the most of the chances today for us."

Athletes begin arriving for 38th National Games, greeted with warm welcome

AGENCIES
HALDWANI (UTTARAKHAND), JAN 25

The much-anticipated 38th National Games are set to commence on January 28, and the arrival of athletes has officially begun.

With an estimated participation of over 10,000 athletes from across the country, Uttarakhand is abuzz with excitement as preparations reach their final stages. The Triathlon competition will kickstart the games in Haldwani on January 26, with participants traveling from various states to take part in the event. The first batch

of athletes arrived here on Saturday.

State Sports Minister, Rekha Arya, personally welcomed the athletes and expressed her best wishes.

She stated, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the teams from various states that have arrived in the land of Uttarakhand to participate in the 38th National Games. On behalf of the people of Devbhoomi, I wish all athletes the very best for their performances. I have already instructed the local officials to make the necessary arrangements for the welcome, transportation, accommodation, and food for the teams arriving

in Haldwani from other states. In the coming days, thousands more athletes will arrive in Uttarakhand for the remaining events."

The enthusiasm surrounding the National Games is palpable, both among the state government and the local populace. The competitions will be hosted in multiple cities, including Haldwani, Dehradun, Rishikesh, Haridwar, and Rudrapur, among others.

The grand opening ceremony of the 38th National Games will take place on January 28 at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Dehradun.

SONOBE BECOMES FIRST JAPANESE PLAYER TO WIN AUSTRALIAN OPEN GIRLS' SINGLES

AGENCIES
AUSTRALIA, JAN 25

Wakana Sonobe won her first Junior Grand Slam singles title at the Australian Open on Saturday, making some history for her country of Japan in the process.

No.4 seed Sonobe triumphed over No.6 seed Kristina Penickova of the United States 6-0, 6-1 in 54 minutes in the final on Rod Laver Arena. With the victory, Sonobe becomes the first player from Japan to win the girls' singles title at the Australian Open.

Left-handed Sonobe is also the first Japanese player to win any Junior



Grand Slam girls' singles title since 1969, when Kazuko Sawamatsu won both Junior Roland Garros and Junior Wimbledon. Sonobe already came close last year when she finished as Junior US Open runner-up.

Sonobe, who turned 17 years old last week,

survived a nail-biter in the first round, when she squeaked past Chinese qualifier Zhang Ruien 6-3, 4-6, 7-6(8). After that, it was smooth sailing for Sonobe, who did not drop a set for the remainder of the singles tournament.

Sonobe came into the final with a 2-0 record

against 15-year-old Penickova, and she continued to have the upper hand. Sonobe used superb backhands to break Penickova three times in the first set, and the Japanese player also fended off three break points in the second game of the match.

Penickova got on the board with a hold for 2-1, but Sonobe was not derailed, saving break point in the next game, then easing to victory. Sonobe converted her first championship point with a winning volley -- her 14th winner of the match to Penickova's six.

Penickova will still head

back to the States as a Junior Grand Slam champion. She and her twin sister Annika won the Australian Open girls' doubles title on Friday, defeating No.2 seeds Emerson Jones of Australia and Hannah Klugman of Great Britain 6-4, 6-2 in the final.

The 6th-seeded Penickova twins needed 63 minutes to race through the doubles final, converting six of their 11 break points. The American siblings only dropped one set in their run through the doubles draw, to the 5th-seeded Kovackova sisters of the Czech Republic in the semifinals.

ASMITA Khelo India women's football league enter remote pockets of Arunachal Pradesh

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 25

It wasn't just the phoebus shining bright in the land of the rising sun, Arunachal Pradesh, this January. About 40km from Shi Yomi district, a strategically and geographically important Indian region in the North-East state, footballs were shining all the way.

The ASMITA Khelo India league forayed into new horizons this season

as the football tournaments reached the remotest locations of Arunachal Pradesh. Three football tournaments kicked off in Ziro, Shi Yomi and Naharlagun from January 15.

Around 500 women participants from these regions played in the league. Monigong, a small arcane village on the Indo-China border in Shi Yomi district, was also an avid participant in the league with women across various

age groups (U-13, U-15 and U-17) exhibiting extreme enthusiasm.

"70% of these young girls played a football league for the first time, they had never seen such competition structure of a football league, and they've only practised for 10 days to play the league, and they played so well," said Major Ankit Sharma, 9th Grenadier, Monigong, who was also the chief guest for the prize distribution ceremony

in Shi Yomi.

The flagship Khelo India Women's league 'Achieving Sports Milestone by Inspiring Women Through Action League' (ASMITA) is the Central Government's initiative for sports development at the grassroots level by reinforcing inclusivity and equity in sports. ASMITA league has provided a major impetus to sports in our country, mobilizing talent from even the most esoteric areas.

'Sports is paramount for the youth here and a lot of fast-paced developments are providing the much-needed momentum, especially in the sport of football. ASMITA has provided a significant window and platform for our girls to showcase their mettle and stand firmly on not only the national but also the international stage,' said Pasang Dorjee Sona, Minister of Education, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, sanctioned a total fund of Rs 3.07 crore to the All India Football Federation (AIFF) in the 2024-25 season for the seamless execution of the ASMITA football leagues. A total of 90 cities have hosted the ASMITA football tournaments this season with over 7000 girls participating.

Speaking of the tournament at Yomi, Dawa

Ruku, football coach at the Govt. Secondary School in Monigong, told SAI Media, "The kids here have been provided a big opportunity and a big platform through the women's league.

With the area being a very remote one, there are problems of transportation here and our talented kids cannot go outside to play.

Now, they are getting to play a tournament in a ground near their home through ASMITA and it

cannot be more memorable for them.'

A total prize money of Rs 72 Lakh is kept for the winning teams of the ASMITA football league. However, the impact goes beyond the prize money.

'I am confident that with constant handholding, these kids are capable of rising to new heights, enabling them to play for the national women's football team one day,' added Dawa Ruku.

Gaiety, Fervour marks National Voters' Day celebration across Jammu Division



JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU

Gaiety and Fervour marked National Voters' Day celebration across Jammu Division featuring voter's pledges, Information, Education and Communication events, besides scintillating cultural events.

At Udhampur: Like other parts of the country, the 15th National Voters' Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm here today with the theme "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure." An impressive function was organized by the District Administration Udhampur, where Deputy Commissioner Saloni Rai was the Chief Guest and Senior Superintendent of Police Amod Ashok Nagpure was the guest of Honour.

Deputy District Election Officer Malvika Sharma, delivered the welcome address and emphasized the significance of National Voters' Day in fostering electoral participation.

The National Voters' Day Pledge was administered by the chief guest to all participants, reaffirming their commitment to strengthening democracy. A captivating cultural program and a skit presented by students highlighted the importance of active participation in elections, leaving a lasting impression on the audience.

The chief guest distributed EPIC cards to first-time voters and presented certificates of appreciation to individuals and stakeholders for their excellent contributions to the election process.

Additional District Development Commissioner Rajinder Singh, Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr Gurvinderjeet Singh, PO Poshan, Subash Dogra and other officers were present.

At Doda: The 15th National Voters' Day was celebrated today at Community Hall Doda, commemorating the foundation day of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The event was organised by the District Election Officer (DEO), with the theme "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure" and saw enthusiastic participation from students, teachers, and officers of the district.

ADDC Pran Singh was the Chief Guest and SSP Sandeep Kumar Mehta was the Guest of honour. Other present included ADC, Deputy DEO, ACR, PO ICDS, ACD, ACP and other officers.

The celebrations commenced with a rally which started from Government Boys Higher Secondary School and passed through Main Bazar and Nagri Road, culminating at Community Hall Doda.

At the Community Hall Doda, the event began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, followed by the administration of the Voter's Pledge, reiterating the importance of voting in strengthening

democracy. A vibrant cultural programme was also presented by students, adding to the celebratory spirit of the occasion.

Similarly, National Voters' Day was celebrated with enthusiasm at Bhardwah in which students from various schools and local youth took out a rally carrying placards.

At Kathua: The District Administration Kathua hosted a grand celebration at the Auditorium Hall of Government Degree College to mark the 15th National Voters' Day. The event, presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Ranjit Singh, witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, district officials, and the general public.

The event featured a signature campaign aimed at promoting responsible voting and empowering citizens with knowledge to become informed voters.

As part of the celebrations, several engaging activities were organized, including Debate Competition and Nukkad Natak wherein Students from various educational institutions participated enthusiastically, showcasing their insights on the importance of voting. Winners were felicitated by the ADC. These street plays were performed to create awareness about the significance of voting, particularly targeting young voters.

A pledge ceremony was also conducted during the event, where participants,

including district officers, college staff, and students, committed themselves to upholding democratic values and exercising their right to vote responsibly. Similar pledge ceremonies were held in government offices across the district to spread awareness about voter rights and participation.

At Samba: The 15th National Voters Day was celebrated with tremendous enthusiasm and civic pride in Samba district, emphasizing the critical importance of democratic participation and electoral awareness.

A grand event, held at the District Complex Nandini Hills, brought together district administrators, young voters, and civic leaders under the inspiring theme "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure." Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma presided over the ceremony, joined by senior district officials including SSP Virender Singh Manhas; ADDC Champa Devi and ADC Jagdish Singh.

The event witnessed an energetic gathering of young NCC cadets, college students and emerging voters who collectively took the voters pledge.

Key Highlights of the event include collective affirmation of democratic values, strong encouragement for youth electoral participation, felicitation of BLOs and rally reinforcing voting commitment.

At Poonch: The 15th National Voter Day was

commemorated with great fervor in Poonch, spearheaded by District Election Officer (DC), Vikas Kundal.

The celebration began with a rally that commenced from the DC Office and concluded at SKC Degree College, where a vibrant program was organized. The event featured recitation of the National Anthem, Voter Pledge and a colorful cultural program with dance performances, skits, and other activities by local artists and thought provoking speeches by students from different educational institutions.

District Election Officer addressed the gathering, emphasizing the significance of voter participation in the democratic process. He also distributed voter cards to new voters and awarded prizes to students and artists who performed on Voter Day.

At Kishtwar: The 15th National Voters Day (NVD) 2025 was celebrated with patriotic spirit here with focus on this year's theme, 'Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure.'

An NVD awareness rally was flagged off by ADC Pawan Kotwal from Mini Secretariat, New DC Office Complex to GDC in spirit with the theme Nothing Like Voting 'I Vote For Sure'

A grand and impressive function was held at GDC by the District Administration Kishtwar in collaboration with the District Elec-

tion Department.

A coffee table book, created by DIPR District Centre, on the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly 2025, was also launched by ADC. The book was praised by the CEO (Election) J&K.

A Voter's pledge was also administered to new voters and other participants on the occasion by the Dy. DEO.

At Reasi: Deputy Commissioner Nidhi Malik flagged off a vibrant rally of students from the DC Office Complex to mark the 15th National Voters' Day.

The rally aimed to raise awareness about the importance of voting and to encourage greater participation in the democratic process. Students, accompanied by officials carried banners and placards to spread the message of the importance of the voting process.

Later, an event was organised in the DC office Auditorium, where a presentation on the electoral process was delivered. Students actively participated by sharing their insights and creative ideas about voter awareness.

The Deputy Commissioner distributed Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) to newly eligible voters. The event concluded with a collective pledge to uphold democratic values and ensure greater voter turnout in future elections. ADDC Sukhdev Samyal; SSP Paramvir Singh; ADC

Rakesh Kumar and other District/Sectoral officials were also present.

At Ramban: The District Administration Ramban, under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner (District Election Officer) Baseer-UI-Haq Chaudhary, celebrated the 15th National Voters' Day (NVD) with enthusiasm attracting participation from stakeholders from across the district.

The celebrations commenced with a massive voters' awareness rally flagged off by the DC, along with Senior Superintendent of Police Kulbir Singh, here from Community Hall Maitra. The rally witnessed overwhelming participation from citizens, students, officers, and stakeholders and culminated at the Government Model Higher Secondary School (GMHSS), Ramban.

Later, a grand event was organized at GMHSS Ramban, attended by MLA Ramban, Arjun Singh Raju; Deputy Commissioner Baseer-UI-Haq Chaudhary; SSP Kulbir Singh; ADDC Roshan Lal; ADC Varunjeet Singh Charak; Dy. DEO Abdul Jabbar; ACR S. Harpal Singh, and other senior officers and citizens.

The Deputy Commissioner administered the Voters' Pledge to participants, emphasizing the importance of being sincere, unbiased, fearless, and responsible voters. Students from different schools and local artists

presented vibrant cultural performances, including songs and dances, and participated in a debate competition on the theme "Nothing like voting, I vote for sure." These activities highlighted the importance of voting and civic responsibility.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Ramban appreciated the District Administration for ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections in the district.

At Rajouri: National Voters' Day was celebrated with great fervor here at Baila Bus Stand, with Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma, as the chief guest.

Students enthusiastically participated in various activities, including a race competition, showcasing their energy and enthusiasm for the occasion.

Cultural programs were also organized, featuring patriotic songs and performances highlighting the importance of elections and voter participation.

As part of the celebration, district officers and officials who played an active role in ensuring the smooth conduct of the Lok Sabha and Assembly Elections in 2024 were felicitated for their commendable efforts.

The event was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Rajouri, Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa; Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Rajouri, Rajiv Khajuria and other district officers.