

**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
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Steady vomit, urine, stool or stool
- Redness

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

# JINDRAH IMAGES

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## Despite all the differences, people share a common origin and a common destiny: LG

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 28

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today felicitated the recipients of 'Maharaja Hari Singh Peace & Harmony Award', organised by Gulistan News Network at Jammu.

The Lieutenant Governor paid tributes to Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, Pandit Girdhari Lal Dogra and Shri Devender Singh Rana, who were honoured with the award post-humously for their leadership qualities and tenacity and dedicating the life for the welfare of people. In his address, the Lieutenant Governor paid



homage to Maharaja Hari Singh and spoke on the revolutionary reforms introduced by him that had made a profound impact on the society and development of J&K.

"Maharaja Hari Singh Ji was a key architect of modern Jammu Kashmir. He also played a major role in shaping its destiny during a critical period in history and ensured the dream of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' becomes a reality," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that Maharaja Hari Singh Ji was unflinching in his concern for the poor and the disadvantaged and he championed the cause of women empowerment, education, healthcare and upliftment of the marginalised.

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### 15 injured after Vaishno Devi-Bound Bus Collides with Truck in Jammu

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 28

At least 15 people were injured when a bus carrying pilgrims to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine collided with a stationary dumper truck near here on Tuesday, officials said. The condition of all the injured, including three children and two women, is stated to be "stable", they said.

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### Jammu Police crack minor boy's murder case, three arrested with weapons

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Jammu Police on Tuesday cracked the murder case of a minor boy and arrested three accused persons

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### J&K Police busts Inter-State drug trafficking module, 2 nabbed from Delhi and UP

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

Jammu and Kashmir Police busted an inter-state drug trafficking module by arresting two kingpins from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Police on Tuesday said

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## People of J&K will continue to seek restoration of Statehood: Omar

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Tuesday that the people of Jammu and Kashmir will continue to seek restoration of statehood for J-K from the status of a Union Territory.

Speaking to reporters in the Hazratbal area, National Conference chief Abdullah also said that Article 370, which was abrogated by the Centre in 2019, was meant to safeguard Jammu and Kashmir and the identity of its people in the erstwhile state.

"We are waiting for it (restoration of statehood). Ask those who are delaying it. We will continue to pray for statehood and pray to God to protect us," Abdullah said. Asked about his earlier statement that Article 370 was for the protection of the Dogra community, the former Union minister said the now-abrogated constitutional



provision was for everyone in J-K.

"It was to safeguard Jammu and Kashmir, it was about the identity of its people. Be it the Dogras, Ladakhis or the people of Jammu and Kashmir, it was for everyone and not just one of them.

"When the Maharaja of Kashmir brought the law, he wanted to protect our jobs as there were apprehensions that people from outside will take away jobs. That came under (Article) 35 (A) then. (Article)

370 came in 1949," he said.

Amid the ongoing debate on the proposed amendments to the Waqf Bill, Abdullah said that "God is great and he will protect the Waqf".

"Let people do what they want... They cannot erase the name of Allah or his Messenger," the NC chief added.

To a question on drug menace in J-K, Abdullah said, "We must remember that those selling drugs are Kashmiris, and those using them are also Kashmiris. May God show them the

right path and bring them out (of drug menace). I am happy that our police are taking strong action in this matter.

"I hope the police will unmask those behind it and take stringent action against them. But until the people of Kashmir don't stand against drugs, it will be difficult to control the problem."

When told that the government and security agencies blame Pakistan for pushing narcotics into J-K, Abdullah said the "people of Kashmir were responsible for destroying themselves".

"I don't know who is to blame. But we are responsible... We Kashmiris are responsible for destroying ourselves. The problem with the drugs nexus is that it involves big money and a lot many people. Until we Kashmiris wake up and fight this menace, we will never be able to overcome it," Abdullah said.

## J&K's First Budget Session post abrogation Art 370

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

As the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir prepares for its first "Budget Session" in March 2025, the legislators may not be allowed to discuss matters pertaining to All India Services, the Police, Law and Order, and Security.

As per the news agency this session, about the presentation of the 2025-26 annual budget, will be the first since the assembly was reconstituted in October 2024.

Jammu and Kashmir, reorganized into two Union Territories on October 31, 2019, has operated without a legislative assembly for many years.

Sources from the Assembly Secretariat said that there is every possibility that written questions on All India Services like IAS, Police, Law and Order, and security matters will not be permitted during the session, nor will these topics be

debated unless allowed by the Speaker under special circumstances.

Additionally, issues related to All India Services are also likely to be excluded from the discussion.

Opposition leaders have said that if such restrictions are put in place these would undermine their ability to represent their constituents effectively.

Sheikh Khurshid of the Awami Ittehad Party and Waheed ur Rehman Para of the PDP criticized the move, stating that security and law and order are central to the daily lives of people in Jammu and Kashmir. "From passports to jobs, police verification is mandatory here. If we cannot address issues related to law and order, we are doing a disservice to our voters," said Para.

National Conference MLA Salman Sagar echoed

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## J&K braces for wet spell from today

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

Jammu and Kashmir would likely witness a week-long wet spell from January 29 with the weatherman predicting a series of Western Disturbances till February 05.

According to the news agency, Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that there is a forecast of light snow

and rain from January 29 afternoon under the influence of a Western Disturbance, affecting J&K from tomorrow.

"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

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### Rajouri mysterious deaths

## All patients out of danger, to be discharged soon

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

The situation in the Badhaal area of Rajouri district is improving as no new cases have been reported in the past seven days. Authorities are awaiting forensic reports to determine the exact cause of the mysterious deaths that claimed 17 lives, including 12 children, since December 8, 2024.

Speaking to the news



agency, Dr Shamim Ahmad, Government Medical College Medical Superintendent at (GMC) Rajouri said no fresh

cases have been reported in the last week. "Currently, 11 patients admitted last week are under observation at GMC Rajouri, but all of them are out of danger," he said.

Dr Ahmad added that none of the patients are on ventilators and their discharge will be decided soon after consultations with experts.

Following the mysterious deaths in Budhal village, authorities declared it

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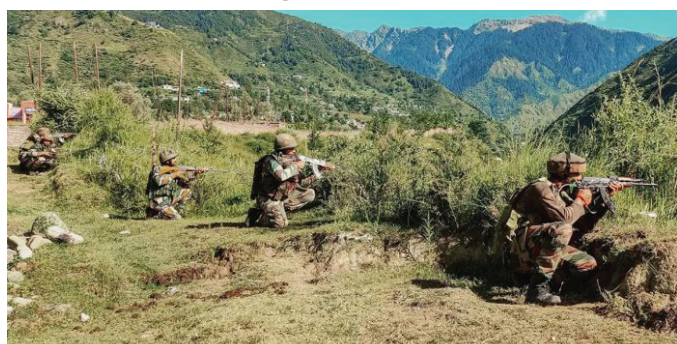
## Search operations underway at nearly two dozen places across Jammu

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Security forces on Tuesday launched a massive search operation at nearly two dozen places, mostly in the higher reaches and forest areas along the Line of Control, to counter terrorists who carried out several attacks last year in various districts of Jammu region, officials said.

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After carrying out deadly attacks in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch since 2021, terrorists spread



concern for the security agencies.

The officials said a search operation is underway at 23 places - highest 10 in the Chenab valley districts of Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban, seven in Rajouri-Poonch belt and three in Udhampur, two in Reasi and one in Jammu district.

The relentless operations by the army in the vulnerable areas, especially in the dense forests in close synergy with police and central armed police forces is meant to counter the terrors and thwart attempts of

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

their activities to six other districts in Jammu region last year, leaving 44 people, including 18 security personnel and 13 terrorists dead.

Though the Pir Panjal districts of Rajouri and Poonch

witnessed a considerable drop in the terror activities in 2024 compared to the previous years, the series of incidents in Reasi, Doda, Kishtwar, Kathua, Udhampur and Jammu from April-May onwards came as a

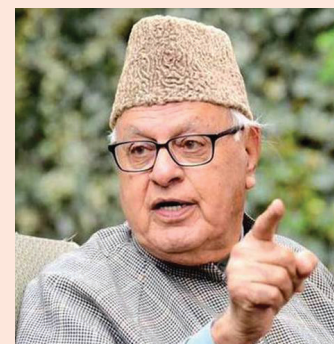
## NC will continue to wait for restoration of statehood to J&K: Farooq Abdullah

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

National Conference President Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday said that his party will continue to wait for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

Speaking to media persons at Hazratbal, where he had gone to pay obeisance on the occasion of Shab-e-Meraj (the night of ascent), Abdullah reiterated his commitment to the cause.

When asked why the restoration of statehood has been



delayed, he said, "Ask those who are delaying it. We are waiting for it and will continue to wait."

On the issue of Article

370, the NC President, who recently was quoted having said that it was for Dogras, emphasized the Article was for the protection of the erstwhile state and its people.

"The Article was for safeguarding the people of Jammu and Kashmir, including Dogras, Ladakhis, and others," he said.

Abdullah expressed deep concern over the growing drug menace in Jammu and Kashmir, stating that it has severely impacted society. "Those who are

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

## Škoda Kylaq officially launches in India

J I NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Škoda Auto India's first-ever sub-4-metre SUV, the Kylaq, has officially arrived on Indian roads, marking a significant milestone for the brand. With its launch, the Kylaq opens new horizons for Škoda in India's booming SUV market. It is the brand's first offering in the high-demand sub-4m segment and the first model in India to showcase Škoda's new Modern Solid design language, emphasising robustness, functionality, and authenticity. Customer deliveries and test drives to begin from today.

Petr Janeba, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India shares, "The Kylaq has officially arrived and is set to drive Škoda's growth trajectory in India over the coming years. Its availability from today marks the New Era for



Škoda Auto India. It combines safety, exceptional driving dynamics, and segment-leading features. Following the success of the Kushaq and Slavia, the Kylaq continues our India-focused product strategy, helping us tap into new markets and bring even more customers into the Škoda family. With its accessible pricing, we can say the Kylaq truly democratises European technology on Indian roads."

With the overwhelming response to the Kylaq and its strong appeal in

the competitive sub-4m SUV segment, Škoda Auto India is confident of achieving robust sales momentum. The company has outlined its goal of reaching 1 lakh annual sales by 2026, driven by the Kylaq's segment-leading features, exceptional safety standards, and European technology for Indian roads, which resonate with consumers. This strategic focus aligns with Škoda Auto India's commitment to expanding its footprint and bringing premium mobility solutions

to a broader customer base across the country.

### 5-star rated at BNCAP

The Škoda Kylaq has set a benchmark in safety, emerging as the best-performing vehicle in the ICE sub-4-metre compact SUV segment. It achieved an impressive 30.88 points out of 32 (97%) in Adult Occupant Protection and 45 points out of 49 (92%) in Child Occupant Protection. For child safety, the Kylaq excelled with a perfect score of 16 points (100%) in the frontal offset barrier test and 8 points (100%) in the side-moving deformable barrier test for 1.5 and 3-year-old children. Additionally, it earned maximum points in the recommended child seat assessment and 9 points out of 13 (69%) in the vehicle-based assessment, highlighting Škoda's commitment to safety across all parameters.

## DGP reviews operational preparedness of Reasi and Ramban

J I NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Director General of Police, J&K, Sh Nalin Prabhat, along with ADGP Jammu Zone, Sh Anand Jain and senior officers conducted an extensive review of the operational preparedness in the area.

The primary objective of the visit was to assess the security arrangements and operational readiness of the various security forces deployed across the region. The DGP visited multiple forward operating bases (FOBs), ensuring the forces were adequately prepared and equipped to handle any potential security challenges.

This visit was part of the ongoing efforts to strengthen security measures in view of the strategic importance of the



area. A detailed briefing was made to the DGP, regarding the existing security setup, challenges being faced and counter-measures.

The DGP also interacted with personnel from all the security forces.

He stressed on total operational coordination and efficient resource utilization.

The DGP also took the opportunity to engage with Special Operations Group personnel, discussing strategies and the way forward.

## Shab-e-Meraj observed with religious fervour across Kashmir

J I NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28 (UNI)

Shab-e-Meraj (night of ascent) was observed with religious fervour at various mosques and shrines across the Kashmir Valley.

The main function was held at the revered Hazratbal Shrine on the bank of Dal Lake, where thousands of devotees thronged from across the Kashmir Valley to participate in the night-long prayers on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday amid freezing temperatures.

Several mosques and shrines were illuminated as people across all age groups gathered to observe the holy night of Shab-e-Meraj.

The Shab-e-Meraj is celebrated on the 27th of Rajab as per the Islamic (Hijri) calendar, and Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) ascended to the highest levels of the heavens on this night.

The Muslim devotees observe the whole night in special prayers, Islamic sermons, and other religious activities to mark the holy night across the world.

At Hazratbal Shrine, the holy relic was displayed before the devotees after the prayers.

The authorities had made elaborate arrangements at the Hazratbal and other places in the Kashmir Valley for the devotees for smooth prayers.

The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, besides other religious and political leaders, greeted the people on the occasion.

## Kissan Mela cum Exhibition organised at Kathua under HADP

J I NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, JANUARY 28

A one-day Kisan Mela cum Exhibition was inaugurated today at Kathua by Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Kathua Dr. Bharat Bhushan and Director Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu Arvinder Singh Reen.

The event, organised under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) 2024-25, focused on the development of seed and seed multiplication chains and aimed to empower farmers with knowledge of modern agricultural practices.

MLA Dr. Bharat Bhushan was the Chief Guest, while S. Arvinder Singh Reen presided over the event organised by the Chief Agriculture Officer Sanjeev Rai Gupta.

Different stakeholders including farmers, agricultural experts and representatives from Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), NGOs, self-help groups and private companies attended the event.

The exhibition featured a diverse range of stalls showcasing agricultural innovations, farm machin-



ery, organic products and the latest advancements in seed production.

Among several displays were sections dedicated to agriculture inputs, seed procurement, farm mechanization and integrated farming practices.

Dr. Bharat Bhushan, in his address, emphasised that such events provide farmers with a valuable opportunity to interact with agricultural experts, gain insights into cutting-edge technologies and apply these innovations to enhance farm productivity and income. He encouraged farmers to take full advantage of the opportunities presented in the Kisan Mela.

Director Agriculture Jammu S. Arvinder Singh Reen, urged farmers to

explore different schemes available under the HADP and other centrally sponsored programs for adopting modern farming techniques.

He highlighted the benefits of organic farming, exotic vegetable cultivation, integrated farming systems, and farm mechanization in driving sustainable agricultural growth. Furthermore, he underscored the importance of developing community-based seed procurement centers and strengthening FPOs to enhance seed multiplication chains and ensure food security.

As part of the event, the farmers participated in live demonstrations at various stalls, where they were educated on the latest agricultural innova-

tions through electronic mediums.

The unique approach, as instructed by the Director Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu, enabled farmers to engage with the content in smaller, interactive groups.

The exhibition also showcased the diverse activities of the Agriculture Department, including Plant Health Clinics, Agriculture Engineering, Apiculture, Mushroom and Spawn Production, Agronomy, Floriculture, Seed Analytical Laboratories, and Soil Testing Labs. These displays provided valuable insights into the department's ongoing efforts to improve agricultural practices and promote sustainability in the region.

The event was conducted by the officers and staff of the Chief Agriculture Office, who ensured the smooth execution of the program.

The Kisan Mela served as a reminder of the importance of modernizing agriculture and fostering collaboration between farmers, experts, and policymakers to create a thriving agricultural ecosystem.

## SGRD Trust to celebrate Holy Parkash Divas of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Ji Maharaj on Sunday, Feb 02

J I NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Shri Guru Ravi Dass SS Trust / Society, Jammu, J&K feels privileged to apprise media persons on Shoba Yatra regarding the celebrations of 648th Holy Parkash Divas of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Maharaj Ji on 02/02/2025 (Sunday) from 11 AM to onwards from Shri Guru Ravi Dass Bhawan, RS Pura to Shri Guru Ravidass Sukhsagar Bhawan, Sikanderpur Kothey (via Kotli Shah Doula, Simbal Morh, Mi-ran Sahib, Maralian, Dak Bunglow. Bishnah).

While addressing the media persons Sh. C.L. Banal (Chairman) Sh. Paras Ram (Convener), Dr. D.D. Shivgotra (Gen-



eral Secretary) of Trust, Sikanderpur, Kothey, Jammu said that every branch of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha's of Jammu Province are participating in this grand function and especially all Sangat is requested to participate in large number The function is being celebrated under the aegis of Shri Shri 108 Swami Gurdeep

Giri Ji Maharaj. Those who attended the press conference included Sh. Er. N.R. Angral (VC), Sh. M.L. Banaliais Sh. K.L. Thapa, Sh. B.R. Chadgal, Sh. Ramesh Lal (CAO), Er. Joginder Pal, Sh. Ramshotam Thapa, Sh. Ram Singh, Sh. Karam Chand, Pathi Dass, Mahatama Pritam Singh and others.

## Godrej Agrovet launches Argo Rid, a fish lice controller in collaboration with ICAR-CIFE

J I NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY, 28:

Godrej Agrovet Limited (Godrej Agrovet) today announced the launch of Argo Rid, a fish lice controller. Developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) - Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), the product helps in healing of lesions due to parasitic attachment (Argulus Spot) on the fishes in addition to boosting their immune system thereby aiding enabling aqua farmers take better care of their fish's health.

Argulus infections have long plagued the Aquaculture industry, affecting nearly 48% of Indian aquaculture ponds and causing an estimated annual loss of USD 62.5 million. [1] ArgoRid addresses this challenge through its farmer-friendly, easy-to-use formulation, making it accessible to both small-scale and large commercial fish farmers who can seamlessly integrate it into their existing feeding practices.



Commenting on the launch, Balram Singh Yadav, Managing Director, Godrej Agrovet said, "At Godrej Agrovet, we are committed to offering research-driven solutions that enhance farm efficiency and uplift farming families while maintaining sustainability. Hence in our quest to contribute to nation's Blue Revolution, we delighted to empower fish farmers with a reliable, easy-to-use, and effective tool to combat one of the industry's biggest challenges. Leveraging the technical expertise of ICAR-CIFE and our distribution reach, we certainly believe that such public-private partnerships will play a critical role in driving meaningful advancements in the industry and strengthen the position of our country's Fisheries sector on the global map."

Dr. Mohammad Aklakur, Scientist, ICAR-CIFE also shared his views on the product. "The introduction of ArgoRid is a breakthrough from a scientific perspective because it proves that nutraceuticals can be

and employment generation, ArgoRid represents a significant innovation for strengthening India's aquaculture sector and ensuring long-term economic benefits for farmers by improving fish survival rates and boosting productivity."

ArgoRid should be mixed uniformly with farm-made or commercial feed, with a recommended dosage of 3 kg per 100 kg of feed. The feeding regimen involves an initial two-day series, followed by a dose on the seventh day, and two additional applications at 15-day intervals if infestation persists. For optimal results, feeding should be carried out on clear and sunny days, ensuring maximum absorption and effectiveness. By bridging technological advancements with on-the-ground support, Godrej Agrovet's Aqua Feed Business is creating an ecosystem of support that addresses critical gaps in scientific fish farming. Creating a comprehensive ecosystem that has the potential to transform how fish farmers manage seasonal productivity challenges, company is committed to building a stronger aquaculture ecosystem through enhanced farmer empowerment and sustainable practices

## Maharaja Hari Singh Peace and Harmony Award Conferred on Late Shri Ram Sahai

J I NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

The prestigious Maharaja Hari Singh Peace and Harmony Award in the field of business and entrepreneurship was posthumously conferred on Late Shri Ram Sahai Ji, a visionary leader and a towering figure in Jammu's trade and industry community by Gulistan channel. The award was presented by Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha Ji in a ceremony that celebrated Shri Ram Sahai Ji's extraordinary contributions to the region. The award was received on his behalf by his son, Shri Rahul Sahai Ji, Chairman of the Indian Chamber of Commerce Jammu.

Late Shri Ram Sahai Ji was a dynamic leader whose efforts left an indelible mark on Jammu's industrial and economic landscape. He served as



the President of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Jammu many times, and was the founder of several transformative institutions, including the Citizens Cooperative Bank Jammu, the J&K Institute of Public Opinion, and the Tax Payers Association J&K. These establishments stand as enduring symbols of his commitment to public service and his vision for a progressive and united society.

Among his many landmark achievements was the allotment and construction of the Jammu Chamber of

Commerce Bhawan at Bahu Plaza, a monumental step in providing a dedicated hub for trade and industry. Additionally, Shri Ram Sahai Ji was instrumental in the pioneering initiation of LOC trade between Jammu & Kashmir and POK, fostering economic ties and promoting peace through commerce. Known as the heartbeat of Jammu's trade and industry, his relentless efforts not only supported businesses but also improved the lives of countless individuals, earning him immense respect and admiration.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Rahul Sahai Ji expressed heartfelt gratitude for the honor bestowed on his late father and reaffirmed his commitment to carrying forward his father's vision of growth and harmony. He remarked, "This recognition is a testament to my father's unwavering dedication to the betterment of society. I am humbled to receive this on his behalf and will continue striving to uphold his values and legacy."

The Maharaja Hari Singh Peace and Harmony Award stands as a fitting tribute to Late Shri Ram Sahai Ji's lifelong dedication to fostering harmony, progress, and entrepreneurship in Jammu and Kashmir. The event concluded with an emotional remembrance of Shri Ram Sahai Ji's life and work, inspiring everyone present to follow his exemplary path.

## Tiny Tots Hr Sec School Celebrates Annual Sports Day with Enthusiasm

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 28

Tiny Tots Hr Sec School celebrated its Annual Cum Sports Day Function with great enthusiasm and flair at the school grounds in Sainik Colony today. The event was graced by the presence of the Chief Guest, Satish Sharma, Minister for FCS&CA, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, Information Technology, Science and Technology, ARI & Trainings, who was warmly welcomed by the students with a shower of petals.

The Chief Guest was given an exclusive tour of the school's Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and Machine Learning Laboratory, where students showcased their innovative models. The Guests of Honour for the day included Anil Kapahi, Secretary



Amar Singh Club; Sandeep Jain, President Bharatiya Jain Sanghathan J and K; Sunny Dua; Shreyansh Kumar Jain; Manmeet Kour; Vishakha Pandita; Dr. Additi Khajuria; Dr. Vaid and Sidharth Dogra, Editor Jammu Links.

Dr. Vikram Handa, Principal of Tiny Tots Hr Sec School, delivered the

annual address and presented the annual report, highlighting the school's achievements over the past year.

Chairperson Veena Handa, along with School Director Gurpreet Handa and the distinguished guests, officially inaugurated the meet by lighting the ceremonial torch,

which was carried around the field by the Sports Captain, Sunny Thakur. This was followed by a Guard of Honor presented by contingents of different houses, led by the school's Captain body.

The atmosphere was filled with excitement as the Kindergarten students proudly marched while

waving the Tricolour. The finals of various athletic events, including sprints, long-distance races, long jump, and fun races for the junior classes, were held throughout the day. The event also featured captivating cultural performances, showcasing traditional dances from Rajasthan, Punjab, and the Land of Fairies. The highlights of the day were the energetic Shiv Tandav performance at the beginning of the program and the aerobics drill towards the end. The parents of the students applauded the talent of their wards with thunderous claps throughout the program.

Satish Sharma, the Chief Guest, lauded the students and staff for their efforts and emphasized the importance of incorporating modern technology, such as Robotics,

Machine Learning, and Artificial Intelligence, into the curriculum. Sandeep Jain, in his address, spoke about the significance of patriotism and the formation of bonds and friendships during school days. He praised the patriotic skit performed by the students and stressed the importance of organizing such activities regularly for the overall development of students.

Veena Handa, Chairperson of Tiny Tots Group of Schools, commended the efforts of the management, students and staff in putting together a fabulous event. The vote of thanks was presented by Kiran Zutshi.

The day concluded with fun races organized for the staff and parents, ensuring everyone had an enjoyable and memorable time.

## MP Jugal Kishore, MLAs review infrastructure projects in Jammu



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Member of Parliament Lok Sabha, Shri Jugal Kishore Sharma, along with MLA Jammu West Arvind Gupta, MLA Jammu North Sham Lal Sharma, MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi, General Manager NHIDCL S.S. Sangawan, District President Rajesh Gupta, Mandal President Kushant Daffara, and Anil Angral, convened a crucial meeting to review the progress of ongoing infrastructure projects in the Jammu region. The meeting focused on addressing key challenges affecting residents, particularly issues arising due to inadequate drainage systems.

MLA Arvind Gupta raised serious concerns regarding the persistent problem of rainwater drainage from the flyover, which is flooding residential areas and causing severe hardships to the residents. He emphasized the dire need for immediate corrective measures, including the rectification of a proper drainage system to prevent water-logging.

Arvind urged NHIDCL and concerned authorities to expedite remedial action, ensuring that citizens do not continue to suffer due to infrastructural shortcomings. MP Jugal Kishore Sharma assured that all necessary steps would be taken to resolve the issue at the earliest. He reiterated the government's commitment to ensuring that development projects do not adversely impact the common people.

The Member Parliament directed NHIDCL officials to undertake a thorough assessment and implement a long-term solution to prevent further inconvenience. He also highlighted the Centre's continued focus on infrastructure development in Jammu and assured that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the region would witness significant progress.

General Manager NHIDCL, S.S. Sangawan, assured the public representatives that immediate action would be taken to address the concerns raised. District President Rajesh Gupta, Mandal President Kushant Daffara, and Anil Angral were also present.

## Adopt latest technologies for best agriculture produce: Javed Dar to farmers



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 28

Minister for Agricultural Production, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives, and Election Departments, Javed Ahmad Dar, today said that all efforts are being made for best use of available agricultural land through adoption of the latest technologies.

Speaking at 'Gulistan News Conclave' in Jammu, the Minister emphasised the importance of modernising agriculture and addressing the challenges posed by decreasing land holdings. He outlined that, despite limited land resources, the government is focused on increasing agricultural productivity by integrating modern techniques and fostering innovation in the sector. He highlighted the significant role of universities in driving reforms over the past three months, contributing towards prosperity of agriculture in the region. The Minister urged the

farmers to adopt latest and modern technologies for best produce in agriculture and allied sectors. He acknowledged the challenges posed by urbanisation, as many people aspire to move to cities for better facilities and exposure for their children. However, he assured that all central and UT level schemes including Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), are being implemented to revolutionise the agriculture sector and enhance livelihoods in rural areas.

Meanwhile, the Minister urged the citizens to maintain trust in the administration, assuring the public that the government, under the leadership of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, remains dedicated to fulfil its promises. He assured that the government would continue its efforts to improve rural livelihoods and agricultural development, meeting the expectations of the general public to the best of its ability.

## Prof. Jain Releases New Year Calendar at Central University of Jammu



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 28

The Vice Chancellor Central University of Jammu, Prof. Sanjeev Jain today unveiled the university's official New Year Calendar, Planner Diary, and Table Calendar for the year-2025. The launch ceremony was held in the Brigadier Rajinder Singh Auditorium in the presence of the committee members and senior faculty.

The meticulously designed calendar and planners reflect the essence of the university's mission and vision while celebrating its achievements and milestones. The event was attended by the team responsible for conceptualizing and designing the materials alongside other dignitaries from the university.

In his address, HVC Prof. Sanjeev Jain, highlighted the importance of such initiatives in fostering a sense of unity and purpose among the university's staff and students. "These planners and calendars serve as

tools to organize, strategize, and achieve our goals while reminding us of our shared commitment to academic excellence and innovation. I commend the committee for their creative effort and dedication," he stated.

The New Year Calendar features picturesque visuals of the vedic vision, Bharat knowledge system, Akhand Bharat, Ayurveda, Indian Astronomy, Art & Aesthetics, Temples etc. with their interesting facts, while the Planner Diary is tailored to meet the academic and administrative needs of faculty and staff. The Table Calendar, compact and visually appealing, adds a professional touch to the workspace. The committee members expressed their gratitude for the Vice Chancellor's support and shared insights about the creative process behind the initiative. Prof. Jain personally congratulated the team for their efforts and distributed copies of the calendar, planner diary, table calendar and dairy to the attendees.

## Indian Army interacts with Gujjars, Bakkarwals at Lam, Rajouri



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJOURI : 28 JAN 2025

In continuation of its efforts to maintain connections with the transient population and address their concerns, the Indian Army carried out an interaction at Kaskatral for the Gujjar and Bakkarwal communities. The Gujjar and Bakkarwals, living in the remote village of Lam, were engaged in the interaction, where their well-being and any critical issues faced by their community were discussed. During the interaction, the community was guided on women empowerment, the importance of educa-

tion for children and their future prospects, and the significance of skill development for better employment opportunities. The community was assured that every possible help would be provided to them, acknowledging that their contributions play a key role in maintaining peace and harmony in the region. The Gujjar and Bakkarwal community expressed their unwavering support and trust in the Indian Army. A total of 47 individuals (16 men, 14 women, and 17 children) from the Gujjar and Bakkarwal communities participated in the interaction.

## Indian Army organizes Motivational Movie Screening for Students at Keri, Rajouri



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJOURI : 28 JAN 2025

In an effort to inspire and motivate young minds, the Indian Army organized a screening of a motivational movie for students at TFS, Keri, Rajouri District. The event was attended by 59 students, including 35 girls and 20 boys, along with 4 teachers. The movie screening was part of the Indian Army's ongoing initiative to promote education and motivation among the youth in remote and inaccessible areas. The event aimed to inspire students to work hard,

chase their dreams, and become responsible citizens of the country. The students and teachers appreciated the Indian Army's efforts in organizing the movie screening, which was both entertaining and enlightening. The event helped foster a sense of motivation and enthusiasm among the students, encouraging them to strive for excellence in their academic pursuits. The Indian Army's initiative is a testament to its commitment to promoting education and motivation among the youth in Jammu and Kashmir. By organizing such events, the Indian Army aims to inspire young minds and help them become responsible citizens of the country. The success of the movie screening event demonstrates the Indian Army's dedication to promoting education and motivation among the youth in remote and inaccessible areas. The event has created a positive impact on the students, encouraging them to work hard and strive for excellence in their academic pursuits.

## Villagers set vehicle carrying cattle smuggling on fire, demonstrate to stop cattle smuggling in area



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Last night in village Pyan of Maira Mandriya area of Akhnoor, villagers set the vehicle on fire after recovering 7 cattle from a vehicle carrying cattle smuggling. On this, villagers demonstrated by raising slogans to stop smuggling in the area and demanded a ban.

The villagers say that cattle smuggling is going on continuously in the area for the last several months, on this, 1 month ago also the villagers went to Akhnoor police station and informed the police officers, but despite this, cattle smuggling in the area was not stopped. The villagers say that the police should take necessary steps to stop the cattle smuggling happening in the area, so that cattle smuggling can be stopped.

On the other hand, the police has started investigating the matter. SHO Akhnoor Rohit Gandhi said that the matter is being investigated.

## JKAACL organises All India Urdu Mushaira to mark 76th R-Day celebration

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 28

The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages (JKAACL) today organized the prestigious All India Urdu Mushaira here this evening at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu.

in the presence of galaxy of writers intellectuals of different languages.

Principal Secretary, Culture and School Education, Suresh Kumar Gupta was the chief guest at the event.

In his address, Suresh Gupta stated that the primary objective of the Mushaira is to celebrate the diversity of India



through the universal language of poetry, which serves as a bridge connecting people from varied backgrounds and regions. He emphasized that poetry is a powerful medium to promote unity, harmony and cultural exchange in a multilingual nation like ours. He also stated that 31 new schemes are being introduced in JKAACL for overall promotion of

regional art, culture and languages.

Harvinder Kour, Secretary JKAACL, welcomed the veteran poets, literary luminaries and esteemed guests. In her address, she stated that this event, began in 1960, has become an annual tradition and continues to be a significant platform for promoting Urdu literature and poetry.

This year's Mushaira

was organized as part of the 76th Republic Day celebrations, bringing together renowned poets from across Jammu and Kashmir and other states and Union Territories of the country. She further highlighted the vital role of literary events like this Mushaira in fostering creativity, nurturing fresh ideas and preserving our cultural and linguistic heritage.

## Samagam 2.0: IIM Jammu Paves Way for Formalization of its Alumni Association

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

The Indian Institute of Management Jammu (IIM Jammu) hosted the Alumni Reunion, "Samagam 2.0," at its campus on January 25-26, 2025. The alumni event witnessed enthusiastic participation from alumni across various batches, offering an opportunity to reconnect with their alma mater, including MBA, MBA (HA & HM), and EMBA alumni, as well as faculty and students. The reunion featured alumni introductions (both online and offline) and reflections, followed by faculty introductions. A special video highlighting IIM Jammu's journey was also presented. The event was graced by Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu.

In his address at IIM Jammu's Samagam 2.0, Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, emphasized

the importance of mutual expectations between the students, alumni, and the Institute. He stressed the need for alumni to take pride in their association with IIM Jammu and foster a sense of belonging and commitment. He spoke about the Institute's ongoing efforts to engage alumni, mentioning alumni meets in major cities like Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, and Hyderabad, and the strong participation witnessed in these events. He encouraged alumni to stay connected, grow, and elevate the Institute's reputation, thus creating more opportunities for the IIM Jammu community. During the interaction, he shared exciting news about a grand event to formalize the IIM Jammu Alumni Association as per the Society Act and the launch of Alumni Chapters across India. The dates for these events will be announced



soon. He also invited suggestions from alumni, emphasizing that sincerity, commitment, and collaboration are the key to success. He concluded by expressing his gratitude to the attendees and reaffirmed IIM Jammu's vision of contributing to governance and policy development, ensuring the Institute continues to be a beacon of excellence.

The event began with a warm reception and campus tour, allowing alumni to relive cherished memories and witness the institute's remarkable growth. A formal event at Patanjali Classroom was started by lighting the lamp by Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu. A formal PowerPoint presentation on the roadmap for formalizing the Alumni Association of IIM Jammu

was put forward by Dr. Vinod Durge, Associate Professor of Practice, IIM Jammu, on this occasion. Prominent attendees included Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean Academics, IIM Jammu; Dr. Ravij Seth; Prof. Pankaj Maheshwari; Prof. Prashant Mishra; Dr. Muqbil Burhan, Chairperson of Center for Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Skill Development and

Chairperson of IIM Jammu Srinagar Campus; Dr. Mahesh Gadekar, Chairperson, Centre for Diversity and Inclusion and Centre for Small Business Development Units; Dr. Pratik Maheshwari, Co-Chairperson, Executive Education and Consultancy; Dr. Sumit Maheshwari; and Dr. Sourav Mondal. Dr. Pradeep K. Tare, Chairperson, Alumni Relations

gave a welcome address and shared updated on alumni relations activities.

Dr. Jaganth G., Co-Chairperson, Alumni Relations gave a vote of thanks. The inaugural event was followed by a group photograph, leaving attendees with lasting memories and a renewed connection to the IIM Jammu family.

The faculties at IIM Jammu shared their experiences and emphasized their roles as members of the alma mater, highlighting the significant contributions they make toward the progress of the Institute and the students. They reflected on the importance of maintaining strong connections with alumni, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and ensuring that IIM Jammu remains a hub for innovation, leadership, and excellence. Their insights underscored how the collaborative efforts

between faculty, alumni, and students are crucial in shaping the future growth of the Institute and contributing to the holistic development of students.

The reunion featured engaging sessions, including a leadership panel discussion with alumni, Sports Activities, Cultural Odyssey, interactions with faculty and students, and networking over breakfast, lunch and dinner. Some of the alumni will also attend the Republic Day celebrations and visit to the transit campus at Canal Road, reliving their memories with a sense of nostalgia. Samagam 2.0 underscores IIM Jammu's commitment to fostering a thriving and engaged alumni network, embodying the institute's vision of excellence and collaboration. The event was coordinated by Alumni Relations Committee at IIM Jammu.

## Movement Kalki marks 100 days of campaign for "National Mother Cow" declaration

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Movement Kalki, an organization dedicated to advocating for the declaration of the cow as the "National Mother Cow," has completed 100 days of its campaign. To commemorate the milestone, a special press conference was held at Hotel Nek in Jammu, where members of the organization highlighted their progress, achievements, and plans for the future.

Shri Pritam Sharma, a member of the Advi-

sory Board of Movement Kalki, presided over the event and detailed the relentless efforts of the organization, which continued undeterred through harsh weather conditions, including severe winters, rain, and storms. In his address, he stated that the movement has ignited a renewed sense of awareness about Sanatan Dharma and the importance of cow protection throughout the nation.

The movement has put forward key demands, including the introduction of legislation to officially

recognize the cow as the "National Mother Cow," the establishment of a Sanatan Dharma Board consisting of religious leaders and stakeholders, and the construction and effective management of cow shelters to ensure the safety and preservation of cows.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the government, Shri Sharma criticized its silence on the issue, attributing it to possible collusion with cow traffickers or an undisclosed agenda. He emphasized that the overwhelming support from saints and devotees during



the Mahakumbh validated the purpose and strength of the movement.

The organization appealed to all major political parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress, National Conference, PDP, and Aam Aadmi Party, to issue a White Paper within a week, clarifying their stance on the

matter. Movement Kalki warned that if no response is received within the stipulated timeframe, it will intensify its campaign through protests and demonstrations.

Among the proposed strategies are organized protests outside the headquarters of political parties that fail to respond,

the burning of effigies to register discontent with key political leaders, and nationwide efforts to expand the movement's reach.

Despite 100 days of continuous campaigning, most political parties have remained silent, which the movement considers a significant concern. So far, only Advocate Vijay Sharma, MLA from Hiranagar, and Yudhvir Sethi, MLA from Jammu East, have expressed support for the cause. The lack of response from other parties and legislators has

added to the movement's growing discontent.

Movement Kalki urged the public, including all sections of society and religious institutions, to join the cause. The organization stressed that protecting and honoring the cow, which holds a significant place in Indian culture, is the moral responsibility of every citizen.

The press conference was attended by several dignitaries and key members of Movement Kalki, including Advocate Someshwar Kohli, Thakur Arjun Singh, San-

jeev Dubey, Sapna Hindu, Dr. Sudesh Kumar, Pawan Narang, Anuradha Yogi, Sushma Sharma, Sukhdev Singh, Antu Kotwal, Neha Malhotra, Pooja Kotwal, Advocate Mohd Bilal, Sumita Kundal, and Yashpal Sharma. Movement Kalki reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to achieving its objective of securing the status of "National Mother Cow" for the cow. The organization concluded by warning that if the government fails to take action, the campaign will intensify its efforts across the nation.

### FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

#### Despite all the...

His entire life was a great saga of courage and conviction for betterment of society.

The Lieutenant Governor further highlighted that it is the responsibility of people at the helm of affairs to ensure that different segments and sections have a stake in Viksit Bharat.

He said the prestigious Maharaja Hari Singh Awards are the recognition of the work done for promoting peace, inclusive development, achievement in different sectors and a feeling of oneness between communities.

"As India moves forward on the path of rapid economic growth, your work in literature, social services, sports, education and business strengthens the fabric of our society. It is your duty to ensure that weaker sections of society and empowerment of women are given top priority," the Lieutenant Governor told the Awardees.

Speaking on India's emergence as an economic super power, the Lieutenant Governor said the progress we achieved in the last 10 year, have assured that the nation will certainly accomplish the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

He emphasized that the government alone cannot achieve its goals and the citizens need to work together.

"It is true that despite all the differences, people share a common origin and a common destiny. I urge the people from all sections of the society to lead India into a developed nation and become the active partners in this development journey," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the J&K Government, under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has fulfilled the long pending demand of declaring holiday on the birthday of Maharaja Hari Singh ji.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor was conferred with 'Maharaja Hari Singh Award in Reforms and Planning'.

Sh Jugal Kishore Sharma, Member of Parliament; Sh Sham Lal Chaudhary, former Minister; Sh Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; members of Gulistan News Network; senior officials and prominent citizens from different walks of life were present.

#### J&K's First Budget...

similar views, pointing out the inherent challenge. "When the police and law and order are outside the purview of the state government, what answers can the state government provide on these issues? This limits our ability to hold meaningful discussions," he said.

A senior BJP leader said, "In a Union Territory, security and law and order are controlled by the Centre. This arrangement has reduced political interference in police operations, allowing them to function more effectively. In the past, political pressure often hampered the police from acting decisively."

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, however, is reportedly in discussions with the Centre to push for the restoration of full statehood. Though no definite timeline has been given, it is hoped by the ruling dispensation that the statehood will be announced in near future. KNO

#### J&K braces for...

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 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

#### All patients out of...

a containment zone, with hundreds of close contacts relocated to an isolation centre at the Government Nursing College in Rajouri.

Initial investigations suggest that the deaths may be linked to the consumption of contaminated food or water. Symptoms observed in the affected people include irritability, drowsiness, profuse sweating and respiratory distress, which are consistent with neurotoxicity or exposure to organophosphorus compounds.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said the deaths were caused by toxins rather than an infectious disease, adding that investigations are on to identify the source of the contamination.

An official involved in the probe said the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report from Chandigarh is expected within two days. "The FSL report will provide a clearer picture of the toxins responsible and enable authorities to establish the necessary protocols," the official said.

Law enforcement agencies are exploring the possibility of any criminal angle to the incident to rule out deliberate contamination or foul play.

Authorities have intensified surveillance in the region, while medical teams continue to monitor the health of affected persons. Health officials are coordinating with toxicology experts to ensure a swift response to any emerging symptoms. KNO

#### Search operations...

Pakistan-based handlers to spread terrorism to Jammu region, they said.

They said the search operations along with area domination will be intensified further in the coming months before the onset of the summer.

According to official data, Doda, Kathua and Reasi districts recorded nine killings each followed by Kishtwar (five), Udhampur (four), Jammu and Rajouri (three each) and Poonch (two) last year.

The dead included 18 security personnel and 13 terrorists, the officials said, adding among the 14 civilians

killed by the terrorists, seven were pilgrims returning from Shiv Khouri temple and three Village Defence Guards.

While the pilgrims were killed in an attack on their bus which also claimed the life of the local driver and conductor, the VDGs were shot dead in Udhampur and Kishtwar districts. (AGENCIES)

#### NC will continue to...

selling, bringing, and consuming drugs are our own people," he remarked.

"I am happy that police are making all out efforts to arrest the drug dealers," he said and added "I appeal to the people to provide information about the drug dealers so that they could be dealt with by the law of the land and get punished severely".

When asked about India's accusations against Pakistan regarding the drug problem in Kashmir, the former Chief Minister said, "I don't know who is to be blamed." However, he added, "We Kashmiris are responsible for destroying ourselves. Wake up, as the call has already been given. Act before it's too late."

He underlined the lucrative nature of the drug trade and its far-reaching consequences. "Drugs involve big money, and many people are drawn to this dirty trade. Unless we Kashmiris unite to fight this menace, we will never overcome it," the NC President warned.

#### 15 injured after...

The accident took place at Nagrota on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway when the driver of the bus lost control of the vehicle, police said. The injured have been admitted to the Government Medical College and Hospital for treatment, officials said.

#### Jammu Police...

with sharp weapons in Bishnah area in the city outskirts.

Police said that murder case has been successfully solved in the Bishnah area.

Police sharing details added that on January 13, 2025 at 11:55 PM, an alert was received reporting that an unidentified individual had been brutally murdered with a sharp-edged weapon and the body was lying along Bhatyari- Bishnah Road.

The deceased was later identified as Ajay Kumar, 17, son of Romesh Lal, resident of Bhatyari, Bishnah.

Police later registered a case and started the investigation.

Police said that the deceased was a conductor of a mini bus.

As per police, a special investigation team meticulously worked through technical analysis and human intelligence to track down the suspects.

"The persistent efforts led to the identification of few suspects and police parties carried out raids at various locations within Jammu and adjacent districts to nab the culprits," said police.

They said that three accused persons were arrested and identified as Anmol Sharma, 24, Nikhil Sharma,

29, both residents of Jakh, Samba and Nishant Choudhary, 23, of Vijaypur, Samba.

During sustained questioning, police said that the accused confessed to the crime, revealing that the murder stemmed from a personal rivalry. According to their statements, Nikhil Sharma launched a fatal assault on the victim using a sharp weapon while Anmol Sharma and Nishant Choudhary were actively involved in executing the crime, which they had planned to avenge the personal rivalry over altercation which had happened between the accused Anmol Sharma and other party.

As part of the ongoing investigation, police have recovered the weapons used in the crime while vehicle involved in the commission of the offence has also been seized, police said.

With all three suspects in custody and key evidence secured, the investigation is progressing towards a watertight prosecution, police added.

#### J&K Police busts...

that it has dismantled a major inter-state drug trafficking network while investigating Case FIR No. 136/2024 under sections 8/22-29 NDPS Act.

Based on evidence from the investigation, including bank transactions and communication records, two key drug suppliers Raju Gupta from Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, and Mohammad Abrar from Bhatnagar, Delhi were identified as major sources of narcotics supplied to local drug peddlers in Kashmir valley.

A Srinagar police team conducted extensive operations in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi over 10 days with the assistance of local police during which Raju Gupta was apprehended on January 23, 2025 in Bareilly, and Mohammad Abrar was arrested on January 24, 2025 in Bhatnagar.

Both suspects were presented before the respective courts, transit remands were obtained, and they are now in police custody.

Moreover, a suspicious courier parcel linked to the accused has been identified in Loni, Ghaziabad, and steps are being taken to retrieve it with court approval.

The financial transactions and properties of the accused are under scrutiny for potential attachment under the NDPS Act.

This case originated on November 8, 2024 during a routine police checking at Tarbal Chowk, Srinagar when a motorcycle was intercepted, leading to the arrest of three drug peddlers Ajaz Ahmad Ganie (Athwajan Pantha Chowk), Owais Ahmad Gojri (Brari Pora), and Mir Roman (Ali Masjid Eidgah).

Police also seized 140 bottles of Codeine Phosphate, Rs 38, 530 in suspected drug proceeds, 3 mobile phones, and a drone camera allegedly used to monitor drug buyers, police said.

The backward linkage that emerged during investigation of this case led police to the aforementioned 2 drug dealers from Delhi and UP.

Investigations are on-going, with more arrests and seizures expected in the coming days, police added.

## Regularize all 2,56,846 Number of Evacuee Properties in favour of all kinds of Allottees in a time bound manner: Ankur Sharma

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

While welcoming LG Govt's decision dated 16.08.2024 providing for conferment of proprietary rights of evacuee lands (custodian) in favour of Displaced Persons of 1947, 1965, 1971 and West Pakistani Refugees Ankur Sharma, Spokesperson BJP J&K while addressing a Press Conference today at BJP Headquarters Jammu along with Balbir Ram Rattan and YV Sharma (Spokespersons), BJP, strongly pressed for grant of proprietary rights in favour of Local Allottees of evacuee lands both Rural & Urban be it Agricultural, Residential Commercial, Mixed or any other type which he termed as a "major responsibility of the Omar led UT Govt". Conferment of proprietary

rights in favour of DPs and WP Refugees was the first step. The follow up and second step of incorporating Local Allottees should be walked by the Omar Govt without any delay. The move he said will empower farmers, middle class, marginalised and disadvantaged sections of the society. Local Allottees are largely Local Dogras of Jammu Province who have been allotted or given possession of evacuee lands under Cabinet Order 578-C, Govt Order LB-7 and Govt Order Reh 371 of 1971 read along with Second Schedule of Agrarian Reforms Act. He also demanded implementation of order dated 16.08.2024 in favour of Displaced persons and West Pakistani Refugees in a time bound manner. It is worthwhile to mention that the total number



of Evacuees properties mostly located in Jammu Province are 2,56,846 of which the Urban properties are 7161. The total market value of these properties run into several thousands of Crores. Ankur Sharma further pressed for grant of proper compensation in favour of Local allottees of those evacuee lands which have been acquired by the Governments for public purpose in the past. Further explaining Mr. Sharma said

that under the current legal regime, nearly 80% of the total compensation should be paid to the allottees however, it is seen that the collectors in many cases especially in case of local allottees do not transfer the compensation amount of acquired lands in favour of allottees. The interests of allottees and legitimate occupants whose allotted lands have been acquired should be protected by paying them just compensation.

The Operating Expense Ratio (OER) incurred by the Custodian department is so high that it betrays common sense to justify its existence said Ankur Sharma. Further elaborating on OER, he said that the cost to operate Custodian Property in comparison to the income it generates is quite high and the department is like an 'Overhead' to the State Exchequer. He further said that Custodian's continuous existence is costing an arm and a leg. Mr. Sharma also said that while The J&K State Evacuee's (Administration of Property) Act, defines Evacuees as persons belonging to four categories, almost entire evacuee property comes under its second category which defines evacuee as a person

who crossed over to Pakistan in support of the creation of Pakistan. 75 Years post independence having a department for protecting and managing properties of those who driven by Two Nation Theory stood for Pakistan and crossed over, betrays all common sense. He further made it clear that once PoJK is taken back from illegal occupation of Pakistan, the issue of Hindu-Sikh evacuee property left back in PoJK could also be settled properly. Mr. Sharma demanded that the Evacuee property Act should be repealed to the extent of doing away with the legal regime of Custodian to Custodian General and for the intervening period, a Relief Commissioner of the rank of Commissioner/Secretary

to the Government who should not be less than a Senior IAS officer or Senior most JKAS Officer from the persecuted community only should be created to adjudicate issues related to conferment of ownership rights/earlier allotments. In the Press Conference YV Sharma Spokesperson also expressed his opinion and said that central Government through LG has already cleared the way for giving permanent proprietary rights to the Displaced Persons of residing in JK UT. He added that it would save lot of revenue as administration is bearing with lot of expenditure on their maintenance. Sharma hoped that the present Govt will waste no time in implementing this scheme as it will generate lot of good will throughout the UT.

**JKACS organizes Community-Based Screening Camp at Dhok Wazarian, Jammu**

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

JKSPYM, under its Targeted Intervention project for Injecting Drug Users (PWIDs), supported by the Jammu and Kashmir AIDS Control Society, JKACS, organized a Community-Based Screening (CBS) Camp today at Dhok Wazarian, Jammu. The focus was to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Hepatitis, and opioid substitution therapy (OST). Tuberculosis (TB) screening was also a key part of the camp to identify and address health issues early. The camp aimed to reach people in underserved areas and connect with high-risk groups (HRGs) and their spouses who are often left out of regular health programs.

## Yudhvir kick-starts devp work at Khatika Talab

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Reiterating the BJP's commitment to holistic and inclusive development, senior BJP leader and MLA Jammu East, Yudhvir Sethi today stated that under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, every section of society is witnessing equal and unprecedented growth. He asserted that the Modi government has ensured that no region or community is left behind in the developmental journey of New India. Sethi was speaking while initiating developmental work worth Rs 16 lakh for land leveling and drain construction adjoining Khatika Talab, Jammu. This much-needed project will improve drainage infrastructure, enhance hygiene, and provide relief to local residents who had been facing difficulties due to poor civic conditions. Addressing the gathering, Sethi said, "The Modi government believes in 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas.' Unlike previous regimes that focused on selective development, the BJP has ensured equal benefits for every section—whether it be urban



or rural areas, underprivileged communities, or neglected localities." He highlighted how infrastructure projects, welfare schemes, and civic improvements are being implemented across Jammu & Kashmir without any bias. Later, Yudhvir Sethi interacted with the residents of Khatika Talab, listened to their concerns, and assured them of immediate action on various civic issues. The locals expressed their

gratitude to the BJP leadership for bringing tangible changes to their area and addressing long-pending demands. The BJP leader also spoke about flagship schemes of the Modi government, including Ayushman Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, and Jal Jeevan Mission, which have transformed the lives of millions in Jammu and across India. "We are committed to making Jammu a model city with world-class infra-

structure and facilities," Sethi asserted. Sethi urged the people to continue backing the visionary policies of PM Modi, assuring them that Jammu's transformation is unstoppable under BJP's leadership. The event witnessed the participation of BJP leaders, local representatives, and enthusiastic residents, all echoing their support for the party's development-driven governance.

## DADAA deputation calls on Sat Sharma

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

A deputation of Doordarshan Approved Drama Artists Association (DADAA), Jammu, called on Sat Sharma CA, President, Jammu and Kashmir BJP and submitted a memorandum containing their demands related to setting up of Satellite "Duggar Channel" in Jammu, in presence of former Deputy Chief Minister Kavinder Gupta, Nanaji Deshmukh Library Incharge Prof. Kulbhushan Mohtra, Parduman Singh, Vinay Gupta, and Narinder Gupta. They were led by J.S. Babli, President DADAA. Through memorandum, they submitted that Dogri language has been included in 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India and Jammu being Dogra land needs projection and propagation of this language. While Kashmiri is spoken in Kashmir, Dogri is spoken in Jammu region. For the



viewers of Kashmiri language, a Kashmiri Channel has been set up but unfortunately, the repeated requests by DADAA for a "DUGGAR CHANNEL" has not been acceded. This Dogra Channel will cover the area of Jammu province of 32,200 sq. Kilometers and can counter the false propaganda of Pakistan against the state of Jammu & Kashmir, as the language is well understood and spoken in maximum areas. By providing "DUGGAR CHANNEL" at Jammu the culture heritage of people

speaking this language will be promoted as it is also spoken in Himachal, some part of Punjab and Pakistan adjoining to Jammu and Punjab border. The present DDK Jammu is only just a Kendra but the budget is not provided at par with other Kendra of the country. Moreover, the PGF Rajouri is also dependant on the DDK Jammu as no separate budget in grant is provided for that. The Kashmiri Migrant artists are also fed by DDK Jammu's grant. They requested that budget in grant for DDK Jammu should

be allotted at par with Srinagar Kendra. They further pointed out that their association had raised the demand in 1999 for a channel with 24 hours services and now reiterate that the present DDK Jammu be included on DTH so that it can reach the whole of India and beyond its boundaries. For "DUGGAR CHANNEL" the Parsar Bharti has to only issue the orders as the infrastructure available at DDK Jammu can be used for better propagation of our cultural values, linguistic plurality and overall development aspect of adequately represent this state of J&K at International level, so that Pakistani propaganda against the state is counter with facts and figures. Association vice president Madan Rangila, Spokesperson Janak Khajuria, and Executive Member Arun Bakshi, accompanied their President when he called on Sat Sharma.

**Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir**  
**Jal Shakti (Irrigation & Flood Control) Department**  
**Mechanical Irrigation Division, Jammu**  
Email/Fax : ifcj.xenmidjmu@gmail.com

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**ABSTRACT OF NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS**  
e-NIT No. MID/J/e-NIT/2024-25/132 Dated: 25/01/2025

Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division, Canal Road, Jammu, on behalf of Lt. Governor of J&K UT, invites tenders by e-tendering mode from registered and reputed Firms **Repair/periodic maintenance of foot valves along with allied works of various LIS's on Main Ranbir Canal falling under the jurisdiction of MISD-1 Jammu.** The bidding process shall be completed online in two covers viz. Cover 'I' - Tender fee and Earnest Money Deposit, fulfillment of prequalification criteria, technical specifications and acceptance of terms and conditions of the tender and Cover 'II' - Financial Bid in the prescribed BOQ.

S. No.	Name of Work	Qty.	Earnest Money	Cost of tender document	Period of completion	Validity of Rates	Name of Division
1.	Repair/periodic maintenance of foot valves along with allied works of various LIS's on Main Ranbir Canal falling under the jurisdiction of MISD-1 Jammu	Complete job as per Scope of Work	2% of the quoted value	Rs200.00	10 Days	180 Days from date of Submission of bid.	Mechanical Irrigation Division, Jammu.

- The tender documents can be viewed and downloaded from the website <http://www.jktenders.gov.in> from: **25/01/2025 (06:00PM)**
- Submission of online bids: **25/01/2025(06:00 PM) to 03/02/2025 (02:00 P.M).**
- Opening of Cover I online bids: **04/02/2025 (2:00 PM)**

-sd-  
Executive Engineer  
Mechanical Irrigation Division  
Jammu

**DIP/J-9601/24**  
**Date: 27-1-25**

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR (UT)**  
**DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ**  
E-mail: d.xenrewreasi@gmail.com  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RURAL DIVISION REASI**

**Sh. ZABIAR AHMED KHATANA S/o Sh. Sulaman**  
**R/o Village Kunderdhan Tehsil Chassana Distt. Reasi.**  
**Card Reg. No.:- PWD-U/R&B/DEE/1922/2021-22-zone-v.**

**No.:-XEW/REW/T/2024-25/3671-78** **Dated:- 23-01-2025**

**Subject: - First and Final Notice through press.**

You have surfaced as the lowest bidder for the below mentioned works with details given, after opening Financial Bids on 10-01-2025. You have not been able to produce the required CDR. The funds being lapsable under this scheme, you are informed through the medium of this notice to come immediately in the office of the undersigned with requisite CDR so that the allotment of contract is issued in your favour and work is completed in time without whiling away any more time. You will avail 03 days time from the date of the publication of this notice, failing which your registration card will be recommended for black listing for 03 year after forfeiting the CDR.

S. No	Name of work	E.NIT No. & Date	Estimate s Cost (lacs)	Quoted Cost	%age Rate quote d
1.	Const. of Bathroom NHO Mohd Shabir S o Mohd Bashir Hajam W. no 7 Morha Sathar Block Chassana Pyt. Majrakund Block Chassana	77 REW REASI DT. 14-11-2024	1.06	104952.96	-1.00%

**s/d**  
**Executive Engineer**  
**Rural Engineering Wing**  
**Reasi**

**DIP/J-9554/24**  
**Date: 27-1-25**

## EDITORIAL

## A Spectacle of Snow and Spirit - Khelo India Winter Games 2025

As the famed ski resort of Gulmarg in North Kashmir prepares to host the fifth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) from February 22 to 25, 2025, excitement is palpable among athletes, organizers, and the local community. This three-day extravaganza promises to not only celebrate the spirit of sportsmanship but also reaffirm Jammu and Kashmir's growing prominence as a global hub for winter sports and tourism.

Renowned for its pristine snow-capped peaks and world-class skiing facilities, Gulmarg is the perfect setting for an event of this magnitude. The venue has become synonymous with winter sports, hosting successive editions of the KIWG that attract athletes and tourists alike. This year, the resort is gearing up to welcome approximately 1,000 athletes from across the country, showcasing an array of sports that range from skiing and snowboarding to ice hockey and snowshoeing.

The Commissioner Secretary of the Youth Services and Sports (YSS) Department, Sarmad Hafeez, highlighted the meticulous efforts underway to ensure the success of the games. "Gulmarg will present a festive look," he stated, noting that cultural programs and a grand opening ceremony at the iconic Club will set the tone for what promises to be a memorable event. Such initiatives not only amplify the vibrancy of the games but also underscore the cultural richness of the region.

Jammu and Kashmir's role as the National Games capital is no small feat. The region has steadily built its reputation by hosting high-profile events like the KIWG, which serve a dual purpose: promoting sports and enhancing the area's global tourism appeal. As Sarmad Hafeez pointed out, last year's edition significantly boosted Gulmarg's standing as a premier winter destination. This year's games, split into two phases—with the first phase recently concluded in Ladakh—aim to build on that success.

The involvement of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who chaired a high-level meeting to review preparations, reflects the government's commitment to leveraging the games as a platform for development. The event's infrastructure, logistical arrangements, and hospitality standards are being fine-tuned to deliver a seamless experience for athletes, officials, and visitors.

The Khelo India Winter Games are more than just a sporting spectacle; they are a catalyst for regional economic growth. The event is eagerly anticipated by local service providers, from hoteliers to transport operators, who stand to benefit from the influx of athletes, their entourages, and spectators. Moreover, the games help foster unity and national integration by bringing participants from diverse corners of India to the snow-laden slopes of Kashmir.

Beyond the competition, the KIWG serves as a celebration of the indomitable human spirit, the beauty of Kashmir, and the shared cultural heritage of India. The inclusion of cultural programs as part of the welcome ceremony exemplifies how sports can be a bridge between tradition and modernity, offering a unique platform to showcase local arts and crafts to a national audience.

As we look forward to the fifth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games, it is essential to recognize the role such events play in shaping India's sports narrative. By nurturing talent, promoting inclusivity, and putting lesser-known regions on the map, the KIWG aligns with the broader vision of transforming India into a global sports powerhouse. For Jammu and Kashmir, this is not just an opportunity to host a world-class event but a chance to spotlight its potential as a year-round tourism and adventure destination.

In conclusion, the 2025 Khelo India Winter Games promise to be a grand spectacle of snow and spirit. With Gulmarg at its heart, this event is poised to leave an indelible mark on India's sporting and cultural landscape, while offering an enduring message of resilience, unity, and celebration.

## Indian Railways: Connecting India and driving progress

GOURAV VALLABH

Every journey by train across India tells a story of the destinations reached and the people brought together to bridge gaps that geography and society once created. Indian Railways has a rich legacy that has been around for more than 170 years, with its recognition as the fourth-largest railway network in the world.

Of late, two large projects have captured the country's attention, reflecting the transformative vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. He inaugurated the Jammu Division, which addresses a long-standing demand and precedes the first direct train service to Kashmir in six decades. This will be the 70th railway division of the Indian Railways and the 6th under Northern Railways, all set to energise this region's economy and fulfil a cherished dream of seamless connectivity.

Equally important was the foundation stone he laid for the headquarters of the newly created South

Coast Railway Zone. This 18th zone would unleash a new trade, agriculture and tourism era, breathing fresh life into the local economy. Together, these achievements underscore Indian Railways' role as a mode of transportation and a driver of growth and national unity.

The recent decisions align with the 2015 Railway Reforms report by economist Bibek Debroy, which recommended empowering field officers, General Managers, and Divisional Railway Managers. The government has implemented most of these suggestions, including creating a new division and zone to enhance the railways' competitiveness. Additionally, initiatives like Vande Bharat trains and the KAVACH safety system focus on integrating technology. The establishment of Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya and the creation of the 'Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh' (RRSK) on April 1, 2017, address safety concerns, with a funding commitment of Rs 1 lakh crore for five years, recently extended with an addi-

tional Rs 45,000 crores for 2022-23. Indian Railways is progressing rapidly, but even powerful engines encounter challenges that require careful navigation.

While celebrating current achievements, it's essential to identify potential obstacles ahead to maintain and accelerate momentum. Potential obstacles to growing at a faster rate require working simultaneously on increasing Share, Speed and reducing Service charges. Primarily 3 S Strategy. The first and foremost thing that Indian Railways should do is to reduce Service charges (Logistics Costs). According to the Economic Survey 2022-23, the current logistics costs in India are in the range of 14-18 per cent of GDP against a global benchmark of 8 per cent. While India has jumped up the rankings on the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index from 54 in 2014 to 44 in 2018 and up to 38 in 2023, there remains a competitive gap of almost \$300 billion (Rs 26 lakh crore). This is a significant improvement, as India has moved up six

places from 44th in 2018 and 16 places from 54th in 2014. Indian Railways has taken commendable strides in this direction through track electrification, improvement in digital logistics systems, and enhancement of freight handling.

Building on these, there is a need for a time-bound plan to reduce logistics costs further. The key measures include increasing the share of rail in transporting bulk commodities, expanding terminal capacities, and ensuring last-mile connectivity efficiently. A policy to protect freight customers from cross-subsidisation and improve operational cost efficiency will also be pivotal in achieving global standards. The average speed of trains, both passenger and freight, is an area where Indian Railways has seen some success and has the potential for huge further improvement. The average speed of superfast trains in India is 55 km/hr, significantly lower than global benchmarks.

With a greater focus on terminal infrastruc-

ture and capacity, this speed could immediately increase by 7 to 10 km/hr. On the other hand, the average speed of goods trains is officially recorded at 25 km/hr; however, customers often experience a much lower speed of 13-15 km/hr due to delays and inefficiencies.

To improve the efficiency of operations, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness, efforts should be made to enhance asset reliability, reduce detentions at terminals by increasing their capacity, and invest strategically in specific sections to increase speed.

Finally, to increase the share of railways in the country's logistics, which currently stands at around 27 per cent, it is essential to pursue a strategic imperative relentlessly. While Indian Railways has done a commendable job modernising freight terminals and expanding its freight network, there is still room for improvement to make rail transport the preferred choice for logistics.

Pricing must be competitive; rail freight charg-

es should consistently remain cost-effective compared to road transport. Continuous investment in terminal improvements, enhancing customer experiences, and implementing customer-friendly policies will enable Indian Railways to further contribute to national logistics.

These initiatives position rail transport as the cornerstone of India's logistics ecosystem, fostering sustainable economic growth. Modernising infrastructure and safety systems and introducing advanced trains have transformed the railways into a key driver of connectivity and logistics in India. As it embraces change, Indian Railways must focus on increasing its Share in the country's logistics movement, that too with higher Speed and lower Service cost (3 S Strategy). Doing so can continue connecting dreams and people like never before.

**(The writer professor of finance -XLRJ Xavier School of Management and BJP leader; views are personal)**

## Quick commerce and the promise of India's evolving e-commerce

SUBHASH CHANDRA

In this new-age era, India is transitioning rapidly to a faster delivery model known as Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce).

Given India's massive population, it is unsurprising to witness an annual growth rate of up to 300 per cent in Q-Commerce, a subset of the burgeoning e-commerce sector. Unlike traditional e-commerce, Q-Commerce focuses on meeting daily consumer needs, making its astronomical growth remarkable as it started from scratch.

**The seamless experience enjoyed by younger consumers has been a key growth driver**

for this industry. Even speciality retailers like Sangeetha have innovatively combined physical stores with quick commerce to deliver electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, laptops, and other devices in record time. This model, however, requires further development to include non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), enabling easier purchasing options for high-value

items like electronics. Integrating NBFCs into this ecosystem would provide value-added services that could drive growth across the retail sector as a whole.

India has been deliberating on an e-commerce policy since 2018. However, progress has been slow, with several delays. In 2019, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry released a draft national e-commerce policy after extensive discussions with industry stakeholders. Yet, with the industry undergoing a paradigm shift, the wait for this policy has become too long.

In August 2024, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal assured that the policy would be announced soon, highlighting critical issues it aims to address. The minister stressed the importance of transparency in algorithms used on online platforms, emphasising that they should neither manipulate nor unduly influence consumer choices. Additionally, he underlined the need for authenticity in online



ratings and reviews, ensuring they reflect genuine customer experiences. Misleading advertisements on e-commerce platforms were also identified as a pressing concern, with calls for their elimination to maintain trust and integrity in the digital marketplace.

With the budget session approaching, there is an opportunity to address these long-pending policy issues. While discussions on the draft e-commerce policy have almost concluded, the final proposal awaits approval. Reports suggest that the government is finalising the

draft e-commerce policy, and the industry hopes it will be introduced during the budget session. Parliamentary discussions could make the policy more robust, fostering a win-win situation for all stakeholders. The new policy is expected to strike a balance between protecting small businesses and supporting large e-commerce platforms. Creating a regulatory environment conducive to growth would not only safeguard domestic entrepreneurs but also promote "Make in India" initiatives. A well-structured policy would encourage innovation

and competition while ensuring consumer interests remain a priority.

Both e-commerce and Q-Commerce are redefining the way consumers shop, albeit with distinct approaches. E-commerce prioritises variety and cost-effectiveness, while Q-Commerce emphasises speed and convenience. The evolution of these models highlights the need for businesses to balance customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and sustainability. The retail sector's adoption of cutting-edge has played a pivotal role in optimising business operations. New technologies enable accurate predictions of order patterns, improve delivery timelines, and streamline inventory management, thereby enhancing overall business efficiency.

This tech-driven optimisation is expected to dominate commerce in the years to come. As e-commerce and Q-Commerce continue to evolve, the focus will be on delivering a seamless and quick experience to consumers.

Companies that excel in providing instant gratification through efficient delivery systems, innovative business models, and advanced technologies will gain a competitive edge in this fast-paced industry. The government has a pivotal role to play in fostering an environment where businesses can thrive. A robust e-commerce policy, introduced during the budget session, would address longstanding industry challenges and set the stage for sustainable growth.

By ensuring transparency, authenticity, and fair practices, the policy can instil confidence among consumers and businesses alike. The industry's expectations from the upcoming budget are high. Stakeholders hope for a policy framework that nurtures innovation, encourages investment, and supports small and medium enterprises while holding larger players accountable for ethical practices.

**(The writer Chairman and Managing Director of Sangeetha Specialty Retail Chain. Views expressed are personal)**

## Pakistan's shift from Taliban to regional realignment

NISHAKANT OJHA

Since the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan in 2021, South Asia has experienced profound shifts in its regional dynamics. What initially appeared to be a strategic victory for Pakistan has instead revealed deep fractures within the Taliban, the emergence of internal resistance movements, and a growing threat from extremist factions. These developments have forced Pakistan's intelligence services, particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to recalibrate their strategy.

Historically, the ISI concentrated its support on the Southern Wing of the Taliban (SWIN), a Pashtun-led faction. However, recent changes indicate a pivot toward engaging the Afghan-Wing Intelligence Network

(AWIN), which collaborates with non-Pashtun factions, most notably the National Resistance Front (NRF). This faction, led by Ahmad Massoud, has gained significant traction in northern Afghanistan, challenging the Taliban's hold. This strategic shift by the ISI has implications far beyond Afghanistan's borders, influencing neighbouring countries such as India, Tajikistan, and Bangladesh. Pakistan's growing support for the NRF, coupled with the recent visit of the ISI chief to Bangladesh, highlights a broader regional strategy aimed at reshaping South Asia's security dynamics and diplomatic alignments.

**ISI's Strategic Shift: From SWIN to AWIN**

For decades, Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan has revolved around support-

ing the Southern Wing of the Taliban (SWIN), a predominantly Pashtun-centric faction. This alignment was rooted in Pakistan's desire to maintain influence in Afghanistan while countering India's regional presence. Leaders like Mullah Omar and Hibatullah Akhundzada embodied the Taliban's Pashtun-dominated leadership, aligning closely with Pakistan's ideological and strategic objectives. However, the Taliban's return to power in 2021 has not unfolded as Pakistan had hoped.

Instead of consolidating power and stabilising Afghanistan, the Taliban has struggled to govern effectively. Its failure to establish an inclusive government and address the growing threat posed by ISIS-K (Islamic State Khorasan), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and other

extremist groups has led to widespread instability. Furthermore, resistance movements like the NRF, composed of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, have challenged Taliban rule in northern Afghanistan, particularly in the provinces of Panjshir, Badakhshan, and Takhar.

In response to these developments, Pakistan has shifted its focus from SWIN to AWIN, which prioritises engagement with non-Pashtun factions such as the NRF. By supporting AWIN, Pakistan is acknowledging that a fragmented Afghanistan, divided along ethnic lines, could better serve its strategic interests than a centralised Taliban-led government. This approach also enables Pakistan to counter India's influence in Afghanistan, as India has historically allied with non-Pashtun factions, pro-

viding them with military, economic, and diplomatic support. The NRF and Non-Pashtun Resistance: Pakistan's New Allies The National Resistance Front (NRF), led by Ahmad Massoud, has emerged as the primary opposition to the Taliban. Ahmad Massoud, the son of the legendary Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, has rallied Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras under the NRF banner. These ethnic groups have long been marginalised under the Taliban's Pashtun-dominated rule. The NRF's guerrilla warfare tactics have posed a significant challenge to the Taliban, particularly in northern Afghanistan.

Pakistan's engagement with the NRF through AWIN presents several advantages. First, it weakens the Taliban's hold on power, which serves Paki-

stan's goal of maintaining leverage in Afghanistan. Second, it ensures that Afghanistan remains politically fragmented, preventing any single faction from dominating the region. This fragmentation allows Pakistan to exert influence over multiple stakeholders, including the NRF, which could align with Pakistan's interests more closely than the Taliban has. However, this strategy is fraught with risks. The NRF has historically been aligned with India, which has supported non-Pashtun groups in Afghanistan as a counterbalance to Pakistan's influence. If India perceives Pakistan's engagement with the NRF as a threat to its interests, it could escalate tensions in the region.

Bangladesh: The ISI Chief's Visit and Its Implications: Another significant development in this

evolving regional strategy is the recent visit of the ISI chief to Bangladesh. This visit underscores Pakistan's intent to strengthen ties with Bangladesh at a time when South Asia's geopolitical landscape is in flux. While Bangladesh has traditionally maintained a policy of non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, the growing instability in the region has implications for its own security. Pakistan's outreach to Bangladesh serves multiple purposes.

First, it seeks to counterbalance India's influence in the region. Bangladesh, with its strategic location in South Asia and its growing economic importance, is a key player in regional geopolitics. Strengthening ties with Dhaka could provide Pakistan with a valuable ally in its broader regional strategy.

Second, Pakistan is

likely seeking cooperation with Bangladesh on counterterrorism efforts. The rise of extremist groups like ISIS-K and the TTP in Afghanistan poses a threat not only to Pakistan but also to neighboring countries, including Bangladesh. The ISI's interest in intelligence-sharing and counterterrorism collaboration reflects a recognition of these shared security concerns.

Finally, the visit signals Pakistan's broader strategic aims in South Asia. By engaging with Bangladesh, Pakistan may be seeking to secure a favorable diplomatic position in anticipation of further instability in Afghanistan. Bangladesh's strategic location near the Bay of Bengal and its potential role in regional security frameworks make it an important partner for Pakistan's evolving strategy.

# New voice-based approach to enable early detection of Alzheimer's

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

In a bid to overcome language limitations posed by Alzheimer's disease, a team of Chinese researchers developed a new voice-based approach to enable early detection of the neurodegenerative disease.

The team led by Prof. Li Hai and his team at the Hefei Institutes of Physical Science of the Chinese Academy of Sciences noted that with ageing global population, Alzheimer's is becoming increasingly prevalent. This makes early detection critical for improving patient outcomes.

"Language decline is often one of the earliest indicators of cogni-



tive decline," the experts noted in the paper published in the IEEE Journal of Biomedical and Health Informatics.

Currently, available automated speech analysis offers a non-invasive and

hinder accuracy and clinical applicability.

To overcome these limitations, Hai's team developed the DEMENTIA framework.

"This innovative approach integrates speech, text, and expert knowledge using a hybrid attention mechanism, significantly enhancing both the accuracy and clinical interpretability of Alzheimer's disease detection," the researchers said.

The framework leverages advanced large language model technologies. It also captures intricate intra- and inter-modal interactions, improving detection accuracy and enabling the prediction of cognitive function scores.

Further, the model also

scores in comprehensive interpretability analyses, demonstrating its robust clinical decision-support capabilities and adaptability across diverse datasets.

"The findings underscore the potential of speech-based tools for early Alzheimer's disease screening and monitoring cognitive decline," the team said.

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease that destroys memory and other important mental functions. It is the most common form of dementia and constitutes around 75 per cent of all dementia cases.

Of the about 55 million people worldwide with dementia, 60 to 70 per cent are estimated to have Alzheimer's.

# Rise of Ayush increasingly making India a health tourism hub

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

With the rise of the AYUSH system (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) India has emerged as a premier destination for medical tourism over the years.

The Ministry of Ayush has been instrumental in promoting traditional medicines. As a result in 2024, Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy were integrated into mainstream health systems worldwide.

In 2023, the government implemented medical visa provisions to facilitate the entry of international tourists seeking health and wellness treatments in the country.

It has led to significant growth in medical tourism

resulting in about 123 regular Ayush visas and 221 e-Ayush visas issued to foreigners seeking treatment in India, between July 2023 and December 2024, according to the Ministry.

During the same period, 17 e-Ayush attendant visas have also been issued.

Ayush Visa is available under four sub-categories namely: Ayush visa; Ayush attendant visa; e-Ayush visa and e-Ayush attendant visa. An Ayush Visa is granted to a foreigner whose sole purpose is to seek treatment through Ayush systems.

India currently has more than 755,780 registered Ayush practitioners, 886 undergraduate and 251 postgraduate colleges with an annual intake of 59,643 UG students and 7,450 PG students.

About 3,844 Ayush

hospitals and 36,848 dispensaries have also been set up, while over 43,000 studies are hosted on the Ayush Research Portal, emphasising evidence-based healthcare.

Ayush has also seen digital transformation through initiatives like Ayush Grid, e-Sanjeevani telemedicine, and AI integration. Further, Ayush Telemedicine has brought quality healthcare to remote regions.

Outside India, Ayush Information Cells are currently operational in 39 locations across 35 countries.

These serve as vital hubs for disseminating knowledge and building global awareness.

The Ministry has also collaborated with over 103 countries to promote Ayush systems.

# Punjab Health Minister Orders Power, Fire Safety Audits at State Healthcare Facilities

AGENCIES  
CHANDIGARH, JAN 28

Punjab Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Balbir Singh on Monday ordered an immediate power and fire safety audit at all government healthcare facilities, including Medical Colleges, Civil Hospitals, Sub-Divisional Hospitals, and Block-level Hospitals across the State.

The decision came after a power supply failure during a surgical procedure at Patiala's Rajindra Hospital, a critical incident that raised concerns about the infrastructure at Punjab's healthcare facilities. Addressing a high-level meeting with senior officials from the Health and Medical Education Depart-

ments, Dr Balbir Singh laid out stringent measures to prevent such lapses in the future.

Dr Balbir directed that all critical care units – including operation theatres, labour rooms, emergency wards, Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs), and Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) – must have Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) systems capable of providing at least 30 minutes of backup during outages. Additionally, all facilities are required to maintain fully functional generator sets with adequate diesel reserves to ensure uninterrupted power supply during extended outages.

The Health Minister also announced the formation of

committees at the district, sub-divisional, and block levels to oversee power and safety systems. These committees, comprising representatives from the Health Department, Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL), and the Public Works Department (PWD-Electrical), will conduct regular inspections and report on the functionality of UPS systems and generators.

To ensure real-time communication, Dr Balbir directed the creation of WhatsApp groups for these committees to expedite responses during emergencies. "These groups will facilitate immediate coordination, ensuring that power backup systems are activated without delay," he stated.

# Young working adults sleep less, do not workout: Study

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

When young adults begin their professional life, their amount of daily physical activity as well as sleep -- essential for healthy well-being -- falls steeply, according to a study on Tuesday.

The study led by scientists at the University of Cambridge found that physical activity increases initially and later drops down significantly.

Young adults who increased their physical activity were those doing semi-routine occupations such as bus driving or hairdressing, and routine occupations such as cleaning or waiting, or technical jobs.

Conversely, people



entering managerial or professional occupations did not engage in physical activity.

The largest drop in levels of physical activity was seen among people who work from home -- though their sleep levels did not change when they

started work.

"If we want to stay healthy throughout our lives, we need to remember that keeping active is an important way of helping us achieve this goal," said Alena Oxenham, from the Medical Research Council (MRC) Epidemiol-

ogy Unit at the varsity.

Oxenham advised people working from home "to consider incorporating physical activity into their day". She suggested "going for a walk before or after work, or during a lunch break".

For the study, the team examined repeated data taken over time from more than 3,000 participants in the UK. All the participants were aged 16-30 years and started work for the first time between 2015 and 2023.

The results, published in the International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, showed that when people started work, their physical activity increased by an amount equivalent to around 28 minutes of

moderate activity (such as cycling) per day on average.

However, this each year after starting work by around seven minutes per day.

The biggest increase was seen among males -- up by an equivalent of around 45 minutes of moderate activity per day compared to an increase of around 16 minutes for females.

The young adults' sleep per night also dropped immediately by almost 10 minutes, the researchers said. The researchers urged workplaces to promote healthy interventions like healthier diets, physical activity, and sleep in young adults to boost "healthier employees and fewer sick days".

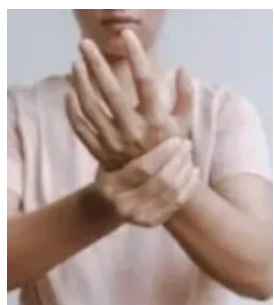
# No threat of Guillain Barre Syndrome in Bengal: State Health Department

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, JAN 28

After Maharashtra recorded one death and 110 suspected cases of Guillain Barre Syndrome, the West Bengal Health Department on Tuesday said that there is nothing to panic about the neurological disorder in the state.

A statement by state Health Secretary Narayan Swarup Nigam claimed that Guillain Barre Syndrome is nothing new.

According to him, there had been sporadic reports of people getting affected by Guillain Barre Syndrome.



However, he added, that in West Bengal, there is nothing to panic about since neither this is a new disease nor there had been fresh reports of new individuals getting affected by it in the state since December 2024.

He also said that his

claims have also been confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO).

According to Nigam, generally, kids below 15 years of age are being affected by this disease.

However, Nigam added the state Health Department's medical teams are keeping a tab on the situation.

Guillain-Barre Syndrome is a rapid-onset muscle weakness caused by the immune system damaging the peripheral nervous system.

Earlier this week, Maharashtra reported the first death of Guillain Barre

Syndrome. On Monday night, the Maharashtra government urged the people not to panic over the situation and to visit any government hospital in case any symptoms on this count surface.

As per the figures available, of the 110 reported cases of Guillain Barre Syndrome in Maharashtra, 88 are from Pune, 15 from Pimpri and the remaining seven are from other districts. Out of the 110 reported cases of Guillain Barre Syndrome in Maharashtra, 73 are men and 37 are women. A total of 13 of them are currently on ventilators.

# US aid suspension poses challenge to Mozambique's health sector: PM Levy

AGENCIES  
MAPUTO, JAN 28

The potential suspension of financial aid from the US to Mozambique has raised concerns about its impact on critical sectors, particularly health, according to Mozambican Prime Minister Maria Beninda Levy.

Speaking on Monday in Maputo, the country's capital, Levy emphasised the importance of the aid while expressing optimism about the government's ability to manage internally.

"If the suspension of external aid from the US



is confirmed, the health sector will be one of the most affected," Levy told the press during an event in Maputo ahead of the official ceremony to appoint and swear in the new police chief, Joaquim Sive.

She noted that the government is prepared to tackle the challenge

despite the significance of the support previously provided. "We have faced other worrying situations before and managed them successfully. I believe this time will be no different, as we will use our internal resources to navigate through."

Acknowledging that the US support has been crucial, particularly in the health sector, Levy said other areas, with less significant dependence on external aid, might also be impacted.

"We will have to redirect some of our resources to ensure these critical areas can continue their activi-

ties without disruption," she added.

The US Department of State has frozen nearly all foreign assistance worldwide effective immediately days after President Donald Trump issued a sweeping executive order on January 20 to put a hold on such assistance for 90 days.

In Mozambique, more than \$400 million could be affected, which are earmarked annually for the health sector, including \$250 million for the HIV program, according to a Sunday report by the local newspaper O Pais.

# Punjab Ranks Lowest among States in NITI Aayog's Fiscal Health Index-2025

AGENCIES  
CHANDIGARH, JAN 28

The NITI Aayog's Fiscal Health Index (FHI) for the financial year 2022-23 has delivered a stark revelation -- Punjab has ranked the lowest among 18 major Indian states. With an FHI score of just 10.7, far behind Odisha's leading score of 67.8, Punjab's fiscal health is in critical condition. The state's position reflected systemic weaknesses across multiple fiscal parameters, including debt management, expenditure quality, and revenue mobilization.

The FHI evaluated states on five broad indicators -- quality of expenditure, revenue mobilization, fiscal prudence, debt index, and debt sustainability. Punjab's failure is rooted

in its dismal performance in quality of expenditure, fiscal prudence, and debt index; while it showed marginal improvement in revenue mobilization and debt sustainability.

Reasons As per the report, Punjab's expenditure priorities have been skewed, with significant implications for public services and long-term growth. The report noted decline in social sector spending, suboptimal capital expenditure, and low returns on investments as the reasons affecting its quality of expenditure. The proportion of spending on education fell from 12.9 per cent of total expenditure in 2018-19 to 12 per cent in 2022-23. Similarly, health expenditure declined from 4.1 to 3.9 per cent during

the same period, falling below national averages.

The report observed that while the capital expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure increased from three per cent in 2018-19 to 5.5 per cent in 2022-23, it remains significantly below the average of other major states. Moreover, seven percent of the state's borrowings went into capital projects, yet many remain incomplete, exacerbating inefficiencies. It was also noted that Punjab's investments in public sector undertakings (PSUs) yielded a meager return of 0.02 per cent, far below the interest costs of state borrowings -- a mismatch that added strain to the state's already fragile fiscal framework.

The report further

pointed out that despite some progress, Punjab's revenue mobilization efforts have been insufficient to counterbalance its growing fiscal burden. In terms of growth in tax revenues, it added that the own tax revenues grew by 13.1 per cent in 2022-23, primarily driven by robust sales tax and VAT collections, and the excise duties also witnessed notable growth. It also noted a surge in the non-tax revenue by 30.2 per cent, with significant contributions from sectors like miscellaneous general services and education. However, road transport receipts declined due to an aging vehicle fleet and free travel policies, signaling inefficiencies.

Punjab's fiscal management has been plagued

by persistent deficits -- in terms of rising revenue deficit and escalating fiscal deficit. As per the report, the revenue deficit-to-GSDP ratio grew from 2.5 per cent in 2018-19 to 3.8 per cent in 2022-23. The state failed to meet revenue deficit targets consistently over the past five years. Besides, the fiscal deficit-to-GSDP ratio surged from 3.1 per cent in 2018-19 to five per cent in 2022-23 -- primarily financed through market borrowings, underscoring an unsustainable reliance on debt.

Debt Index Punjab's debt levels have reached alarming proportions, raising serious concerns about its fiscal future -- calculated on the basis of increasing debt-to-GSDP ratio, and

negative debt sustainability. The report pointed out that the debt-to-GSDP ratio climbed from -41 per cent in 2018-19 to -46 per cent in 2022-23. The growth rate of outstanding public debt rose sharply from 4.5 per cent in 2021-22 to 13.8 per cent in 2022-23. Also, Punjab's debt sustainability remained negative, suggesting an inability to stabilize or reduce debt without significant policy intervention. A Debt Management Unit has been established, aiming to reduce the debt-to-GSDP ratio by three percentage points by 2025-26.

Committed Expenditure A significant portion of Punjab's revenue expenditure is locked into committed expenditures, leaving little room for developmental initiatives.

Approximately 60-65 per cent of the state's total revenue expenditure has been dedicated to salaries, pensions, and interest payments since 2018-19 -- leaving limited resources for development-oriented spending.

Structural Issues Punjab's financial crisis is rooted in structural inefficiencies and poor fiscal discipline. The backlog of incomplete projects reflected inefficiencies in capital project execution, while high borrowing costs further strained the fiscal system without yielding commensurate returns. At the same time, the state's reliance on market borrowings to finance deficits highlighted a lack of sustainable revenue generation mechanisms.

Recommendations

To address these challenges, the report recommended enhancing revenue mobilization, improving capital utilization, managing debt, and rebalancing expenditure. The report stated that Punjab must "explore untapped revenue streams" and "optimize existing tax collection mechanisms". It also suggested ensuring "timely completion of capital projects" which will improve returns on investments and reduce wastage. Efforts to diversify debt issuance and reduce reliance on high-cost borrowings are also suggested. Besides, the report also stressed on allocating more resources to education, health, and infrastructure that will boost social and economic development.

## High Level Committee holds 4th Consultation Meet with Stakeholders

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KATRA, JAN 28

The High Level Committee (HLC) framed by the Lt. Governor, JK-UT also Chairman of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) held its fourth crucial meeting with the representatives from various associations and groups including the Rural Development Forum, Senior Citizens Welfare Forum and Prominent members of Panchayats surrounding Katra. The meeting was convened swiftly in response to requests from various associations and groups demonstrating the committee's commitment to engaging with the local community before proceeding ahead with the project.

The committee headed by Dr. Ashok Bhan and also comprising of Suresh Sharma, Members of the SMVDSB, Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner of Jammu and Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB held the discussions with associations and groups focused on addressing concerns and gathering feedback from stakeholders ensuring that their voices are



also heard in the decision-making process for as per directions of Hon'ble Chairman, SMVDSB (Lt. Governor, JK-UT).

The groups also extended their wholehearted support to the various development projects initiated by the Shrine Board including the Passenger Ropeway while emphasizing the need for continuous and sustainable development. They encouraged the Shrine Board to carry on such projects that enhance infrastructure, amenities and overall experience for pilgrims and locals. However, they also underscored the importance of considering the concerns, needs and aspirations of the local population during the planning and execution of these projects for maintaining a delicate balance between fostering development and

preserving the region's unique religious, social and cultural heritage.

Representatives from key panchayats surrounding Katra including Garni, Aghar Jitto, Kanjli, Akhali Button, Hutt and Bhaga expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the priority darshan provision at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji announced by the Chief Executive Officer of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board on Republic Day- 2025 which extends to residents of Katra Town and all 41 villages in Sub-Division, Katra. Additionally, the representatives applauded the construction of four temples along the Trikuta Hills Parikrama Marg stating the initiative as a visionary move by the Shrine Board aimed at enriching the spiritual experience of devotees and showcasing the region's rich cultural heritage.

## Kavinder slams Sajjad Lone, claims India governed by constitution, not religion

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Senior BJP leader and former deputy chief minister Kavinder Gupta condemned the statement made by JKPC President and Legislator Handwara Sajad Gani Lone that religion should be placed above Parliament, emphasizing that the government should not take steps that force people to go against their religious beliefs.

In a statement issued to media persons, the BJP stalwart leader asserted that the law of the land in India is governed by the Constitution and not by any religious dictates. "In our democracy, the Constitution is the highest authority, and it provides the framework within which all citizens, irrespective of their faith, must function. India is a pluralistic society with diverse religious beliefs, and it is crucial that the laws of the country reflect this diversity without being subject to any individual's personal religious preferences," the senior BJP leader said.

"The Constitution and the rule of law must remain supreme. Sajad Gani Lone's remarks suggest an erosion of this principle by attempting to elevate religion over parliamentary authority. We cannot allow convenience or select interpretations of faith to influence governance," the leader added. Addressing the concerns regarding the Waqf amendment, the BJP



leader reiterated that the matter is being examined by the Joint Parliamentary Committee, which is likely to review the relevant legal and constitutional aspects before making any recommendations. He assured the public that they must place their trust in the legal process and the decisions that will be made with due diligence.

Kavinder Gupta also pointed out that even within Islamic law (Shariat) there are numerous practices that many Muslims do not adhere to in contemporary times highlighting that religious laws cannot and should not dictate the legal structure of a country. "Our society and legal system evolve over time to meet the changing needs of all citizens, and we must respect and support that evolution. It is essential that we strike a balance between religious customs and the broader interests of justice and equality," he said while urging people to have faith in the Constitution and the legal framework of the country. He stressed that matters of public governance must not be held hostage by convenience or misinterpretations of religious beliefs.

## Govt's priority is to upgrade existing resources, facilities; transform JK's healthcare: Sakeena Itoo

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 28

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today remarked that government's priority is to upgrade existing resources and facilities in the health sector in order to transform the healthcare landscape of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister made these remarks while speaking at the 'Badalta Jammu and Kashmir Conclave' organised by Gulistan News Network here.

Speaking during the Conclave, Sakeena Itoo said that Jammu & Kashmir is making significant strides under the leadership of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah. She added that the present government has appointed around 300 new doctors and posted them in remote areas to



take care of healthcare needs of people living in far off areas.

The Minister acknowledged the shortage of doctors and paramedical staff in the health department but assured the people that the government is committed to address all these issues promptly. She added that government has already started the process of having dialysis facilities in all sub-district hospitals for the facilitation of general public. She further said that Cath Labs have

been made functional in Jammu as well as Kashmir besides Linac facilities will be shortly available here.

Highlighting different interventions being made by the present government for public welfare, Sakeena Itoo said that the Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, is personally monitoring the progress in each department and taking regular reviews regarding implementation of various interventions being made for public good.

## SMVDU-TBIC participates in Konnect Interactive Session organized by JKEDI, Jammu



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Technology Business Incubation Center (SMVDU-TBIC) participated in the prestigious Jammu Kashmir Konnect interactive session, organized by the Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) held at the JKEDI campus in Bari Brahmna. The event aimed to promote collaboration and innovation within Jammu & Kashmir's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The session, hosted by Shri Rajinder Sharma, Director of JKEDI, featured Shri Sumeet Kumar Jarangal, Director of DPIIT, Government of India, as the keynote speaker. The event brought together key stakeholders, including heads of incubation centers, their teams, and prominent startups affiliated with incubators across Jammu & Kashmir. Representing SMVDU-TBIC, CEO

Dr. Sanjay Mohan, along with Business Manager, Ms. Divye Duheta Mahajan and Committee Member Dr. Ankush Raina, actively contributed to the discussions, offering valuable insights. During the session, SMVDU-TBIC emphasized several critical aspects vital for the growth and success of the startup ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir. The team called for greater collaboration among stakeholders from different incubators to create a unified community plan aimed at supporting and uplifting startups. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of establishing a robust mentorship network that would guide startups through every stage of their development.

SMVDU-TBIC also expressed a strong interest in exploring DPIIT's schemes that could further enhance the capabilities of both incubators and startups. The interac-

tive session provided an invaluable platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas, discuss ongoing developments, and strategize ways to nurture entrepreneurship in Jammu & Kashmir. The dialogue underscored the need for a cohesive, inclusive, and resource-rich ecosystem that supports startups at all stages of their journey. SMVDU-TBIC expresses its gratitude to Shri Rajinder Sharma, Director of JKEDI, for providing the team with the opportunity to interact with Shri Sumeet Kumar Jarangal, Director of DPIIT, Government of India along with other stakeholders. The discussions were invaluable in contributing to the growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir. Further gratitude is extended to Prof. Pragati Kumar, Vice-Chancellor of SMVDU, for his unwavering support, which continues to inspire and guide the efforts at SMVDU-TBIC.

## Keshav Chopra meets LG JKUT

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 28

Chairman Samvedna Society and Prominent Social Activist Keshav Chopra today met with Lt Governor JKUT Manoj Sinha and apprised the Lt Governor about various issues of public importance, Keshav briefed him about the

activities and work done by Samvedna for different Sections of the Society, Keshav chopra while highlighting said that his society is committed to promote the Culture and Local Artists of Jammu & Kashmir, He also apprised Lt Governor about the future endeavours of the Society.

## Javed Rana calls on Union Tribal Affairs Minister Pushes for holistic development of tribal population in JK

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

Minister for Tribal Affairs, J&K, Javed Rana, today called on Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Jugal Oram, in New Delhi and discussed the roadmap for holistic development of tribal communities in Jammu & Kashmir.

He sought Centre's assistance for transforming lives of tribal communities by fostering sustainable, inclusive growth.

The discussions revolved around a range of proposals aimed at addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by tribal populations in the Union Territory.

Accompanying the Minister were Secretary, Tribal Affairs J&K, Prasanna Ramaswamy G and Deputy Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department.

The meeting witnessed presentation of a detailed proposal outlining transformative initiatives for welfare of tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir. The focus was on improving access to



education, healthcare, sustainable infrastructure, women empowerment and economic opportunities.

The Union Minister commended the efforts of J&K government and assured robust support from the Centre.

One of the key highlights of the discussion was establishment of 15 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in tribal-dominated districts. The initiative is set to provide quality education and skill development opportunities to tribal children,

addressing long-standing educational disparities in the region.

Rana emphasised the transformative potential of these schools in empowering tribal youth. He sought support of the Centre to develop a Tribal Smart Village with modern infrastructure, renewable energy solutions and digital connectivity. This project is envisioned as a model for sustainable and inclusive development, catering to the unique needs of tribal communities, he added. He underscored the importance of

ing basic medical facilities. The Indian Army's initiative aimed to bridge this gap and provide essential medical care to these communities. The medical patrol was well-received by the local population, who expressed their gratitude for the Indian Army's efforts in providing medical aid and support. The event rein-

forced the Indian Army's commitment to serving the nation and supporting the local population, particularly in remote and inaccessible areas. The success of the medical patrol demonstrates the Indian Army's dedication to providing humanitarian assistance and promoting the well-being of local communities.



## NIA searches underway in case related to killing of 2 non locals last year

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted raids at several locations in Kashmir on Tuesday morning as part of an ongoing investigation into a terror conspiracy case, officials said.

They said the raids are

underway in Srinagar, Sopore and Budgam districts of Kashmir in the case related to the killing of two non-local workers from Punjab who were shot dead in Srinagar's Shalla Kadal, Habba Kadal on February 7, 2024.

A case was initially registered in Police Station Shaheed Gunj, Srinagar

and investigation was later taken over by the NIA.

"The searches are underway," officials said.

In November last year, NIA had attached the property of key accused Adil Manzoor Langoo of Zaldagar Srinagar- alleged involved in the killing of the two non local workers.

## India honours Trinidad and Tobago President with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award

AGENCIES  
PORT OF SPAIN, JAN 28

India has conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award on Christine Carla Kangaloo, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, recognising her outstanding achievements in public affairs and her contributions to enhancing India's global prestige, the High Commission of India in Trinidad and Tobago announced on Tuesday.

In a post on X, the High Commission stated, "At the Republic Day reception hosted by the High Commission last evening, Christine Carla Kangaloo, ORTT, President of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago, was honoured with the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award on behalf of the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, by the High Commissioner of India Dr. Pradeep Rajpurohit, for her outstanding achievements in Public Affairs and for fostering the name and prestige of India."



Kangaloo, an Indo-Trinidadian President, served as the chief guest for the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, from January 8-10, 2025. She delivered a virtual address that received widespread applause across India and beyond.

The High Commission extended its congratulations to the President and the First Gentleman for this distinguished honour, thanking them for gracing the Republic Day reception.

During her address at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Kangaloo empha-

sised the deep-rooted ties between India and Trinidad and Tobago, dating back to 1845 when Indian indentured workers first arrived on the Trinidadian shores.

She highlighted that India was among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Trinidad and Tobago after its independence in 1962.

The President praised India for its contributions to the global community, citing achievements in education, medicine, mathematics, and navigation.

She noted India's his-

torical accomplishments, including the establishment of the world's first university in Takshashila, the development of Ayurveda as an early medical system, and the invention of algebra, trigonometry, calculus, and the concept of zero.

Kangaloo also highlighted cultural contributions such as chess and the decimal system and acknowledged Sushruta as the father of surgery.

Speaking about the Indian diaspora's impact, Kangaloo noted their significant contributions to cultural, social, and economic progress worldwide.

She described the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas conventions as platforms for collaboration between India and its diaspora and as a tribute to the resilience and determination of people of Indian origin.

Kangaloo reflected on the arrival of more than 143,000 Indian indentured workers to Trinidad over 72 years, which profound-

ly reshaped the country's demographic, cultural, and economic landscape.

Today, descendants of these workers constitute around 42 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's population, bringing immense value to the nation through their traditions and heritage.

Expressing her gratitude for being chosen as the chief guest and for receiving the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, Kangaloo said, "I feel deeply humbled and honoured by this recognition."

The President also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for India's assistance during the Covid pandemic, including the provision of vaccines upon the request of Trinidad and Tobago's leadership.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award is the highest honour conferred upon overseas Indians for their exceptional contributions in various fields, strengthening ties between India and the global diaspora.

## M23 reportedly takes over national television station in DR Congo's Goma

AGENCIES  
GOMA, JAN 28

Rebels of the March 23 Movement (M23) took control of the facilities of the Congolese National Radio and Television (RTNC) in Goma, a city under onslaught by the rebel group in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), sources of RTNC confirmed.

Radio Okapi, a media outlet supported by the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the DRC, cited multiple sources and described the siege of the national television station as a strategic advance for the rebels, who are seeking to establish their domination over the city, Xinhua news agency reported.

Since Sunday evening, gunfire has been heard across Goma. On Monday morning, fighting intensified in various parts of the city, including areas near the border with Rwanda, local sources told Xinhua.

Other local sources said that the rebels gained the



upper hand after capturing Mount Goma, a strategic hill 1,500 metres above sea level in the city's center. Several M23 columns entered neighbourhoods in the city, with their movement along both major and minor roads observed by residents.

According to UN sources, the border between Rwanda and the DRC near Goma was closed Monday morning. For several days, a significant number of Goma residents have crossed the border to seek refuge in Gisenyi, a Rwandan town bordering the DRC, where panic has been mounting amid reports of gunfire.

In its latest statement

released early Monday, the M23 announced that the "liberation of the city has been completed" and that "the situation is under control" following a 48-hour ultimatum given to Congolese soldiers.

On Saturday, the M23 issued a 48-hour deadline for the DRC armed forces and their allies to surrender.

The DRC government said Monday that it "continues to work to avoid carnage and the loss of human life" in Goma. Meanwhile, DRC President Felix Tshisekedi called an inter-institutional meeting in Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC, but his spokesperson Tina Salama did not give further details.

## UN officials express alarm over escalating violence, humanitarian crisis in DRC

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 28

Senior UN officials expressed alarm over the escalation of violence and the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), amid intensified hostilities in Goma, the eastern regional capital city.

Bruno Lemarquis, deputy special representative of the secretary-general and the resident and humanitarian coordinator for the DRC, said heavy artillery fire hit the city centre, striking hospitals and a UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) site, Xinhua news agency reported.

"For example, several shells struck the charity maternity hospital in central Goma, killing and injuring civilians, including newborn and pregnant women," he said. A Save the Children facility and

the UNHCR site also were struck.

The coordinator was unable to describe the number and extent of casualties at the maternity hospital, but said there were no casualties at the other two sites, adding that hospitals in Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, are overwhelmed.

Speaking to reporters at UN headquarters on a video link from Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC, Lemarquis said the humanitarian crisis in and around Goma is extremely worrying with "a new threshold of violence and suffering" reached as active combat threatens all quarters of the city.

"Civilians are taking the brunt of the escalating hostilities," he said.

Lemarquis said the few colleagues of his remaining in the city of 1 million -- only critical UN humani-

tarian personnel remain -- reported hundreds of thousands of people attempting to flee the violence. Non-essential UN national and international personnel and their dependents were taken to Kinshasa or the regional UN hub in Entebbe, Uganda. The coordinator said 700,000 internally displaced people in and surrounding Goma living in dire conditions over the weekend are again on the move. "They have no choices they have to flee the violence," he said.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the under-secretary-general for peace operations, speaking from Damascus where he was visiting, said the ability of his peacekeeping colleagues who had to seek shelter was limited, but he said, "The situation on the ground obviously remains volatile and dangerous.

## UN peacekeeping head thanks India, other troop contributors to deadly Congo operation

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 28

Peacekeeping head Jean-Pierre Lacroix has thanked India and other countries contributing troops to the UN operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where three peacekeepers were killed last week.

The 1,114 Indian troops and 160 police personnel were reported safe after two South African and one Uruguayan peacekeepers were killed by the M23 rebel group, which has overrun eastern areas of the mineral-rich country.

Lacroix said on Monday, "We really admire the resilience, the fortitude, the determination and commitment of our peacekeepers, the men and women for serving the political, and I want to extend this expression of gratitude



to the troop-contributing countries."

"It's very challenging for our peacekeepers, and of course, it is very challenging for our true contributing countries, and I really thank them for the support," he added.

La Croix, who is the under-secretary-general for peace operations, spoke through a video link

from Damascus, where he was on another UN mission. He said that he has been in touch with several ambassadors from troop-contributing countries.

Previously, 21 Indian peacekeepers have been killed while serving with MONUSCO, one of the deadliest UN operations, which has claimed the lives of about 290 peace-

keepers. On Friday, the two South Africans and on Saturday, the Uruguayan peacekeepers were killed in eastern DRC.

In addition, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which has a separate peacekeeping mission in the DRC, reported that three Malawi and nine South African soldiers in its operation were killed, according to Face of Malawi.

The current upsurge in violence is blamed on neighbouring Rwanda, whose troops were accused of aiding the M23 rebel group.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on the Rwandan military to stop supporting M23 and withdraw from DRC.

The Security Council held an emergency meeting on Sunday on the situ-

ation in the DRC and, in a rare show of unanimity, issued a statement condemning the presence of "external forces" in eastern DRC, a diplomatic reference to Rwanda.

M23 is reported to have captured Goma, a principal city in eastern DRC, in a country rich in minerals sought by high-tech.

The group takes its name after a March 23, 2009, DRC peace deal to end the rebellions in the country that it says was violated.

The UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC, known as MONUSCO from its French initials, was created by the Security Council in 2010 to protect civilians and humanitarian personnel and support the DRC government's efforts to bring order to the country torn by rebel groups.

## US Prez Donald Trump signs orders focused on reshaping US military

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, JAN 28

US President Donald Trump has signed several executive orders focused on reshaping the US military, media reports said.

One order signed late on Monday bans diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the military. It will remove the use of race- or sex-based preferences in the armed forces, the Defence Department and the Homeland Security Department.

Another reinstates more than 8,000 service members who were discharged for refusing to get the Covid-19 vaccine, the BBC reported.

The White House added that a third executive order tasks officials with formulating a policy on transgender troops. The action does not immediately ban transgender service members.

According to reports, a fourth order mandates a process to develop an "American Iron Dome" - similar to the one used by Israel in the Middle East; while the White House says a proclamation has



been signed to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The executive orders were signed by Trump on board Air Force One. Removing DEI programmes from within the federal government was one of Trump's central campaign promises - and one he has moved swiftly to implement upon taking office last week.

DEI programmes aim to promote participation in workplaces by people from a range of backgrounds, the report said.

Their backers say they address historical underrepresentation and discrimination against certain groups, including racial minorities, but critics say such programmes can themselves be discriminatory.

The Trump administration claims that removing these initiatives from the

defence department, and males will be explicitly forbidden from using facilities designated for females, the report said.

In 2021, then-President Joe Biden signed an order allowing transgender people to serve in the military and preventing discharges based on gender.

During most of Trump's first term at the White House, transgender personnel were banned from joining or serving unless they received a waiver.

The Trump administration has claimed members who undergo transition surgery are often incapable of the physical demands of their jobs - potentially harming military readiness. The White House did not provide evidence of this claim and the BBC has reached out to the Pentagon for comment.

The third order reinstates US military personnel who were discharged for refusal to accept Covid-19 vaccinations during the pandemic.

Those service members will be reinstated with full back pay and benefits, and receive their former rank, the report said.

As part of the order, the use of pronouns will be forbidden across the

## UNSC condemns M23 advances in DRC, urges abide by ceasefire

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 28

The United Nations Security Council condemned strongly ongoing advances by the March 23 Movement (M23) rebels in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), demanding them withdraw immediately and urging all parties to abide by the ceasefire.

In a press statement issued after an emergency meeting on the DRC, the council members condemned ongoing advances by the M23 in North-Kivu province, and expressed serious concerns regarding imminent threats against Goma, the

capital of North Kivu and a major regional hub, Xinhua news agency reported.

These advances "represent a serious violation of the ceasefire, exacerbate the grave humanitarian and displacement crisis in the eastern DRC and undermine efforts to reach a lasting peaceful and political solution to the conflict through the Luanda process," the statement said.

The council members demanded that the ongoing offensive and advances towards Goma immediately stop, calling on the M23 to reverse its territorial expansion without delay. They reiterated their full support to the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which is acting within its mandate and doing essential work in the DRC, and expressed their strong commitment to the safety and security of its peacekeepers. They stressed that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes.

The council members condemned the ongoing flagrant disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC, and demanded the external forces in the eastern country withdraw immediately. They urged all

parties to scrupulously abide by the ceasefire.

They urged Rwanda and the DRC to return to diplomatic talks to achieve a lasting and peaceful resolution of the protracted conflict in the region, and reaffirmed their support for the ongoing mediation efforts between the two countries through the Luanda Process.

As the situation is deteriorating rapidly in the eastern DRC, several foreign embassies have issued advisories urging their citizens to leave North Kivu. The United Nations announced Saturday that it has temporarily relocated non-essential staff from Goma.

## Hamas top officials arrive in Cairo to discuss implementation of Gaza ceasefire deal

AGENCIES  
CAIRO, JAN 28

Members of the leadership of Palestinian movement Hamas arrived in the Egyptian capital of Cairo on an official visit ... to meet with the Egyptian leadership and discuss the progress of the ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement," the movement said in a statement on Monday.

The delegation included the head of the Hamas political office abroad, Khaled Meshaal, deputy head of the political office, Khalil al-Hayya, the head of Hamas in the West Bank,

Zaher Jabarin, and other members of the movement responsible for the negotiations.

The delegation will also meet with Palestinian prisoners whom the Israeli side released and deported to Egypt.

Israel and Hamas, with the mediation of Qatar, Egypt and the United States, agreed on January 15 to a 42-day ceasefire and declared their intention to finally end the hostilities

that have claimed the lives of over 47,000 Palestinians and about 1,500 Israelis over 15 months, spreading to Lebanon and Yemen and provoking an exchange of missile strikes between Israel and Iran.

The first stage provides for a partial exchange of prisoners, the withdrawal of Israeli troops to the Gaza borders and humanitarian aid. The second and third stages are yet to be agreed upon.

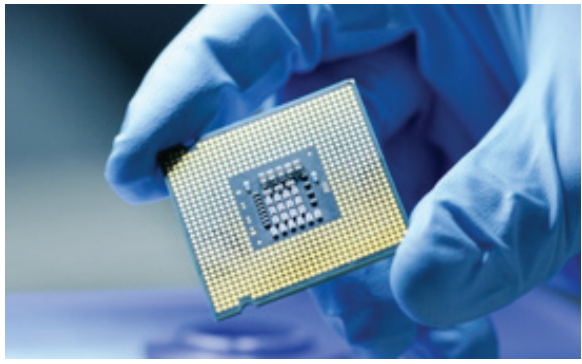
# Semiconductor demand in India to reach 28 pc by 2026 end in AI era

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

The demand for semiconductors in India in the artificial intelligence (AI) era is likely to increase to 28 per cent by the end of 2026, close to the global expected demand of 29 per cent, according to a report on Tuesday.

Majority of downstream organisations anticipate increased demand for AI chips, custom silicon chips, and memory-intensive chips over the next 12 months, said the report by the Capgemini Research Institute (CRI).

About 96 per cent of surveyed Indian downstream organisations are



expecting an increase in demand for AI chips/chips designed for AI acceleration, as compared to 88 per cent global organisations.

Nearly 96 per cent of Indian downstream organisations are expecting an increase in demand

for custom silicon chips (custom ASIC), as compared to 81 per cent global organisations, the report mentioned.

Similarly, 82 per cent of Indian firms are expecting an increase in demand for memory-intensive chips (HBM, GDDR6) as

compared to 79 per cent global organisations.

Meanwhile, 54 per cent of Indian downstream organisations are already using custom silicon chips in their products, nearly at par with 56 per cent global organisations.

Downstream industries are the final stages of production and sale of goods, where raw materials are refined into finished products.

According to the report, 50 per cent of the Indian downstream firms believe that advancements in AI/ML acceleration is the most relevant semiconductor advancement for downstream industries, while 45 per cent of them

say that it is advancements in GPU computing that can bring the most value.

'Enhanced security' is the top-ranked technology innovations desired by Indian downstream organisations, with 50 per cent respondents stating this, followed by 48 per cent of Indian firms selecting the 'availability of more comprehensive APIs, SDKs, kits, boards, etc.', and 46 per cent selecting 'enhanced customisation'.

Moreover, 52 per cent of them are confident that the semiconductor industry will continue to innovate at a pace that meets the future needs.

# SK hynix's surpasses Samsung for 1st time in quarterly profit

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 28

Chipmaking giant SK hynix has surpassed its biggest rival, Samsung Electronics, for the first time ever in terms of quarterly profit, data showed on Tuesday, as its robust sales of artificial intelligence (AI) memory chips pushed up its fourth-quarter figures to record highs.

According to its quarterly earnings report, SK hynix posted a record 8.08 trillion won (\$5.62 billion) in operating profit for the October-December period, up 15 per cent from a year earlier. In comparison, Samsung Electronics estimated its fourth-quarter operating profit at 6.5 trillion won, including some

3 trillion won from the semiconductor division. The tech giant has yet to disclose its final earnings results, reports Yonhap news agency.

It marks the first time SK hynix has outperformed Samsung Electronics, whose diverse business spans home appliances, mobile devices and semiconductors, in quarterly operating profit.

For the entire 2024, SK hynix's annual operating profit totalled a record 23.47 trillion won, while Samsung Electronics' chip division is forecast to earn around 15 trillion won.

SK hynix's stellar performance was fueled by strong demand for premium high bandwidth memory (HBM) chips amid

the generative AI boom, despite sluggish demand for conventional memory chips used in smartphones and personal computers.

SK hynix has dominated the HBM market since it began providing its HBM to Nvidia Corp., whose graphic processing units (GPUs) are critical for AI computing.

In the fourth quarter, HBM sales accounted for more than 40 per cent of the company's DRAM sales, up from 30 per cent in the previous quarter.

"SK hynix has a portfolio of higher value-added products than its competitors, making it less affected by market downturns," said Ryu Young-ho, an analyst from NH Investment & Securities Co.

# South Korean investors bet big on US stocks, 'Trumponomics 2.0'

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, JAN 28

Investors are pouring a large amount of money into funds that invest in U.S. stocks on hopes that President Donald Trump's "America First" policy would help further boost the U.S. stock market, data showed on Tuesday.

According to the data from market tracker FnGuide, 167 funds that invest in U.S. stocks had 23.34 trillion won (\$16.24 billion) under management as of January 21, up 1.29 trillion won from the end of last year.

Massive money inflows into such funds come as the U.S. economy is anticipated to continue its bullish run, with the Trump administration widely expected to implement policies aimed at making

the world's largest economy stronger.

Last year, local investors reaped decent gains from investments in U.S. stocks.

The U.S. stocks-focused funds delivered an average 34.1 per cent return last year.

In 2024, the Standard & Poor's 500 index soared 23.3 per cent, and the tech-savvy Nasdaq index jumped 28.6 per cent.

In contrast, domestic stock-focused investment funds saw some 100 billion won in outflow. The country's benchmark index, the Korea Composite Stock Price Index, fell 3.9 per cent on-year in 2024, and the funds that invest in local stocks suffered a 0.47 per cent dip.

Meanwhile, South Korea's three major department store chains said on Tuesday their luxury goods

sales continued to rise last year on steady demand for premium products despite an economic slowdown.

Luxury goods sales at Lotte, Shinsegae and Hyundai department stores sharply increased during the 2020-2022 period when people were engaged in "revenge spending," in which they made up for missed travel and shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pace of sales growth in luxury goods slowed in 2023 as consumers spent more on travel and other leisure experiences. But in the following year, the three companies came up with robust sales results.

Luxury sales at Lotte Department Store, the country's biggest department store by sales, rose 5 per cent in 2024 from a year earlier.

# 62 pc HNIs and UHNIs plan to buy luxury properties in India in next 12-24 months

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

Confidence in India's economic growth remains strong and 62 per cent of high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) and ultra high-net-worth individuals (UHNIs) have expressed desire to buy luxury properties in the country in the next 12-24 months, according to a report on Tuesday.

Affluent buyers believe that India will continue to be the fastest-growing major economy, with GDP growth projected to hover between 6 per cent and 6.5 per cent, said the annual 'Luxury Residential Outlook Survey 2025' conducted by India Sotheby's International Realty (ISIR). The steady confidence underscores real estate's enduring appeal



as a wealth-building asset. The number of ultra high-net-worth individuals in India has reached 13,600 in 2024, with projections of a 50 per cent increase by 2028.

HNIs and UHNIs remain primarily motivated by capital appreciation, with 55 per cent citing it as their main reason for investing in luxury residential real

estate in 2025, up from 44 per cent in 2024.

Nearly half of respondents expect real estate investments to deliver returns between 12 per cent and 18 per cent, while 38 per cent anticipate returns below 12 per cent.

Fewer than 15 per cent foresee returns exceeding 18 per cent, reflecting more realistic expecta-

tions after three years of strong gains, according to the report.

"As we look ahead to 2025, India's luxury real estate market is primed for continued growth, though with a more cautious optimism. We believe demand for trophy and bespoke luxury assets, especially spacious farmhouses and gated community villas in hill and beach destinations will be a significant trend in the coming year," said Amit Goyal, MD of India Sotheby's International Realty.

India stands out as a frontrunner, with billionaires here experiencing a staggering 42 per cent surge in collective wealth, now exceeding \$905 billion, according to the UBS "Billionaire Ambitions Report."

Over the past decade, India's billionaire count has more than doubled to 185, with their total wealth tripling. This solidifies India's position as the third-largest base for billionaires globally, just behind the US and China, Goyal noted.

The survey also highlighted a rising interest in second and holiday homes, with 54 per cent of respondents considering properties in hill or beach destinations.

Convenience is a key factor, as 55 per cent prefer homes within a four-hour drive, while only 20 per cent opt for international locations.

Among global markets, Dubai has overtaken London as the top choice, with US cities also gaining attention, said the report.

# Retail digital payments in India witness 100-fold jump in 12 years

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

Retail digital payments in India have grown from 162 crore transactions in the financial year 2012-13 to over 16,416 crore transactions in the financial year 2023-24 -- approximately 100-fold increase over 12 years, a new RBI report has revealed.

The remarkable growth in payment infrastructure and payment performance is also apparent in the Digital Payment Index published by RBI, which has witnessed more than four-fold rise in the last six years (445.50 for March 2018), according to the Central Bank's 'Payment Systems Report.'

Overall digital payments in India have grown exponentially in the last decade.

"While in CY-2013,



there were 222 crore digital transactions valued at Rs 772 lakh crore, it has increased 94 times in volume and more than 3.5 times in value to over 20,787 crore transactions valued at Rs 2,758 lakh crore in CY-2024," the report emphasised.

In the last five years alone, digital payments in India have increased 6.7 times in volume and 1.6 times in value. This

amounts to a five-year CAGR of 45.9 per cent in terms of digital payments volume and 10.2 per cent in terms of digital payments value.

From the nascent digital payment ecosystem, comprising mostly of traditional card based digital payments, it has transformed into an ecosystem offering a bouquet of digital payment options catering to every need of the Indian

consumer - instant payment systems (UPI, IMPS), small value payment systems (PPI, UPI Lite), large value payment (RTGS), bill payment (BBPS), bulk payment (NACH), offline payment (UPI Lite X), government payments (NACH, APBS), toll payments (NETC) and many more.

The Reserve Bank is also focusing on interlinking the fast payment systems (FPS) with that of other countries to offer a seamless and less-costly cross-border payment experience.

Last year, the Unified Payments Interface of India (UPI) and PayNow of Singapore were interlinked through extensive collaboration between RBI and Monetary Authority of Singapore. Recent data shows that the cost of sending a remittance has come down noticeably, said the report.

# India top priority, will boost investments in research and development centres: Samsung's TM Roh

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

Global electronics giant Samsung on Tuesday said it would further boost investment in the research and development efforts in India, as domestic consumers are keen to adopt latest technologies and innovations, making the country a top priority for the company.

TM Roh, President and Head of Mobile Experience division at Samsung, said that given the importance of the company's research centres in Noida and Bengaluru, their role is bound to grow and "we will continue to upgrade their contribution".

"India is a very important country for Samsung in both Galaxy AI development and sales, and will always remain our top priority," Roh said after the launch of Samsung's flagship Galaxy S25 series.



He further stated that young Indian consumers are mobile-savvy, and more open to new innovative technologies.

"We have the largest research presence in India in a single country. We have the largest human resources and other resources in Noida and Bengaluru, and so in these research centres, we are developing, upgrading and differentiating features for Galaxy AI and also for other Galaxy products," he added.

The research centres in India also work on the development of the features based on the local languages, including Hindi.

In Galaxy S25 this time, from the very beginning of the launch, the Google Gemini Live would be provided in Korean, English and Hindi. "So, we are starting with these three languages for Galaxy S25 Gemini Live, and then we'll expand to other languages as well. So once again, you can see the importance of the Indian market to us, as well as the contribution that is being made by the Indian resource centres," Roh noted.

On Samsung's flagship S25 series, Roh said, the phone marks the beginning of multiple AI agents who will understand the consumer needs and provide personalized services.

"Based on multi-modal-

ity, Samsung will present a new paradigm of interactions between users and devices, enabling the most natural mobile phone experience ever, as if you're talking to your friend. All of this has been made possible and optimised by Samsung's open collaboration philosophy, under which we have kept up long-standing partnerships with industry-leading innovative companies," Roh said.

He reiterated Samsung's commitment to privacy by underscoring the fact that AI-related data and information on the cloud will not be used for training and advertising purposes.

The company recently announced that consumers can pre-order Galaxy S25 Ultra, Galaxy S25+ and Galaxy S25 in India. Galaxy S25 series starts at Rs 80,999 and goes all the way to Rs. 1.65 lakh for the top Ultra model.

# Sharks Tank judges 'navigating choppy waters': Harsh Goenka on losses of investors

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

Sharks Tank India judges are "navigating choppy waters", said Harsh Goenka, the chairperson of RPG Group, citing their company's losses.

Lauding the show for promoting entrepreneurship, Goenka shared data on the financial losses incurred by some of the judges.

"I still love watching #SharkTankIndia. But it seems some of our sharks are still navigating choppy waters," the industrialist wrote on social media platform X. "There's more 'bleeding' in the tank than I thought," he added.

Sharing the list of FY24 profit after tax, Goenka noted that Varun Dua's Acko General Insurance suffered the most with a

loss of Rs 456 crore, followed by Azhar Iqbal's Inshorts (Rs 228 crore), Ritesh Agarwal's Oyo Rooms (Rs 184 crore PBT before exceptional items) and Kunal Bahl's Snapdeal (Rs 160 crore).

The list also included Vineeta Singh's Sugar Cosmetics incurring a loss of Rs 68 Crore and Aman Gupta's boAt suffering Rs 54 Crore in losses.

# NSE denies appointment of Siddharth Kotak as its AI Promotion Chairman

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 28

The National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE) on Tuesday refuted claims circulating in media reports, regarding the appointment of Siddharth Kotak as the exchange's AI Promotion Chairman.

The exchange clarified that the news is "entirely baseless and was published without any official authorisation".

"We want to make it

clear that no individual named Siddharth Kotak has been appointed as AI Promotion Chairman at NSE. The news being circulated is fake and misleading," NSE said in a statement.

The stock exchange also urged investors, stakeholders and the general public to avoid relying on this false information, advising everyone to remain cautious and verify such news from authentic sources.

NSE said it has been

actively working on an advanced AI trading system. This system aims to use cutting-edge algorithms and real-time data analytics to help investors make better decisions, reduce trading risks, and attract global investments to India's markets.

The new AI trading system is expected to be rolled out across key trading venues in India over the next two years. NSE is also planning educational programs to help retail investors understand the

benefits and workings of this technology.

India has been increasing its investment in financial technologies like AI and blockchain, as part of its efforts to digitise the economy.

Experts believe AI trading will play a crucial role in boosting the global competitiveness of India's capital markets and driving economic growth.

Meanwhile, total unique investors' base (unique PANs) on the NSE

crossed the 11-crore mark for the first time, and total client accounts registered with the exchange now stands more than 21 crore, it was announced last week.

Investor registrations at the NSE experienced acceleration in recent year due to surge in stock market participation, with 3.6 times jump in the last five years. It took 14 years from the NSE's commencement of operations in 1994 to reach 1 crore investors.

# Kohli joins Delhi Ranji team, trains at Arun Jaitley Stadium

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

Former India captain Virat Kohli, who has confirmed his availability for Delhi's next Ranji Trophy match has joined a practice session at the Arun Jaitley Stadium ahead of a match against Railways, starting from Thursday

Kohli last played Ranji Trophy game in 2012, against Uttar Pradesh in Ghaziabad. During the practice session on Tuesday, Kohli took part in several group running and fielding drills, and also engaged in brief football sessions with his Delhi teammates.

Earlier, IANS reported that Kohli has confirmed his availability for Delhi's



next Ranji Trophy match and will play against Railways in the clash that will be played from January 30 to February 2 at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

Kohli himself has been very keen to play this match, which he communicated to the DDCA on Monday evening, sources had told IANS.

There has been a lot

of pressure on the Indian red-ball team members to play domestic matches after the abject batting failure in Australia as the Indian team barely crossed 150 runs in its first innings in most of the Test matches.

In five Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Kohli scored just 190 runs and was dismissed eight

times chasing deliveries outside the off-stump.

Delhi are currently in fourth place in the Elite Group D table with 14 points from five games and need wins in their remaining two games to have a chance at qualifying for the knockout stages.

The final round of Ranji Trophy group games will end four days before India's first ODI against England in Nagpur on February 6.

Kohli is part of the ODI squad for the three-match bilateral series in the lead-up to the Champions Trophy from February 19. Besides Kohli, wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant is also playing for Delhi in the Ranji Trophy games.

# Australia, England stars rise in ICC Women's T20I rankings

AGENCIES  
DUBAI, JAN 28

Australia's unbeaten start to the ongoing Ashes series against England has seen a host of their best performers make good ground in the latest ICC Women's player rankings.

The Aussies have been in excellent form with six consecutive triumphs in white-ball fixtures against their arch-rival on home soil, and have already clinched the multi-format Ashes series ahead of the one-off Test that commences at the MCG on Thursday.

Experienced opener Beth Mooney has been one of the stars of the Australian team during the white-ball component of the series and the in-form left-hander scored a total of 213 runs from three innings across the three T20I contests that were recently completed.



It saw Mooney increase her lead at the top of the rankings for T20I batters, with teammate Tahlia McGrath now her closest rival after the stand-in Australia skipper jumped one place to second on the same list following her 75 runs across the three matches.

England captain Heather Knight finished the trio of T20I contests as her side's leading run-scorer with 101 runs and the veteran right-hander improved three spots to equal 22nd for the T20I batters, while Australia all-rounder Grace

Harris also caught the eye with a nine-rung jump to 28th overall.

It's no surprise that Australia's bowlers have dominated the series too, with spinner Georgia Wareham improving five places to equal eighth after she picked up a series-high six scalps with the ball across the three T20I matches.

England spinner Sophie Ecclestone remains in the No.1 spot on the latest T20I rankings for bowlers despite just four wickets across the T20I series, while West Indies star Hayley Matthews stays well

out in front on the list for T20I all-rounders.

There is also some movement on the latest ODI rankings following the completion of the ICC Women's Championship and the recent three-match series between the West Indies and Bangladesh in the Caribbean.

The West Indies clinched a narrow 2-1 series triumph over Bangladesh, with experienced trio Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher and Karishma Ramharack among the players to stand out.

Dottin made strong contributions with both bat and ball and rose three places to 35th for ODI batters and nine spots to 25th for ODI all-rounders as a result, while Fletcher (up five rungs to 23rd) and Ramharack (up 10 places to 35th) made gains up the list for ODI bowlers following the series.

# New Zealand's Amelia Kerr named ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year

AGENCIES  
DUBAI, JAN 28

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced New Zealand's Amelia Kerr as the winner of the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year.

Acknowledging the outstanding female cricketer across all formats of the game during the calendar year, Kerr becomes the first New Zealander to win the coveted trophy after a momentous 2024 in which she inspired the White Ferns to their first ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

In T20Is alone, Kerr amassed 387 runs and took 29 wickets at an average of 15.55, yet it was during the World Cup campaign that her brilliance was most apparent - setting a new record for the most wickets in a single edition (15) and culminating in an unforgettable individ-



ual display in the final to secure the silverware and the Player of the Tournament accolade.

On the biggest stage, up against an in-form South African outfit, Kerr overcame challenging conditions to score a crucial 43 from 38 balls before removing the dangerous Laura Wolvaardt and Anneke Bosch in figures of three for 24 with the ball to thwart the chase and set up a 32-win victory amid wild celebrations.

While her year will be best remembered for her historic feats in the shortest format, Kerr also impressed in ODIs, hitting 264 runs at an average of 33.00 and taking 14 wickets which included four-wicket hauls against India

and Australia.

The 24-year-old overcomes South African skipper Wolvaardt, Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu and Australia's Annabel Sutherland to win the award, backing up her Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year success on Saturday.

"It's a huge honour to win the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year. I guess for me individual awards aren't something you think about much, but this is an extremely special one," Amelia Kerr said.

"It's nice to be able to contribute for New Zealand, I guess that's all any cricketer wants is to work hard and put out performances for their teammates.

There are so many people that have helped me achieve what I have, and I'm very grateful for the support network I have around me."

# HIL: Soorma Hockey Club clinches crucial 5-3 victory over Vedanta Kalinga Lancers

AGENCIES  
ROURKELA, JAN 28

JSW Soorma Hockey Club secured a hard-fought 5-3 victory against the Vedanta Kalinga Lancers in the Men's Hero Hockey India League 2024-25 at the Birsamunda Hockey Stadium here.

Dilpreet Singh (5') gave the Lancers the lead in the game on Monday night, but Prabhjot Singh (26') restored parity for Soorma.

Harmanpreet Singh (32', 54') and Nicolas Keenan (33') extended Soorma's lead with quickfire goals in the third quarter; however, Thierry Brinkman (44') pulled a goal back towards the end of the quarter.

Maninder Singh (51') and Harmanpreet Singh found the back of the net to extend Soorma's lead further, and even though Gursahibjit Singh (56') pulled a goal back in the

dying minutes, Soorma walked away with three crucial points.

Soorma dictated the tempo as the game began, making headway into the opposition half, but the Lancers had the first shot of the game as Sanjay crossed the ball from the right wing, and Aran Zalewski's deflection forced Soorma goalkeeper Vincent Vanasch into action early.

Minutes later, Dilpreet Singh received the ball on top of the circle and swirled around to unleash a thunderous shot to grant the Lancers the lead. They went on to trade circle entries as the first quarter came to an end.

Lancers' Rabi deflected Thierry Brinkman's cross towards the goal in the last minute, but he was inches away, and the quarter ended 1-0 in their favour.

The Lancers pegged Soorma back into their

circle as the second quarter began, and soon after, Bobby Singh Dhami shot, but his attempt was wide. Soorma grew into the game as the quarter progressed, making frequent forays into the Lancers' circle with a slower tempo.

With four minutes left in the quarter, Harmanpreet hammered the ball straight down the middle to Prabhjot, who got behind his marker and deflected the ball past Lancers' goalkeeper Cotterill, Toby Reynolds, to equalise for Soorma.

The Lancers earned a penalty corner as the half came to an end, but Sanjay's low dragflick was swatted away easily.

The third quarter began with Soorma earning a penalty corner and Captain Harmanpreet Singh unleashing a powerful flick to the right top corner to give his team the lead.

In the very next play, Harmanpreet found Nicolas Keenan, who barged into the circle and found the back of the net with a reverse shot.

Soorma slowed down the tempo again, aiming to protect their lead but as the quarter came to a close, Thierry received the ball close to the goal and, from an acute angle, whizzed the ball into goal.

Thierry Brinkman earned a penalty corner for the Lancers within minutes of the last quarter, but they were not able to find the back of the net with a variation.

Soorma responded by earning a penalty corner of their own in the next minute, but Maninder Singh failed to keep his shot on target from the middle of the circle.

In the very next play, Soorma initiated a free-flowing counterattack, and Gurjant Singh from the

right wing found Maninder in a one-on-one with Krishan Pathak. This time Maninder picked out the roof of the net to extend Soorma's lead in the game again.

They went on to earn a penalty corner with six minutes left in the game, and Harmanpreet stepped up again to find the bottom right corner and make it 5-2.

The Lancers surged ahead with minutes left in the game, and Thierry danced past multiple defenders and pulled the ball back to Gursahibjit Singh, who tapped the ball in and pulled a goal back.

Lancers earned another penalty corner with a minute left in the game, but Hendrickx was unable to keep his flick on target.

Soorma defended well in the final seconds, sealing their victory in this high-scoring match.

# U19 WC: BANGLADESH END CAMPAIGN WITH DOMINATING 10-WICKET WIN OVER WINDIES

AGENCIES  
KUALA LUMPUR, JAN 28

Bangladesh have signed off from the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025 with a comfortable 10-wicket victory over West Indies at Bayuemas Oval on Tuesday.

Rain delayed the start of the match and reduced the contest to 13 overs each, and a strong bowling display left Bangladesh just 55 to win. Nishita Akter Nishi and Anisa Akter Soba both impressed with the ball, taking five wickets between them to consistently stymie any West Indies momentum.

And openers Fahomida Choya and Juairiya Ferdous made no mistake in their run chase, reaching the required total in just under nine overs to seal their side's third victory of the tournament.

It was not enough, however, to secure progression to the semifinals ahead of India and Australia from Super Six Group 1.

Some miserly Bangladesh bowling ensured the West Indies were limited to a slow start to their innings, with just 12 runs coming from their four-over powerplay.

Nishita Akter Nishi also made an early breakthrough, tempting captain Samara Ramnath into a shot that found the hands of Habiba Pinky

at long-on to dismiss the opener for zero.

Nishita struck again in her next over to take the wicket of Asabi Callendar, who also found a fielder in the deep to depart for 12. The spinner then found some turn to bowl Jahzara Claxton first ball to leave West Indies reeling at 16 for three.

Najjanni Cumberbatch and Brianna Harricharan looked to steady the ship but their fledgling partnership was prematurely ended by Anisa Akter Soba's first ball of the innings, with the wrist spinner bowling Harricharan for three.

Cumberbatch continued to anchor her side, making 13 until she found

the hands of Nishita in the deep for Jannatul Maoua's first wicket of the match.

Anisa then bowled Abigail Bryce out for two to earn her second wicket of the match and reduce West Indies to 42 for six. Amrita Ramtahal dug in to top score with 16 as the West Indies set Bangladesh a target of 55 to win.

Bangladesh started their chase brightly, capitalising on some loose fielding to take 11 from the opening over.

Openers Fahomida Choya and Juairiya Ferdous then both found the boundary in the next two overs, as Bangladesh quickly hunted down the required total.

Some disciplined line and length slowed the run rate, but the West Indies could not find a breakthrough.

The partnership reached 50 in the ninth over, and Juairiya sealed victory in style, finding the boundary once more as Bangladesh earned a comfortable victory.

Brief scores: West Indies 54 for six in 13 overs (Amrita Ramtahal 16, Najjanni Cumberbatch 13; Nishita Akter Nishi 3-11, Anisa Akter Soba 2-13) lost to Bangladesh 55/0 in 8.5 overs (Juairiya Ferdous 25, Fahomida Chpoya 14; Najjanni Cumberbatch 0-4, Aaliyah Weekes 0-7) by 10 wickets.

# U19 WC: Trisha's all-round show guides India to 150-run win over Scotland

AGENCIES  
KUALA LUMPUR, JAN 28

Trisha Gongadi scored a maiden ton as India thrashed Scotland by 150 runs in the Super Six match of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup here at the Bayuemas Oval on Tuesday.

Trisha played a blistering knock of unbeaten 110 off 59 balls and became the first player to smash a century in the U19 Women's T20 World Cup. With the history-making knock, the 19-year-old has also become the top scorer in the tournament - amassing 230 runs in five matches.

Trisha, along with Sanika Chalke, powered India to an impressive total of 207/1, which is not only the highest score in this edition

but also the second-highest across both editions of the tournament.

Besides her batting heroics, Trisha showed magic with the ball as she claimed three wickets and conceded just six runs in two overs. She was named the Player of the Match. Aayushi Shukla also wreaked havoc, claiming four wickets in her three overs as India bowled out Scotland for 58 in 14 overs to wrap up the victory by 150 runs.

Scotland won the toss and chose to field, but were quickly made to regret their decision by India. Openers Kamalini G and Trisha unleashed a barrage of boundaries, propelling India to 67/0 at the end of the powerplay.

Their attack didn't stop there; the pair continued to pepper the field with boundaries, taking India to 104/0 by the 10th over. Kamalini brought up her fifty in style with a boundary, before Scotland finally claimed their first breakthrough, courtesy of Macie Maceira.

The Indian opening pair set a new record for the highest partnership in this World Cup, accumulating 147 runs. Trisha then made history, scoring the first-ever century in the tournament to power India to a massive total of 207/1.

# Melbourne Renegades sign Jason Behrendorff via in the BBL's new player movement window

AGENCIES  
MELBOURNE, JAN 28

The Melbourne Renegades have signed paceman Jason Behrendorff for the next three Big Bash seasons, via inaugural BBL Player Movement Window, which opened on Tuesday and allows clubs to sign eligible free agents and trade uncontracted players or draft picks

Behrendorff, one of the competition's most prolific

bowlers, joins the Renegades after 10 seasons in Perth Scorchers and fresh off a dominant BBL 14 campaign where he topped the league for wickets with 17 scalps.

The left-arm quick played 105 games with the Perth Scorchers, amassing 137 wickets - the fifth most in the league's history - at an impressive 16.73 strike rate. He has won four BBL titles with Scorchers over a 13-year career. Known

for his raw pace and skill with the new ball, Behrendorff's signing adds further firepower and experience to the Renegades' bowling attack also featuring Golden Arm runner-up Tom Rogers.

"Moving to Melbourne has something my wife, Juvelle, and I have talked about as a goal whether the end of my career happened so to continue my career and play cricket in a city we both love is a blessing," Behrendorff said. "I am really excited for what the next chapter holds with the Melbourne Renegades but just as importantly for my family too."

Behrendorff's white ball reputation has been cemented with 29 appearances on the international stage for Australia - winning the T20 Player of the Year in the 2023/24 summer - and in T20 competitions worldwide including the Indian Premier League.

# Head to replace Konstas as opener in SL Tests, confirms Smith

AGENCIES  
GALLE, JAN 28

Travis Head will replace Sam Konstas to partner Usman Khawaja at the top of Australia's batting order for the first Sri Lanka Tests, starting from Wednesday, skipper Steve Smith confirmed.

Meanwhile, Australia have not confirmed their playing and Smith said finalisation of the line-up would be delayed because of the ever-changing nature of the Galle pitch. Konstas impressed in



his first two Tests to help Australia secure a first series win over India in a decade. But Head's efforts

while filling in for injured opener David Warner in the final two Tests of Australia's most recent sub-

continent tour to India in 2023 won him an opener's spot.

"Travis will go to the top, outside of that I think it will be pretty stable. I don't see it being a great deal of change from that. The selectors liked what they saw in India when he (Head) had that opportunity. He got after the new ball, scored quickly and put the pressure on them straight away so I guess similar thinking here," Smith told reporters prior to Australia's final pre-Test training session.

## Union Minister chairs review meeting on Aspirational District Programme in Baramulla

J NEWS SERVICE

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 28

Union Minister of State (MoS) for Union Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Labour and Employment, Shobha Karandlaje, today chaired a meeting at Baramulla to review progress on various indicators of NITI Aayog's Aspirational District Programme (ADP).

The meeting was attended by Member Legislative Assembly Baramulla, Javed Hassan Beig; Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa; officers from the Ministry of MSME, Labour and Employment and other officers from the concerned departments. She was apprised that the district has made remarkable progress in its Delta Ranking, issued by NITI Aayog, moving from the 108th position to 46th out of 112 districts, achieving a com-

posite score of 59.3 as on September 2024.

The Minister was further informed that the education sector in Baramulla has witnessed wholesome progress, with a substantial increase in student enrolment, especially among girls, a significant decrease in the dropout rate, with efforts to improve the quality of education through skill upgradation for teachers, upgrading school infrastructure, and promoting digital learning with the implementation of smart classrooms.

The Union Minister had a comprehensive review of district under Agriculture and Financial Inclusion besides Skill Development and Infrastructure. She expressed her appreciation over the progress achieved by Baramulla administration.

Speaking during the meeting, the Union MoS



directed the officers from the Health Department to conduct comprehensive research to identify the underlying causes of infant and maternal mortality in the district. She asked for implementing targeted interventions to ensure further reductions in mortality rates, thereby improving overall healthcare outcomes.

The Union Minister instructed the administration to plan for implementation of food processing units in the region through various govern-

ment schemes. This will ensure efficient utilisation of locally produced apples and prevent any wastage during transportation over long distances, thereby boosting the local economy and benefiting the farmers.

Shobha Karandlaje asked the officials to accelerate the execution of developmental projects, particularly those that support MSMEs, employment generation and livelihood enhancement. She reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment

to holistic development in Aspirational Districts through data-driven governance and targeted interventions.

During the meeting, Shobha Karandlaje distributed various essential resources including computers, smart boards and other amenities to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and schools, aimed at enhancing their overall functionality for betterment of the community.

During the visit to Baramulla, Shobha Karandlaje inaugurated

a hi-tech polygreenhouse with a total area spanning 500 square meters at Chakloo, which was sanctioned to the local farmer Dr. Mudasir Ali through HADP scheme at an estimated subsidy of 95%.

Later, the Union Minister visited Government Medical College Baramulla, where she inaugurated the Endo-Urological Equipment at the Associated Hospital as part of the Aspirational District Programme. The newly introduced equipment will support advanced urological

procedures, enhancing healthcare options for patients in the region.

The Union Minister also inaugurated the newly constructed Medical Registration Department's (MRD) Registration Centre at GMC Baramulla, aimed at streamlining the patient registration process.

During her visit, the Minister interacted with the attendants and sought feedback on the healthcare facilities being provided to the patients.

Meanwhile, Javed Beigh also raised several con-

cerns related to water scarcity and other developmental challenges in the region and sought the intervention of the Union MoS for their timely resolution. Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Minga Sherpa, presented a comprehensive overview of the district's performance under 5 key indicators of ADP including Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development besides Infrastructure.

DC Baramulla highlighted significant improvements in health and nutrition, including upgradation of existing facilities and establishment of new health centres, maternal and child healthcare, reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates, reduction in TB cases, and effective implementation of Poshan Abhiyan in combating malnutrition.

## Tony slams PHE Department over acute water scarcity in Jammu; seeks stern action

J NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, JANUARY 28

Senior Congress leader and DDC Suchetgarh, Taranjit Singh Tony has strongly criticized the Public Health Engineering (PHE) department for its failure to provide clean drinking water to several areas of Jammu, including Ratti Sarai, Sunjwan, Barmini, Chatha, Bathindi, Trikuta Nagar, Sainik Colony, Chowadi, Rajiv Nagar, Qasim Nagar, and Bahu Fort. As summer approaches, these areas are grappling with an acute shortage of potable water, causing severe hardships for the residents. In a press release issued here today, Tony lambasted the PHE authorities for their inefficiency, alleging that they are failing in their fundamental duty



to supply drinking water. He stated that despite repeated appeals from the residents, no concrete measures have been taken to resolve the crisis. "The non-functionality of the PHE department is not just negligence but amounts to a criminal offense, as depriving people of clean drinking water is a viola-

tion of their basic rights," he said.

Expressing his deep concern over the deteriorating water supply situation, Tony made a fervent appeal to PHE Minister Javed Rana to take immediate and stern action against the officials responsible for this gross mismanagement. He emphasized that those who are deliberately neglecting their duties must be held accountable.

The senior Congress leader also urged the minister to release funds for the installation of proposed tube wells and expedite the implementation of various water supply schemes under

the Jal Jeevan Mission in these affected areas.

"Despite the scorching summer looming ahead, there seems to be no seriousness among the PHE staff, from the department officials to the Chief Minister's office. This apathy must end immediately," he asserted. Tony called upon the government to prioritize this crisis and ensure uninterrupted water supply to the residents. He warned that if corrective measures are not taken at the earliest, massive protests will be launched to press for the people's fundamental rights. He also reaffirmed his commitment to standing with the people in their fight for basic amenities and urged the administration to act swiftly before the situation worsens further.

## Indian Army inaugurates Skill Development Course for Local Youth at Akhnoor

J NEWS SERVICE

AKHNOOR : 28 JAN 2025

Under Operation Sadbhavana, the Crossed Swords Division of the Indian Army has launched a comprehensive Skill Development Training program on LED Light Assembly and Repair, tailored specifically for the youth of the Akhnoor region. The training was inaugurated today at Akhnoor under the aegis of the Crossed Swords Division, in collaboration with Career Park Trust, an organization accredited as an Awarding Body by the National Council for Vocational Education & Training under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Government of India. The inauguration ceremony was graced by the Commander of the



Chenab Gunners, who officially launched this transformative project. The event was attended by Sh. Kuldeep Raj Sharma, Chairman of Shri Ram Dass Education Trust, Sh. Girish Parihar, Principal of Polyskill Pvt ITI, Gurha Brahmana, the Career Park Trust team, and other esteemed guests. The ceremony also witnessed enthusiastic participation from 60 trainees enrolled in the program, along with

local youth and members of the community. This 500-hour training initiative, sponsored by the Indian Army under Operation Sadbhavana, aims to equip 60 trainees with advanced skills in LED light assembly and repair. The curriculum focuses on setting up self-help groups (SHGs) and selling products online, enabling trainees to become entrepreneurs and contribute to the region's economic

growth. The training will be conducted with state-of-the-art facilities and expert faculty at Multi-Skill ITI Akhnoor, enhancing the employability and entrepreneurial potential of the local youth. This initiative is poised to create job opportunities and empower trainees to become entrepreneurs and job providers in the area. The local community expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Indian Army for its unwavering support and benevolent initiatives. They lauded the Indian Army for introducing such unique programs that are the "need of the hour" and pledged their support for future endeavours aimed at enhancing peace, progress, and prosperity in the region.

## Steps underway to transform Jammu and Kashmir: Dy CM

Attends Gulistan News Network's Conclave Badalta Jammu & Kashmir

J NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, JANUARY 28

Elaborating the people friendly measures initiated by the present government, Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today said that steps are underway to ensure transformation of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister was speaking at a conclave "Badalta Jammu and Kashmir" organised by Gulistan News Network here.

The conclave was attended by Minister for Health and Education, Sakeena Itoo, Minister for Agriculture and Horticulture, Javid Dar, Minister for FCS&CA, Satish Sharma, Legislators, DDC members, Intellectuals, Academicians, Media persons and people from different fields.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that ever since the present government has taken over several steps have been taken to ensure Jammu and Kashmir comes up as most developed part of India.



"These flagships programmes would ensure that the socio-economic and developmental initiatives get a fillip and people get benefitted", he maintained.

While responding to a query, the Deputy Chief Minister said that we are committed to restoration of special status to J&K. He said that both Prime Minister and Home Minister have already promised restoration of the statehood and we are looking forward for fulfilment of the promise.

While referring to the initiatives undertaken to streamline the

so that the economy of the region gets requisite boost. This would also go a long way in ensuring creation of jobs to our skilled and non skilled youth", he emphasized.

Referring to increasing the connectivity in rural and far flung areas, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government is actively perusing the provision of 4 lane roads to the Pir Panchal road network so that the travelling time gets reduced and people get benefitted. The government has already taken it up with the concerned Union Ministry, he said and added that we are also taking up the issue of rail connectivity to other parts of Jammu and Kashmir with the Centre so that an elaborate network of railways is established for the convenience of general masses.

The inaugural session of the conclave was attended by the Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani and other dignitaries.

## Gaurav honored with Maharaja Hari Singh Award, as Visionary leader of J&K UT

J NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, JAN 28

Gaurav Gupta, an eminent leader and the official Spokesperson of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu & Kashmir, has been conferred with the "Visionary Leader Award J&K UT" during the Conclave Maharaja Hari Singh Award 2024-25, organized by JK 24x7 News and Gulistan News.

On the occasion, Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Shri Manoj Sinha was the Chief Guest who presented the award to Gaurav Gupta in recognition of his exceptional contributions and vision-ary leadership. These accolades highlight his unwavering dedication to the socio-political and economic progress of the region.

A dynamic and articulate political figure, Gaurav Gupta has consistently demonstrated his commitment to public welfare and governance. His leadership extends beyond politics, as he currently serves as the Honorary Secretary of the



prestigious Jammu Club, contributing significantly to the social and cultural fabric of Jammu.

Gaurav Gupta's achievements include his tenure as the former Secretary General of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI, Jammu), where he played a pivotal role in advocating for business growth and economic reforms in the region. Recognized as one of the most influential voices in political debates, he continues to shape discussions on crucial geopolitical matters with his profound knowledge and strategic insights.

Adding another remarkable feather to his cap, Gaurav Gupta

is the first-ever barefoot marathoner from Jammu & Kashmir, symbolizing endurance, resilience, and an unyielding spirit. His extraordinary journey stands as an inspiration to the youth, emphasizing perseverance and dedication in the face of challenges.

Gaurav Gupta's consistent recognition with prestigious awards reaffirms his influential role in shaping Jammu & Kashmir's future. His contributions, vision, and leadership continue to set a benchmark for excellence, furthering the cause of development, empowerment, and progressive governance in the region.

## KPDCL Reviews Power Supply, RDSS Progress & PM Surya Ghar Yojna

J NEWS SERVICE

BUDGAM, JANUARY 28

In order to review power scenario and implementation of various Centrally Sponsored Schemes MD KPDCL Mehmood Ahmed Shah today visited district Budgam and chaired a meeting of Engineers of Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) here.

Besides Superintendent Engineer Shurjeel Ghani Lala the meeting was attended by Executive Engineer Ishtyaq Ahmed and other Engineers/Officers of KPDCL. At the outset, MD KPDCL took a firsthand appraisal of the power scenario and directed the officers to ensure smooth power supply to all the major towns and far flung areas.

The MD was appraised about the damages of the transformers and replacements made thereof. The officers were directed to ensure swift restoration of power in case of inclement weather and replacement of damaged transformers as per the set timelines.