

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Severe and continuous headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Severe vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Dizziness
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool
- Redness

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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CM Omar Abdullah reviews implementation of JSD schemes



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 27

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Monday chaired a review meeting of the Jal Shakti Department here at the Civil Secretariat.

the progress of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in Jammu and Kashmir.

CM emphasized the need for effective implementation and robust monitoring mechanisms to achieve the mission's objectives. The meeting

was attended by Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs Javed Ahmad Rana, Advisor to the CM Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Jal Shakti

Shaleen Kabra, Additional Chief Secretary to the CM Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary Finance, Commissioner Secretary H&UDD, Commissioner Secretary Forest, Ecology & Environment, Mission Director JJM and other senior officers from concerned departments.

During the meeting, ACS Jal Shakti presented a comprehensive overview of the mission's progress, goals, and challenges.

He highlighted that 81% of households across Jammu and Kashmir have been connected with tap water supply under the Jal Jeevan Mission and efforts are being made to achieve the remaining targets.

It was informed that the mission aims to **CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

Poets & writers have also ensured that our traditions are passed on to the next generation: LG Sinha



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha inaugurated the 'Rashtriya Kavi Sammelan' in Hindi, Dogri and Urdu, at Abhinav Theatre today.

The three-day literary event is being organised by J&K Academy of Art,

Culture and Languages as a part of the 76th Republic Day celebrations.

The Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations to the acclaimed and young poets from J&K and other parts of the country participating in the Poetry Sessions.

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Weatherman predicts series off WDs from Jan 29

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 27

The weatherman on Monday said that the series of Western Disturbances are affecting Jammu and Kashmir from January 29 onwards and light snowfall is expected at isolated places or scattered places till February 05.

According to the news agency, Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that the weather is expected to remain dry till January 29 afternoon.

However, he said that a series of WDs are affecting J&K till February 5 and under its influence, there is a forecast of light snowfall at isolated places.

"Fresh spell of light rain

and snow is expected at scattered places during 29th night and 30th morning & at isolated places during 31st January," he said, adding that the weather would remain generally cloudy on February 01 and 02 with the possibility of light rain and snow at scattered to fairly widespread places during the period.

Sharing further details, the Director stated that generally cloudy weather is expected on February 03 with the possibility of light snow at isolated higher reaches.

Also, on February 04 and 05, there is a possibility of light rain and snow at scattered places, he said.

Giving further details, the MeT Director said **CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

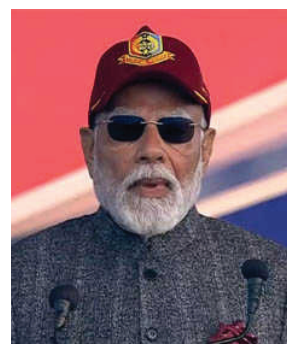
Youth to determine development of India & world in 21st century: Modi

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday that the youth of India will determine the development of the country and the world in the 21st century.

Addressing the annual National Cadet Corps (NCC) at the Cariappa Parade Ground in Delhi, the Prime Minister emphasized that "Indian youth are not only contributing to India's development but are also a force for a global good."

Indian youth have created 1.5 lakh start-ups and over 100 unicorns... the Prime Minister noted that "More than 200 major



global companies are led by people of Indian origin, contributing trillions of rupees to the global GDP and helping improve the lives of millions."

He stated that in any sector, imagining the future of the world without the talent and strength of India's youth is

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RAJOURI MYSTERIOUS DEATHS

Situation normalising, no fresh cases in last five days

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 27

The situation in the Badhaal area of Rajouri appears to be stabilizing, with no new cases reported in the last five days. However, authorities are still working to confirm the cause behind the 17 mysterious deaths that occurred in the village over the past two months.

Officials informed the news agency that three siblings who were undergoing treatment at GMC Jammu and SMGS Srinagar have recovered and were discharged. These individuals have been shifted back to Rajouri, where they will remain under observation along with their families and close contacts.



Another patient, Aijaz Ahmad, who is being treated at PGI Chandigarh, is also showing signs of recovery, while other patients admitted to GMC Rajouri have also recovered.

Top health officials suspect that organophosphorus poisoning might be behind the deaths, as

patients responded positively to atropine injections—a standard antidote for organophosphate poisoning.

A senior doctor explained, "Atropine was initially administered to two patients for heart rate management, and they showed

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Amid health crisis, 60% of posts vacant at GMC Rajouri

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 27

Amid the ongoing health crisis in the Badhaal area of Rajouri district, the Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri is grappling with a severe staff shortage, with around 60% of sanctioned posts currently vacant.

Official sources informed the news agency that nearly 62% of the sanctioned positions at GMC Rajouri remain unfilled, which affects the institution's functioning.

"Out of 23 sanctioned posts for professors, only one professor is currently available," an official said, adding that the hospital is also facing acute shortages of doctors and paramedics, leaving key departments understaffed and overburdened.

The hospital lacks critical diagnostic and treatment facilities, including an MRI machine and a Cath Lab, forcing patients from Rajouri and neighbouring Poonch district to travel to Jammu for advanced medical care.

Residents of Rajouri and Poonch have expressed concern over the inadequate healthcare facilities and have urged the government to address the shortages in staff and infrastructure at GMC Rajouri.

MLA Budhal, Javed Iqbal Choudhary said the hospital is in a dire state. "The hospital is severely short-staffed and is functioning without many essential diagnostic facilities," he said.

Principal GMC Rajouri has formally requested the Health and Medical

Education Department to establish an MRI facility at the hospital.

In a letter to the Health Secretary, a copy of which has been accessed by KNO, the Principal stated: "In continuation of Office No. GMCR/2022-23/9754-59 dated 21.11.2022 and in reference to the request submitted by the In-

charge Head of the Department, Radio Diagnosis & Imaging, GMC Rajouri, it is forwarded with a request to kindly direct the concerned authorities for the establishment of an MRI facility at the Associated Hospital of GMC Rajouri."

In light of the mysterious illness that claimed 17 lives in Badhaal village, authorities recently deployed 10 paediatricians and anesthesiologists to GMC Rajouri.

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Five Army soldiers injured in road mishap in Poonch

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 27

Five Army soldiers suffered injuries when a vehicle they were traveling in skidded off the road and met with accident on Monday in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir. Official sources here said that a BP vehicle this morning met with an accident at Dhantar road in Saujiyan area of Mandi Tehsil.

"The vehicle skidded off the road and rolled down leaving five army personnel injured," they said. They said that a rescue operation was immediately launched and all the injured soldiers were evacuated.

"They were shifted to the District Hospital Poonch and their condition is stated to be stable," sources said.

Jammu Police arrests hardcore criminal with heroin, pistol

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 27

Jammu Police have arrested one hardcore criminal with contraband of heroin and pistol in Bishnah area here in the city outskirts. Police said that acting on specific inputs, a police team conducted a raid and arrested the criminal with 25 gm of heroin and a 9 mm pistol. Arrested criminal was identified as Pankaj Singh alias Panku Raja, resident of Kotli Mian Fateh, Miran Sahib, against whom 12 FIRs are registered.

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JPC clears Waqf (Amendment) Bill, approves 14 amendments

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

The Joint Parliamentary Committee on Monday cleared the Waqf (Amendment) Bill and approved 14 amendments, despite the Opposition's objections, which termed it to "subverting the democratic processes."

Speaking to the reporters after the meeting, JPC Chairman and BJP MP Jagdambika Pal said, "The amendments moved by



the NDA members in 14 of the Bill's clauses have been accepted".

He added 44 amend-

ments were discussed. After detailed discussions over the course of 6 months, we sought amend-

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J&K govt hikes dearness allowance for employees

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 27

The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Monday announced a hike in the Dearness Allowance (DA) for all government employees working under the 7th Pay Commission.

This decision follows the Council of Ministers' approval on January 20.

According to an order issued by the Finance Department, a copy of which lies with news agency, the Dearness

Allowance will be revised to 53% of the basic pay, effective from July 1, 2024, up from the previous rate of 50%.

The revised DA will be applicable to employees working in regular pay levels under the 7th Pay Commission. The government also announced that employees will receive arrears for the additional DA installments from July to December 2024 in their February 2025 salary. From January

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22 JKAS officers transferred in J&K

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 27

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday ordered the transfer and posting of 22 JKAS officers in the interests of administration.

According to an order issued by the General Admin-

istration Department (GAD), a copy of which lies with the news agency, Munir-ul-Islam, Chief JKAS, has been transferred and appointed as Secretary in the Information Department.

Ajaz Abdullah Saraf, JKAS, Additional Transport Commissioner, J&K, has been

appointed as Chief Executive Officer/Secretary of the J&K Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board.

Firdous Ahmad Giri, JKAS, Additional Director SKIMS, Srinagar, has been transferred and posted as Mission Director RUSA, J&K. Qazi Sarwar, JKAS, Additional Commissioner in

the office of the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, has been appointed as Director, Urban Local Bodies, Kashmir.

Bashir Ahmad Wani, JKAS, Additional District Development Commissioner, Kulgam, has been appointed as Additional Registrar Cooperatives, Kashmir. Altaf Ahmad

Khan, JKAS, Additional Registrar Cooperatives, Kashmir, has been transferred and appointed as Additional District Development Commissioner, Kulgam.

Akram Ullah Tak, JKAS, Director Urban Local Bodies, Kashmir, has

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Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reviews preparations for 5th Khelo India Winter Games

Releases mascot & commemorative souvenir for the winter games

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparations for the 5th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) scheduled to be held from February 22 to 25, 2025 at the renowned ski resort Gulmarg.

The meeting focused on ensuring the successful conduct of the event and strengthening Jammu & Kashmir's position as a premier destination for winter sports.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Youth Services & Sports Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary Dheeraj Gupta, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Commissioner Secretary Tourism, Commissioner Secretary General Administration Department (GAD)/Information, Commissioner Secretary Youth Services & Sports (YS&S), Secretary PW(R&B), Secretary Health & Medical Education, senior police officers, heads of depart-



ments, Director Information, and other concerned officials.

Commissioner Secretary YS&S, Sarmad Hafeez gave a detailed presentation, highlighting the success of the 4th edition of Khelo India Winter Games, which significantly boosted the popularity of Gulmarg and Kashmir as global winter tourism destination. This year, the 5th edition has once again been allotted to Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, he informed.

The meeting was informed that the event is split into two phases: one held in Ladakh from January 23 to 27, and the second in Gulmarg from February 22 to 25. Over 1,000 athletes

from 35 states, Union Territories and sports boards are expected to participate in competitions such as alpine skiing, Nordic skiing, ski mountaineering, snowboarding and a demonstration sport—snowshoe racing.

The venues for the events include Kongdoori and Gulmarg Club.

The meeting reviewed the organizational framework, including technical and logistics arrangements, with the event being funded by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India.

Committees for coordination, registration, and logistics have already been constituted, with registrations underway.



The meeting was informed that mascot for the 5th edition, a snow leopard, and the event's logo have been finalized.

Publicity efforts, including hoardings and mascot displays at major cities and airports such as Delhi, Srinagar, Jammu and Amritsar, are in full swing.

In terms of media and publicity, the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) has been actively involved in pre-event, event, and post-event coverage.

The games will be televised live on DD Sports and streamed on other online platforms, with extensive coverage planned through AIR and Prasar Bharati.

A community engage-

ment slogan, "Aes Che Praraan" (We Are Waiting), has been adopted to involve local communities in the games.

Teams and officials are expected to arrive in Srinagar on February 21, where a help desk at the airport will assist with logistics arrangements. The event will also feature cultural evenings, a grand opening ceremony and comprehensive arrangements for transportation, traffic management, health services, water supply, sanitation and food for participants and officials. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah unveiled the Khelo India Winter Games 2025 mascot, the snow leopard, symbolizing the region's rich bio-

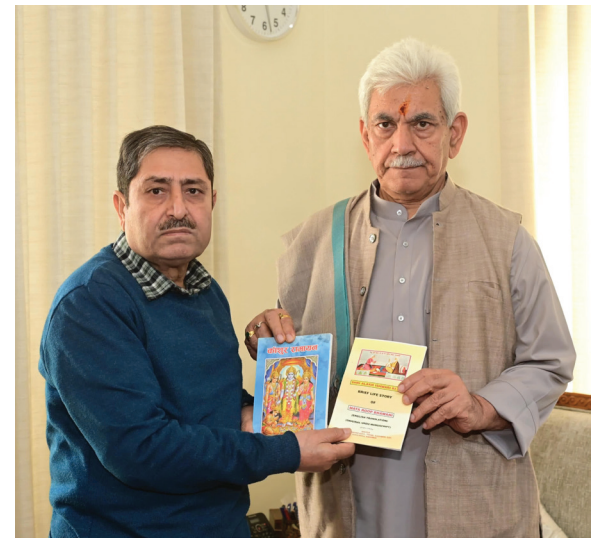
diversity and commitment to conservation.

During the meeting, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah emphasized the importance of ensuring seamless coordination and preparedness for any unforeseen situations including accidents.

Chief Secretary asked the department to have some prominent sports celebrities at the event to enhance the event's visibility and appeal.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister also released a commemorative souvenir and launched a multimedia campaign—including print, electronic, and social media initiatives—for the Khelo India Winter Games 2025.

The Chief Minister expressed confidence in the preparations and reiterated the government's commitment to making the 5th edition of Khelo India Winter Games a grand success. He commended the efforts of all stakeholders involved and emphasized the importance of showcasing Jammu & Kashmir's potential as a hub for winter sports and tourism.



Sh Rajinder Premi, social activist and son of freedom-fighter, social reformer and litterateur, Sh Sarwanand Kaul Premi called on Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha, today.

Sh Rajinder Premi requested for commemoration of literary and cultural activities on the works of his father martyr Sarwanand Kaul Premi, and naming of PHC Soafshali and Degree college after his late brother Verinder Kaul.

LG meets Rotary Club, disability welfare delegations



J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 27

Rtn. Adeep Singh Mehta, Chief Coordinator, Mega Medical Mission J&K, Rotary Club of Jammu Baahu called on the Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha, today. He briefed the Lieutenant Governor on the future

endeavour of the Rotary Club to organize a mega surgery camp in district Doda. A delegation led by Sh Ram Dass Dubey, President, Confederation of Physically-Challenged Organizations also called on the Lieutenant Governor and apprised him of various welfare issues of persons with disabilities.

EPFO promotes Online Services at Doda

J I NEWS SERVICE
DODA, JANUARY 27

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) Regional Office, Jammu, today celebrated the second anniversary of the "Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0" initiative with a special awareness and grievance redressal program held here in the Conference Hall, DC Office.

The event was presided over by the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner Rizwan Uddin, who addressed grievances of workers and employers while providing essential handholding support.

Launched in January 2023, "Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0" aims to strengthen the connection between EPFO and its stakeholders by promoting awareness about social security provisions, digital services, and fraud prevention.

The EPFO highlighted



key themes such as grievances filing mechanisms, UAN activation, e-nomination, and other online services. A special Pension Help Desk was set up to address on-the-spot pension-related queries, while discussions were held on enhanced benefits under the Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme, 1976, which now offers coverage of up to Rs 7 lakh. The event witnessed active participation

from contractors, private schools, and representatives of the government departments, along with beneficiaries from diverse sectors.

Assistant Labour Commissioner Nehal Pandit, CEO P.L. Thapa, and other stakeholders were present to emphasize the importance of extending social security benefits to eligible employees from the beginning of their employment. The program also

focused on initiatives like e-nomination, online claim filing, and employer dashboards, ensuring a robust exchange of information and services for stakeholders.

The EPFO encouraged all participants to continue promoting social security awareness and maximize the benefits available under the EPF and MP Act, 1952, for the welfare of employees across the region.

DC reviews working of School Education Department in Reasi

J I NEWS SERVICE
REASI, JANUARY 27

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Reasi Nidhi Malik conducted a comprehensive review of the School Education Department today to ensure effective implementation of the educational schemes and initiatives in the district.

The review encompassed assessment of staff strength in schools, execution of works under District Capex/UT, besides implementation of mid-day meal program, scholarship schemes and Samagra Shiksha Abhyaan.

Chief Education Officer (CEO) Deepak Gupta presented a detailed overview of the department's functioning and achievements.

Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs) were asked to conduct field visits at

least three to four days a week and develop a standardized format for daily reporting to enhance accountability and ensure the smooth functioning of schools.

Nidhi Malik emphasized the need for proper monitoring of infrastructure, electricity, and the quality of mid-day meals being provided to students. She stressed on creating a conducive learning environment.

The DC also instructed the CEO to collaborate with the Lead District Manager (LDM) to facilitate the opening of bank accounts for all students, enabling them to access scholarship benefits seamlessly. Strict action was mandated against non-performing or frequently absent teachers to maintain discipline and productivity in the system.

DC Kupwara extends greetings on Shab-i-Meraj

J I NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, JANUARY 27

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan has extended her heartfelt greetings to the people of Kupwara district on the eve of Shab-i-Meraj.

In her message of felicitations, Ayushi Sudan hoped that this auspicious occasion would spread the message of peace and promote the spirit of brotherhood, harmony and amity among people



of all faiths. She prayed for peace, progress, and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir.

Handicrafts & Handloom Dept hails Master Craftsmen conferred Padma Shri, JK Govt Awards 2025

J I NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 27

Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir, today extended heartiest congratulations to its three master craftsmen for having been conferred Padma Shri and J&K Government Awards for excellence in the field of arts and crafts.

While Farooq Ahmad Mir, the renowned Kani weaver from Srinagar, was conferred the prestigious Padma Shri Award 2025, in recognition of his 60 years of perseverance in promoting the unique craft of Kani weaving, Mukhtar Ahmad Bhat from Sonpah, Beerwah Budgam and Mushtaq Ahmad Khan, from Badamwari Srinagar, where given J&K Government Awards for their immense contribution in taking crafts like Sozni and Kani weaving to



the next level.

In a statement issued here today, Director Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, Musarat Islam, showered praise on the awardees for bringing laurels to Kashmir Handicrafts and inspiring younger generation to carry on the tradition of making exquisite hand-made products from

the valley. "This recognition shall provide traction to the indigenous craft of Kani weaving as well as intricate Sozni embroidery on Pashmina fabric which have the potential to emerge on global markets in a much bigger way," he stated.

Later, a team of officers led by the Director,

Chief Designer, School of Designs and Riyaz Ahmad Kawoosa, PEO.

The Department shall shortly organize a function to felicitate all the awardees, and also hold interactive sessions to bring these stalwarts face-to-face with craft trainees enrolled in the department, the statement added.

Beekeepers felicitated at concluding ceremony of 7-day training program

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Directorate of Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu today felicitated 50 aspiring Beekeepers drawn from Jammu and Samba Districts.

They were felicitated at the concluding ceremony of the seven-day training program on Scientific Beekeeping organized for them at Baba Jitto Kisan Kendra by the Apiculture Development Scheme, Directorate of Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu, under the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM).

Director Agriculture Jammu, S. Arvinder Singh Reen, presided over the ceremony and felicitated the beekeepers, presenting them with Tool Kits, literature, bee flora sap-



lings, and certificates of participation.

Earlier, the participants visited the Apiculture Demonstration cum Training Centre in Chimney Chak, Jammu, where they received practical, hands-on training in bee hive operations and colony management.

The Director assured the beekeepers that the department would soon organize training and exposure programs out-

side the UT, in response to their demand for advanced learning opportunities. He further announced the establishment of a laboratory and honey processing unit in the public sector, which would significantly benefit the beekeeping industry in the Jammu region. The session also included an interactive feedback session led by Assistant Entomologist Rajesh Verma, where participants expressed

satisfaction with the quality and relevance of the training. The beekeepers commended the comprehensive lectures and practical insights they had received throughout the program. The concluding ceremony was also attended by Deputy Director Trainings (J) Alok Pandotra, Agronomist (VIS) Vikas Padha, Divisional Seed Certification Officer Prem Singh, Chairman JKDCF & UAMMCL Vikrant Dogra, Assistant Soil Survey Officer Dr. Adil Rashid, SMS S. Om Singh and SMS Deepak Singh. The officers and staff of the Apiculture Development Scheme, Directorate of Agriculture Jammu, successfully conducted the proceedings of the program.

76th Republic Day

HUDD launches 'Swachhanta' campaign in 80 ULBs of J&K

2 lakh citizens take Swachhata Pledge; 3.50 lakh partake in sanitation activities

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

The Housing and Urban Development Department organised multiple events under "Swachhanta" campaign launched in all 80 Urban Local Bodies of Jammu and Kashmir as part of 76th Republic Day of Jammu & Kashmir.

A defining moment of this year's celebration was the collective action witnessed through 'Swachhanta' campaign; an inspiring Jan Andolan (people's movement) for cleanliness. Over 2 lakh citizens came together and pledged to remain steadfast in their commit-

ment towards a cleaner and greener environment.

'Swachhanta', an innovative campaign aimed to foster a community driven approach towards cleanliness, as a lead up to the Republic Day festivities, was launched by the Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD) from 21st to 26th January, 2025. The initiative has brought together individuals, community groups, volunteers, Swachhata ambassadors, influencers, students and officials in a shared mission to enhance urban sanitation and create a cleaner environment for the Day of Sovereignty.

The participants, while partaking in various sanitation activities, pledged to uphold cleanliness as a personal and soci-

etal responsibility. They vowed to voluntarily contribute towards cleanliness efforts and inspire others to join the mission for creating a sustainable and hygienic environment.

The campaign featured a diverse range of events aimed at fostering awareness and action for sanitation and cleanliness. Swachhata activities like 'Swachhata Mein Ekta' - Celebrating Unity in Cleanliness; Nukkad Natak- 'Chhote Kadam, Bade Parivartan'; Pure Waters Pure Future; Sanitation for Safe Healing in health institutions; Social Interventions by Citizens; 'Plogging'-Run for a Swachh J&K; painting competition; quiz competitions and 'Grow Green, Breathe Clean'-Plantation drives, were organised

across all 80 Urban Local Bodies of the UT.

During the campaign, over 950 different sanitation and cleanliness activities have been carried out in which the citizens participated with great fervour and enthusiasm. More than 3, 50,000 people from urban areas participated in different sanitation activities undertaken by the 80 Urban Local Bodies.

Commissioner Secretary H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur, who spearheaded the campaign, said "Swachhanta campaign not only enhanced the spirit of Republic Day but also reinforced the vision of Swachh Bharat Mission, celebrating the ideals of sovereignty, unity and civic responsibility through the lens of cleanliness".

DC Rajouri flags off CCI Parisha Girls for Picnic under Mission Vatsalya

JINNEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, JANUARY 27

In a significant initiative under the Mission Vatsalya scheme of the Department of Social Welfare, Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma today flagged off a special picnic for 30 girls from CCI Parisha. The outing aimed to provide the children with a much-needed recreational break while enriching their social and cultural experiences.

The picnic was sent to the scenic and revered destination of Shahadara Sharief, offering the participants a day filled with joy, learning, and exploration. Accompanying the girls were staff members of CCI Parisha, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience.

Speaking at the flag-off ceremony, the Deputy Commissioner lauded the District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) Abdul Raheem and the Social Welfare Department for organizing the event.

"Such initiatives are essential for creating a



nurturing environment for children in CCIs, helping them experience life beyond institutional care. I commend DCPO Abdul Raheem and his team for their dedication to the well-being and holistic development of these children," he stated.

The participants expressed their gratitude and excitement at the opportunity to visit the historical and religious site of Shahadara Sharief. The day included shared meals, interactive ses-

sions, and activities aimed at fostering teamwork, unity, and positivity.

DCPO Abdul Raheem highlighted the significance of such outings under Mission Vatsalya. "These activities are vital for the psychological and emotional growth of the children. Moments of joy and exploration not only inspire confidence but also instill a sense of belonging and hope in their lives," he remarked, thanking the Deputy Commissioner for his unwavering support.

DPIIT, JKEDI Sign MoU to Strengthen Startup Ecosystem in J&K

JINNEWS SERVICE
BARIBRAHMANA, JANUARY 27

In a landmark move to bolster the startup ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering collaboration, mentorship, and support for startups in the region.

The signing took place at "Jammu Kashmir Konnect," a special startup-focused program organized at JKEDI's Baribrahanma campus, where startups, incubators, and key-way stakeholders gathered to discuss innovation and growth opportunities.

Director DPIIT Dr. Sumeet K Jarangal and Director JKEDI Rajinder Kumar Sharma formally signed the MoU, marking a significant step toward strengthening startup support systems in J&K. While incubators and startups from the Jammu division attended the event physically, those from the Kashmir division participated virtually.

During the program, Director DPIIT and Director JKEDI held one-on-one interactions with all incubators, discussing



their challenges, needs, and future plans. The session provided a unique platform for incubators to share insights, suggest improvements, and seek policy-level support for enhancing the startup ecosystem.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Sumeet K Jarangal emphasized the need for DPIIT-recognized incubators to avail Funds of Funds and Seed Fund. He stressed that while financial resources are available, structured mentorship and handholding remain the most crucial factors for startup success. He also assured that more interactive sessions will be conducted in the future, encouraging startups to shift their mindset toward becoming job providers rather than job seekers. Furthermore, he highlighted India's ambition to become a global leader in advanced technology sectors, reducing dependence on countries like Israel and the U.S.

Speaking on the occa-

sion, Rajinder Kumar Sharma reiterated JKEDI's commitment as the nodal agency for Startup JK, stating that the institute is actively collaborating with various organizations to strengthen the startup ecosystem in the region. He assured that more such workshops will be conducted in partnership with DPIIT and incubators to ensure continuous knowledge sharing and engagement. He also lauded the achievements of a startup from Udhampur that has attained unicorn status, underscoring the immense potential of J&K's emerging startup ecosystem.

The MoU between DPIIT and JKEDI paves the way for greater branding, outreach, and accessibility to Startup India's ecosystem, fostering mentorship, knowledge exchange, and infrastructure support. It also focuses on market linkages, funding networks, and international expansion opportunities, aligning with India's vision

of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

During the event, Director JKEDI highlighted the impact of the JK Startup Policy, launched in March 2024, which has led to over 250 new startup registrations on the DPIIT portal taking the total to 988 in a short span. He also emphasized the significant outreach efforts undertaken by JKEDI, stating that during the current financial year, the institute has successfully conducted 601 Entrepreneurship Awareness Programs (EAPs) across Universities, Colleges, Higher Secondary Schools, and IITs in 20 districts of J&K—without incurring any expenses.

The "Jammu Kashmir Konnect" program, coupled with the signing of the MoU, marks a major milestone in J&K's startup ecosystem, ensuring that aspiring entrepreneurs receive the mentorship, funding opportunities, and ecosystem support needed to thrive.

The Head of the Incubators from IIT-Jammu, IIM-Jammu, Jammu University, SKUAST-Jammu, Cluster University and CIIT Jammu along with the FICCI Flo attended the event physically whereas Incubators from NIT-Srinagar, IUST University, SKUAST - Kashmir and CIIT Baramulla joined virtually.

VC DDC Kupwara reviews enrollment process of beneficiaries under PMAY (R)

JINNEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, JANUARY 27

Vice Chairman District Development Council (VC-DDC) Kupwara, Haji Farooq Ahmad Mir today chaired a meeting with Panchayat Secretaries and Surveyors at BDO Office Wavoor to review the ongoing enrollment process of beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Rural (PMAY-R).

The meeting was held to ensure that the enrollment process is carried out efficiently and all eligible beneficiaries are registered under the scheme for the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. The VC DDC highlighted the significance of PMAY-R in addressing



the housing needs of rural populations and stressed the need for timely and accurate identification of beneficiaries. He emphasized the role of Panchayat Secretaries and Surveyors in ensuring that the process is transparent, fair, and free from errors. He urged all stakeholders

to work in close coordination to achieve the set targets within the prescribed time frame.

The Vice Chairman appealed to the people of Lolab sub division to contact the concerned Surveyors for registering their name in the PMAY list.

Handicrafts Dept's Field Squad inspects craft showrooms

JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 27

Continuing its inspection drives to discourage sale of counterfeit products in the name of Kashmir Handicrafts, the Quality Control wing of the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, conducted surprise inspection of handicraft dealers in Lal Chowk and other City Centre sections, here today.

Teams, led by Quality Control Inspectors, checked showroom dealers for valid registrations and strict adherence to sale and display of genuine handmade craft products, duly labelled for price with specifications. In a statement issued today, a spokesman from the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir, stated that the stakeholders are appreciative of the efforts made by the Department and extended wholehearted support, aimed at customer satisfaction and safeguarding the interests of highly skilled craftsmen and rich heritage of Kash-



mir. The Handicrafts and Handloom Department has again urged the business houses associated with handicrafts and handloom sector to approach the Department for GI tagging, testing and QR-coded certification of their products at Craft Development Institute & Indian Institute of Carpet Technology labs. Highlighting the circu-

lar directions issued from time-to-time on strict adherence on sale of genuine handmade products, the spokesman warned of strict action under the provisions of Tourist Trade and Quality Control Acts against violators, which shall also include imposition of heavy penalty and cancellation of registration certificate.

Animal Husbandry Department Kashmir unveils Calendar for 2025

JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 27

Animal Husbandry Department Kashmir today officially unveiled its calendar for the year 2025 in an impressive function, held here.

The unveiling function was presided over by the Director Animal Husbandry Kashmir, Dr. Parvinder Singh Sudan, and Burhan Hussain, Assistant Director Information department serving as the guest of honour with all departmental officers/officials in attendance.

The calendar is part of an "information dissemination" campaign initiated by the Animal Husbandry Department to apprise masses about departmental advisories/schemes/ programmes besides initiatives and achievements.

Dr. Sudan highlighted that this initiative aims to provide valuable month-wise advisories specifically designed for pet and livestock owners. This structured approach is intended to enhance awareness regarding animal care practices throughout the year.

He said it also acts as a source for information regarding employment generating departmental schemes that align with broader goals aimed at doubling farmers' incomes in Kashmir.

Media Liaison Officer, Dr. Anwar Hussain Nagoo stated that the calendar acts as a strategic planning tool for individuals involved in animal husbandry by providing specific dates and information relevant to their activities, like breeding schedules, feeding regimens and health check-ups.

Udhampur admin initiates formulation of development plan

JINNEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 27

In line with the directions of the Finance Department regarding the collation of major development plans for priority implementation, a Primary Consultation meeting was convened by Deputy Commissioner Saloni Rai, with the Members of the Legislative Assembly of the four constituencies of District Udhampur.

The meeting was attended by MLA Udhampur West, Pawan Kumar Gupta; MLA Chenani, Balwant Singh Mankotia, MLA Udhampur East, Ranbir Singh Pathania and MLA Ramnagar, Sunil Bhardwaj, Additional District Development Commissioner, Rajinder Singh and other district officers.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on various aspects of the development agenda, including Prioritization of sector-wise works, ensuring a structured approach to development, Drafting constituency-wise proposals for priority projects, Compilation of major development projects for submission.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers to draft a comprehensive proposal of priority projects in consultation with the MLAs and ensure its submission by the evening. She further emphasized that the proposal should be inclusive of all key sectors and reflect the developmental priorities of each constituency.

LG Sinha engages with PHDCCI on Economic and Tourism Development

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 27

Representatives of PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PHDCCI), Jammu Region Chapter called on Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha, today.

The delegation co comprised of Sh Rakesh Wazir, Chair, PHDCCI Jammu; Sh Sanjay Gupta, Co-Chair; executive members including Sh Shyam Lal Kesar, Sh Vinod Sachdeva, Sh Virender Kesar, Conve-



nor - Head Katra, and Sh Kartik Partap Singh, Deputy Resident Direc-

tor, submitted a representation to the Lieutenant Governor highlighting comprehensive set of recommendations focusing on the economic, industrial, and tourism development of the Union Territory.

They also discussed important matters pertaining to extension of the New Central Sector Scheme; incentives for

renovating hotels in the service sector, upgradation of existing industrial units, promotion of spiritual, health, education and adventure tourism, etc.

A very auspicious sign, DevBhoomi Uttarakhand has made Uniform Civil Code a reality: VP

J1 NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 JAN

Vice-President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar today expressed his happiness and said that today is a very auspicious day that the state of Uttarakhand has made the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) a reality. The Vice-President presided over the inaugural programme for the fifth batch of participants of the Rajya Sabha Internship Programme and also inaugurated the online portal for the Internship Programme at Vice-President's Enclave today.

Addressing participants of the Rajya Sabha Internship Programme, Shri Dhankhar said that, "Today, a very auspicious sign has occurred. And that auspicious sign is, what the framers of the Constitution had envisioned and directed in the Constitution, specifically in Part 4 - the Directive Principles of State Policy. The framers of the Constitution directed the state

to work hard to realize these directive principles. Some of them have been realized, but one realization is Article 44. Article 44 of the Indian Constitution mandates and ordains that the state shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India. We are all in a joyous mood today. The beginning of the last quarter of the century since the adoption of the Indian Constitution has begun, with Dev Bhoomi Uttarakhand making the Uniform Civil Code a reality. One state has done it. I congratulate the foresightedness of the government ... for realizing the vision of the founding fathers of the Constitution by implementing the Uniform Civil Code in their state, and I am sure it will only be a matter of time before the entire country adopts similar legislation".

Expressing his concern over the opposition to UCC by some, the Vice-President stated, "Some

people, I would say out of ignorance, are criticizing it. How can we criticize something which is a mandate of the Indian Constitution? Ordainment emanating from our founding fathers. Something that has to bring about gender equality. Why we oppose it? Politics has taken such a deep root in our minds that it has turned into poison. For political gain, people don't hesitate to forsake nationalism, not even for a moment, without feeling concerned. How can anyone oppose promulgation of Uniform Civil Code! you study it. Study the debates of the constitutional assembly, study how many times the Supreme Court of the country has so indicated."

Underlining the security threat posed by illegal migrants, Shri Dhankhar emphasised, "We have to see the challenges. And challenge to the Nation is, millions of illegal migrants are living in our land. Millions! Is it not a challenge to our sovereignty?"

Such kind of people will never be wedded to our nationalism. They use our resources of health, education, and other facilities. They engage in jobs meant for our people. I expect everyone in the government to take a severe look at this. This problem and resolution of it cannot be delayed even by a day? How can a nation suffer illegal migrants in millions? They are threat to our democracy because they are trying to influence our electoral system. They are also threat to our societal harmony, to our nation's security."

Drawing attention to the enlarging basket of opportunities for youth, Shri Dhankhar stated, "The people of this country have tasted development for the first time because they now have a toilet in their house, a gas connection in the kitchen, access to the internet, road connectivity, and air connectivity. They are about to

get piped water, clean drinking water. 40 million people have already received affordable housing. When you experience such a situation, you become an aspirational nation.....People's aspirations are touching the sky; now everyone wants everything. It has entered people's minds that since the river of progress has flowed so much, we will be number one in the world, and first and foremost, they see themselves in that position..... I am somewhat concerned that our youth is still thinking in terms of coaching classes for government jobs. They are in a silo, stuck in a groove. They can't think beyond a government job. They should realize that today, the basket of opportunities is constantly growing."

Lauding the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shri Dhankhar said that, "People do not appreciate this. When the Prime Minister first said that the country should

have aspirational districts, their number was gradually decreasing. These were the districts where no officer wanted to become the District Magistrate, no one wanted to be the SP, and development was absent. He took it upon himself that the entire nation should be like a plateau, not a pyramid. What was the result? Aspirational districts were identified. Today, the change has come 180 degrees."

"India is singled out as the only nation that has registered in last decade huge economic upsurge, exponential infrastructural growth, deep technological penetration, hand-holding policies that are affirmative for youth and what has been the outcome, an atmosphere of hope and possibility", he added.

Highlighting the significance of dialogue and deliberation in our civilization, the Vice-President stated, "Our culture says that without debate, a

solution to a problem cannot be found. I firmly believe that. The world faces problems, some of which are existential in nature, such as climate change or conflicts like the one between Russia and Ukraine, or Israel and Hamas. But at the end of the day, as the Prime Minister indicated, resolution takes place only through dialogue and diplomacy. Are we performing in this manner at the moment? Have we not yielded the space for debate and dialogue to be overtaken by disruption and disturbance? Have we not yielded the space for consensus-building to be replaced by irretrievable confrontational stances?"

"There were many divisive issues, contentious issues, and major disagreements before the Constituent Assembly, but there were never any differences in spirit. The tough terrain was negotiated, the headwind was faced, air pockets were overcome by dialogue,

debate, discussion and deliberation. Idea was not to score a point, idea was to arrive at a consensus, a consensual approach because India is a country that is the role model of inclusivity, tolerance, adaptability", he added.

Speaking on art 370 he said, "Our Indian constitution owes much to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, he was chairman of the drafting committee. He had a global perspective and was a visionary, he drafted all the articles of the Constitution except one, Article 370. You have seen Sardar Patel,.... he was not associated with integration of Jammu & Kashmir. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was so nationalist and sovereignty was in his mind. By writing a communication, he declined to draft Article 370. You'll have the occasion to go through that. Had Dr. Ambedkar's will prevailed? we would not have paid a huge price which we have paid."

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Youth to determine...

difficult and this is why he refers to them as a 'force for global good'.

Remarking that the 21st century world is changing rapidly, and it is essential to keep pace with this change, Modi emphasized that the significant role of the youth in this transformation.

Delving into the Mudra scheme, the Prime Minister noted that initially, loans up to Rs 10 lakh were given without guarantees, and in the government's third term, this limit has been increased to Rs 20 lakh.

He highlighted that over the past 10 years, more than Rs 40 lakh crore has been disbursed under the Mudra Yojana, helping millions of young people to start their businesses.

Greeting the gathering on NCC Day, the Prime Minister said, "Being selected for the Republic Day Parade is an achievement in itself."

He noted that this year's Republic Day was special as India completed 75 years as a Republic.

Modi said that over 75 years of the Republic, the Constitution has inspired democracy and emphasized the importance of civic duties.

"Similarly, the NCC has inspired the youth of India in nation-building and taught them the importance of discipline" he said.

He added that the NCC has been extended to border areas and coastal districts, with over 170 border talukas and nearly 100 coastal talukas now having NCC presence.

CM Omar Abdullah...

provide 55 litres per capita per day (lpcd) of safe and clean drinking water, adhering to BIS 10500 standards. The adoption of alternative and effective designs, coupled with detailed technical scrutiny of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), has led to significant cost savings amounting to Rs 522 crore, underscoring the department's commitment to efficiency and innovation.

The Chief Minister reviewed various challenges faced during the mission's implementation, including low tender responses, delays in the supply of Galvanized Iron (GI) pipes in Jammu and Ductile Iron (DI) pipes in Kashmir, and incidence of dry bore wells in multiple districts. Electro-mechanical issues were also highlighted as significant concerns impacting the timely execution of projects.

The proposed project size under the Jal Jeevan Mission covers 3,253 schemes aimed at ensuring a sustainable water supply system.

The meeting was informed that establishment of District Project Management Units (DPMUs) and continuous technical review by consultants are being carried out to ensure the quality and success of the mission.

The Chief Minister stressed the importance of robust third-party monitoring mechanisms to enhance transparency and accountability.

He directed that complaints from specific areas be addressed promptly by engaging these monitoring agencies for swift resolutions. Furthermore, he called for addressing concerns related to the improper laying of water supply pipes above ground and ensuring the sustainability of water resources in affected regions.

The meeting also focused on water quality monitoring and surveillance, with the Chief Minister emphasizing the need to strengthen Pani Samities at the Panchayat level.

He encouraged regular interaction with concerned Ministers and MLAs to define their roles and responsibilities in enhancing the effectiveness of these committees.

In addition, the meeting discussed the operation and maintenance of rural water supply and extension of the Nal Jal Mitra Programme, e-billing systems and other operational aspects. The Chief Minister highlighted the urgency of addressing manpower shortages within the department to improve service delivery and achieve mission objectives.

The Chief Minister expressed satisfaction with the progress made under the Jal Jeevan Mission while reiterating the importance of sustaining momentum and overcoming challenges.

He assured full government support in realizing the mission's vision of providing clean and reliable drinking water to every household in Jammu and Kashmir. KNO

Poets & writers have...

He said the Rashtriya Kavi Sammelan, starting from today, reflects the richness and variety of our unique literary heritage. In these sessions we get an opportunity to see a repository of wisdom and tradition of our civilization that has existed over millennia, he further added.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor paid homage to the great litterateurs of Dogri, Hindi and Urdu languages and highlighted the pivotal role of poets and writers in the society.

"In India every generation of poets, writers have made rich contribution to the creative tradition and cultural identity. They have also ensured that our traditions are passed on to the next generation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon the poets and literary personalities to become the voice of patriotism and unity and make their valuable contribution in building a vibrant, progressive and united society.

"Poetry Art form has a social responsibility. It can be a powerful medium for creating awareness about socio-economic issues, inspiring the spirit of patriotism and portraying the values of harmony and brotherhood," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that the Jammu Kashmir is witnessing a historic transformation and it is our collective responsibility to reaffirm our commitment to inclusive development and work with dedication.

In today's Hindi Poetry session, Sh Harish, Sh Upendra Pandey, Sh Rajesh Agarwal, Sh Shambhu Shikhar, Sh Deepak Saini, Sh Chetan Charchit, Sh Shailender Madhur, Sh Rajesh Jain, Sh Dharamveer Nishchal, Sh Santosh Singh, Ms Padmini Singh and other renowned poets and young talent, enthralled the audience through their captivating poetry recitation.

Sh Suresh Kumar Gupta, Principal Secretary, Culture Department; Sh Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Deputy Commissioner, Jammu; Ms Harvinder Kour, Secretary, JKAACL; renowned artists and people, especially the youth in large number were present.

Amid health...

All leaves for doctors and paramedics have been cancelled under a medical alert issued by the administration.

The residents of Rajouri have appealed to the government to prioritise the hospital's needs. They said the absence of proper medical facilities in this frontier district is causing undue suffering. Local treatment options should be improved to minimise patient reliance on distant healthcare facilities, they added. KNO

Weatherman predicts...

that the minimum temperature is expected to rise from January 29 by some degrees while the maximum temperature would dip by some degrees and would settle around normal.

Pertinently, Jammu and Kashmir is presently witnessing the prolonged dry spell with the first three weeks of this month recording the deficit rainfall of 81 per cent from January 01 to January 22. KNO

Rajouri mysterious deaths...

significant improvement. This led us to consider organophosphorus poisoning as a likely cause."

However, the doctor cautioned against premature conclusions, as official reports from top laboratories are still awaited.

Organophosphorus poisoning is caused by exposure to organophosphates, a class of chemicals commonly used in pesticides, herbicides, and nerve agents. Exposure can occur via ingestion, inhalation, or skin contact. Common symptoms include excessive saliva and tears, vomiting and diarrhoea, small pupils, sweating, muscle tremors and confusion.

The Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report from Chandigarh, which could provide critical insights, is expected within 2-3 days.

Dr Shuja Qadri, an epidemiologist and Head of Com-

munity Medicine at GMC Rajouri, stated that active and passive surveillance of cases has ruled out communicable diseases, bacteria, viruses, and zoonotic causes. "Our investigation has narrowed down to food-related toxins, either ingested accidentally or deliberately," he said.

Samples have been sent to toxicology labs for screening against 200 potential toxins. Dr. Qadri expressed optimism that the investigation will identify the toxin within a week, enabling authorities to prevent further deaths.

Over the last two months, 17 people, including 14 children, succumbed to the mysterious illness, with several others requiring hospitalisation.

Authorities are maintaining strict surveillance in the affected village, and all efforts are focused on identifying the cause to ensure no further loss of life.

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakina Itoo, speaking to KNO expressed confidence in the investigating team. She assured that all possible efforts are being made to identify the cause behind the mysterious deaths in Rajouri.

"The team is working diligently to gather more information and laboratory results, which will provide critical insights into the situation," she said.

With the situation seeming to normalise, the minister appealed to the public to remain vigilant and cooperate fully with the authorities. "The government is committed to taking every necessary step to ensure the safety and well-being of the people, particularly those living in the affected areas," Itoo added. KNO

22 JKAS officers...

been posted as Additional Commissioner in the office of the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir.

Pran Singh, JKAS, Additional District Development Commissioner, Doda, has been appointed as Special Secretary to the Government, Housing and Urban Development Department. Zahoor Ahmad Mir, JKAS, Special Secretary to the Government, Housing and Urban Development Department, has been posted as Additional Director SKIMS, Srinagar. Sanjay Gupta, JKAS, Deputy Commissioner, State Taxes, Enforcement (Samba), has been transferred and posted as Additional Secretary to the Government, Mining Department.

Arun Kishore Kotwal, JKAS, Additional Secretary to the Government, Mining Department, has been posted as Additional Transport Commissioner, J&K. Bal Krishan, JKAS, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Bhandarwah, has been transferred and posted as Additional Registrar Cooperatives, Jammu.

Masarat Hashim, JKAS, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Pahalgam, has been transferred and posted as Deputy Labour Commissioner (Central), J&K. Shah Nawaz Shah, JKAS, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Kokernag, holding additional charge of Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Verinag, has been posted as Deputy Commissioner.

Waseem Raja, JKAS, Deputy Commissioner, State Taxes, Enforcement (Central) Kashmir, has been posted as Additional Secretary to the Government, Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment. Ajeet Singh, JKAS, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Bani-Basohli, has been posted as Deputy Commissioner, State Taxes, Enforcement (Samba).

Mridhu Salathia, JKAS, Additional Mission Director, J&K Rural Livelihood Mission, Jammu, has been posted as Additional Secretary to the Government, Housing and Urban Development Department. She will also hold the additional charge of Mission Director, National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), in addition to her own duties, until further orders. Ideel Saleem, JKAS, Deputy Labour Commissioner (Central), J&K, has been posted as Additional Secretary in the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Kashmir.

Mir Nasrool Hilal Jeri, JKAS, Joint Registrar, Cooperative (Audit), Srinagar, has been posted as Additional Secretary to the Government, Housing and Urban Development Department. Manpreet Kour, JKAS, Assistant Commissioner, State Taxes Department, Jammu, has been posted as Additional Mission Director, J&K Rural Livelihood Mission, Jammu.

Bureeda Majid, JKAS, Project Officer, Wage Employment (ACD) Budgam, has been transferred and posted

as Programme Officer, ICDS Project, Ganderbal. Hilal Ahmad Mir, JKAS, awaiting orders of adjustment in the General Administration Department, has been posted as Project Officer, Wage Employment (ACD) Budgam. KNO

J&K govt hikes...

2025 onwards, the increased DA will be included in the monthly salary.

Furthermore, the government clarified that any fraction of 50 paise or more in the DA calculation will be rounded up to the next higher rupee, while any fraction below 50 paise will be disregarded. KNO

JPC clears Waqf...

hundreds of amendments in all 44 clauses and all of them were defeated by vote, the JPC Chairman added. Slamming the move, TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee alleged that the meeting is trying to "Subverting" the democratic processes" by not accepting the amendments proposed by the opposition MPs.

"It was a farcical exercise. We were not heard. Pal has acted in a dictatorial manner", Banerjee said.

In August last year, the Waqf (Amendment) bill was referred to the 21-member JPC. The legislation seeks to bring changes to the powers of state waqf boards, survey of waqf properties and removal of encroachments by amending the Waqf Act, 1995.

Speaking about the meeting Shiv Sena MP Naresh Mhaske said, "There were 44 resolutions and discussion and voting was held on each one of them along with amendments"

He added, "Opposition was against each resolution but their objection did not get the majority of the votes. We added 14 resolutions in the bill and the final draft will be presented to us on 29th January".

SP MP Mohibullah Nadvi said, "This is a joke with the minority of the country, with the Waqf Board. Constitution has been bulldozed. This makes it seem that the Bill that was brought in was just a joke...This is a process to loot Waqf Board. Parliamentary procedure was not followed."


The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is aimed at addressing the challenges and bringing reformative changes like legal mechanisms to reclaim illegally occupied properties, improved transparency, enhanced audits and digitisation.

The Waqf Act of 1995 was enacted to regulate Waqf properties and has faced criticism for corruption, encroachments and mismanagement.

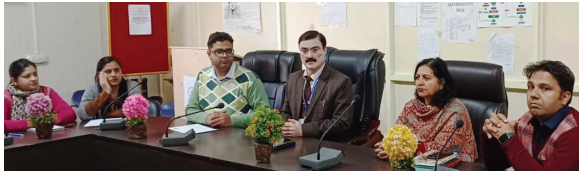
Jammu Police arrests...

The accused, also a history-sheeter of PS Miran Sahib, had recently come out after completing his detention under the Public Safety Act (PSA).

A case has been registered at Police Station Bishnah under relevant sections of law and further investigation is underway to trace the network behind the recovered narcotics and illegal weapon.

<h2>10TH DAY</h2> <p>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.</p> <p>TENTH DAY will be performed on 28/01/2025 (Tuesday) at our residence Amit Nagar, Muthi, Jammu.</p> <p>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. Chinta Devi and Sh. Jeet Lal</p> <p>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</p>	 <p>SH. DHANI RAM</p>
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GDC Vijaypur organises Slogan Writing, Poster Making event to mark National Geographic Day



JINNEWS SERVICE
SAMBHA, JANUARY 27

The Geography Department of Government Degree College (GDC) Vijaypur marked National Geographic Day with slogan writing and poster making themed "Support for Conservation and Sustainability." The event was held under the guidance of the Principal Dr. Vandana Verma.

Prof. Meetu Sharma (HOD Geography) coordinated the event and expressed her pleasure in seeing the students' active involvement and creativity. The event saw enthusiastic participation from the 4th-semester students, who showcased their creativity and understanding of geographical concepts through their slogans and posters.

Power Shutdown

JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 27

According to the Chief Engineer, Distribution, KPDC, in order to carry out Temporary shifting and permanent raising of Sopore Tap Line near Lalad Amargarh, the shutdown of 33KV Delina-Sopore Line shall be observed due to which Receiving Station at Sopore-II shall remain off while power supply to the Sopore Town, Amargarh, Krankshivan Colony and adjoining areas will be affected from 10:00 AM to 04:00 PM on 29 January, 2025.

Similarly, to carry out the Augmentation of 0.1 ACSR to 0.2 ACSR of Nehalpora Markundal Line, the shutdown of 33KV Nehalpora-Markundal Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at Markundal, Naidkhai, Shahgund, Aglar shall remain off while the power supply to Naidkhai, Markundal, Sumbal, Ankul, Gundboon and adjoining areas will be affected from 10:00 AM to 03:00 PM on 29 January and 01 February 2025.

Also, to carry out Evacuation of power from GIS Tengpora Grid Station, the shutdown of 33KV GIS Tengpora KP Bagh Line and GIS Tengpora Exhibition Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at KP Bagh, Jawahar Nagar and Rajbagh shall remain off while power supply to the KP Bagh, Jawahar Nagar, Rajbagh and Danderkha areas will be affected from 11:00 AM to 03:00 PM on 29 January, 2025.

Further, to carry out the work of installation of 33 KV isolator on 33 KV Bemina Exhibition Line, the shutdown of 33KV Bemina Exhibition Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at GIS Batmaloo, Court Complex shall remain off while power supply to the Batmaloo, Moominabad Batmaloo, Court Complex Mominabad areas will be affected from 11:00 AM to 04:30 PM on 02 February, 2025.

In order to carry out the balance left over work by way of erection of poles as well as laying of new conductor, the shutdown of 33KV Bemina KP Bagh Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Station at Rakhiarth shall remain off while power supply to the Rakhiarth, Hamdania Colony areas will be affected from 11:00 AM to 04:30 PM on 29 January and 01 February, 2025.

Moreover, to carry out Stringing of ACSR Conductor, the shutdown of 33KV Delina Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at Sopore-2nd, Delina and Jetty shall remain off while power supply to the Sopore-

Town, Amargarh, Krankshivan Colony, Delina, BSF, Kanispora, Jahama, Kralhar, Chandsooma, Khawajabagh, Jetty, Transit Accomodation, PHE Jetty and adjoining areas will be affected from 11:00 AM to 02:00 PM on 29 January, 2025.

Also, to carry out Ongoing work on 33 KV Kalantra tap Line, the shutdown of 33KV Wagoora line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at Sangram, Wagoora, Kreeri and Ichloo shall remain off while the power supply to the Wagoora, Kreeri, Mangam, Kawcheck and adjoining areas will be affected from 10:00 AM to 04:00 PM on 29 January, 2025.

Further, to carry out Replacement of deteriorated poles of 33 KV Line, the shutdown of 33KV Baramulla-1st and Baramulla-2nd Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at Baramulla-1st, Kanlibagh, GMC, Baramulla and Baramulla-2nd shall remain off while the power supply to the Baramulla Town, GMC Baramulla, Kanlibagh, Old Town, Azad Gunj, Janbazpora and adjoining areas will be affected from 11:00 AM to 02:00 PM on 02 February, 2025.

In order to carry out Stabilization of line, the shutdown of 33KV Kongambara Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at Kunzar and Dhobiwan shall remain off while power supply to the Kunzar, Dhobiwan and adjoining areas will be affected from 10:00 AM to 04:00 PM on 29 January, 2025.

To facilitate HT Conducting works under RDSS, the shutdown of 33KV Badampora Lar Tulumulla Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Stations at Tulumulla, Kheerbhawani and Lar shall remain off while the power supply to the Repora, Watlar, Lar, Tulumulla, Kheerbhawani and adjoining areas will be affected from 10:00 AM to 03:00 PM on 01 & 06 February, 2025. Similarly, to carry out Stabilization works, the shutdown of 33KV Nadhihal Tap Line shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Station at Ajas shall remain off while power supply to the Ajas, Bazipora, SK Bala and adjoining areas will be affected from 10:00 AM to 04:00 PM on 30 January & 01 February, 2025.

Also, to carry out Stabilization works, the shutdown of 33KV Badampora Safapora Tapline shall be observed due to which 33/11KV Receiving Station at Safapora shall remain off while power supply to the Safapora, Gratbal, Jarakobagh and Manasbal areas will be affected from 10:00 AM to 04:00 PM on 30 January, 2025.

Reasi admin discusses formulation of Development plan with MLAs



JINNEWS SERVICE
REASI, JANUARY 27

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Nidhi Malik today convened a consultative meeting with the Members of Legislative Assembly regarding formulation of annual development plan.

The meeting with MLA Shri Mata Vaishno Devi constituency Baldev Raj Sharma and MLA Gulabgarh constituency Khurshid Ahmad focused on seeking comprehensive details of priority development works in their respective constituencies for the upcoming fiscal year 2025-26.

After detailed discussions, the MLAs were invited to submit detailed proposals outlining essential and high-priority works, ensuring that the needs of the constituencies are adequately represented. The DDC emphasised the importance of aligning these initiatives with the overall development goals of the district while addressing the specific needs of local communities.

The DDC assured both the MLAs that their feasible and impactful suggestions would be thoroughly evaluated and integrated into the district's development plan for 2025-26.

Bharat Vikas Parishad Gandhinagar celebrates 76th Republic Day with patriotism



JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 27

The Bharat Vikas Parishad Gandhinagar Branch, Jammu celebrated the 76th Republic Day at Nanak Nagar, opposite Varmani Maal with great enthusiasm and patriotism. The ceremony was attended by forty five (45) members of the organization, their families, and distinguished guests.

The event began with the unfurling of the national flag by Shri Bharat Bhushan Sharma, Prant President of Bharat Vikas Parishad Jammu (UT). This was followed by a rendition of the national anthem and salute.

In his address, Shri B.B.Sharma emphasized the importance of Republic Day and the significance of the Indian Constitution. He also highlighted the contributions of Bharat Vikas Parishad in promoting social

welfare, education, and cultural activities in the region.

The ceremony included a program featuring patriotic song and poem performed by Diksha Sharma a student.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks. by Sh.Sushil ojha, President branch, Sh. C.U.Sharma, Sectt.and Sh. Jagjit Singh Isher, a call to the members to uphold the principles of democracy, secularism, and social justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Prominent among participants were S/Sh. Satyanand Sharma, Dr.Dev Ranaj Sharma, Dr. Balwant Sharma, Arun Sharma, Shiv Ram Sharma, smt. Amita Sharma, Vijay Sharma, Prof. Bharat Bhushan Sharma, Gopal gupta, Sd.Gurmeet Singh, P.S.chandel, Ram langar, Sham langer, yash pal gupta, B.S.Chib Mrs. and Mr.C.L.koul, and much more members.



Wajahat Farooq Bhat, Chairman, Save Youth Save Future Foundation, called on Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha, today. He was accompanied by Ms. Anika Nazir, Women's Wing President, and Mudasir Ahmed Dar, South Kashmir Zonal President of the foundation.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

Awareness event on women centric welfare schemes held at SDH Bholderwah

JINNEWS SERVICE
DODA, JANUARY 27

District Social Welfare Department, through the Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women on Monday organised an awareness camp at Sub District Hospital Bholderwah to mark 10 years of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP).

The camp was held under the direction of District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) Tariq Qazi and attended by Block Medical Officer (BMO Dr. Ashraf Kuchey and the staff of the Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti and ASHA workers.

As part of the BBBP ini-

tiative, baby kits were distributed among mothers of newborn girls to support their well-being and encourage the message of girl child empowerment. Additionally, sanitary napkins were distributed among postnatal mothers to emphasize the importance of menstrual hygiene in preventing infections and ensuring reproductive health.

Gender Specialist, District Hub for Empowerment of Women Dr. Sanya Khan presented an overview of the Sambal and Samarthya components under Mission Shakti. She explained the schemes and programs aimed at women's empowerment, including Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

(PMMVY), State Marriage Assistance Scheme (SMAS), Tejaswini, and various pension schemes under the Social Welfare Department. She also elaborated on the objectives of BBBP, its target beneficiaries, and the achievements in areas such as education, sports, and skill development.

Dr. Sanya also highlighted the services provided by the Women Helpline (181) and the Sakhi One Stop Centre, focusing on addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and offering assistance to women in distress.

Dr. Ashraf Kuchey emphasized the critical importance of menstrual hygiene, particularly for

women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. He discussed the health risks associated with poor menstrual hygiene, including reproductive and urinary tract infections, and stressed the need for improved awareness and access to sanitation facilities and sanitary products. The event also addressed social taboos and myths surrounding menstruation, which often hinder the growth and education of young girls. Participants were encouraged to adopt simple and effective menstrual hygiene practices, and a collective call was made to break societal stigmas surrounding this natural physiological process.

Madhav Sewa Trust organizes Seva Basti Kabaddi Tournament

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 27

In a commendable initiative to strengthen cultural values, social awareness, and community engagement, Madhav Sewa Trust's Dharam Jagran Samway organized the Seva Basti Kabaddi Tournament today. This noble effort aims to unite communities, promote moral values among the youth, and reconnect them with their rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

The tournament witnessed enthusiastic participation from children and youth across different social and economic backgrounds, reflecting the inclusive nature of the program. The event was not just a sports competition but also a platform to



educate and inspire young minds about their responsibilities towards society.

A key highlight of the event was the oath-taking ceremony, where participants pledged their commitment to preserving and promoting Sanatan Hindu Dharma. Through various activities such as group discussions and interactive sessions, the program sought to instill a sense of pride in Indian traditions

and cultural values.

Rakesh Tyagi, incharge North Zone Dharam Jagran informed that this initiative was aimed to counter unethical religious conversions taking place in slum areas under the guise of social service. By engaging the youth in sports and cultural awareness programs, the organizers sought to reaffirm their commitment to their heritage and prevent misguided influences,

he added. He emphasized that such competitions help shape young minds by providing them with the right guidance and motivation. He reiterated their mission to empower underprivileged children by giving them access to knowledge about their roots and traditions.

On the occasion, MP Jugal Kishore Sharma and MLA Vikram Randhawa also shared their views.

The Seva Basti Kabaddi Tournament stands as a testament to the collective efforts of organizers, volunteers, and participants, fostering a spirit of unity, selflessness, and cultural pride. The Madhav Sewa Trust remain committed to their vision of building a society that upholds its traditions while embracing progress and harmony.

76th Republic Day Celebrated in District Court Complex Samba

JINNEWS SERVICE
SAMBHA, JAN 28

As per the directions of the Hon'ble High Court of UT of J&K and Ladakh, 76th Republic Day was celebrated in District Court Complex (Head Quarter) Samba today i.e. on 26th January, 2025 with full Zeal & enthusiasm.

The event commenced with the unfurling of the National flag by Sh. Ravinder Nath Watal Worthy Principal District & Sessions Judge Samba & Worthy Chairman District Legal Services Authority Samba which was followed by reciting of the National Anthem by the gathering.

Sh. Ravinder Nath Watal Worthy Pr. District and Sessions Judge Samba who was the Chief Guest for this programme greeted the gathering on this occasion and also highlighted the importance of this day. This program/event was witnessed by Mr. Umesh Sharma Chief Judicial Magistrate Samba, Mr. Sandeep Singh Sen Secretary District Legal Services Authority Samba, Ms. Himani Parihar Munsiff Samba, Ms. Rashi Verma Special Mobile Magistrate Samba, Ms. Cheena Sumbria Pr. Magistrate Juvenile Justice Board Samba, Ms. Kritika Sethi Addl. Munsiff



Samba, Prosecuting Officers of District Court Complex Samba, Officers from LADCs Samba, President, Senior and Young members of the Bar Association Samba, Panel Lawyers, teachers and students of different participants Schools of District Samba, Police personnel, Staff Members of both District Court Samba & District Legal Services Authority Samba & Para Legal Volunteers of District Legal Services Authority Samba. Various cultural programmes were also organized by District Legal Services Authority Samba as per the directions of Worthy Chairman, District Legal Services Authority Samba on this occasion wherein students from

Pareesha (Home for Girls), Junior Einsteins Modern School, Bari Brahmana, Palaash (Home for Boys) and Global Kids Playway Sangalwali Samba presented different performances on the theme of the programme.

Thereafter a felicitation ceremony also got organized wherein the Chief Guest distributed certificates to the students who displayed their performances, Staff and PLVs of DLSA Samba. Whereas the proceedings of this programmes were conducted by Mr. Hitesh Sharma, Panel Advocate DLSA Samba. The overall proceedings of the program got supervised by Secretary District Legal Services Authority Samba.

Jal Sanchy Jan Bhagidari: DC reviews execution of Water Conservation projects in Poonch District

JINNEWS SERVICE
POONCH, JANUARY 27

Deputy Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kundal today convened a meeting to assess the progress under the Jal Sanchy Jan Bhagidari initiative. The meeting brought together officers from across the line departments.

The DC underscored the critical need for conservation measures amid growing challenges related to water scarcity. The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti provided an update on the initiative, detailing the latest advancements in schemes and the collaborative role of different departments in ensuring effective implementation.

Key indicators of the Jal Sanchy Jan Bhagidari initiative were thoroughly discussed, including the development of check dams, ponds, rooftop water harvesting structures, open well recharges, and the renovation of traditional water bodies.

The DC stressed the importance of completing targeted projects within the prescribed timelines, urging all officials to work with dedication and efficiency.

EDITORIAL

NC's shift on Statehood: Pragmatism or Retreat?

The recent remarks by National Conference (NC) leader and MLA Hazratbal, Salman Ali Sagar, signify a marked shift in the party's stance on the demand for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood. This pivot, advocating a non-confrontational approach with the central government, raises questions about the NC's broader strategy and its implications for the region's political landscape. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, the NC government appears to have embraced a policy of diplomacy and restraint. Sagar's assertion that "there is no need of confrontation with the central government" underscores a deliberate departure from the more assertive rhetoric traditionally associated with statehood demands. Instead, the NC's leadership is signaling a preference for behind-the-scenes engagement, as evidenced by Omar Abdullah's discussions with top national leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Sagar's remarks reflect the NC's belief that cooperation with the central government may yield better results than outright confrontation. He emphasized that the Omar Abdullah-led government is committed to resolving pressing issues, including statehood, through "productive and result-oriented" efforts. The NC seems to be banking on a phased, negotiation-driven approach to achieve its objectives, rather than resorting to protests or public outcry. While this approach may be pragmatic, it also risks alienating segments of the population that view statehood as a matter of identity and dignity. By downplaying the urgency of the issue and avoiding confrontation, the NC might inadvertently give the impression that it is de-prioritizing statehood in favor of maintaining cordial relations with the center. Predictably, this shift has drawn criticism from opposition parties, who accuse the NC of abandoning its core commitment to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The opposition sees this as a retreat and a dilution of the mandate the NC claims to uphold. However, Sagar's statement dismisses these criticisms, labeling them as attempts to create "ruckus." The NC's leadership remains firm in its belief that restraint and dialogue will ultimately lead to the restoration of statehood and address other pressing issues. The NC's current stance could be interpreted as an attempt to strike a balance between addressing the aspirations of the people and maintaining a functional relationship with the central government. However, this strategy is not without risks. The party must ensure that its overtures to the center do not overshadow its accountability to the electorate, particularly on emotive issues like statehood. The Omar Abdullah government's optimism about the center's "positive response" is commendable, but it must be accompanied by tangible outcomes. If the NC's approach fails to deliver on statehood or other critical issues, the party risks losing its credibility and support base. As the political climate in Jammu and Kashmir evolves, the NC's strategy will undoubtedly come under intense scrutiny. The party's decision to eschew confrontation in favor of quiet diplomacy is a calculated move, but one that must be backed by visible progress. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have long awaited the restoration of their statehood, and their patience is not infinite. The NC's leadership must walk a fine line between pragmatism and principle. While dialogue with the central government is necessary, the party must also reassure the people that their aspirations remain front and center. Any perception of complacency or retreat could prove costly in the long run. Ultimately, the success of this strategy will depend on whether it delivers meaningful results—and whether the people believe in the NC's commitment to their cause.

ISRO's PSLV-C60 Mission and POEM-4 A game-changer for India's space exploration

ANKITANAND

India's space exploration has reached a significant milestone with the recent launch of the PSLV-C60 mission by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). This mission featured the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) alongside the PSLV-Orbital Experiment Module (POEM-4), propelling India into an elite group of nations capable of space docking. Additionally, ISRO's collaboration with startups, researchers, and academic institutions showcases its commitment to fostering deep-tech advancements while reducing the high costs of space experimentation.

Enhanced Resources

Traditionally, the upper stage of a launch vehicle becomes dormant after payload deployment. However, ISRO has creatively repurposed the PSLV's fourth stage into POEM, an orbital platform equipped with telemetry, command support, and a power supply. This transformation enables technical and scientific research in space while optimising resource use and lowering financial barriers for researchers, academic institutions, and businesses.

POEM-4 reflects ISRO's

ability to turn constraints into opportunities, providing an affordable avenue for space experimentation. This democratisation of space access marks a turning point for India's space sector, opening the doors to innovations previously hindered by high costs and limited resources.

Empowering Startups

ISRO's POEM-4 has significantly benefited startups and academic institutions by enabling cost-effective in-orbit technology testing. Mumbai-based Manastu Space Technologies, for instance, is developing the Vyom 2U Green Propulsion System, which replaces toxic satellite fuels with an environmentally friendly hydrogen peroxide-based alternative. This innovation addresses two key challenges in space exploration—safety and sustainability—and incorporates advanced features like a high-temperature catalyst, optimised thruster design, and proprietary green propellant MS-289. With ISRO's support, Manastu is preparing for an upcoming PSLV mission to validate its technology, potentially positioning India as a global leader in sustainable satellite operations.

GalaxEye, another innovative startup, has devel-



oped affordable synthetic aperture radar (SAR) modules. Unlike optical imaging, SAR technology penetrates clouds, providing precise and uninterrupted satellite imagery crucial for disaster management, environmental monitoring, and more. Validating its SAR modules in space through POEM-4 positions GalaxEye to deliver cost-effective global imaging solutions. Additionally, TakeMe2Space, a startup working on space-based data centers and processing power modules, utilised POEM-4 for initial technology validation. This achievement, despite the startup's limited fund-

ing, highlights ISRO's commitment to nurturing deep-tech innovators and breaking down entry barriers for emerging players.

Driving Economic Growth and Innovation

ISRO's approach with POEM-4 aligns with its broader vision of fostering public-private collaboration to stimulate economic growth. By offering advanced testing infrastructure at reduced costs, ISRO accelerates the commercialisation of innovative solutions.

Manastu Space's collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

exemplifies the power of such synergies. With funding from DRDO's Technology Development Fund, Manastu developed the iBooster system through years of intensive research. Its successful delivery underscores the potential of partnerships between government institutions and startups to advance national defense and space capabilities.

Push for innovations

The PSLV-C60 mission and the POEM-4 initiative position ISRO as a leader in frugal yet impactful innovation. By repurposing resources and promoting collaboration, ISRO dem-

onstrates that ground-breaking advancements do not require massive budgets but thrive on ingenuity and inclusivity.

Dr. Pawan Goenka, Chairman of IN-SPACE, aptly summarized the initiative's significance: "POEM is a practical solution deployed by ISRO that allows Indian startups, academic institutions, and research organizations to test their space technologies without the need to launch entire satellites. By making this platform accessible, we are reducing entry barriers and enabling a wider range of entities to contribute to the space sector."

Toward a Multi-Trillion-Dollar Space Economy

India's ambitions of becoming a multi-trillion-dollar economy find a strong ally in ISRO's innovations. The space sector, driven by public-private partnerships, support for deep-tech startups, and inclusive access to space, is poised to play a key role in this vision. Initiatives like POEM-4 lay the groundwork for a thriving space ecosystem that fosters innovation, economic growth, and global leadership.

(The writer is, founding partner at Riceberg Ventures; views are personal)

A chance encounter in Delhi: A story of hope amidst the chaos

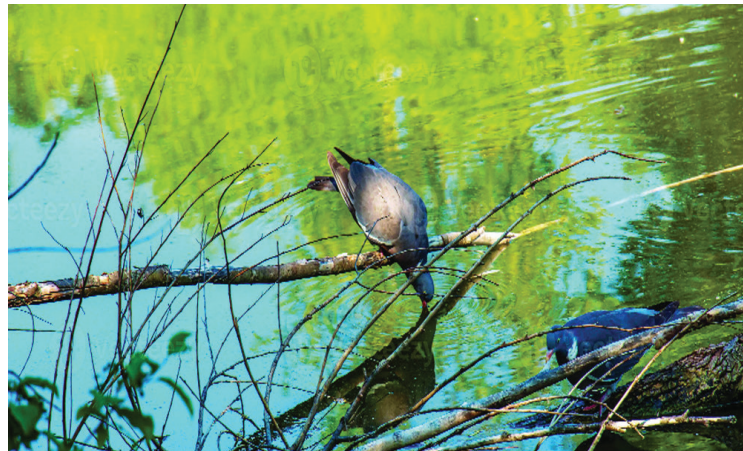
APSMALHOTRA

Surprises never cease to crop up in my beloved Delhi, although, when I reminisce, I find this Delhi to be so very different from the place where I was born and grew up—in a few years from now, I will be touching the magical mark of sixty years—Insha-Allah!!! These are surprises that keep the passion to continue living here alive, despite the megapolis tottering on the edge of a bottomless abyss.

I encountered one such surprise more than two decades ago, when I chanced upon an opportunity to care, to love—dispassionately. Then, I worked in the vicinity of Delhi's sprawling International Airport. At some distance from my office were robust

pockets of greenery. As I strolled on the edge of a stagnant water body, immersed in thoughts, the shrill chirping of two birds circling overhead broke my reverie.

Wary—expectedly so—of duplicitous humans, they maintained a distance from me, trying to scoop down to my level, but then taking off at the last moment. Something in their incessant chirping pointed to a high level of desperation, of an impending crisis. Not the one to be blessed with Dr Do Little's prowess, instinctively, I shrugged off the noise to a behaviour anomaly that might be inherent in avians of this species. But



the next moment I was proved wrong.

The magnitude of the disaster struck me like a sledgehammer—on the muck-infested, rotting, stagnant surface of the pond, I saw a tiny tremor, so minute that one could easily have missed it. It aroused my curiosity, and I leaned over to have

a better view. Lo and behold, trying to break free from the strangulating grip of the muck were three tiny birds, barely the size of an index finger—in all probability offspring of the panic-stricken pair hovering above. Perhaps they had fallen into the pond, carried by a dust-storm that had lashed the

capital a few hours earlier.

As they waged a fast-losing battle to stay afloat in the poisonous pool (symptomatic of most water bodies in the capital), the strings of my heart (already weakened by a blood pressure problem) felt a strong tug.

Somehow, I managed to shrug off my indecisiveness and moved to the

edge of the pond. Tenderly, so as not to cause any harm, I scooped the first bird into my palm; the paranoid birds overhead mistook me for a predator and made some aggressive moves. But, as I delicately placed it on hard ground, they realised that I was not a foe—immediately, the

chirping subsided; I finished the balance task in peace. After I had rescued the last bundle of joy and placed it on the welcoming lap of Mother Earth, I felt reassured that the worst was over.

Contended, I commenced my trudge into civilised environs. Barely had I taken a few steps, when I looked behind and saw the protective parents cuddling their young ones—exemplifying all that is human but is sadly getting diluted.

The unexpected encounter lifted my spirits sky-high, as even in the fast-decaying Delhi, my beloved Delhi, hope continues to flow eternally. And where there is hope, a better future can never be far away.

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Completes 10 Years: Driving Women-Led Development for a Viksit Bharat



ANNPURNA DEVI

UNION MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

As India marches confidently toward its vision of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047, the transformative impact of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is a testament to how far we have come in our transition from women's development to women-led development. Swami Vivekananda once said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird

to fly on only one wing." Inspired by this time-less vision, the Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme on January 22, 2015, in Panipat, Haryana. This landmark initiative sought to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in India and ensure that girls and women across the nation have the opportunities, care, and dignity they deserve.

The 2011 Census revealed a deeply concerning Child Sex Ratio of 918, a stark reflection of societal biases and the misuse of diagnostic tools. Through targeted, life-cycle-focused interventions, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao was launched to not only reverse this trend but also lay the foundation for a future where women lead and thrive.

Over the past decade, the scheme has cata-

lyzed significant progress. According to the Health Management Information System, the national Sex Ratio at Birth has improved from 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24. Institutional deliveries have surged from 61% in 2014-15 to 97.3% in 2023-24, while first-trimester ante-natal care registrations increased from 61% to 80.5%. Gross enrolment ratios for girls at the secondary level rose from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 79.4% in 2021-22. Additionally, the gap in infant mortality rates between male and female newborns has nearly disappeared, reflecting our commitment to equity in survival and care.

Under the visionary leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister, The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao movement has gone beyond improving statis-



tics; it has redefined the narrative around women's empowerment. Initiatives like the Yashaswini Bike Expedition, a 10,000-km journey by 150 women bikers in October 2023, symbolized the indomitable spirit of India's daughters. The Kanya Shiksha Pravesh Utsav in 2022 enrolled nearly 100,786 out-of-school girls, showcasing the power of education in transforming lives. The National Confer-

ence on Skilling emphasized the importance of women's active participation in the workforce, bringing us closer to our vision of women-led development.

As we celebrate ten years of this transformative initiative, it is clear that the mission is far from over. If we are to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat, it is imperative to ensure that girls and women remain at the heart of our nation-building efforts.

India cannot develop till her girls and women are able to live out their full potential. This is the time for us to take decisive action. We must strengthen the implementation of the The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act of 1994, address dropout rates in education, expand skill development programs, and provide targeted interventions at every stage of a girl's life.

For the Financial Year 2023-2024, Female Labour Force Participation in India stood at 41.7%. While this is a significant increase from previous years, it is still below the Labour Force Participation of Men. Noteworthy also, is the fact that Female Labour Force Participation in the Urban areas is lower than Female Labour Force Participation in the Rural areas of the country. A

large number of women in India, are involved in unpaid domestic care work. Our endeavour should be to not only foster an environment for more women to leave the folds of their domestic spheres and take up employment outside the house, but also to create a means to promote care work as a valid career and a profession, so women who are trained in care work, and want to pursue it, can do so while also gaining financial independence and seeing their efforts contribute to the economic growth of the country. According to the World Economic Forum, closing the workforce gender gap could increase global GDP by 20%. For India, this is not just an opportunity—it is a necessity. Women-led development is central to achieving our goal of a trillion-dollar economy

and becoming a developed nation by 2047. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is not just a program; it is a movement that has inspired millions and positioned women at the forefront of India's progress.

Under the visionary leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister, we are witnessing a historic transformation. From women's development to women-led development, the daughters of India are rising as changemakers, entrepreneurs, and leaders. They are transforming into the leaders of their own growth story. Together, let us nurture their dreams and empower their journeys, ensuring that when India completes 100 years of independence, it does so as a nation where every woman plays a central role in shaping its destiny.

EXPLAINED: WHAT IS GUILLAIN-BARRÉ SYNDROME? KNOW WHEN TO SEEK TREATMENT

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Tingling, weakness of hand-grip or foot drop could signal Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), said health experts on Monday, even as the reported cases spike to over a hundred in Pune, Maharashtra.

The Maharashtra health department on Sunday also reported what is suspected to be the first death linked to the GBS outbreak concentrated in Pune.

The Union health ministry has sent a team to Pune's Sinhgad area, where the outbreak is currently concentrated.

What is GBS?
GBS is a serious illness that often progresses rapidly, making the patient bedridden in a few days. It is associated with damage to nerves causing severe weakness of limbs, trunk, and face.

It is often followed by a bacterial or viral infection (such as diarrhoea causing Campylobacter jejuni bacteria or viral infections like dengue or chikungunya), that wreaks havoc on the nerves.

In people afflicted with

GBS, the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy nerves outside the brain and spinal cord, leading to weakness and, sometimes, paralysis, or even death.

"GBS is a very rare but potentially paralysing nerve disorder caused by the immune system mistakenly attacking the body's own nerves. It is often triggered by gastrointestinal or respiratory infections," Rajeve Jayadevan, Chairman of the Kerala State IMA Research Cell, told IANS.

Campylobacter, a bacterial gut infection that spreads through contaminated food and water, has been linked to the current outbreak. The symptoms of GBS typically include gastrointestinal issues like nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea before GBS onset.

The condition causes "weakness that is progressive, later involving the upper limbs, and can also affect the muscles involved with breathing," the expert said.

However, it is important to note that the vast majority of infections do not result in GBS, said Jay-



adevan, also a Kochi-based gastroenterologist.

"Improving sanitation, water, and air quality, along with general measures to reduce the spread of infections in communities, can help lower the risk," he said.

When to seek medical help?

The illness often starts suddenly and can progress over 4 weeks. Some patients may experience rapid worsening, while others may progress more slowly.

While prompt diagnosis and treatment of GBS are crucial, with delays potentially leading to worse outcomes, the symptoms are often common, related to other diseases, and may not always end up as GBS.

"If someone develops new-onset tingling sensation and weakness, especially in the legs with difficulty walking, they should seek immediate attention at a hospital with advanced facilities," Jayadevan told IANS, adding that "facial weakness can appear with drooping of the eyelid (ptosis) or a smile involving only one side of the face".

Dr Pawan Ojha, Director - Neurology, from a Vashi-based hospital told IANS that it is important for the public not to panic over simple tingling/ numbness of limbs or face.

"But GBS should be considered only when there is weakness of hand-grip, foot drop, or difficulty in raising hands above shoulder or rising above the

ground," Ojha said.

He noted that some patients also get severe autonomic disturbances, that is, fluctuating blood pressure, heart rate, cardiac arrhythmias, temperature/ sweating/ bowel/ urinary disturbances, which can be life-threatening at times.

"Any difficulty in speaking, swallowing, or breathing could also be a sign of severe GBS and should receive urgent medical attention," the expert said.

"Although these symptoms are not unique to GBS, they require immediate and thorough evaluation to determine the exact cause. With modern medical treatment, full recovery is possible in most cases," Jayadevan noted.

GBS patients should be hospitalised for close monitoring of vital signs or worsening and for urgent treatment. Severe cases of GBS might require ICU admission and ventilatory support. Complications like abnormal heartbeat, infections, blood clots, and high or low blood pressure need early detection and treatment.

Urgent treatment in

the acute phase is intravenous immunoglobulin injections over 5 days or plasma exchange over a week. Steroids are usually avoided.

Devices like braces or wheelchairs might be necessary for some time, said Ojha. Physical therapy is necessary for patients to regain strength and movement and avoid secondary infections.

How to prevent GBS?

The state health department in an advisory shared that one can prevent GBS up to a certain extent by taking general precautions such as drinking boiled water/ bottled water, washing fruits, and vegetables thoroughly before eating, properly cooking poultry and meat; avoiding raw or undercooked food, especially salads, eggs, kebabs or seafood.

It also suggested keeping raw and cooked foods separate, disinfecting kitchen surfaces and utensils after handling raw meat, as well as adopting general hygiene measures like frequent hand washing with soap, especially before eating and after using the toilet.

This weight loss app can track fibre, protein content in meals

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, JAN 26

Researchers have developed a weight management programme that helps individuals plan meals with the assistance of a web application and support from a registered dietitian, including tracking fibre and protein content in meals.

Many people struggle to maintain a healthy weight, and choosing the optimal meals for weight loss can be challenging. Most dieting apps available are usually macronutrient calculators, according to the study published in the journal JMIR Formative Research.

"But we want people to focus on finding foods that have a high protein and fibre density to get them to their meal goals. It's less about counting calories and more about finding the foods that will satisfy us and provide the protein we need to maintain muscle mass as we lose weight," said Ashleigh Oliveira, a doctoral student at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the US.. "Foods that are high in fibre also have all the micronutrients we need, so we're not missing

out on vitamins and minerals as we're eating less food," Oliveira added.

The programme's first iteration, the Individualized Dietary Improvement Programme (iDip), was an in-person programme where participants received education and feedback from registered dietitians.

Subsequently, iDip was converted to a fully online programme, EMPOWER, to increase accessibility. The researchers tested the program's efficacy with individuals in rural Illinois.

"The overall goal is to develop an online weight loss programme that can be used as prevention as well as treatment in a clinical setting," said co-author Manabu Nakamura, associate professor in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition and the Division of Nutritional Sciences.

EMPOWER has three components: Educational materials about nutrition; an online app where participants can design meals for weight loss and monitor their progress; and personalized support from registered dietitians, who are available for online chats.

India accounts for 53pc of global leprosy cases, need legal reforms: Experts

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

India accounts for 53 per cent of the global leprosy cases, said experts here urging the need for legal reforms to help individuals affected by the disease.

Leprosy/Hansen's disease is an infectious disease caused by mycobacterium leprae that causes severe, disfiguring skin sores and nerve damage in the arms, legs, and skin areas around the body.

"India accounts for 53 per cent of the global leprosy cases. It is important to establish community-based rehabilitation to eliminate discrimination and support the affected individuals," said Dr. S. Sivasubramanian, Senior Scientist, at an event held in the national capital.

While leprosy is not so

contagious, repeated contact with nose and mouth droplets from someone with untreated leprosy can spread. However, due to a lack of awareness, there has been a significant stigma attached to the disease, said the experts calling for breaking myths and eradicating stigma by advocating inclusion of affected individuals in the mainstream of society.

"Untouchability due to leprosy is worse than caste-based discrimination, as in the former even one's own family members keep a distance from the affected individual," said Rajesh Aggarwal Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) cum Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD).

"Legal reforms are nec-

essary, and vigilance must be kept ensuring early detection of cases," he added, while also stressing the significance of rehabilitation measures after treatment.

The experts underscored the necessity of collective efforts to break the stigma and discrimination associated with leprosy.

"There are still 750 leprosy colonies in India that remain isolated from mainstream society," S. Govindaraj, Commissioner, CCPD.

"Out of more than 700 districts in India, 125 districts still report a significant number of leprosy cases.

These districts are spread across 14 States, with Chhattisgarh having the highest number at 24 districts," added Dr. Shivkumar, a leprosy expert.

Indian scientists develop nano-formulation to bring safer treatment for Parkinson's

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Scientists from the Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST) Mohali, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology, on Monday, announced a targeted nano-formulation that will enable safer treatment method for people suffering from Parkinson's disease.

The new nano-formulation helps in the sustained release of a hormone called 17beta-oestradiol which is crucial for managing Parkinson's. Many neurodegenerative and psychiatric malignancies like Parkinson's disease originate from an imbalance of 17 beta-oestradiol (E2) in the human brain.



However, the peripheral side effects of the usage of E2 for Parkinson's therapy and less understanding of the molecular mechanism hinder establishing its neurotherapeutic potential, said the team. In the study, published in the journal Carbohydrate Polymers, the team noted using Dopamine Receptor D3 (DRD3) conjugated to

17beta-oestradiol-loaded chitosan nanoparticles that led to sustained release of 17beta-oestradiol (E2) to the brain.

"The targeted nano-formulation inhibited the mitochondrial translocation of calpain, thereby protecting neurons from rotenone-induced mitochondrial damage," the researchers said.

Furthermore, in a rodent model, the targeted nano-delivery system alleviated behavioural impairments. In addition, the study reveals for the first time that BMI1, a member of the PRC1 complex that regulates mitochondrial homeostasis, is a substrate of calpain.

The targeted nano-formulation restored BMI1 expression by inhibiting its degradation through calpain. Calpain is a protein that breaks down proteins in cells in response to calcium.

The study "has helped in understanding the role of hormone (E2) in regulating oxidative stress in Parkinson's patients. With the continued exploration of long-term safety profiles and better-targeted deliv-

ery, this can establish itself as a safer drug to improve the lives of Parkinson's patients," the researchers said.

Earlier, INST researchers showed that nano-formulation of melatonin -- the hormone produced by the brain in response to darkness -- could provide a therapeutic solution for Parkinson's. Parkinson's disease is one of the most common neurological disorders caused by the death of dopamine-secreting neurons in the brain due to aggregation of synuclein protein inside it.

Available medications can only minimise the symptoms but cannot cure the disease and this underlines the need to develop better therapeutic solutions for the disease.

Asia-pacific healthcare market to hit \$5 trn by 2030, Indian CDMOs to shine globally: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

The Asia-Pacific healthcare market is on track to hit \$5 trillion by 2030, driving 40 per cent of global sector growth, according to a report on Monday.

The report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) noted that the unprecedented expansion is fuelled by rapid demographic shifts, investment influxes, and groundbreaking technology applications.

The expansion also includes advancements in new therapies and modalities by Indian contract development and manufacturing organisation (CDMOs).

"Innovation is emerging as a key driver of growth in Asia's healthcare landscape. Indian CDMOs are scaling globally, leveraging their cost efficiencies but also starting to make early strides into complex and cutting-edge modalities such as ADCs and oligonucleotides, enhancing their global competitiveness," said Smruthi Suryaprakash, Partner, BCG.

"At the same time, decades of investment in biotech across the region are starting to pay off, with advancements in India and Singapore driving localised breakthroughs in new therapies and modalities. These complementary trends, as highlighted in our report,



showcase Asia's potential to lead both global and regional healthcare innovation," Suryaprakash added.

Further, the report comprehensively explores the Asian healthcare market from multiple perspectives and identifies key factors driving transformation.

It noted that Asia accounts for only 22 per cent of global healthcare spending, despite being home to 60 per cent of the global population.

With chronic conditions such as diabetes and cancer affecting Asia disproportionately, the report suggested finding its own healthcare models to manage the disease burden. Of the top five prevalent cancers in Asia, liver and stomach

cancer have a lower prevalence in the West, which means that Asia will need to invent its own solutions.

Moreover, the market is ripe for disruption because of the rapid ageing of populations, along with significant gaps in infrastructure and capabilities, according to the report. It also noted significant opportunities across all sub-sectors -- innovative hospital and specialty care, contract manufacturing, and research, as well as innovation-driven biotech, and models of digital health involved omni-channel patient journeys.

"We are at a unique point in time where Asian healthcare is at the confluence of many tailwinds -- rapidly shifting demographics, trade flows and FDIs favouring Asia as a destination, and demand factors like growing chronic disease burden and a new more active and demanding patient -- that creates opportunities to reimagine how healthcare will be delivered in Asia," said Priyanka Aggarwal, Managing Director, Healthcare Practice, BCG.

The report serves as a guide for investors and healthcare companies to reflect on the recent changes in the sector and implores into addressing key imperatives and immediate priorities. It also attempts to guide the reader to re-imagine healthcare by innovating to challenge existing inefficiencies.

IIT Guwahati researchers develops nanomaterial to detect mercury in cells & environment

AGENCIES
GUWAHATI, JAN 27

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati on Monday announced the development of a new nanomaterial that can be a cost-effective method for identifying toxic metals like mercury in human cells.

Mercury exposure through contaminated food, water, air, or skin contact is known to lead to serious health issues, including nervous system damage, organ failure, and cognitive decline.

The team developed stable metal halide perovskite nanocrystals capable of detecting toxic metals like mercury in live cells without causing any harm.

The innovation could revolutionise disease diagnostics and environmental monitoring by improving the detection and management of metal toxicity in biological systems, said the researchers.

"One of the standout features of these perovskite nanocrystals is their narrow emission linewidth, which is desirable for improving the sensitivity due to the high signal-to-noise ratio for metallic detection," said Prof. Saikat Bhaumik, Assistant Professor, Department of Physics, IIT Guwahati.

Bhaumik noted that traditional imaging methods often struggle with light scattering, making it dif-



icult to capture clear images from deeper cell layers.

"The ability of the perovskite nanocrystals to undergo multiphoton absorption overcomes this limitation, allowing for sharper and more detailed imaging.

These properties make them ideal for advanced fluorescence imaging in medical and biological research," he added.

To ensure the nanocrystals maintain their functionality over extended periods, the team encapsulated the perovskite nanocrystals in silica and polymer coatings. This significantly enhanced their stability and luminescent intensity in water, making them highly effective for practical use.

The enhanced nanocrystals emit

a bright green light under specific wavelengths, enabling precise detection of mercury ions, which are hazardous even in minute concentrations.

The nanocrystals also demonstrated remarkable sensitivity, detecting mercury levels as low as a few nanomolar concentrations. Moreover, when tested on live mammalian cells, the nanocrystals were found to be non-toxic, preserving cell function while effectively monitoring mercury ions.

Beyond mercury detection, these nanocrystals could also play a pivotal role in identifying other toxic metals in biological systems and could also be adapted for drug delivery, enabling real-time monitoring of treatment efficacy.

Home Minister Amit Shah takes holy dip in Sangam, CM Yogi accompanies him to ghat

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Union Home Minister Amit Shah reached Prayagraj on Monday to participate in the Maha Kumbh celebrations. He took the holy dip at Triveni Sangam, flanked by several Hindu saints and seers and offered prayers to God.

Earlier, the Home Minister took a boat ride to reach the Arali ghat and was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath and Deputy CMs KP Maurya and Brajesh Pathak.

The beaming visuals from Maha Kumbh showed Amit Shah greeting and



waving to the crowd as he proceeded towards the Ganga ghat.

Hours before leaving for Prayagraj, the Home Minister also wrote on X, "Mahakumbh is a unique symbol of the uninterrupted flow of Sanatan culture."

"Kumbh reflects our

eternal philosophy of life based on harmony. Today, I am eager to take a dip in the confluence and seek the blessings of the saints in this great festival of unity and integrity in the holy city of Prayagraj," he added.

The Home Minister on a day-long visit to the holy

city, is expected to hold meetings with Hindu saints and seers.

According to a release from the Mahakumbh Media Centre, the Home Minister will also visit Bade Hanuman Ji Temple and Abhayvat after the holy bath.

He is also expected to meet the Maharaj and other saints of Juna Akhara and have lunch with them.

His schedule also includes visits to Guru Sharananand Ji's Ashram, where he will meet Guru Sharananand Ji and Govind Giri Ji Maharaj, and conclude his visit with a meeting with the Shanka-

racharyas of Sringeri, Puri, and Dwaraka.

Amit Shah's holy dip in Sangam comes days after the entire UP cabinet led by CM Yogi Adityanath took a holy dip at the Sangam.

The Maha Kumbh is witnessing a huge surge of devotees and pilgrims for the two-month-long festival.

On the day of Makar Sankranti alone, over 3.5 crore devotees including seers and saints took a bath in the Ganga. For the first time, Shankaracharya of all the four Peethas was present at Maha Kumbh and CM Yogi also met them.

Assam govt taking multiple initiatives to uplift education sector: CM Sarma

AGENCIES

GUWAHATI, JAN 27

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday asserted that the state government has been taking several initiatives to uplift the education sector while working in synchronisation with all stakeholders.

He said that the government has been working towards building state-of-the-art schools across the state that will bring a massive change in education.

"These schools will be established in each of the Assembly constituencies in the state with some constituencies will get more than one such school with all modern facilities," CM Sarma added.



Earlier on Sunday, CM Sarma announced that the state government is set to roll back the new pension schemes. Instead, the Central government's Unified Pension Scheme will be implemented for the employees from April this year.

During his Republic Day speech in Dibrugarh on Monday, the Chief Minister said, "There has been displeasure among the state government employees on

the New Pension Scheme (NPS). The state government has decided to abolish the NPS in Assam and Unified Pension Scheme will come into effect from April month. This will ensure that once an employee completes 25 years of government service, the person is entitled to get 50 per cent of last drawn salary along with 50 per cent of Dearness Allowance as pension after retirement." He also said that the recruitment process of some employees started in 2005 that is before the New Pension Scheme was introduced in the country; however, for some reason, they could not be enrolled in the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

Tension prevails along India-Bangladesh border after clash between farmers

AGENCIES

AGARTALA, JAN 27

Tension prevailed along the India-Bangladesh border in Tripura's Unakoti district on Monday after a clash between the farmers of two villages on the border of the countries, officials said.

The BSF and police officials separately said the villagers of India and Bangladesh clashed among themselves over the issue of farming in cropland in the border village of Hirachhara in Kailashahar Sub-division on Sunday evening. According to the officials, two Indian farmers and a Bangladeshi cultivator were injured in the clash before the BSF troops intervened in the conflict. Local people said that Indian farmers - Karim Ali (28) and Zamir Ali (34),

both brothers, were severely assaulted with sharp weapons and iron rods by a group of 10-12 Bangladesh nationals. The attack left them critically injured, with Karim sustaining deep wounds on his left hand and back while Zamir suffered head injuries.

Both are currently undergoing medical treatment at the Unakoti District Hospital, where doctors have indicated that Karim's left-hand finger may need an amputation.

The incident occurred when the two brothers, who cultivate betel leaves and paddy on their land near the zero line of the border, had gone for farming activities on Sunday and found significant damage to their crops. They informed the matter to the Border Security Force (BSF) personnel posted in the area.

However, while returning home in the evening, they were threatened not to go to that area again for cultivation and then attacked by Bangladeshi nationals from the Murui Chhara area of Moulvibazar district (Bangladesh).

The attack occurred within Indian territory raising concerns about the safety of the Indian border villagers. Additional troops of the BSF have been deployed in the areas.

Sunday's incident occurred within three weeks after Bangladeshi nationals allegedly attacked BSF personnel at the Maguruli border and attempted to snatch their firearms on January 7.

Meanwhile, Tripura Chief met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi on January 18 and handed over a letter to him on

the construction of a big embankment along the border by Bangladesh.

"The Chief Minister in his letter to the Home Minister, highlighted the potential effect of the Bangladesh embankment in Unakoti district and possible floods on the Indian side. The Chief Minister has urged the Home Minister to take up the matter with the Bangladesh government to take appropriate steps by the neighbouring country," an official said.

Seeking the Union government's intervention, the opposition Congress on Saturday organised a demonstration along the India-Bangladesh border areas in northern Tripura's Unakoti district to protest against the construction of the embankment by the neighbouring country along the boundary.

Atone for insulting Ambedkar at Mhow: Shivraj Singh Chouhan to Rahul Gandhi

AGENCIES

MHOW, JAN 27

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying that he should visit the Ambedkar memorial built by the BJP government in Mhow and atone for insulting Babasaheb.

Rahul Gandhi was in Madhya Pradesh's Mhow, the birthplace of Ambedkar, to launch the party's nationwide programme 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan'.

"Do visit the grand memorial built at the birthplace of Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Ji in Mhow, which has been built by the Bharatiya Janata Party government. Also, do penance by closing your eyes in front of Babasaheb's memo-



rial because you and your party always insulted him. After independence, Congress governments ruled Madhya Pradesh for decades but Congress neither organized any event at his birthplace nor thought of building a memorial," Chouhan said in a statement.

The former Chief Minister further stated that after independence, Congress ruled Madhya Pradesh for decades but neither organised any event at his birthplace nor thought of building a memorial there. Chouhan stated that

when the BJP government was formed in Madhya Pradesh, the then Chief Minister Sundar Lal Patwa performed the Bhoomi Pujan of the memorial in Mhow. After this, the Congress government came and the work was stopped there.

"When the BJP government returned to power again, we built a divine and grand memorial in honour of Babasaheb. Now Ambedkar Maha Kumbh is organised in Madhya Pradesh, in which thousands of followers of Dr Ambedkar visit here,"

Chouhan added. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to visit Dr Ambedkar's memorial around 3.45 p.m. to pay his tribute.

Gandhi will be accompanied by AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to the various places in Mhow. The party's Working Committee Members (CWC) are also attending Mhow's rally.

Earlier, state Congress chief Jitu Patwari said the rally was expected to be historic, with lakhs of party workers from across the state likely to participate. He said that every Congress cadre was excited about the rally and eager to raise their voice against the insult to Ambedkar from his birthplace.

Kejriwal ki Guarantee: AAP makes 15 new promises to Delhi voters

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Claiming to be the pioneer in using the 'guarantee' concept in politics, AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal on Monday released 15 poll promises under 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee' that include assured jobs for the youth, Rs 2,100 monthly assistance for women, new ration cards and waiver of inflated water and power bills.

Kejriwal also made a new announcement of Rs 1 lakh assistance for marriage of daughters of auto, taxi and e-rickshaw drivers in the national Capital, apart from Rs 10 lakh life insurance for the drivers.

Releasing the final manifesto for the February 5 Assembly election, the former Delhi Chief Minister admitted that he had failed to fulfil his 2020 poll promise of cleaning

the Yamuna, providing 24x7 clean drinking water and European standard roads.

"I am admitting that we could not fulfil these works due to Covid-19 and our team's imprisonment. These three works are my dream and in the next five years we will achieve these as we have a plan and adequate funds for them," Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal warned voters that the BJP will stop free welfare schemes if it comes to power in Delhi and said, "Pressing 'Jhaadu' button in the coming election will result in a monthly saving of Rs 25,000 for each family in the city."

"I think many poor families, including those from the middle class, will be forced to leave the city if this saving is stopped," Kejriwal said, asserting that each family in the city is saving a monthly



sum of Rs 10,000 due to free education for kids, Rs 5,000 through the free power scheme, Rs 2,000 from free water, Rs 5,000 because of free healthcare and Rs 2,500-Rs 3,000 due to the free bus travel scheme for women.

Promising that the 'Mahila Samman Yojana' will be implemented in the first Cabinet meeting of the new AAP government, Kejriwal said that 'Jhaadu' is symbolic of goddess of wealth, Laxmi.

"If you press 'Jhaadu' button in the EVM and you

have around two women in your family you will get additional Rs 4,000 every month, in addition to the saving of Rs 25,000 every month," Kejriwal said.

The other promises reiterated in the 15 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee' included end to tanker mafia, free power benefit for tenants, Rs 18,000 per month for priests and granthis, repair of overflowing and blocked sewers within 15 days of government formation and replacement of old sewer lines in one year.

"When I was in jail,

they did such a shoddy job and blocked sewers. I will ensure that blocked sewers are repaired on a priority," Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal also reiterated the earlier promises of financial assistance and scholarship for students from weaker sections of society, free travel for students in DTC buses and 50 per cent concession on their Metro travel, free pilgrimage for the elderly and the Sanjeevani health insurance for all 60-plus residents.

He said all the promises being made as part of 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee' will be in addition to the existing six 'revaris' (freebies) already being offered by the AAP government, including free power, free water, free education, free pilgrimage, free travel for women in buses and free medical care.

The final set of the AAP's

poll promises comes two days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah unveiled the BJP's 'Sankap Patra-part 3', offering welfare schemes for a cross-section of voters including women, students, slum dwellers, auto and taxi drivers and middleclass refugee families from Pakistan.

Voting to elect 70 new Delhi legislators will take place on February 5 and results will be declared on February 8. In the outgoing Assembly, the AAP has 62 MLAs and the BJP has eight.

While the AAP is fighting to bag a fourth straight victory, the BJP is trying to return to power after 27 years. In the 2020 election, the ruling AAP's vote share was 54 per cent, BJP's vote share was 39 per cent and the Congress' vote share was 4 per cent.

Rs 220 cr bank fraud: ED seizes firm's assets in Mumbai, Dehradun

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Immovable assets worth Rs 79.78 crore were provisionally attached by the Enforcement Directorate, Mumbai, in a case of Rs 220-crore bank fraud by a company, Sharon Bio Medicine Limited, and others, an official said on Monday.

The attached assets are in the form of flats, plots, hotel and agricultural lands located at Navi Mumbai, Mumbai, Satara, Raigad in Maharashtra and Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri Garhwal in Uttarakhand, the official said in a statement.

The fresh seizures under PMLA, 2002 made on January 24 are a part of the ongoing probe in the case of bank fraud against Sharon Bio Medicine Limited and others, taking the total attachment and seizure in this case till date to Rs

96.20 crore, the statement said. The company earlier faced ED raids in October last year in a case allegedly involving the use of forged documents and bogus contracts by the pharma company for causing a loss of Rs 220 crore to banks. According to the ED statement, the probe revealed that the pharmaceutical company engaged in the manufacturing of active pharmaceutical ingredients allegedly availed credit facilities from banks before laundering the money.

During the raid against the company on October 23, 2024, movable assets including bank funds, and Demat accounts valued at Rs 14.53 crore were seized or frozen along with various other incriminating documents, digital devices and immovable property-related documents, the statement said.

Uttarakhand CM Dharam Singh launches UCC portal, credits people for implementation

AGENCIES

DEHRADUN, JAN 27

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dharam Singh launched the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) portal and rules on Monday, marking a historic moment as Uttarakhand becomes the first state in India to implement the UCC. Speaking at the launch, Dharam Singh described the day as "historic not only for our state but for the entire country." "Today, we are implementing the UCC in 'Devbhoomi' Uttarakhand. The credit for this

goes to the people, who blessed us and formed our government," he added.

"By implementing the UCC, we pay true tribute to Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar and the members of the Constituent Assembly. The constitutional and civil rights of all citizens of Uttarakhand are now equal, and women of all religions have been granted equal rights," Dharam Singh said.

The UCC will be applicable not only throughout the state but also to Uttarakhand residents living out-

side it. The approved rules focus on establishing a uniform legal framework for marriage, divorce, inheritance, and property rights, ensuring equality irrespective of religion.

Sons and daughters will have equal rights in inheritance, polygamy will be prohibited, and monogamy will be the legal norm.

Marriages will need to be registered compulsorily, even if solemnised as per religious customs. Men must be 21 years old and women 18 years old to marry.

Congress leader Jagtap slams Mumbai Police for mishandling high-profile cases

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, JAN 27

Maharashtra MLA and senior Congress leader Bhai Jagtap has criticised Mumbai Police for its alleged mishandling of several high-profile cases.

Speaking to IANS, Jagtap remarked, "Mumbai Police, often compared to Scotland Yard for their efficiency and professionalism, are now tarnishing their image with subpar investigations. Their handling of cases is increasingly being perceived as superficial."

Referring to the murder case of Sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh in Beed, Jagtap said it is because of the public and political pressure that things got moving. "The

main accused was booked under MCOCA (Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act) only due to our persistent efforts," he told IANS. Jagtap raised concerns about the police allegedly presenting "duplicate" accused in the attack on Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan. He said, "Such actions raise doubts about the integrity of investigations and damage the image of both Maharashtra and its police force. We, as the Opposition, will hold the state government accountable during the upcoming Budget Session."

Jagtap also took aim at the Central government over the selection process for the Padma Awards.

Referring to the award reportedly given to someone for determining the auspicious time

(muhurat) for the Ram temple consecration, he commented, "This is a mockery of our country's highest civilian honour. The Padma Awards are meant to recognise individuals who have made significant contributions to the nation. Unfortunately, the dignity of these awards has been eroded since 2014. It's not about any individual but about the respect these awards deserve under our Constitution."

Reacting to allegations by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) labelling Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi as "dishonest", Jagtap dismissed the claims as election rhetoric. "Whenever elections approach, baseless allegations surface. The AAP, a party born out of a movement, now faces

serious allegations against many of its own leaders. The people of this country are wise enough to see through such tactics, and LoP Rahul Gandhi remains unaffected by these baseless charges," he told IANS. On the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections, Jagtap reiterated his long-held position that the Congress should contest independently, irrespective of alliances. He said, "When I was president of Mumbai Congress, even during the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, I advocated for the Congress to fight BMC elections on its own. Coordination within the MVA was good then, but the Congress needs to assert its strength and fight this battle independently."

22 KILLED, 124 INJURED BY ISRAELI ATTACKS IN LEBANON

AGENCIES
BEIRUT, JAN 27

The death toll from Israeli attacks on crowds of Lebanese trying to return to their homes in southern Lebanon has risen to 22, including six women, with 124 others injured, the Lebanese Health Ministry said.

The injured included 12 women and a paramedic from the Islamic Scout Association, who was carrying out a humanitarian rescue mission, the ministry said in a statement.

A Lebanese military source told Xinhua that an Israeli force, backed by a Merkava tank and a bull-



dozer, advanced towards a gathering of civilians in the village of Mays al-Jabal, and "fired heavily to intimidate and disperse the residents."

The Israeli military also blocked the main road at

the entrance of the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon located in Naqoura, southern Lebanon, the source said, adding that the military fired several flares over Mays al-Jabal

and the Arqoub Heights in eastern Lebanon, and launched machine-gun fire toward Mount Sadaneh, west of Shebaa, in south-eastern Lebanon, Xinhua news agency reported.

Sunday marks the end of a 60-day deadline for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territories. Under a ceasefire agreement reached in late November after months of conflict between Israel and the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, the Lebanese army would take control of the areas south of the Litani River, ensuring its security and preventing any presence of weapons and militants.

Despite the ceasefire

agreement, the Israeli army has continued to carry out strikes in Lebanon, some of which have caused deaths and injuries in the border areas.

Earlier on Sunday the Lebanese Health Ministry said that the death toll from Israeli gunfire targeting crowds of Lebanese trying to return to their homes in southern Lebanon has risen to 11, with 83 others injured.

Ten of the eleven victims were civilians trying to return to their still-occupied hometowns along Lebanon's southern border with Israel, while the eleventh was a soldier killed in al-Dahira, also in southern Lebanon.

South Korea: Preliminary report of Jeju Air crash shows Black Box stopped recording 2 km before runway

AGENCIES
SEOUL, JAN 27

South Korean authorities investigating the tragic Jeju Air crash last month released a preliminary accident report on Monday, revealing that the aircraft's Black Box stopped recording approximately 2 kms before the plane approached the runway.

It is the first report as part of the ongoing investigation into the deadly crash at Muan International Airport on December 29, which claimed the lives of 179 of the 181 people aboard the Boeing 737-800. Only two people survived.

The preliminary findings will be submitted to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), as well as aviation authorities in the United States, France

and Thailand, according to the transportation ministry.

The ICAO, a United Nations agency, mandates that investigators produce a preliminary report within 30 days of an aviation accident. It also encourages the release of a final report within 12 months.

The investigation committee under the transport ministry disclosed the approximate location where the Black Box, comprising the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) and Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR), stopped functioning.

According to the report, the Black Box stopped recording at 8:58:50 a.m. on December 29, four minutes and seven seconds before the aircraft struck a localiser near the runway after it had hit a flock of birds.

The ministry noted it would take several months to analyze the FDR and the CVR for further verification, Yonhap news agency reported.

The report further stated that the exact timing of the bird strike, the number of birds involved and whether other bird species were present have yet to be determined.

The ministry briefed bereaved families on the preliminary findings during a meeting on Saturday.

Earlier on January 25, Yonhap news agency reported that the ill-fated Jeju Air plane involved in last month's deadly crash had received a warning from Air Traffic Control about bird activity just one minute before its Black Box recording stopped, the transport ministry said.

Iraq urges unified efforts to support regional stability

AGENCIES
BAGHDAD, JAN 27

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani called for unified efforts among regional countries to support stability in the Middle East.

Al-Sudani made the remarks on Sunday during a meeting with visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. According to a statement by al-Sudani's media office, the two discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments in Syria, Gaza and Lebanon, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the ceasefire agreements.

Al-Sudani reiterated "Iraq's readiness to coordinate with neighboring countries, especially Türkiye, regarding ongoing regional developments," it said.

For his part, Fidan reaffirmed his country's desire to maintain close coordination with Iraq on regional developments, stressing



Turkey's commitment to the strategic Development Road project and cooperation based on the memorandums of understanding signed between the two countries in areas such as energy, education, trade, banking, and other sectors, Xinhua news agency reported.

Fidan also met with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, during which the two discussed regional developments, stressing the importance of reducing tensions, de-escalating conflicts, and promoting dialogue to resolve disputes, according to a statement by the Iraqi presidency office.

Rashid also called for "sustained joint efforts" to eliminate the threat of the

Islamic State (IS) and other extremist groups, highlighting the importance of regional and international cooperation in achieving long-term security and stability, it said.

For his part, Fidan proposed forming a regional alliance involving Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Turkey to combat the IS group, dismantle its strongholds, and disrupt its funding sources to ensure greater stability for the region, it said.

Also on Sunday, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein met with Fidan. The two sides discussed bilateral ties and ways to advance them to greater prospects to serve the common interests, according to a statement by the

Iraqi foreign ministry.

Regarding the situation in Syria, the two sides affirmed that they are in constant contact with Syria's interim administration for joint coordination on issues of common concern, the statement said.

Hussein also stressed the importance of addressing the security situation on the Iraqi-Syrian border, especially about the IS, it said.

The talks also touched on the situation in Gaza, developments in Lebanon, and the importance of turning the ceasefire into a permanent situation while stressing the need to stop Israeli attacks, it said.

For his part, Fidan said Turkey views the relations with Iraq from a strategic perspective, adding that as Iraq enjoys security and stability, Turkey also enjoys them, which contributes to the prosperity of the two peoples, it said.

LUKASHENKO LEADS IN BELARUS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: EXIT POLL

AGENCIES
MINSK, JAN 27

Incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko is leading the 2025 Belarus presidential election with 87.6 per cent of the vote, according to the first exit poll cited by the Belarusian Committee of Youth Organisations.

The exit poll showed that the other four candidates received the following percentages of the vote: Oleg Gaidukevich 1.8 per cent, Alexander Khizhnyak 1.2 per cent, Anna Kanopetskaya 1.6 per cent and Sergei Syrankov 2.7 per cent. 5.1 per cent voted against all candidates.

The head of state is considered elected if a candidate is supported by more than half of the voters.

The presidential election kicked off in Belarus earlier on Sunday with



polling stations opened at 8:00 a.m. (0500 GMT) and closed at 8 p.m. (1700 GMT).

Voters casted their ballots at 5,325 polling stations nationwide and the number of voters stands at about 6.9 million, according to the country's Central Election Commission.

Early voting for the country's presidential election took place from January 21 to 25.

The Central Election Commission said Saturday that 41.81 per cent of eligible voters have cast their ballots during the five-day early voting session, which is organised

for those unable to vote on the election day.

Earlier, the Central Election Commission had confirmed formation of polling stations for the presidential elections in the country.

The president is elected for five-year terms. A two-term limit, reintroduced by 2022 amendments to the constitution, will be imposed after the election.

According to the law, Belarus' president is chosen through direct elections and a candidate winning more than 50 per cent of the vote will be elected. If no candidate achieves this majority, the two leading candidates will enter a second round, in which the candidate who receives a simple majority wins.

Presidential elections take place every five years. In the last election on

Chinese Foreign Minister meets Foreign Secretary Misri, says both sides should 'seize opportunity'

AGENCIES
BEIJING, JAN 27

Positive interactions have been carried out at all levels and the process of improving China-India relations accelerated since Chinese President Xi Jinping's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kazan last year, emphasised Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his meeting with visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in Beijing on Monday. "The two sides should seize the opportunity, meet each other halfway, explore more substantive measures, and commit to mutual understanding, mutual support, and mutual achievement, rather than mutual suspicion, mutual alienation, and mutual consumption," read a statement issued by the

Chinese side.

"The improvement and development of China-India relations is fully in line with the fundamental interests of the two countries and their peoples, is conducive to safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the global South countries, and is conducive to making contributions of the two ancient civilizations to peace, stability, development and prosperity in Asia and the world," it added. During their meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in October 2024 in Kazan, PM Modi had conveyed it to the Chinese President that India-China ties have to be based on three mutuals - mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity - if they have to return to a positive trajectory and remain sustainable.

As Colombia buckles, Trump shows how tariff threats will work if countries oppose illegal migrants' deportation

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, JAN 27

As the US has intensified its campaign of rounding up illegal migrants and deporting them on military planes, it overcame opposition from Colombia with threats of tariffs in a preview of how President Donald Trump will enforce his campaign promise.

After Colombia refused to let two aircraft carrying its nationals apprehended in the US as illegal migrants land, Trump announced on Truth Social on Sunday afternoon a 25 per cent tariff on imports from that country, which, he threatened, would double in a week.

However, by Sunday night, Colombia's resistance crumbled, and the White House said it had agreed to "unrestricted acceptance of all illegal aliens from Colombia" including those coming on military planes.

In a show of force on Sunday, federal agents fanned out across the US rounding up criminal ille-

gal migrants.

Trump had promised mass deportations in his Day 1 agenda, but the logistical impossibility of rounding up millions of people has made his administration moderate it by prioritising those who had committed crimes, reinvigorating enforcement of laws that were followed tepidly.

Brazil, meanwhile, protested the handcuffing of deportees who arrived there on US planes calling it "degrading treatment".

Mexico temporarily refused to let US military planes carrying deportees land last week, but quickly rescinded the orders and let them back in.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, "It is the responsibility of each nation to take back their citizens who are illegally present in the United States in a serious and expeditious manner".

After a meeting between Rubio and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday, the US said that they had discussed "irregular migration"

and the minister said that India was open to taking back illegal migrants.

Reports said that about 20,000 Indians would be taken back.

While that meshes with Trump's goal of ridding the country of illegal migrants, it also deals with India's concern over Indian criminal gangs and extremists operating from the US. There are an estimated 11 million illegal migrants in the US and, according to the Pew Research Centre about 725,000 of them are Indians.

The rounding up of illegal immigrants, particularly those with criminal histories, has been ongoing, even under former President Joe Biden, but has been reinvigorated with a dash of publicity after President Trump declared a national emergency over illegal migration last Monday after he was sworn in.

On Sunday, Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove said that several federal agencies were being deployed to help

the Department of Homeland Security in rounding up illegal migrants in order to "secure the border, stop this invasion".

He and Border Czar Tom Homan were in Chicago, where the enhanced operations have been launched.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the prime agency for the deportations announced "enhanced targeted operations" in Chicago to keep "potentially dangerous criminal aliens".

Chicago is one of the places that have declared themselves sanctuary cities that claim to be protective of illegal migrants and forbidding their police and other agencies to cooperate with the immigration authorities.

Operations were also afoot in other places, including Colorado where about 50 people were arrested in a raid at a nightclub, according to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

DEA said in post X that many were members of Tren de Aragua, a dreaded Venezuelan

criminal gang declared a terrorist organisation by President Trump.

The agency said it was participating in raids in Los Angeles, Savannah in Georgia, Omaha in Nebraska, and Arizona State.

On Friday, raids were carried out in Newark, New Jersey.

Homan has threatened legal action against those impeding immigration operations.

Despite Chicago's claim to be a sanctuary city, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker said in an interview to CNN that the state would cooperate in deporting criminal illegal migrants or those under deportation orders, while ruling out participation in raids.

The White House posted on X stylised photos of some of those arrested, listing the crimes they are convicted or accused of, and these ranged from having ties to the Islamic State terror organisation, membership in the international gang MS-13, rape, sexual abuse of minors, murder, and, even, driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Japanese PM Ishiba's cabinet approval at 35.7 per cent

AGENCIES
TOKYO, JAN 27

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's Cabinet approval rating remains at 35.7 per cent, slightly down from 36.5 per cent last month, while disapproval rose to 49.2 per cent, according to a Kyodo News survey.

Economic concerns dominated, with 84.3 per cent of respondents

expressing worry over the potential impact of US President Donald Trump's planned tariffs on Japan's economy, particularly its auto industry.

The survey also found that 59.4 per cent of respondents support allowing married couples to have different surnames.

Regarding political party support, 26 per cent back the ruling Liberal

Democratic Party (LDP) for proportional representation in the upcoming upper house election, with overall support for the LDP at 29.6 per cent.

The survey, conducted over the weekend, collected responses from 429 household members and 635 mobile phone users, Xinhua news agency reported.

Results from another opinion poll, done by NHK

last month, had highlighted that the support rate for Japanese Prime Minister's cabinet dropped to 38 per cent, a three-point decline from the previous month.

Disapproval rate rose by one point to match 38 per cent in December 2024, according to the poll conducted from December 6 to December 8, which received responses from 1,224 participants.

The poll revealed that trust in Ishiba's character (33 per cent) was the most common reason for support, followed by perceptions that the cabinet is better than alternatives (30 per cent).

Among those disapproving, 34 per cent cited a lack of confidence in policies, 24 per cent pointed to insufficient execution, and 13 per cent mistrusted Ishiba's character.

Los Angeles Schools struggle to rebuild after devastating wildfires

AGENCIES
CALIFORNIA, JAN 27

The devastating wildfires that began sweeping through Southern California on January 7 have left the region's education system reeling, with over a dozen schools severely damaged or destroyed.

As school officials begin the daunting task of rebuilding, they face an estimated cost of hundreds of millions of US dol-

lars, with recovery expected to take years, reports Xinhua news agency.

At least 12 schools in Los Angeles County have suffered significant damage, with five campuses destroyed, according to CalMatters, a non-profit news organisation focusing on local agendas in California. Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second-largest school system, lost two elementary schools

in Pacific Palisades, while Palisades Charter High School was heavily damaged. In Pasadena and Altadena, three additional elementary schools were destroyed.

The financial toll is overwhelming. Rebuilding could cost hundreds of millions of dollars. "Rebuilding these schools could take years," said Debra Duardo, Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools.

Indian skilled workforce gaining immense global recognition: Jayant Chaudhary

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Skilled workforce in India is gaining immense global recognition, said Jayant Chaudhary, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), on Monday.

"India's skilled workforce is gaining immense global recognition, with our talent pool being widely appreciated. Our emergence as a global skill capital is a testament to our commitment to excellence," said Chaudhary, while sharing insights from his interactions with global business leaders at the recent Annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. He



also highlighted a global demand for skilled workers.

The MoS informed that discussions at Davos also revolved around sustainability, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, and a focus on women-led development. On the occasion

of the 76th Republic Day, Chaudhary also celebrated the achievements of 100 distinguished entrepreneurs from across India from the skill ecosystem at a special event hosted at Kaushal Bhawan in the national capital.

These entrepreneurs, including those from Raj-

asthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, and the North-east, were invited by the government and were also honoured as special guests at the Republic Day parade, recognising their pivotal role in driving the nation's growth and innovation under the Skill India Mission.

Chaudhary commended the entrepreneurs present for elevating India's reputation as a source of skilled talent.

"The participation of 100 entrepreneurs at this national celebration underscores the impact of our skilling initiatives.

These programmes have empowered individuals nationwide, creating sustainable livelihoods

and inspiring others to pursue entrepreneurial journeys," he said.

India's startup ecosystem is the largest in the world, with 118 unicorns valued at \$354 billion. This success is driven by visionary policies, effective execution, and the resilience of entrepreneurs.

The critical role of the MSME sector was also underscored, comprising 63 million enterprises, employing over 11 crore people, and contributing 30 per cent to the GDP and 45 per cent to exports.

In addition, the transformative impact of the Skill India Mission was noted, emphasising its role in empowering youth and fostering self-reliance (AtmaNirbhar Bharat).

Processor performance top choice among Indian smartphone consumers: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Smartphone processor performance has taken the lead in smartphone purchase decisions among Indians, followed by battery life, storage capacity and camera quality, according to a report on Monday.

With increasing reliance on smartphones, consumers are more cautious and informed in their purchase decisions. As a result, they are now willing to pay a premium for faster processors to ensure better performance, said the report by Counterpoint Research.

According to the survey, 28 per cent of the respondents believe processor performance significantly impacts overall device performance.

When it comes to paying extra for features, processor speed tops the list, with 16 per cent willing to spend more, followed by battery life (13 per cent) and 5G connectivity (12 per cent), the findings showed.

According to senior research analyst Shivani Parashar, processor performance has become the key factor for consumers when purchasing a smartphone, as 84 per cent of the respondents are familiar with the role of chipsets in a smartphone.

As GenAI continues to evolve, the smartphone experience is set to become even more personalised. Chipset companies are driving innovation as the industry shifts focus from simple connectivity to AI-powered processors that deliver smarter, faster and more personalised smartphone experiences, said Parashar. According to the

survey, Qualcomm, Exynos and MediaTek are the top chipset brands people are familiar with.

Meanwhile, the smartphone market in the country is poised for significant growth in 2025, with a projected 6 per cent increase (year-on-year) driven by improving consumer sentiment and government initiatives aimed at reducing unemployment.

According to a latest report by Counterpoint, India's smartphone market has emerged as the second largest globally by unit volume and third largest by value in the third quarter of 2024.

The smartphone volume grew by 3 per cent in Q3 2024 (July-September), while its value surged by an impressive 12 per cent to reach an all-time record for a single quarter.

Adani Total Gas' operational revenue up 12 pc in Q3, connects over 9 lakh homes with PNG

AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD, JAN 27

Adani Total Gas Ltd (ATGL) on Monday reported a 12 per cent increase in revenue from operations in the third quarter of FY25 at Rs 1,397 crore.

EBITDA for the nine months of the current fiscal stood at Rs 893 crore, up by 6 per cent (year-on-year), India's leading energy transition company said in a statement.

"ATGL maintained its growth trajectory, focusing on customer centric approach and delivering a robust operational performance with a notable 15 per cent year-on-year increase in volume," said Suresh P Manglani, ED and CEO, ATGL.

Despite the reduced APM gas allocation, "Team ATGL ensured an uninterrupted supply of CNG to our large masses of consumers by sourcing additional supplies of gas through alternative



options," he mentioned.

For ATGL, the allocation of APM gas for the CNG (T) segment was reduced from 63 per cent to 51 per cent from October 16, 2024, and then further from 51 per cent to 37 per cent, effective November 16 onwards.

Manglani stated the company is striving to further accelerate the devel-

opment of PNG and CNG infrastructure across its 34 geographic areas (GAs), including the recently added Jalandhar GA in Punjab.

In Q3, the company increased CNG stations to 605 by adding 28 new stations and expanded PNG home connections to 9.22 lakh, by adding 28,677 new households.

It increased industrial and commercial connections to 8,913 adding 167 new consumers.

Along with the IndianOil-Adani Gas Pvt Ltd (IOAGPL), the company now has a combined network of 999 CNG stations, with 41 new stations added in the quarter. PNG home connections crossed the 1-million mark to 1.09 million across the country, touching over 4 million lives on a daily basis.

IOAGPL is a joint venture company of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Adani Total Gas Limited. Further, ATGL has also formed two wholly-owned subsidiaries -- Adani TotalEnergies E-Mobility Ltd (ATEL) and Adani TotalEnergies Biomass Ltd (ATBL) for its E-Mobility and biomass business, respectively.

About 1,914 EV charging points have already been commissioned across 226 cities and charge points have now increased to 20 airports in India, informed the company.

India's aircraft MRO industry revenue to rise 50 pc next fiscal, surpass Rs 4,500 crore

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Riding on expanding fleet size and GST rationalisation, India's domestic aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) industry is likely to see its revenue surpass Rs 4,500 crore in fiscal 2026 (FY26), clocking an impressive 50 per cent growth over fiscal 2024, a report said on Monday.

The increase in scale will enhance profitability margins which along with range-bound debt levels should improve debt protection metrics and strengthen credit profiles, according to a Crisil Ratings report.

This growth will be fuelled by fresh demand for maintenance services emanating from rising operating fleet size of Indian aircraft carriers -- expected to grow by up to 20-25 per cent by next year.

This will be aided by new aircrafts getting added and grounded air-



crafts (post engine-related issues) resuming operations.

"While line and airframe checks are strongly correlated with aircraft fleet size, redelivery checks are likely to grow multi-fold next fiscal (up to 10 times over fiscal 2024 levels)," said Shounak Chakravarty, Director, Crisil Ratings.

This will be driven by the reduction in GST input tax, to 5 per cent on all aircraft components, which may lower the compo-

nent-related expenditure and place Indian MROs on par with their Asian competitors.

"Their intrinsic cost advantages will further help Indian MROs gain market share," said Chakravarty.

Additionally, reduction in Goods and Services Tax (GST) on aircraft components and services not only positions domestic MROs more competitively with their overseas competitors but also ease their working capital

blockage. This, along with players' improving profitability, will have MRO players savouring improved credit profile over the medium term, said the Crisil report.

In addition to demand tail winds, Indian MROs are also adding to their service repertoire which will improve their penetration to up to 20 per cent by next fiscal.

The share could have been higher but for the time needed to ramp up hangar capacities, local ecosystem for aviation spare parts and extensive training/upskilling of manpower that will yield results only over the medium term, said the report.

Pallavi Singh, Associate Director, Crisil Ratings, said that the working capital cycle to expected to improve by 20-25 days and hence, overall debt levels will remain range bound even as MRO players invest in expanding their service offerings.

Centre issues draft rules to make IST mandatory towards 'One Nation One Time' goal

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

The Centre's Department of Consumer Affairs on Monday said it has notified Draft Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2025 to synchronise time across the country with an aim of "One Nation, One Time."

The landmark rules aim to standardise and mandate the use of Indian Standard Time (IST) across all sectors in

the country, providing a unified and precise time-keeping framework for strategic, non-strategic, industrial and societal applications, according to an official statement.

This precision is vital for sectors such as navigation, telecommunications, power grid synchronisation, banking, digital governance, and cutting-edge scientific research, including deep space navigation and gravitational wave detection.

Credit card usage in India grows as consumers finance consumption needs

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Credit card usage in India grew at 34 per cent in the September quarter of 2024, compared to 26 per cent in the same period in 2023, as consumers increased spending on their existing credit cards to finance their consumption needs, according to a report on Monday.

India's retail credit growth moderated a bit in the quarter ending September 2024 due to a general cooling in the rate of credit demand growth and a decrease in credit

supply across most loan products, according to the TransUnion CIBIL Credit Market Indicator (CMI) report.

"The marked increase in credit card spending indicates its expanding acceptance among consumers, not only for transactions but also as a tool to access credit," said Bhavesh Jain, MD and CEO of TransUnion CIBIL.

This may be an opportunity for lenders to identify consumers who require additional credit for their consumption and aspirational goals, and service them with customised



solutions that are better suited and affordable for them.

These customised credit offers should focus on helping the consumer fulfil their needs effectively while also supporting

them in building a stronger credit profile, Jain added.

By using more comprehensive data insights to understand the changing dynamics of consumer spending and credit usage, lenders can devise

dynamic strategies better suited to evolving market conditions while enhancing customer loyalty.

Achieving the dual objectives of sustained credit growth while simultaneously maintaining asset quality requires issued loans to be repaid on time to help minimise default risks and preserve financial stability.

"Evolving market conditions mean lenders need to take a targeted approach to retail credit growth. Intensive portfolio monitoring, facilitated by innovative analytic techniques, will enable lenders to prudent-

ly advance credit to qualifying consumers across India, acting as a catalyst for economic activity and development," Jain suggested.

According to the report, while personal loan origination volumes recorded a double-digit YoY growth, the growth was at a slower pace (up 11 per cent quarter ending September 2024) compared to the same period the previous year (up 32 per cent).

Loans against property and two-wheeler loans also saw growth in originations, the report added.

Big brokerage firms tipped to have pocketed decent earnings in 2024

AGENCIES
SEOUL, JAN 27

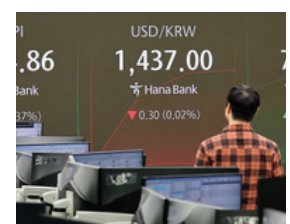
South Korea's major brokerage houses are expected to have racked up decent earnings last year on the back of increased trading of overseas stocks, industry sources said on Monday.

According to the data from market tracker FnGuide, the combined operating income of the country's big five brokerage houses in 2024 is estimated at 5.66 trillion won (\$3.94 billion), sharply up from the previous year's 3.37 trillion won, reports Yonhap news agency.

Korea Investment & Securities Co. is expected to have posted the biggest operating income of 1.27 trillion won, followed by Samsung Securities Co. with 1.19 trillion won, Mirae Asset & Securities Co. 1.15 trillion won, Kiwoom Securities Co. 1.23 trillion won and NH Investment & Securities Co. 923 billion won, the data showed.

Their stellar performances were partly driven by commission fees from increased trading of overseas stocks by retail investors.

The average daily turnover of the local stock



market stood at 19.1 trillion won last year, up 2 percent from a year earlier, while that for overseas stocks by Koreans jumped 84 percent on-year to \$53.1 billion.

Also, local securities firms took less reserve last year than a year earlier against exposure to risky construction development projects, helping jack up

their bottom lines.

This year, their performances are widely expected to improve further on the back of expected monetary easing cycles and reduced risks against shaky construction projects.

Meanwhile, the Korea International Trade Association (KITA) plans to establish a new overseas office in Johannesburg this year to bolster trade and economic ties with African nations, KITA officials said on Monday.

The announcement to establish the office in the populous South African city was made during a

general meeting of the Seoul members of KITA's South Korea-Africa economic cooperation committee held in Seoul on Wednesday.

The Johannesburg office will serve as the association's first dedicated presence on the African continent, aiming to provide on-the-ground support for South Korean companies seeking to enter African markets.

It will also facilitate closer cooperation with African economic organizations and help identify opportunities in key sectors, such as agriculture, energy and infrastructure.

Indian firm Optiemus joins US major TP-Link to boost 'Make in India' initiative

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

Homegrown electronics company Optiemus Electronics (OEL) on Monday announced to team up with TP-Link, a leading global electronics brand, to manufacture networking devices and smart home products in India.

As part of this partnership, OEL will produce a range of telecom and IoT products, including GPON (ONT), security cameras, home Wi-Fi routers, enterprise routers, modems/

gateways, SOHO switches, and other network expansion devices.

These products will be manufactured at OEL's advanced production facility, which has the capacity to make up to 6 million devices annually.

Production of these products is set to begin in February this year and finished products will be available in the domestic market by March 2025, according to the companies.

The partnership is expected to boost exports

as well, with plans to develop and manufacture products for international markets.

The collaboration supports TP-Link's commitment to the government's 'Make in India' vision and strengthens India's goal of becoming a global hub for electronics and telecom manufacturing.

"We are excited to partner with TP-Link, a globally leading name in networking devices, in line with our strategic vision of forging alliances with global leaders," said A.

Smriti Mandhana wins ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has been named the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year for 2024. She pipped Australia all-rounder Annabel Sutherland, Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu and South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt to win the top honour for the second time after 2018.

Smriti, the left-handed opener, had a fantastic 2024 as she finished as the highest run-scorer in women's ODIs with an impressive 747 runs coming in just 13 matches,



the most number of runs she's scored in a calendar year in the 50-over format, coming at an impressive average of 57.86 and strike rate of 95.15.

She also scored four ODI centuries in the year and set a new record in the women's game. Her year in ODIs began modestly with 29 against Australia

in January. But when India returned to action in ODIs against South Africa in June, Smriti was in blistering form.

She smashed consecutive centuries in the first two ODIs at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru and narrowly missed a third with a 90-run knock in the series finale, as India won the series 3-0 with Smriti adjudged the Player of the Series for amassing 343 runs.

Smriti's consistency in ODIs was evident once again in October when she ended a shaky series against New Zealand with a stunning century at the

Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. She capped off the year with an excellent 105 at the WACA against Australia, though it ended up in a losing cause.

It was a knock where Smriti hit 14 fours and one six in her impressive century coming off 109 balls while the rest of the Indian side managed to score just seven boundaries combined in the innings. Smriti ended the year by delivering a strong show against the West Indies, narrowly missing out on a hundred but hit two half-centuries in a series win for India.

National Games Uttarakhand: IOA, NGOC establish safeguarding helpline to promote safety & well-being of athletes

AGENCIES
DEHRADUN, JAN 27

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the National Games Organising Committee (NGOC) have established a safeguarding telephone helpline as part of a focused initiative to promote safety and well-being as well as to prevent and address adverse incidents during the Uttarakhand National Games.

IOA president PT Usha said the helpline will be available to athletes, coaches, and officials around the clock. "This is part of our initiative to prevent harassment, abuse, and other forms of interpersonal violence in sports. We have also

formed a safeguarding committee that will work to prevent safeguarding issues and look into any complaints that may arise," she said.

"This reflects IOA and NGOC's commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment, ensuring athletes, coaches, and support staff have confidential resources to report and resolve issues effectively. While safeguarding measures are in place for all participants, the committee will place special emphasis on supporting women athletes, coaches, and officials," she added.

The safeguarding committee includes Neetal Narang as chairperson and Deepa Mehta and

will prioritise the prevention of incidents that compromise the integrity and safety of participants and ensure timely action while maintaining the confidentiality of all complaints.

The National Games Uttarakhand will officially begin with an opening ceremony at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Dehradun on January 28 and will run till February 14.

Organised by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), the National Games will be its 38th edition and will feature 32 sports as well as four demonstration events (Mallakhamb, kalarippayattu, rafting, yogasana).

BUMRAH WINS ICC MEN'S TEST CRICKETER OF THE YEAR AWARD

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

India's fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been named as the winner of the ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year award for 2024. Bumrah picked an astonishing 71 wickets while bowling 357 overs in 13 matches at an average of 14.92 in 2024.

Bumrah's 71 scalps in 2024 made him just the fourth India bowler to take more than 70 Test wickets in a calendar year after Ravichandran Ashwin, Anil Kumble and Kapil Dev. Those numbers were enough for him to beat competition from Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis and England batting duo of Harry Brook, and Joe Root to win the prestigious award.

It was a year where Bumrah excelled in both home and away conditions, proving to be a key



contributor in keeping India in contention for a spot in the 2025 World Test Championship Final, though the side fell short of making it to the title clash.

Bumrah's incredible 2024 began during India's memorable Test win against South Africa in Cape Town, where

he picked eight wickets. He then went on to bag 19 wickets in India beating England 4-1 margin, with the highlight being a match haul of nine wickets and helping India to a series-levelling win in Visakhapatnam.

Bumrah's most standout performance in Tests in 2024 came in the high-

stakes Border-Gavaskar Trophy Series in Australia, where he picked 32 wickets in five matches at an average of 13.06 and a strike rate 28.37 to clinch the Player of the Series award.

It was during the series in Australia that Bumrah crossed the 200 Test wickets milestone, becoming the 12th Indian bowler to do so, though it didn't help the visitors in avoiding a 3-1 series defeat.

His best performance on tour of Australia came when he picked eight wickets in a stunning spell in Perth, including a five-wicket haul in the first innings, to lift India towards a 295-run win.

Bumrah, 31, also set a unique record while achieving the feat, becoming the only bowler in Test history with a minimum of 200 dismissals to have an average less than 20 (19.4).

Ranji Trophy: KL Rahul named in Karnataka's squad for match against Haryana

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 27

India batter KL Rahul is set to make a return to the Ranji Trophy after being named in Karnataka's squad for their league stage match against Haryana, to be played at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru from January 30 to February 2.

Rahul was not available for Karnataka's win over Punjab due to an elbow niggle, but is now fit and available for the side in their clash against Elite Group C toppers Haryana, which they need to win to boost their chances of entering the knockouts.

It is also understood that Rahul will practice with the Karnataka team on Tuesday and Wednesday. Rahul, 32, last featured in a Ranji Trophy match back in February 2020 against Bengal at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata.



His last domestic red-ball game came for India A during the Duleep Trophy in Bengaluru in September last year. Rahul's return means Karnataka are full strength for their game against Haryana, with Mayank Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal and Prasidh Krishna other capped Indian players in the team. Pacer Vidwath Kaverappa has also been named in

the squad after recovering from an injury which kept him out of action since the Duleep Trophy in September last year.

Meanwhile, talismanic batter Virat Kohli is slated to train with the Delhi team on Tuesday ahead of his first Ranji Trophy appearance since 2012. IANS had previously reported that Kohli had communicated to the DDCA about his

availability for their last group game against Railways, set to happen at the Arun Jaitley Stadium from January 30 to February 2.

Kohli had opted out of Delhi's previous match, where they lost to Saurashtra by ten wickets in Rajkot, due to a neck niggle. But in the past few days, social media was abuzz with visuals of Kohli working under former India and Royal Challengers Bengaluru batting coach Sanjay Bangar at a training facility away from Mumbai.

Other India players set to play in final league phase of the Ranji Trophy include all-rounder Riyan Parag, who is set to lead Assam against Saurashtra in Rajkot after recovering from a shoulder injury needing surgery, while pacer Mohammed Siraj set to take the field for Hyderabad against Vidarbha in Nagpur.

Premier League: Martinez's deflected strike earns Man United 1-0 win over Fulham

AGENCIES
LONDON, JAN 27

Lisandro Martinez's deflected shot earned Manchester United a 1-0 victory against Fulham, who suffered their first loss at home since November 23.

The Argentine scored after 78 minutes as Amorim's side gained momentum in a tight game in west London. The Reds have now won on all of the club's last eight visits to Craven Cottage, a run stretching back to December 2011.

This third away victory in the league this season moves United up to 12th place in the table, with focus now shifting back to the UEFA Europa League in a busy January schedule.

Amorim's men travel to Romania to take on FCSB on Thursday, knowing another win will secure progress into the competition's Round of 16.

United mustered just one shot in a first half that Fulham edged. Alex Iwobi was the liveliest player and twice stung the palms of Andre Onana, while Raul Jimenez tried his luck with a couple of efforts that cleared the crossbar.

The second half followed a similar pattern, although there were some United fans who thought Bruno Fernandes' 20-yard free-kick had nestled in the goal, when in reality it found the side-netting.

In the end, it was an element of fortune that finally brought a goal. Garnacho had his defend-

er's insides turning with a body feint this way and that, allowing the no. 17 to pull it back for Toby Collyer, introduced for the injured Ugarte two minutes earlier. Collyer was beaten to the ball, only for Martinez to step up out of defence confidently and strike.

Fulham came agonisingly close to a late equaliser when Joachim Andersen flicked on Andreas Pereira's left-sided corner.

Rodrigo Muniz struck well over the crossbar when free in the area with just two minutes remaining before Amad netted from a late United counter-attack, only for VAR to rule the goal out for offside. The Reds held on for the remaining seconds to secure a valuable three points on the road.

Joburg Super Kings bag bonus point win over Sunrisers

AGENCIES
JOHANNESBURG, JAN 27

Joburg Super Kings fast bowlers Lutho Sipamla and Hardus Viljoen ripped through the Sunrisers Eastern Cape to drive their team to a comprehensive nine-wicket bonus point victory at the Wanderers.

After all the rain the Highveld has experienced the past weeks, the Super Kings fans streamed through the turnstiles at the Wanderers to take in the perfect summer's day to support their team.

The yellow whistles bristling around the Bullring had an immediate effect with Sipamla (3-13) gaining the ultimate redemption.

After the young fast bowler over-stepped at St George's Park on Friday evening when he clean bowled Zak Crawley with



the first ball of the innings, Sipamla followed it up on Sunday by having the England Test batter caught at slip this time.

It was the perfect start for both Sipamla and the Super Kings. With his confidence restored, the fast bowler charged in and claimed a second wicket when Tom Abell chopped on to his stumps to leave

the Sunrisers reeling at 0/2 after the first over.

From there on the Sunrisers only slipped further into the quagmire with Jordan Hermann and Aiden Markram also following shortly to leave the defending champions at 17/4.

David Bedingham (48) and Tristan Stubbs (37) attempted a rebuild with

a 57-run partnership, but the Super Kings were not going to release the pressure with Hardus Viljoen (4-24) closing out the innings with a superb death over spell that saw the Sunrisers skittled for 118.

The Super Kings' performance in the field was also exceptional with Donovan Ferreira highlighting it with an exceptional one-handed grab whilst running on the boundary to send Beyers Swanepoel back to the dugout.

The Super Kings' run chase was near perfect with Devon Conway (76 not out off 56 balls) and Wihan Lubbe (25 not out off 17 balls) easing their team home with six overs remaining.

It was the perfect way for the Super Kings to celebrate their captain Faf du

Plessis' 400th T20 appearance.

"T20 is a strange game. You feel on top of the world after a win like that. As a team, we needed it," said Du Plessis said. "Two in the first over makes a huge difference. It really breaks a team when you can take wickets in the powerplay"

"From a bowling perspective, we were not far off (in the previous game as well). Today was nice to get a few rewards, especially glad for the bowling attack," he added.

The League also celebrated its 1 millionth ticket holder at the match which is testament to the unwavering support of the fans who have flocked to stadiums in record numbers to be part of South Africa's premier domestic competition.

Suryakumar Yadav-led Indian team arrives in Rajkot ahead of 3rd T20I against England

AGENCIES
RAJKOT, JAN 26

Suryakumar Yadav-led Indian team on Sunday arrived in Rajkot for the third T20I against England. The home team received a warm welcome in the city from fans, who were excited to see their star cricketers in front of them.

India lead the five-match T20I series by 2-0 after winning the second game in Chennai by two wickets on Saturday. Chasing 166, Tilak Varma's unbeaten 78 studded with five sixes and four fours



guided them home with four balls to spare in a thrilling contest at MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Ahead of the third T20I at Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium on Tuesday, both teams will practice tomorrow. Men in Blue started the series on

a high as they registered a dominating seven-wicket win in the opener at Eden Gardens in Kolkata. They kept the momentum going in Chennai and sealed a nail-victory in an evenly poised encounter.

On Sunday, the Board of Control for Cricket in India

(BCCI) included Shivam Dube and Ramandeep Singh in India's squad as replacements for injured Nitish Kumar Reddy and Rinku Singh.

"All-rounder Nitish Reddy sustained a side strain injury in the practice session on January 24 in Chennai. He is ruled out of the ongoing 5-match T20I series. Reddy will head to the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru for further management," the BCCI statement said.

"Rinku Singh sustained a low back spasm while fielding in the 1st T20I against England on Janu-

ary 22. He is progressing well and the BCCI medical team is monitoring him closely. He is ruled out of the 2nd and 3rd games of the ongoing 5-match T20I series," it added.

India's squad for the T20I series against England: Suryakumar Yadav (C), Axar Patel (VC), Sanju Samson (WK), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammad Shami, Varun Chakaravathy, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Dhruv Jurel (WK), Shivam Dube, Ramandeep Singh.

Injured Pathum Nissanka unlikely to play first Test against Australia

AGENCIES
COLOMBO, JAN 27

Injured Sri Lanka opener Pathum Nissanka is unlikely to play the first Test against Australia in Galle, starting on Wednesday.

Nissanka is undergoing rehabilitation in Colombo for the groin strain he sustained during the third T20I against New Zealand earlier this month. He has not joined the rest of the squad in Galle, team manager Mahinda Halangoda

confirmed to ESPNcricinfo.

Sri Lanka's team management is hopeful of his availability for the second Test starting on February 6.

The remaining 17 players in Sri Lanka's Test squad are expected to be available, according to team manager Halangoda. Captain Dhananjaya de Silva, recovering from a side strain, and Kamindu Mendis, who suffered a split webbing during domestic matches in the

past two weeks, have both travelled with the team to Galle.

With Nissanka unavailable, Sri Lanka need a second opener to partner Dimuth Karunaratne. The most likely option is Oshada Fernando, who has opened in 19 Test innings.

Another possibility is uncapped Lahiru Udara, a specialist opener at the domestic level. Wicket-keeper-batter Sadeera Samarawickrama is also in contention.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah inaugurates Tawi State Guest House in Jammu

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today inaugurated the newly constructed Tawi State Guest House on Canal Road, Jammu, in a significant addition to the state's hospitality infrastructure.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Ministers Javed Ahmad Dar and Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary Hospitality & Protocol Rashmi Singh, Director Hospitality & Protocol Ashwani Kumar, Joint Director H&P Naresh Kumar and other senior officers and concerned officials attended the event. During the inau-



guration, the Chief Minister conducted a detailed inspection of the facility, including the VVIP suites, mini suites, bedrooms, conference hall and other amenities.

Officials briefed him on the space allocation and state-of-the-art facilities available at the guest house.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister

commended the efforts of the Hospitality & Protocol Department in developing this facility that will serve as an important asset for hosting state guests and high-level delegations.

Giving details, an official handout stated that the ground floor of the guest house features five suites, three bedrooms, a conference hall with a seating capacity of 45 persons, a kitchen, pantry and waiting area.

The first floor comprises of one VVIP suite, two mini suites, two suites, two additional rooms and another waiting area.

The guest house has been equipped with modern amenities, including an advanced HVAC system, a furnished conference hall with audio-visual facilities, and an 8-passenger lift for convenience.

Satish Sharma conducts surprise visit to RTO office Jammu

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Minister for Transport, FCS&CA, Youth Services and Sports, Information Technology, Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, on Monday conducted surprise visit to office of Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Jammu at Narwal and took stock of its functioning.

The Minister inspected each counter and interacted with the respective dealing Assistants to understand the nature of services being provided by them.

While interacting with the staff, Satish Sharma directed the concerned to ensure delivery of public services within set time limit.

The Minister had a



round of the whole premises and inspected the infrastructural facilities there. He directed for making best use of digital technology to ensure complete transparency in the system and expeditious disposal of public issues.

Satish Sharma said that the government is keeping a strong vigil over the Agent Mafia to save the public from exploitation. He said that the govern-

ment is plying adequate public transport facilities for the passengers for religious places and other tourist spots.

The Minister also visited the shops located outside the RTO office and instructed them not to charge any extra amount beyond the prescribed fees. He emphasized the need to educate the public about utilizing faceless services, allowing them to access

the public, eliminating the need for physical visits to any office. Later, Satish Sharma visited fruits and vegetables mandi Narwal and interacted with members of Jammu Fruit and Vegetable Traders Associations and listened to their issues. The Minister assured the associations that all their genuine demands would be fulfilled in a phased manner.

GDC Marh organises Financial Literacy Camp

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Government Degree College Marh, in collaboration with SBI organised a two days awareness programme on Financial Literacy. The programme was coordinated by Prof Surbhi Gupta (HOD Commerce), Dr. Priya Sharma (HOD Economics) and Dr. Younus Bhat (Department of Commerce) under the supervision of College Principal Prof (Dr.) Rakesh Kumar Koul.

In the opening remarks, the Principal of the college appreciated the initiative taken by the SBI personnel for organizing the programme for the welfare of the staff and the students and introducing them with various government schemes and loan facilities. He also emphasized on the significance of financial literacy, financial freedom and the need of becoming



rich by increasing self employment among the youth of the nation.

Prof Surbhi Gupta welcomed the Resource Person Ramesh Raina (Financial Literacy Counsellor), Virender Dhotra (Deputy Manager Financial Inclusion) and five members team from SBI.

Ramesh Raina threw light on various government schemes, loan facilities for self employment, ATAL Pension Scheme for the age group of 18 to 40 years people, Health insurance schemes and online frauds. He also acquainted the audience about all the ways to safeguard them-

selves from various types of cyber crimes. One of the significant outcomes of the programme was that the students and faculty showed interest in opening an online zero balance account with 2 lakh insurance and accounts were opened wherein zero quarterly charges ATM cards and passbook were also on spot given to them in the college conference room. The formal vote of thanks was presented by Dr. Priya Sharma.

Meanwhile, a Seminar on the theme "Why is Voters Awareness important in Democratic state" was held in the College to

commemorate National Voters' Day- which coincides with the establishment of the Election Commission of India on 25th January 1950.

At the outset, a pledge was undertaken by the Department of Political Science to motivate young voters to exercise their privilege to cast a vote. About 20 students participated in the seminar, which provided them a platform to deepen their understanding of the significance of voting and help them to develop critical thinking skills, improve communication abilities, build confidence, and gain exposure to diverse perspectives.

Kunal Chanjotra (Istsem), Shivansh Kesar (IstSem), Khushi Choudhary (4thSem), Ridhu Rajput (IstSem), Prerna (6thSem), Ketan (4thSem) exuberantly participated in the seminar.

Secretary RDD for expeditious completion of Panchayat Ghars, CSCs, PLCs

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, on Monday emphasised the need to expedite the construction of Panchayat Ghars (PGs), Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Panchayat Learning Centres (PLCs) across Jammu and Kashmir.

While chairing a meeting held in this regard, the Secretary directed for ensuring completion of all ongoing works of Panchayat Ghars by March 31, 2025. He sought the intervention of Deputy Commissioners (DCs) in the projects wherever land related issues for Panchayat Ghars still exist. As of now, 258 Panchayat Ghars have been completed.

The Secretary stressed that Panchayat Ghars are essential for strengthening local self-governance, enhancing rural administration, and ensuring better service delivery to citizens.

Furthermore, the Secretary set a deadline of February 3 for submission of balance Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for PGs planned for the 2024-25 fiscal. He also instructed that the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) must be uploaded immediately with an emphasis on addressing bottlenecks in infrastructure development to ensure timely completion of these projects. He added that the ongoing work on PGs and CSCs is vital for effective local governance. He highlighted that the addi-

tional rooms being added to existing PGs for CSCs would provide citizens with improved access to digital services, including online applications, banking and various government schemes.

This initiative, he said, would not only streamline services but also contribute significantly towards enhancing digital literacy and fostering greater inclusion in rural areas.

In addition, the Secretary reviewed division-wise progress on PLCs and asked the district officials to complete installation of required equipment by March 31. He urged upon the nodal officers to ensure that centralised specifications for equipment are delivered to the concerned PLCs without delay.

During the meeting, the

Secretary also reviewed the status of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), which define the development priorities for each village. He noted that while the majority of GPDPs had been approved and uploaded, efforts should be made to ensure the remaining ones are completed on time to prevent delays in local development activities.

Director Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal, gave detailed presentation regarding progress on Panchayat Ghars (PGs), Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Panchayat Learning Centres (PLCs). He provided an update on the status of ongoing PG projects, highlighting that while many had reached their final stages, some were still in the construction or planning phase.

CS reviews progress on ongoing road projects

Says survey underway to cover unconnected habitations under PMGSY IV

JNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 27

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a meeting of Public Works Department (PWD) attended by the Engineers of the executing agencies to review progress on major ongoing road projects in Jammu and Kashmir.

While taking stock of overall progress on accomplishing these vital road connectivity links across the UT, the Chief Secretary emphasised on enhancing the capacity of the engineers to enable them in meeting deadlines efficiently. He directed the senior functionaries to monitor the works themselves for timely completion. He maintained that these road projects are highly significant and need to be completed expeditiously while observing all quality parameters and supervision by the senior officers from the concerned agencies.

He emphasised early completion of survey and formulation of DPRs under PMGSY IV so that all of the unconnected habitations are provided all weather road links under this pro-



gramme without any fail. He advised the Secretary to regularly monitor this process and complete the requisite Comprehensive New Connectivity Priority List (CNCPPL) in respect of each village so that due priority is given to them for early execution and completion.

In a presentation, Secretary PWD, Bhupinder Kumar, apprised the meeting of the achievements made under PMGSY I, II and III. He informed that under PMGSY-I a road length of 17578 Km was constructed including 210 Long Span Bridges (LSBs) and 7 LSBs stands completed under phase II

while 1248 km road including a LSB was constructed under phase III of this programme.

The meeting discussed the action plan for completion of remaining works of earlier phases of PMGSY. It also took note of the rolling out of PMGSY IV and its scope of implementation in the UT. The list of unconnected habitations and their survey over the 'Gram Sadak Survey app' and the status of preparation of CNCPPL for each proposed habitation at block/district level was debated threadbare in the meeting.

It was revealed that J&K being in special cate-

gory along with NE states would be given assistance to the extent of 90% by the central government under PMGSY. It also has a relaxation in terms of population criteria as the habitations here need to have a population of 250 only instead of 500 for other States/UTs with legislatures.

The meeting was apprised that out of the 1386 unconnected villages in J&K, Gram Sadak Survey in favour of 1249 villages had been finalised and those of 102 is under scrutiny to take them up under PMGSY phase IV for execution.

About Central Road

Infrastructure Fund (CRIF), it was divulged that out of 121 ongoing projects sanctioned at a cost of Rs2366 crore an expenditure of Rs 1180 crore had been incurred till date and 21 projects stands completed against the target of 41 projects for the year 2024-25.

With respect to NABARD RIDF, it was given out that 1098 projects were sanctioned under RIDFs XXIV to XXIX to be completed at a cost of Rs4761 crore. Out of these, an expenditure of Rs 1246 crore had been recorded and 195 projects completed till date. It was added that under RIDF-XXX the UT has submitted 140 projects for approval costing around Rs949 crore.

Regarding the overall performance registered under Capex for the financial year 2024-25, the meeting was informed that 2115 works stands complet-

ed as on date against the target of 3469 works sanctioned under Road Sector, NABARD, Cities & Towns, CRIF, PMGSY, Bridges programme and other heads of development.

As far as blacktopping of roads is concerned, it was divulged that a total of 3013 km of roads had been macadamised during the ensuing financial year under different sectors of development. Moreover, 25 bridges had also been completed against the target of 60 fixed for this fiscal. The Chief Secretary also took appraisal of the progress achieved on major road projects executed in different parts of J&K under various schemes. He asked about the current status of their completion with the possible dates of completion. He also directed for completion of all projects on due date so that there is no more slippage in timelines fixed for them.

Other issues that came up for discussion in the meeting included merger of JKPC staff in PWD and utilisation of funds still lying with the Corporation for finishing of incomplete projects left out by it.

Doda Civil society greets DC for receiving Prestigious President's Award



JNEWS SERVICE
DODA, JANUARY 27

Civil society members, including political representatives and local media fraternity from across the district today called on Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh and greeted him for receiving the prestigious President's Award.

The award, presented by the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, on January 25, 2025, recognized his exceptional leadership and efforts in ensuring the smooth and transparent conduct of the 2024 General Assembly Elections in the district.

The delegations expressed their admiration for Harvinder Singh's dedication, meticulous planning, and coordination with various departments that led to an exemplary electoral process. Representatives from

political groups highlighted his impartial approach and commitment to upholding democratic values, while members of the media fraternity commended his transparency and accessibility during the election period.

Public deputations also lauded the efforts made under his leadership to ensure inclusive participation and a secure environment for voters across the district, even in remote and challenging areas.

The visiting groups also praised the Deputy Commissioner's broader contribution towards the development of the District, including his focus on infrastructure, education, health, and social welfare initiatives. They acknowledged that his leadership has not only strengthened governance but also enhanced public trust in the administration.