

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Headache and continuous fever above 102°F
- Severe joint and muscle pain
- Diarrhea
- Present vomiting
- A skin rash
- Disorientation
- Stomach pain or loss of appetite
- Redness in eyes

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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Prayagraj Maha Kumbh stampede 30 dead, 60 injured

AGENCIES
PRAYAGRAJ, JAN 29

Tragedy struck the Maha Kumbh early on Wednesday, as 30 devotees died and 60 others were injured in a stampede after barricades collapsed on the Sangam bank in Prayagraj, a senior police officer said here.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Kumbh) Vaibhav Krishna said the incident took place between 1 am and 2 am when the barricades installed in

the Akhara area gave way, leading to chaos among the people waiting for the 'Brahma Muhurat' for taking the holy dip.

The DIG said the barricades broke due to extreme pressure from the crowd on the other side. "Devotees, who were sleeping or waiting for the Brahma Muhurat on the other side of the barricades, were crushed by the crowd coming from the other side due to chaos," he said.

Krishna said 90 injured people were rushed to the

hospital with the help of ambulances by creating a green corridor but 30 of them died.

"So far 25 of the deceased have been identified and efforts are on to identify others. 36 devotees are being treated at the local medical college. Some of the deceased were from other states like four from Karnataka and one each from Assam and Gujarat," he said.

The DIG also said that the list of the deceased will be shared later. "Some of the

deceased have been taken by their family members. The administration has issued a helpline number 1920 on which devotees, whose family members are missing, can contact. At present the situation is normal," he said.

Krishna said Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath talked to the saints and Mahamandaleshwars who agreed to delay their Amrit Snan which was held later "safe and sound".

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Govt orders transfer of 4 senior officers

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 29

The Jammu and Kashmir government has ordered the transfer and posting of four senior officers, including two IAS officers and one JKAS officer in the interest of administration.

According to an order, a copy of which lies with the news agency, Shantmanu, IAS (AGMUT:1991), currently serving as the Financial Commissioner (Additional Chief Secretary) of

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Central gov't plans ropeway to enhance accessibility for Amarnath pilgrims

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 29

The Central government has announced plans to establish ropeway connectivity at 18 major

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J&K finance dept approves additional fund releases for 2024-25

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 29

Jammu and Kashmir Finance department has authorized the further release of funds under the Revenue Budget for the Financial Year 2024-25. The authorization follows

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Work in tandem, neutralize terrorists: DGP Prabhat tells security forces

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 29

Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Wednesday asked the security forces to work in tandem. The DGP while interacting with top officers of Army, CRPF and J&K Police during his visit to Kathua, according to the news agency said, "The need of the hour is operational alertness, focused execution of tasks, and resolute will."

He directed all security forces to work in coordination and make all efforts to neutralise terrorists whose presence has been sighted in the area.

The DGP stressed the importance of intelligence generation and operations on the ground. He appreciated the special teams for their proactive approach and determination.

Meanwhile, a police spokesman in a statement said that the DGP visited various locations in



the Kathua district along with top police, Army, and CRPF officers. He visited Machedi, Badnota, Sadrota, and Dugaini Police Posts and interacted with jawans and officers of the Special Operations Group (SOG) Kathua and Billawar. ADGP (Jammu zone) Anand Jain, according to the statement, briefed the DGP on the ongoing anti-terrorist operations in these areas.

DIG (JKS Range) Shiv Kumar, DDIB (Jammu), Kathua SSP Shobit Saxena, SP (Operations) Amir, Dy SP (Operations) Malhar Sukhvir Singh, and the Billawar SHO accompanied the DGP, the statement added.

Brigadier TS Sekhon, CO Sikh Unit, and Commandant CRPF gave a detailed presentation about the operational preparedness in their respective areas, the statement said, adding that the DGP also interacted with Army and CRPF jawans and officers, it said.

CM holds strategic meetings with industry leaders at MICE event in Mumbai

JI NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 29

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah engaged in a series of high-profile one-on-one meetings on Wednesday evening during the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) event in Mumbai.

The discussions focused on fostering collaborations across diverse sectors, including sports, fashion, culinary arts, wellness, healthcare, and technology.

Among the key interactions, golf legend Vijay Amritraj and his team discussed promoting golf tourism and sports infrastructure development in Jammu and Kashmir. Ms. Anita Dongre and her team explored opportunities to revive Kashmir's traditional textiles and craftsmanship on global platforms through her label Kashmiri Fashion.



Meanwhile, Michelin-starred Chef Vikas Khanna and his team deliberated on leveraging Kashmir's unique cuisine to enhance culinary tourism and cultural exchange.

Additionally, wellness expert Mickey Mehra highlighted strategies to integrate wellness tourism with Kashmir's serene landscapes.

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J&K sees deficit rainfall of 87% from Jan 01 to 29

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAN 29

Amidst the forecast of wet spell for the next one week, Jammu and Kashmir continued to record the deficit rainfall in the month of January with details revealing that a deficiency of 87 per cent was recorded from January 01 to January 29.

As per the details available with the news agency, against

the normal rainfall of 88.2 mm, the Union Territory has recorded a precipitation of just 11.5 mm only.

The highest deficiency of 98 per cent was recorded in Kathua during the period followed by 96 per cent in Shopian district in south Kashmir and 95 per cent in Doda.

The data further reveals that Jammu, Kishtwar and Reasi districts in Jammu

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Republic Day celebrations culminate, LG Sinha attends 'Beating Retreat' ceremony

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 29

The customary 'Beating Retreat' ceremony marked the culmination of the four-day-long Republic Day celebrations, at the MA Stadium, here on Wednesday with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha being the Chief Guest on the occasion. Marching Bands of Armed Forces played the



enchanting patriotic tunes on the brass bands and pipe drum bands on the slow and quick strathspey.

The Lt Governor, according to the news agency, felicitated the contingents of J&K Police and security forces; parade commander, deputy parade commander, marching contingents of cadets from NCC (boys), contingents of

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JPC adopts Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024 report with majority vote

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

The Joint Parliamentary Committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024, on Wednesday adopted its report with a majority vote, JPC Chairman Jagdambika Pal said.

The amended version of the proposed law was passed by a majority vote of 15-11 despite opposition termed the amendments as "unconstitutional", alleging that the Bill is aimed at targeting minorities.

Talking to reporters, Jagdambika Pal said, "We had circulated the 656-page JPC report to all members. Based on all



deliberations of the JPC and the report prepared after that, the JPC committee will finally adopt the report."

"Today is an important day for JPC on Waqf for two

reasons- we will present our report to the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and get it adopted, and also get the amended revised bill adopted".

In August last year, the Waqf

(Amendment) bill was referred to the 21-member JPC.

The legislation seeks to bring changes to the powers of state waqf boards, survey of waqf properties and removal of encroachments by amending the Waqf Act, 1995.

On the meeting of JPC on Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024, AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi said, "We received the 656-page report last night. It is humanly impossible to read the report overnight. I have given a dissent report against the amendments which are not in favour of the Waqf Board. I will also oppose this

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J&K Police conduct searches at 25 locations in terror-related case across Rajouri district

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 29

Jammu and Kashmir Police on Wednesday conducted searches at 25 locations in terror related case across Rajouri district.

A police spokesman here said that on the strength of warrant received from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Court, Rajouri Police conducted extensive searches at 25 locations

across the district including Rajouri, Naushera, Thanamandi, Dharhal, Koteranka, Budhal, Manjakot and Chingus belts.

"These searches were conducted as a part of investigation linked to a terror-related case registered at Police Station Rajouri," said the spokesman.

He further stated that this case pertained to a terrorist network active in Rajouri which with the connivance of

proscribed terrorist organizations like Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), has been working to activate overground workers (OGWs) in Jammu and Kashmir to initiate, organize and execute terror-related activities.

"During the searches, incriminating material and important documents were recovered and seized while further investigation is underway," the spokesman added.

Agri Deptt. organises seminar cum training prog on bee keeping at Bandipora

JI NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, JANUARY 29

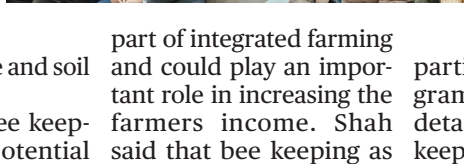
The Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Department Kashmir organised two days district level seminar cum training program on bee keeping, under National Bee Keeping and Honey Mission (NBHM) at NM auditorium Bandipora.

While addressing the session, Joint Director Agriculture (extension) Kashmir Sartaj Ahmad Shah highlighted the importance of small scale Agri-Cottage industries like bee keeping, Mushroom Cultivation and other allied activities in the overall development of agriculture sector. He said the main focus of organising such training programmes is to promote

small scale agri-cottage industries like bee-keeping among the farmers and educated youth of the region.

Shah said the agriculture diversification is the key to reduce risk in farming activities and hence bee keeping has emerged as one of the important tools which enhance agricultural income of the farming community as well as secure it against the changes in climate and soil resources.

He said the bee keeping forms the potential



part of integrated farming and could play an important role in increasing the farmers income. Shah said that bee keeping as

an off-farm activity has a potential of employment generation due to wide agro-climatic diversity enabling round the year bee flora availability.

Pertinently the National Bee Keeping and Honey Mission (NBHM) aims at promoting bee-keeping and providing self sustaining employment opportunities among the farmers and unemployed youth in rural india.

Chief Agriculture Officer Bandipora also addressed the participants of the program and presented a detailed scenario of bee keeping in Bandipora dis-

trict. He also presented the details of different programs being implemented by the department in the district for the promotion of bee keeping.

District agriculture officer, sub-divisional officers, zonal officers and other concerned officers/officials of the department were present on the occasion. The program is sponsored by National Bee Board and was attended by bee keepers, students and officers of the department.

Earlier, Joint Director inaugurated awareness cum training program on Chilli under HADP project promotion of Niche crops. The program was organised by advanced research station for saffron and temperate seed spices, SKUAST-K.

Fisheries Deptt receives Brown Trout from Denmark

JI NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, JANUARY 29

Kulgam has become the first district to receive the much awaited & most popular Rainbow Trout & Brown Trout from Denmark today at Tschanser Trout Hatchery. This was stated by Assistant Director Fisheries Shabir Ahmad Shabir. He said that Department of Fisheries Kulgam procured genetically improved germplasm of Rainbow trout and Brown Trout from Denmark he added.

While apprising DDC Kulgam Athar Aamir Khan regarding the procurement, AD Fisheries said that the procurement is genetically improved strains of Brown Trout from Denmark and successfully introduced them in Trout Fish Farm



Tschanser. The germplasm will be reared in the hatchery house under controlled conditions and stocked in the freshwater streams of the district and other areas of UT.

District Development Commissioner, on the occasion said that the administration envisages Kulgam becomes pioneering in Trout Angling considering picturesque freshwater streams like Ahral stream and Veshow stream & its tributaries.

The stocking of these

streams and subsequent sport fishing will make Kulgam a major contributor to eco-tourism he added.

AD said that there was a need to procure the germplasm in order to tackle the genetic depression of the existing rainbow trout.

The officials have been advised to take utmost care for effective management of the germplasm so that pure and viable line of germplasm shall be maintained for further stocking of the streams.

Mission Shakti SANKALP HEW, GCW Parade organise Awareness Talk on Gender Sensitization

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 29

Mission Shakti SANKALP HEW, Social Welfare Department, in collaboration with Government College for Women Parade on Wednesday organized an awareness lecture on sensitization of Youth against Gender based Violence.

The Women's Study Centre, CASH and NSS Jammu were part of the event held under the aegis of Nayi Chetna 3.0 Campaign that aims to amplify awareness against gender based violence through grassroots initiatives.

Held under the patronage of the College Principal Dr. Ravender Kumar Tickoo, the programme was coordinated by Dr. Seema Malpotra, Convener, WSC and CASH.

High Court Advocate Meenu Padha was the resource person. Throwing light on the subject, she said gender equality is essential in modern society for building an equitable society. She made the students aware of "The Gender Based Violence in India With A Spotlight on Jammu And Kashmir".

The resource person explained that Gender-based violence (GBV) is any harmful act perpetrated against a person based on their gender, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. "It's a human rights violation driven by harmful gender norms and power imbalances" she added.

Elaborating further, she said Gender-based violence is a big problem in India as many women

face things like: Being hit or hurt and added that this can happen at home, work, or in public.

Explaining sexual abuse she said this includes rape, unwanted touching, and other harmful acts. The students were made aware of the Legal Laws like The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO), Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PwDVA), The POSH Act, or the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

"Many women don't report these things because they are scared to be ashamed. The laws to protect women sometimes don't work well. This makes it hard to stop violence and help those who are hurt. Many

women don't report these things because they are scared to be ashamed" she added and added that this makes it hard to stop violence and help those who are hurt.

The lecture was followed by discussion in which students asked her many questions pertaining to gender equality. Official of Mission Shakti, Specialist in financial literacy Sunil Kumar was present. The event was attended by students of different semesters, NSS Volunteers and the members of WSC & CASH. The Principal appreciated the initiative of Mission Shakti and efforts of the Convener and committee members and also advised to organize such more events for creating awareness among students. Dr. Isha Sharma compared the whole event.

Javed Rana calls on Union Forest Minister, HP Chief Minister

JI NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today called on Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav, in New Delhi to discuss key environmental and tribal welfare issues concerning Jammu & Kashmir.

Emphasizing the ecological significance of Jammu & Kashmir, which has over 52% of its land under forest cover, Javed Rana sought greater financial assistance and policy support from the central government to protect J&K's biodiversity and strengthen sustainable development efforts.

During the meeting, Javed Rana highlighted the urgent need for increased funding for forest conservation, soil and water preservation and afforestation programs. He submitted a proposal seeking Rs 75 crore for soil and water conservation in the Kandi region over the next three years, Rs 100 crore for development of migratory routes for nomadic grazers and Rs 50 crore for conserving medicinal plants in the Shivalik region.

Highlighting the increasing risks posed by forest fires, he urged for release of Rs 10 crore at the beginning of the financial year for fire prevention and management. Additionally, he demanded Rs 50 crore for conducting a comprehensive study on the ecological and economic value of J&K's forests, as well as expedited approval for a JICA-backed training facility in Jammu and Srinagar to enhance forest management expertise.

The Minister particularly pushed the induction of SFS officers recruited in 2011 into the Indian Forest Service (IFS) to strengthen mid-level management and requested increased allocation of IFS officers



Recognizing the role of technology in modern forestry, Javed Rana sought Rs 4 crore under a centrally sponsored scheme to leverage AI and remote sensing for forest resource management, afforestation monitoring, fire prevention and water harvesting.

He also pushed for a Rs 300 crore allocation over the next five years under the Climate Change Action Plan to strengthen J&K's environmental resilience.

Besides, special funding of Rs 100 crore was also requested for conservation of key water bodies including Wular Lake and Gharana Wetlands.

Additionally, he called for enhanced financial allocations under the Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) and the Green India Mission to support large-scale afforestation and ecological restoration efforts in the region.

Apart from conservation funding, Rana raised several concerns regarding the forestry sector's human resource challenges.

The Minister particularly pushed the induction of SFS officers recruited in 2011 into the Indian Forest Service (IFS) to strengthen mid-level management and requested increased allocation of IFS officers

under the AGMUT cadre to support J&K's growing forestry needs.

He further recommended upgrading the Kashmir Forest Training Institute in Bandipora to an academy at par with Tamil Nadu Forest Academy and Kundal Academy in Maharashtra to provide advanced training for forest officers across the country.

The discussion also covered critical policy interventions including the need to restore the powers of the Chairman of J&K Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC) under Section 5 of the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

Rana urged the Union Minister to expedite clearance of over 400 pending cases under the Forest Conservation Act related to the Jal Jeevan Mission, which are awaiting approval at the regional office, so that water infrastructure projects in forested areas can be implemented without further delay.

The Union Minister acknowledged the concerns raised and assured full cooperation from the central government. He reiterated the Centre's commitment towards strengthening conservation efforts, enhancing financial support for afforestation projects and ensuring that tribal communities receive the bene-

fits they rightfully deserve. Both leaders agreed on the need for a collaborative approach between the central and J&K governments to implement long-term solutions that balance environmental conservation with economic growth.

The Union Minister assured that the proposals would be considered on priority and necessary steps would be taken to expedite approvals and fund allocations.

Speaking after the meeting, Javed Rana exuded confidence that proactive policymaking and sustained government support would lead to meaningful environmental reforms. He reaffirmed the commitment of J&K Government led by Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, for policies that safeguard J&K's natural heritage while ensuring the welfare of its tribal and forest-dependent communities.

Meanwhile, Javed Rana also called on Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, at New Delhi today and discussed issues of common public interest. The Minister enquired about the strategies employed by Himachal Pradesh for protecting and conserving natural water resources and practices being employed to mitigate soil erosion and landslides.

Union Minister reviews construction of ESIC Hospital at Budgam

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 29

Union Minister of State (MoS) for Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Labour and Employment, Shobha Karandlaje, today chaired a meeting to review construction of 100-bedded Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Hospital at SIDCO Industrial Complex, Ompora, Budgam.

The hospital being constructed at a cost of Rs 160 crore would be equipped with modern healthcare facilities and will have OPD, IPD, ICU, Wards, Diagnostic Laboratories, Operation Theater, Disaster management facilities, in addition to an independent sub-station. Besides, Surgery and Psychiatric departments would be established in which specialist doctors and well trained staff will be made available round the clock.

The Union Minister termed the hospital as yet another step to boost healthcare infrastructure in J&K. He said the hospital is being constructed to provide world class healthcare facilities under ESIC to strengthen the preventive, primary and secondary health care ecosystem



in J&K.

She directed the authorities to complete the project before the deadline while cautioning against any breach in set completion timelines. She visited all the health facilities under construction planned for 23 specialties in the hospital.

Shobha Karandlaje informed that there are more than 6000 industries and establishments in Jammu and Kashmir, under ESI Act and more than one lakh thirty three thousand insured people and their dependents are being given benefits in Jammu Branch Office and five Other Dispensary-Branches at Kathua, Samba, Udhampur, Katra and Srinagar. This hospital will serve considerable population registered under ESI Act.

She added that the hospital would improve the healthcare facilities in the entire area with facility of surgery and psychiatric experts available round the clock.

The hospital is expected to benefit thousands of insured industrial workers and their families associated with around 600 factories and institutions designated under the ESI Act. The ESIC system will cover all medical and hospital expenses, including referrals to a territory care hospital, along with a range of insurance coverages for death and disability.

"The hospital is planned to be built in the same style as hospitals in metro cities to provide better treatment to the locals. The goal is to deliver better healthcare services to the disadvantaged elements

of society at an affordable price," another official highlighted. He added that treatment costs would be capped to ensure accessibility for those in need.

The official mentioned that SIDCO has acquired 40 kanal of land, which will be leased for the hospital's construction. "The facility is strategically designed to ensure efficient patient care during emergencies, equipped with the necessary personnel, equipment and an ample number of operating rooms. Around 23 specialists will be available in the hospital," the official said.

Dushyant Pande, Regional Director, ESIC, J&K, along with engineers of CPWD and IEDS Joint Director were present on the occasion.

J&K NHM cautions against fake recruitment notification

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JAMMU 29

The National Health Mission (NHM), Jammu and Kashmir, has issued an urgent alert regarding circulation of fake job advertisements on social media, specifically concerning claims about the JKNHM CHO Recruitment 2024.

This misinformation has been propagated by the online portal www.

bika.co.in, leading to significant confusion among the job seekers. The NHM J&K has informed the public that currently no advertisement has been issued for recruitment of Community Health Officers (CHO) or any other category of staff by the State Health Society, NHM, J&K. Any notifications claiming otherwise are entirely false and misleading. The Mission has urged

upon the candidates to disregard false announcements and ignore any unverified claims regarding JKNHM CHO recruitment circulating on social media or through unofficial websites. For accurate information regarding job openings, candidates should refer exclusively to the official NHM J&K website (<https://jknhm.jk.gov.in/>). The NHM J&K emphasizes the impor-

tance of relying on verified sources to avoid falling victim to misinformation or defrauds. Job seekers should remain vigilant and consult official announcements for any updates regarding recruitment processes.

For further information on this account, the NHM J&K office can be contacted directly through the official website or Centralised Health Helpline 104.

Mental Health Awareness cum Psychiatric consultation camp for prisoners held at Subsidiary Jail, Dignibal

JI NEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 29

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Ganderbal, in collaboration with the District Mental Health Unit Ganderbal and District Police Ganderbal, organized a Mental Health awareness and Psychiatric consultation camp for prisoners at the Subsidiary Jail Dignibal, Ganderbal today, under the theme "Breaking the Chains of Stigma".

The camp was held under the supervision of Abdul Nasir, Chairman DLSA, Ganderbal and under the guidance of Sheikh Babar Hussain, Secretary DLSA Ganderbal, aimed to provide mental health services, creates awareness about the importance of mental well-being, and promote inclusivity among prisoners, encouraging them to seek help without fear of stigma.

Dr. Rajnish Raj, PG (Mental Health), and Afshan, Clinical Psychologist, from District Mental Health Unit Ganderbal,



provided mental health awareness sessions among the prisoners and psychiatric consultations to those in need.

The team interacted with 32 prisoners, addressed their mental health concerns and provided guidance on maintaining good mental well-being.

The camp was also attended by Gurmukh

Singh, Incharge, Subsidiary Jail Dignibal Ganderbal, Tanveer Ashraf, Assistant LADC, Ganderbal, Police personals of Subsidiary Jail Dignibal Ganderbal & Adhikaar Mitras of DLSA Ganderbal.

The camp was part of DLSA Ganderbal's efforts to promote mental health and well-being among vulnerable populations, including prisoners.

Chief Justice inaugurates Judicial Enclave at DCC Kathua

JI NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, JANUARY 29

Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Tashi Rabstan, today inaugurated the Judicial Enclave, comprising five well furnished apartments for Judicial Officers, at District Court Complex, Kathua in presence of Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Administrative Judge, Kathua district.

Shahzad Azeem, Registrar General, High Court; MK Sharma, Principal Secretary to Chief Justice; Amit Gupta, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority and Judicial Officers posted at District Headquarters Kathua were also present on the occasion.

The Chief Justice highlighted the significance of having dignified residences for the Judicial Officers nearer to the Court Complex. He emphasised early completion of the under construction Court Complex at Kathua and other Court Buildings in the district so that the Courts, which are presently func-



tioning in the buildings with grossly insufficient and inadequate space and facilities, can be shifted there. The same would be beneficial for all the stakeholders paving the way for smooth and speedy dispensation of Justice.

Justice Rajnesh Oswal also expressed happiness at the completion of the Judicial Enclave and appreciated the pioneering efforts made by the Chief Justice in this regard.

In his welcome address, Jatinder Singh Jamwal, Principal District and Sessions Judge, Kathua welcomed Chief Justice, Administrative Judge and all other dignitaries which included Officers

of the High Court Registry, the Deputy Commissioner Kathua and Senior Superintendent of Police Kathua. He presented a brief overview of Judicial Enclave and other infrastructural projects coming up in the district.

Pravin Pandoh, Additional District Judge Kathua, presented vote of thanks. He thanked all the dignitaries present on the occasion and made a special mention of Parvez Malik and his team for their dedication in timely completion of this project.

The proceedings of the event were conducted by Amandeep kour, Special Mobile Magistrate, Kathua.

10 Day Skill development Workshop commences at GDC Marh

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 29

Student Welfare-Women Empowerment- IIC Committee, student presidium of Government Degree College Marh, in collaboration with Dogre Well Wisher Foundation, registered with the directorate of Handicraft J&K and Ministry of Textiles Government of India, organised 10 day workshop on handicraft skills under the patronage of the principal of the college Dr. Rakesh Kumar Koul. The resource persons for the workshop are Ritu Gupta and Arun Kumar from Dogre Well Wisher Foundation.

The inaugural session started with a welcome note by the college Principal, who emphasized the importance of handicraft in generating self-employability and self-sustenance among the rural youth and upholding and preserving the traditional culture of Jammu and Kashmir.

The workshop will provide a platform to the participants to gain hands-on experience in Aari work

handmade embroidery. It shall also serve as a platform for fostering collaborations and enabling cultural exchange.

As many as 35 students along with faculty members registered themselves for the workshop. On the first day, the male as well as the female students were imparted the training in handling the Aari (needle) and the fundamentals of stitching which shall finally lead to fine embroidery. A healthy competition among male and female students was noticed as an equipotential stakeholder of the society which was very encouraging under the NEP. The faculty members who graced the occasion were Prof Madhvi Prasher, Prof Ashu Jolly, Prof Balwinder Saini, Prof Sachin Bhagat, Gurleen Kour and Mrs. Shiksha. The inaugural session ended with avote of thanks by Dr. Sheetal Devi (HOD Dogri). The Principal of the college Dr. Rakesh Kumar Koul appreciated the efforts of the faculty members and students for their contribution towards the development of the college.

Deputy Chief Minister holds public outreach programme at Kangri



JI NEWS SERVICE
KANGRI, (RAJOURI) JANUARY 29

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today conducted a public outreach programme at Punna Khetar, Kangri, in Beripattan Tehsil, Rajouri, where he interacted with the local residents and listened to their grievances.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation, with people expressing gratitude for the government's outreach initiatives. During the programme, the public raised various issues including relocation of tsehil office at Beripattan, establishment of a veterinary sub centre at Tanda, installation of electricity poles and addressing frequent power cuts, upgradation of Gurbak Singh to Shamshanghat, Gurudwara Singh to main road, and main road to Bachan Singh roads, requisition of transformers at Pyari Gala, Tanda (Ward No. 5) and Punna Khetar, Kangri, expediting work on Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) schemes in the region, opening of J&K Bank branch at Kangri, setting up of a medical sub-centre and repairing of handpumps at different locations.

The Deputy Chief Minister listened patiently to the concerns and issues projected by the people. He directed the district administration and concerned departments to address the grievances on priority basis. He reaffirmed the government's

commitment towards public welfare, stating, "Our government is taking administration to people's doorsteps to ensure effective redressal of their grievances. We are fully accountable and committed to rapid development of every nook and corner of the region."

The Deputy Chief Minister stressed that the benefits of all government schemes must reach genuine beneficiaries and warned against any misuse of subsidy schemes. He further directed the Chief Agriculture Officer to cancel the licenses of fertiliser dealers who are charging higher-than-approved rates to ensure that farmers are not exploited.

To enhance administrative accessibility, he also directed that the office of Tehsildar Beripattan be made functional in the Panchayat Ghar Kangri, ensuring ease of access for the local population.

Regarding strengthening of governance in the border areas, the Deputy Chief Minister directed ADDC Rajouri, Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa, to hold similar public outreach programs on regular basis. He also instructed for a reshuffle of non-performing officials to enhance efficiency in service delivery. The event was attended by ADC Nowshera, Chief Engineer, PWD (R&B) Pir Panjal, Anil Kumar Pandohi; SE PWD(R&B), Devi Dayal and other district officers, who assured prompt action on the public issues raised by the public.

DC reviews implementation of Holistic Agriculture Development Programme in Kishtwar

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 29

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan today reviewed the progress of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) in the district.

The meeting focused on assessing the progress made under various schemes.

The Nodal Officer HADP/Chief Agriculture Officer, Kishtwar Amjad Hussain Malik, presented a detailed report on the programme's progress. He informed that a total of 14,314 applications were received across agriculture and allied sectors. Of these, 10,532 applications have been approved, including 7,996 in the Agriculture sector, 331 in Horticulture, 1,425 in Animal Husbandry, 589 in Sheep Husbandry, 167 in Sericulture, 18 in Fisheries, and 6 in the Marketing sector, as approved by the District Level Committee (DLC). During the review,



the DC emphasized the importance of maximizing the registration of eligible candidates throughout the district and directed field functionaries to ensure greater outreach and participation in the programme.

The meeting also included a comprehensive review of both physical and financial achievements across various sectors, such as Horticulture, Fisheries, Sheep Husbandry, and Animal Husbandry.

The DC also set new tar-

gets for all allied departments to ensure progress in HADP and to achieve the top rank in the UT. These included a total number of targets: 7,350 for the Kisan Sathi Portal, 1,600 for Daksh Kisan, and 750 for adding farms to the KKG app.

The review meeting was attended by CPO Kishtwar Shahnawaz Bali, CHO Kishtwar Sajid Mustafa, DSHO Kishtwar, DAO Kishtwar, SDO, SDAOs, SMS and other officials from agriculture and allied sectors.

Satish Sharma inaugurates medical camp at Railway Station

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 29

Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Transport and IT, Satish Sharma, today inaugurated a Medical Camp at Railway Station, Jammu.

The camp was organised by the Motor Vehicles Department in collaboration with Health Department and Taxi Operator Union Railway Station Jammu to promote health awareness and well being among the transport workers.

During the camp, more than 450 drivers participated and underwent BP, sugar and eye-sight check-up for colour blindness and other eye sight related issues.

The Minister was accompanied by the DIG JKS Range; Transport Commissioner; SSP Railways; Joint Transport Commissioner; RTO Jammu; CMO Jammu and other senior officials from the respective departments.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister appreciated the dedication of drivers who, despite their demanding schedules, participated in the camp, prioritizing their health over daily earnings. He urged the participants to develop a sense of responsibility by adhering to road safety measures, including wearing seat belts and helmets and avoiding mobile phone use while driving.

The Minister highlighted that drivers play a crucial role in building a responsible and pro-



gressive society, as their behaviour influences young minds travelling in their vehicles during their struggle time.

Satish Sharma also expressed concern over the rising number of road accident fatalities, which claim around 1,70,000 lives annually, stressing that this number surpasses casualties from some diseases. He called upon all stakeholders to come forward and contribute towards road safety and accident prevention.

The Minister assured that monthly health check-up camps would be organized for drivers in collaboration with the Transport and Health

Departments. Additionally, efforts will be made to establish dormitories, toilets and a "Driver Sarai" at major transport hubs for the welfare of drivers and their helpers. Earlier, the Transport Commissioner and DIG spoke at length about the significance of road safety and the measures needed to curb the accidents.

"This initiative reaffirms government's commitment towards enhancing road safety, ensuring the well-being of transport workers, and fostering a responsible driving culture in Jammu & Kashmir", maintained the Minister.

Judicial officers, Bar Association Ganderbal condole with PD&SJ



JI NEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 29

A condolence meeting was held today at the District Court Complex, Ganderbal, to express deep sorrow on the sad demise of Haji Din Mohammad (Retd. DySP), the father of Abdul Nasir, Principal District & Sessions Judge,

Ganderbal. The meeting was convened by Rafia Hassan, Additional District & Sessions Judge, Ganderbal, and was attended by all Judicial Officers, Public Prosecutors, members of the District Bar Association, and staff of District Judiciary/DLSA, Ganderbal.

The attendees observed two minutes of silence in memory of the departed soul and prayed for his eternal peace. They also extended their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family & praying to Almighty Allah to grant them the strength to bear this irreparable loss.

Information Department condoles demise of cousin of Bilal Ahmad Rather

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 29

The Officers and officials of Information Department have condoled the demise of cousin of Bilal Ahmad Rather, Field Publicity Assistant who

passed away today after a brief illness.

In this regard, a condolence meeting was held under the chairmanship of Joint Director Information Kashmir, Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari at the Divisional Office

Exchange Road, Kot-hibagh.

Deputy Director (PR), Dr Ahsanul Haq Chishti; Cultural Officer, Burhan Hussain, other officers and officials of the department attended the condolence meet.

Work diligently in addressing people's concerns: Kavinder

Felicitates newly appointed BJP District President, Mandal Team of Akhnoor



J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 29

Senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Kavinder Gupta today felicitated the newly appointed BJP District President of Akhnoor, Kuldeep Sharma, along with his Mandal team at Party Headquarters in Jammu.

Kavinder Gupta congratulated Kuldeep Sharma on assuming the responsibility of District President Akhnoor and extended his best wishes to the newly appointed Mandal team,

including Gaurav Singh (Mandal President, Pargwal), Ankush Choudhary (Khour), Geeta Rajput (Palanwala), Shamsher Chand (Sungal Sohal), Bodhray Sharma (Khada Bali), Gulshan Kumar (Mair Mandrian), and Ashok Kumar Sharma (Chowki Choura). Surinder Singh, Shakti Bhagat and Anil Bhagat were also present.

Kavinder Gupta emphasized the importance of grassroots leadership in ensuring the party's suc-

cess and furthering the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He urged the newly appointed team to work diligently in addressing the concerns of the people, strengthening the party at the booth level, and spreading awareness about the various welfare schemes initiated by the BJP government.

"The BJP has always believed in empowering its workers and strengthening the organi-

zational structure. With the dynamic leadership of the newly appointed team, I am confident that Akhnoor will witness further development and better representation of people's aspirations," he added.

Kavinder further encouraged the team to remain connected with the people, listen to their grievances, and ensure that Modi government schemes reach the last mile. Stressing the party's commitment to the welfare of the people of Jammu & Kashmir, he said, "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the region has witnessed unprecedented development. It is our duty to ensure that the benefits of these initiatives reach every household."

Indian Army organizes 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' for Students at Kalu Lohran, Rajouri

J I NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI : 29 JAN 2025

With the aim to promote a clean and healthy lifestyle in society, the Indian Army at Samote organised the 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' at Govt Primary School Kalu Lohran, Targain. The initiative aimed to raise awareness among students about the importance of cleanliness in their environment and its direct impact on health and well-being. The campaign was designed to highlight the significance of maintaining cleanliness, not only for personal well-being but also for the overall health of the community and the environment. It emphasized the link between cleanliness and a healthy society,



urging participants to take proactive steps in their daily routines to ensure better waste management, improved sanitation, and better personal hygiene. The aim of the campaign was to spread awareness about the need for cleanliness in their surroundings and for a healthy society. The students were made to understand various health problems related to

waste disposal, unhygienic living conditions, sewage problems, and personal hygiene. The students enthusiastically participated in the event. The event culminated with all participants taking a pledge to keep their names, surrounding areas, and countryside clean. Around 110 people, including 2 teachers and 24 students, attended the event.

Indian Army organizes Chai Pe Charcha with Sarpanch, Panch at Sarsoti, Rajouri

J I NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI : 29 JAN 2025

In the ongoing efforts to connect with the locals and discuss the critical issues being faced by the villagers, the Indian Army organized a Chai Pe Charcha with Sarpanches and Panchs at Sarsoti. The aim of the meeting was to bring out the critical issues faced by local villagers through meaningful discussions and enhance relations with the Indian Army. The event encouraged open and constructive discussions on various topics, including community development, enhancing socio-economic status, the progress of villages, and the role of local governance in shaping the future of the community. Discussions in this meeting revolved around key issues such as infrastructure development, healthcare services, mental health, education, and sustainable community initiatives. In an effort to enhance the development and security of local villagers, an important step is being taken to strengthen the relationship between army personnel, village Sarpanches, Panchs, and locals. A total of one Sarpanch and seven Panchs attended the event and expressed their gratitude for the continuous support rendered by the Indian Army in motivating and guiding the locals toward better social and economic status.

Galaxy S25, the best smartphone and a true AI companion, says TM Roh

J I NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 29 JANUARY 2025:

Galaxy S25 is Samsung's best prepared product ever, said TM Roh, the company's President and Head of Mobile Experience Division.

"The Galaxy S25 is the slimmest and most durable smartphone, coming with unrivalled leadership

in hardware for camera and battery. It also has the best-performing customized processor only for Galaxy. The already outstanding camera experience of our S Series is further combined and enriched with Galaxy AI, resulting in AI-powered image quality and image editing capabilities," he added.

Roh said Indian consumers are highly receptive to innovative features, and the usage of AI features in India is higher than the global average. That is why the new AI features in Galaxy S25 were developed with Hindi language as a top priority from the beginning.

"In Galaxy S25, the

best protection for personal information and safe and reliable AI use through Knox vault, so that consumers do not have to worry about their privacy, Roh said.

"We provide privacy protection for AI data-driven use, both on the device and on the cloud, and also provide the users with the choice of opting in or opting out,"

he added. India is a very important country for Samsung in both Galaxy AI development and sales and will always remain our top priority, Roh said.

Samsung 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 that comes with 12 GB RAM and 1TB memory. Consumers pre-ordering Galaxy S25 Ultra can get benefits worth Rs 21,000, the company said.

Galaxy S25 series smartphones sold in India are being manufactured at Samsung's smartphone factory in Noida.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Prayagraj Maha Kumbh...

The DIG clarified that no VIP protocol was followed on Wednesday due to the strict directives of the government.

"Similar provisions will be followed on Vasant Panchami," he said.

Earlier, Adityanath briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the entire incident. Several rounds of the high level meetings were held at the CM's residence to discuss urgent steps to tackle such incidents.

After the incident, Yogi had appealed to the people to offer prayers at the temple and take a bath near the ghats of the Ganga and cautioned them not to pay attention to rumours. Briefing the media about the incident, the CM said the incident took place when the devotees tried to surge ahead to the Sangam Nose on the holy festival of Mauni Amavasya.

Yogi said the situation was completely under control and the bathing in Sangam is continuing uninterrupted and smoothly.

The CM said that strict action will be taken against those who spread rumours and negative information.

He said that there was a huge crowd of devotees in the Maha Kumbh. "About 8-10 crore devotees are present in Prayagraj today. About 5.5 crore devotees took the Maha Kumbh bath on Tuesday. There is a lot of pressure due to the devotees going to Sangam Nose. Some devotees were seriously injured while crossing the barricades on Akhara Marg between 1-2 o'clock at night. They have been immediately taken to the hospital," he said.

Yogi said that the administration is continuously engaged at the local level to ensure the safe bathing of the devotees. "Prime Minister Modi has taken information from me about the devotees four times since this morning. BJP President JP Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Governor Anandiben Patel are also continuously taking information about the devotees since morning," he said.

He said that the situation in Prayagraj is currently under control, but the crowd influx is very high. "I have also talked to the saints; they have very politely said that first the devotees will take a bath, and only after that will we go towards Sangam for bathing. All the Akharas agree to this," he said.

It may be noted that around 10 crore people were expected to take a bath at Kumbh on Mauni Amavasya. According to official figures over 6.99 crore pilgrims have taken a holy dip at different ghats till 6 pm.

President Droupadi Murmu described the incident as "extremely sad" and expressed her condolences to the families of the injured devotees while praying for the quick recovery of the injured devotees.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was in constant touch with the state government, condoled the loss of lives in the incident.

Taking to X, the PM wrote, "The local administration is engaged in helping the victims in every possible way".

"I have spoken to Chief Minister Yogi ji in this regard and I am constantly in touch with the state government."

The tragedy evoked strong reaction from the BJP's political opponents. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge alleged due to "half-baked arrangements, VIP movements, self-promotion and mismanagement."

Rahul Gandhi has described the stampede incident at Prayagraj Maha Kumbh as "extremely sad" and asked the state government to "focus on better arrangements

for common devotees rather than VIPs".

Akhilesh Yadav has expressed grief over several people being injured in a stampede-like situation at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj and underlined the need for enhanced surveillance at the event.

He called on the Uttar Pradesh government to take immediate action to support the injured and prevent further chaos.

CM holds strategic...

Discussions with Health & Team focused on advancing public health initiatives and preventive care frameworks in the region. Representatives from Tech Unicorns, a coalition of high-growth startups, explored tech-driven innovations to boost entrepreneurship and strengthen digital infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir.

J&K sees deficit...

division saw a deficiency of 94 per cent each in the first 29 days of this year-2025. Kulgam in south Kashmir has also recorded a deficit rainfall of 93 per cent during the period.

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir saw a deficit rainfall of 82 per cent.

Udhampur, Ramban and Samba stations have recorded a deficit precipitation of 90 per cent, 89 per cent and 86 per cent respectively.

Anantnag and Pulwama districts in South Kashmir have seen a deficiency of 85 per cent and 81 per cent respectively, the data revealed and added that Budgam, Bandipora and Baramulla have recorded a deficient rainfall of 83 per cent, 76 per cent and 73 per cent respectively.

Pertinently, Jammu and Kashmir is expected to witness rains and snowfall for the next one week as the series of Western Disturbances according to the weatherman are affecting the Union Territory from this afternoon till February 05. KNO

Republic Day celebrations...

schools (boys and girls), cultural performers, gymnastics and tableaux of different departments for their outstanding display at the grand event.

The 'Beating Retreat' ceremony concluded with the ever-popular 'Saare Jahan Se Achha' with simultaneous display of spectacular fireworks and sound & light display followed by the National Anthem. KNO

JPC adopts Waqf...

Bill in Parliament".

Echoing the same sentiments, DMK MP A Raja says, "The draft report has been adopted in a hurried manner. Last night we received the draft report by 9.50 pm, how can the Chairman expect that we will submit the dissent note overnight".

SP MP Mohibbullah Nadvi called it "unfortunate" and said the way discussions were held and points presented, should not have been done in this way. The stakeholders and the opinions of people across the country were neglected while adopting the report".

TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said, "I have given my dissent note... We received a 656-page draft report yesterday around 7:55 pm. The observations and recommendations of the committee in this report are wholly

perverse".

"According to me, the JPC proceedings have turned into mockery... All other views have been totally ignored" he added.

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

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

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

Hitting out at the opposition leaders, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya said, "JPC on Waqf Amendment Bill has concluded today. The intention of the government was to bring modernity, transparency and accountability in the management of Waqf properties and to also prevent the abuse of the law by vested interests who were trying to encroach upon lands at the cost of social and communal harmony in the country".

"The final report is a fine document that empowers the Muslim community by bringing in much-needed accountability and transparency in the dealing of the Waqf Board" he added.

Govt orders...

the Higher Education Department, will now hold the additional charge of Administrative Secretary, School Education Department.

Suresh Kumar Gupta, IFS (AGMUT:1991), Principal Secretary to the Government, Culture Department, has been relieved of his additional duties.

Saurabh Bhagat, IAS (AGMUT:2002), who is currently serving as the Commissioner/Secretary to the Government in the Science and Technology Department, has been entrusted with the additional role of Administrative Secretary for the Information Technology Department.

This appointment relieves Shantmanu of his additional charge in the department. K. Ramesh Kumar, IFS (AGMUT:2000), who was previously the CCF for Settlement & Demarcation, J&K, has been transferred to serve as the Commissioner/Secretary to the Government, Culture Department, relieving Suresh Kumar Gupta of his charge.

In another order, Alyaz Ahmad Naisroo, JKAS, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Anantnag, has been assigned the additional charge of Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Pahalgam, until further orders. KNO

Central govt plans...

religious and tourist destinations across India, including a ropeway connecting Baltal to the Amarnath shrine in Jammu and Kashmir.

The news agency has learnt that the government is seeking proposals from consultants to prepare detailed project reports (DPRs) for these developments. The proposed 11.6-kilometre ropeway will link Baltal with the Amarnath shrine.

The initiative, as per the government, aims to improve accessibility and provide a convenient travel option for visitors to these sites.

Currently, pilgrims undertake a lengthy trek from Baltal or Pahalgam or rely on helicopter rides, which may not always be available.

The new ropeway will reduce travel time and offer an alternative route, allowing visitors to enjoy views of the surrounding landscape.

This project is expected to ease the journey for a wider range of pilgrims, including children, the elderly, and those with mobility issues, making the annual Amarnath Yatra more accessible to thousands of devotees.

In 2024, the Amarnath Yatra commenced on June 29 and concluded on August 19, spanning 52 days. The pilgrimage attracted over 350,000 registered pilgrims, marking a significant increase from the previous year.

Notably, helicopter services were available for those preferring a quicker journey, providing access to the Panjarni base camp, located about 6 kilometres from the cave. KNO

J&K finance...

Government Order No. 268-F of 2024, dated August 16, 2024, and an earlier order issued on January 9, 2024.

According to the order, a copy of which lies with the news agency, the funds have been released to the extent of 100% of the Budget Estimates (BE) 2024-25 or as per the reworked Revised Estimates (RE) 2024-25, whichever is lower.

This applies to all detailed heads, including "Salary" and similar expenditure categories, where at least 70% of the released funds have already been utilised.

For detailed heads where expenditure is below 70%, the funds have been released up to 85% of BE 2024-25 or as per reworked RE 2024-25, whichever is lower.

Additionally, the specific expenditure categories such as travel expenses (TE), telephone charges, office expenses, fuel (POL), camps, seminars, hospitality allowances, and advertisement & publicity have been allocated up to 90% of BE 2024-25 or as per RE 2024-25, if the expenditure level exceeds 55% of previously released funds.

"If the expenditure in these heads is below 55%, further funds of 10% have been authorised, ensuring an aggregate release of up to 85%," the order said.

"Full fund authorisation has been granted for detailed heads involving contra-credit, such as electricity charges, as per the BE 2024-25 or reworked RE 2024-25, whichever is lower," the order said.

"Certain categories, including Leave Travel Concession (LTC), vehicle purchase, furniture procurement, interest payments, power purchases, food grain costs, snow clearance, UT Share under the Revenue component, and the Disaster Response Fund (DRF), will be considered for fund release on a case-by-case basis upon proposal submission by the respective departments," it added.

"The utilization of the authorized funds will be subject to conditions outlined in Government Order No. 268-F of 2024 and adherence to austerity measures specified in Government Order No. 10-F of 2025, issued on January 11, 2025," it added. KNO

Power Shutdown

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 29

In order to carry out the augmentation/ stabilization of 33 KV Shariefabad-Narbal Line, the power supply to Receiving Stations Narbal & Sanoor and adjoining areas including Narbal, Sanoor, Radbugh, Malpora, Soizeith, Lawaypora, Kawoosa and adjoining areas shall remain affected on February 01 & 03 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

Similarly, to carry out dismantling of spare poles, the power supply from Nigalpora-HMT 33KV line to Receiving Stations Nihalpora, Singhpora, Mirgund, Shadipora and adjoining areas shall remain affected on February 04 from 10:00AM to 4:00AM.

Chairperson, DDC Kulgam visits Bhan village to assess damages to property in fire incident

JI NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, JANUARY 29

Chairperson of the District Development Council (DDC) Kulgam, Mohammad Afzal Parry, visited Bhan village of District Kulgam to assess the damages caused by a fire incident that occurred on January 27, 2025.

The fire severely damaged a tin shed, timber worth lakhs, a timber machine, and other valuable property belonging to one Shabir Ahmad Najar.

During his visit, Chairperson met affected family and local residents and expressed his sympathy with the affected family. He urged the district administration to provide immediate relief and compensation to the victim. He also assured the family that necessary steps would be taken to support their rehabilitation.

DC Kulgam reviews HADP, credit linked schemes in District

JI NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, JANUARY 29

Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan today held a comprehensive review of agriculture and agri-entrepreneurship oriented schemes including HADP, Kisan Credit Scheme, PMFME & Agriculture Infrastructure Fund. On the occasion, DC directed all the concerned departments and banks to reach out to every farmer and farmer family in the district and ensure full coverage of beneficiaries under the said schemes in the district. He also reviewed the progress of various schemes of concerned departments against set monthly targets.

CS review functioning of JKPC

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 29

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a meeting to review working and functioning of J&K Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC) here.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary Forest, Ecology and Environment, Department, Sheetal Nanda; Chairman, J&K Pollution Control Committee; Member J&K Pollution Control Committee and other concerned officers of the Department.

The meeting focused on identifying challenges and formulating actionable strategies to safeguard the region's environment while ensuring sustainable development.

Implementation of the provisions of Water and Air Act by the operating industrial units, Chief Secretary directed that closure orders issued by the J&K PCC under Water Act 1974 and Air Act 1981 against the Stone Crushers units and brick kiln units are implemented in letter and spirit on the ground.

On this occasion Dulloo



directed JKPC to check and share the list of those units against which closure orders have been issued by the JKPC but closure orders have not been implemented on ground to the Secretary FEE, who shall appropriately escalate the matter with the concerned DCs for implementation of the orders. He stressed that consents should be renewed strictly in accordance with the law.

Further he directed to ensure that operating stone crushers units and brick kiln units strictly adhere to the provisions of the law and environmental standards laid down under EPA 1986. He stressed for zero tolerance for violation of environmental laws by the indus-

trial units. Regarding air quality monitoring, he urged that the operationalization of the newly proposed AQM stations at Jammu and Srinagar must be expedited. He asked for regular water quality monitoring of polluted river stretches and wetlands by JKPC to gauge its status for dovetailing of efforts to mitigate this menace. He also suggested for devising an action plan for improving the quality of water of these river stretches.

Chief Secretary stressed upon them to focus on tourist spots for implementation of the non-biodegradable Waste Management Rules and seizure of the Single Use Plastic and other polybags if not conforming to the prescribed

ensure that meetings are held.

While reviewing the functioning of the existing STPs by JKPC he asked for strict implementation of the J&K Non-Biodegradable Waste Management Rules to safeguard the water bodies from getting polluted here. The Commissioner Secretary, FEE, Sheetal Nanda apprised the meeting that instructions have been issued to all the DCs and the issue shall be reviewed regularly. He also made out that JKPC would intensify the enforcement activities and must make earnest efforts to check and seize branded polythene shopping bags, if found to be not in conformity with the existing rules.

Finally JKPC was suggested to coordinate with the concerned stakeholder departments and ensure that revised action plan under NCAP is firmed up and approved. He suggested the to hold a meeting with concerned departments for early finalization of revised action plan under NCAP for its early submission to the CPCB.

standards/specifications. Teams to be constituted in each district under the supervision of the concerned DCs for implementation of these Rules.

Strict implementation of the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules and Monitoring of the Health Care Facilities (HCFs) to check whether they are complying with the Bio-Medical Waste Management.

The Chief Secretary directed that meetings of DLMC under the Biomedical Waste Management Rules should be held by the DCs in regular intervals. He directed the Commissioner Secret, FEE to hold a meeting with concerned DCs of 7 districts where such meetings have not been held yet and

Delegation of ABRSM meets UGC Chairman, discusses anomalies in draft regulation-2025

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 29

The delegation of Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh (ABRSM) met the Chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC) Prof. M. Jagadesh Kumar and Secretary Prof. Manish Joshi and discussed the anomalies in the draft regulation 2025.

National President of ABRSM Prof. Narayan Lal Gupta said that in this discussion which lasted for about two hours, the ground level problems regarding the proposed provisions of appointment and promotion of teachers were put before the UGC. ABRSM opposed considering bureaucrats and industrialists eligible for the post of Vice Chancellor and demanded its withdrawal.

Prof. Gupta said that issues like limiting the requirement of PhD in Career Advancement Scheme to Associate Professor and Professor posts only, making the criteria of Notable Contribution practical, giving promotion of Academic Level 15 to college teachers as well and removing the limit of 10% were raised prominently. ABRSM also objected to proposed changes in service conditions before the implementation of the Eighth Pay Commission recommendations.



ABRSM's National General Secretary, Prof. Geeta Bhatt, stated that the delegation emphasized giving priority to teaching, research, and publication in Indian languages for promotions and recruitment. ABRSM also recommended provisions for paid study leave to teachers for Ph.D., granting CAS promotion benefits from the date of eligibility, ensuring tenure for Principals until retirement, addressing anomalies in the benefits of past service, eliminating the distinction between undergraduate and post-graduate Principals, and capping contractual academic positions to a maximum of 20% of approved posts.

Prof. Bhatt further added that the delegation discussed the appointment of an Ombudsman to ensure transparency in resolving complaints related to violations of UGC regulations, defining teachers' workload, limiting daily stay in institutions to five hours, organizing

refresher and orientation courses offline and treating such activities as on-duty. The delegation also advocated for removing discrimination between NET and Ph.D. in CAS promotions, establishing clear criteria for shortlisting candidates for recruitment and providing a minimum five-year transition period for opting into old regulations for promotions. The UGC Chairman and Secretary assured the delegation that all issues raised would be considered at the appropriate level and decisions would be made accordingly. Apart from the President and General Secretary, the delegation included National Organization Secretary Mahendra Kapoor, Joint Organization Secretary G. Laxman, Senior Vice President Mahendra Kumar, Vice President Prof. Shailesh Kumar Mishra, Additional General Secretary Prof. Arbindo Mahato, Secretary Prof. Pradeep Khedkar and Joint Secretary Prof. Jaspal Varwal.

CB files charge-sheet against 4 for duping Rs 30.50 lakh from a Jammu based Doctor

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JAN 29

Crime Branch (CB) has filed charge-sheet against four accused including Director of Bengaluru based company for duping Rs 30.50 Lakh from a Doctor of Jammu on the pretext of setting up a Gym in joint venture.

This case was registered on 20-02-2023 on the written complaint of Dr. Anuj Arora (Dentist) S/o Shri K.K.Arora R/O C-3 Extension Gandhi Nagar Jammu

against Director & others of M/S Chisel Fitness LLP after conducting preliminary verification and prima-facie proving commission of a cognizable case.

A team of CB officers also conducted raids in Bengaluru, Karnatak last month. Team also conducted thorough search in collaboration with the officers / officials of Police Station Wilsen Garden, Bengaluru and Police Station Ashok Nagar, Bengaluru. It was found that office premises/ building of M/S Chisel Fitness LLP

located at 36 NR Chambers Richmond Road Bengaluru was closed for last 3-4 years.

Investigation has been completed and challan produced in the court of law against the four accused namely 1. Satya Shardul Sinha W/o Shardul Ashok Sinha R/o No. 24 K.H Road Bangalore South Wilson Garden Bengaluru Karanataka Founder & Director Chisel Fitness LLP bearing address as 36 NR Chambers, Richmond Road, Bangalore, Karanatak 2. Mr. Sushil Kumar Tong-

bram brother of said Mrs. Satya Sinha Director Chisel Fitness LLP supply and chain Management LLP Bangalore, Karnatak 3. Dr. Kingmoohan Director, Corporate & Legal Affairs LLP Bangalore, Karnatak 4. Mr. Gangoni Poorna Chandra, Architect Chisel Fitness LLP Bangalore, Karnataka Senior Superintendent of Police Crime Jammu Benam Tosh confirmed that charge-sheet of case FIR No. 22/2023 has been filed in the court of law for judicial determination.

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

Sh. Ajay Singh
S/o Sh. Devinder Singh (6005682037)
R/o Dharan Tehsil, Thakrakote District, Reasi
Card Reg. No.:- PWD-U/R&B/DEE/1174/2021-22-zone-v.

No.:-XEW/REW/T/2024-25/3930-36

Dated:- 27-01-2025

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 30-07-2024 and 07-08-2024. 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 07 days time from the date of the issuance 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	Bid Opening Date	Estimates Cost (lacs)	Quoted Cost	%age Rate quote
1	Construction of Roof Top Water Harvesting Unit at Charan Mohalla Panchayat Thakrakote, BlockThakrakote Under PMAGY 2.0 for the year 2023-24	e-NIT No. 11 of REW REASI of 2023-24	30/07/2024	4.67	317655	31.99 %
2	Construction of Roof Top Water Harvesting Unit at upper Matah in Panchayat Thakrakote BlockThakrakote Under PMAGY 2.0 for the year 2023-24	e-NIT No. 11 of REW REASI of 2023-24	30/07/2024	4.67	317655	31.99 %
3	Construction of Roof Top Water Harvesting Unit at Khiladi Mohalla Panchayat Dharan BlockThakrakote Under PMAGY for the year 2023-24	e-NIT No. 18 of REW REASI of 2024-25	07/08/2024	4.32	285989	33.75 %
4	Construction of Roof Top Water Harvesting Unit at Bhokri Mohalla Panchayat Dharan, BlockThakrakote Under PMAGY for the year 2023-24.	e-NIT No. 18 of REW REASI of 2024-25	07/08/2024	4.32	285989	33.75 %
5	Construction of Roof Top Water Harvesting Unit at kote Mohalla Panchayat Dharan BlockThakrakote Under PMAGY for the year 2023-24	e-NIT No. 18 of REW REASI of 2024-25	07/08/2024	4.32	285989	33.75 %
6	Construction of Roof Top Water Harvesting Unit at Thor Mohalla Panchayat Dharan BlockThakrakote Under PMAGY for the year 2023-24.	e-NIT No. 18 of REW REASI of 2024-25	07/08/2024	4.32	285989	33.75 %
7	Construction of Roof Top Water Harvesting Unit at Lower Lodhra Panchayat Dharan BlockThakrakote Under PMAGY for the year 2023-24	e-NIT No. 18 of REW REASI of 2024-25	07/08/2024	2.53	285989	33.75 %

S/d
Executive Engineer
Rural Engineering Wing
Reasi

DIP/J-9638/24
Date: 29-1-25

EDITORIAL

Transforming Pilgrimage Accessibility – The Promise of Ropeway Connectivity

The recent announcement by the Central government to establish ropeway connectivity at 18 major religious and tourist destinations across India is a significant step towards enhancing accessibility, sustainability, and overall convenience for pilgrims and travelers. Among these projects, the proposed 11.6-kilometre ropeway connecting Baltal to the Amarnath shrine in Jammu and Kashmir stands out as a transformative development for one of India's most revered pilgrimages.

For centuries, the Amarnath Yatra has been an arduous yet spiritually fulfilling journey for millions of devotees. Pilgrims have traditionally undertaken a demanding trek from Baltal or Pahalgam, navigating treacherous mountain paths and unpredictable weather conditions. While helicopter services have been available, their limited capacity, high costs, and dependence on weather conditions have restricted accessibility, particularly for elderly devotees and those with physical disabilities. The introduction of a ropeway is expected to provide a safer, more reliable, and inclusive mode of transport for a larger number of visitors.

One of the primary benefits of the proposed ropeway is the significant reduction in travel time. Currently, the trek from Baltal to the shrine can take several hours, requiring physical endurance and resilience. A ropeway, in contrast, will allow pilgrims to complete the journey within minutes while offering breathtaking aerial views of the scenic Himalayan landscape. This technological advancement will ensure that devotees can focus more on their spiritual experience rather than enduring a physically taxing journey.

Beyond enhancing accessibility, the ropeway initiative aligns with broader sustainability goals. Traditional trekking routes often witness a substantial environmental footprint, with waste accumulation and erosion impacting the fragile Himalayan ecosystem. A well-managed ropeway system can mitigate these concerns by reducing foot traffic, minimizing pollution, and preserving the sanctity of the region. Moreover, the controlled infrastructure will help regulate the influx of pilgrims, ensuring a safer and more organized pilgrimage experience.

The potential economic benefits of this initiative also deserve attention. Enhanced connectivity is likely to boost tourism, generating employment opportunities for local communities, including guides, hospitality providers, and vendors. Furthermore, the government's push for public-private partnerships in executing such large-scale projects will encourage investment and technological advancements in infrastructure development.

However, while the initiative is commendable, it necessitates careful planning and execution. The government must ensure that the ropeway project adheres to stringent environmental guidelines to prevent any adverse impact on the region's biodiversity. Additionally, it is imperative to address the concerns of local stakeholders, including residents, religious bodies, and environmental activists, through comprehensive consultations and impact assessments.

As the government seeks proposals from consultants for the preparation of detailed project reports (DPRs), transparency and efficiency must be maintained in the planning and implementation phases. Regular progress updates and adherence to timelines will be crucial to ensuring that the project does not face unnecessary delays or cost overruns.

The Amarnath Yatra holds deep spiritual significance for millions of devotees. By introducing ropeway connectivity, the government is not only modernizing pilgrimage infrastructure but also reaffirming its commitment to inclusive and sustainable development. If executed effectively, this project has the potential to serve as a model for other religious and tourist destinations across India, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity in a harmonious manner.

Maha Kumbh Ka Atal Sandesh Ikk Jutt Hua Apna Desh



OMKAR DATTATRAY

The Maha Kumbh 2025 has occurred after a very long time of 144 years is thus a rare phenomenon of planetary alignments. It is the biggest human, religious congregations of India and one of the world's biggest congregations attracting crores of devotees and people not only from India, but from all over the globe. Beyond religiosity, spirituality, divinity, faith, Maha Kumbh is the spectacle of unity rather unity in diversity as well as cultural extravaganza. Maha Kumbh, held every 144 years, symbolizes cosmic alignment enhancing the collective consciousness. The Maha Kumbh is a festival that incorporated science, astrology and spirituality. The dates of Maha Kumbh are calculated using scientific techniques, the majority of which utilize planetary placements. Kumbh Mela is a profound celebration of faith, spirituality, and Maha Kumbh or simply Kumbh is symbol of not only India's unity but is the instance of world human unity and it vividly is the extension and

reflection of the Indian cultural and Sanatan doctrine of Vasudev Kutumbkam which means that whole world is but a one family and Maha Kumbh is the living, best and beautiful example of world being one family. Unity in diversity permeates from Maha Kumbh and essential oneness of the world is best exemplified by this biggest congregation. Maha Kumbh is not only a religious, spiritual and divine gathering of men, women, children, young, old and even of the transgenders-kinners but is besides the confluence of the three sacred rivers of Ganga, Yamuna and mystical Saraswati, a confluence of religion, divinity, faith, spirituality, India's unity in diversity. It is in fact a spectacle and tamashi reflecting Indian culture and traditions vividly and clearly. Thus what permeates to the eye is the sangam of humanity and its essential unity as the devotees and people from all parts of India and beyond it participate in this grand religious and pilgrim tourist extravaganza and the beautiful thing about the Kumbh Mela is that it is not solely a Hindu and Indian festival as the people of different religions from India and even abroad are visiting Prayaj Raj and take a dip in the holy water at the sangam. Hindus seek to purify their sins and cleanse the impurities of their soul and also to seek Mukti that is



Moksha which is salvation meaning liberation from the cycle of birth and death. People from other faiths also take great pleasure in participating in the Kumbh or Maha Kumbh Mela and they also take dip in the holy waters and see this world's one of the largest gatherings as symbolizing and showing the cultural vibrancy and dynamism of India. It is no ordinary matter but is in fact extraordinary that in Kumbh and Maha Kumbh people and devotees from all the four corners of the world are attracted towards this festival and it is shows that Maha Kumbh has gravitational attraction and thus attracts people from very far and wide. Besides, the holy dip in the trivani, the saints, religious gurus and sadhus from India and abroad assemble in Maha Kumbh at Prayaj

Raj and give religious and discourses on culture and Sanatan Dharma, thereby making the people assembled here aware of their great and grand Sanatan Dharma, cultural heritage and the flourishing of unity in diversity as this largest gathering is the best, pristine and glorious symbol of unity in diversity for which India is famous throughout the world as people from other faiths and countries shower heaps of praises and appreciation of India for practicing and following its golden doctrine of unity in diversity which is the hallmark and distinctive characteristic feature of India and its culture and its governance and political system. Maha Kumbh fosters patriotism, nationalism and above all Indian-ness that is Bharatiyata in its entirety. So the impor-

ance and significance of Maha Kumbh transcends religious barriers and people from various faiths embrace it and are benefited with its experience and cultural grandeur. The fact that People from all across India are visiting Prayaj Raj and taking part in religious rituals and ceremonies besides taking a holy dip in the waters of Sangam of the three sacred rivers is enough to surmise that people of India are basically and essentially religious and spiritual and thus they are attracted towards this pilgrimage of rare occurrence and they seek blessings of the Almighty and also seek forgiving of their sins. Indian's irrefutable belief are visiting Prayaj Raj and they participate in their own way in the Maha Kumbh and thus the meaning and significance

of Maha Kumbh cannot be restricted to Hinduism and Sanatan dharma as it is the festival of humanity as the sea of humanity is visiting this place and Prayaj Raj has become not only mini-India which in fact it is, it has become a mini-world. So there is no exaggeration in labeling Maha Kumbh as the festival of humanity as its contours go beyond our national boundaries and embrace and attract the devotees and people from across the world. In fact Maha Kumbh is the marvelous as well as mesmerizing and enchanting experience and it is a best, beautiful and glorious pageant of religiosity, divinity, spirituality, faith and above all of togetherness and Indianness. Maha Kumbh will disseminate knowledge, education and information about the essential unity of the mankind and it throws light on the Sanatan doctrine of whole world being one family and world being the multiplication of self. In the end it can be said that Maha Kumbh is of great importance to not only to India's, but it is the great saga of humanity. It teaches and preaches the unity of humankind. We should not belittle the significance of Maha Kumbh but celebrate its humanity and universal appeal and importance.

The author is a columnist, social, KP activist and Freelancer

“Caste, Class, and Social Revolution in India”



BY DR. RAJ KUMAR (HISTORIAN)

The great sages approached Manu, who was seated with a collected mind, and having duly worshipped him, spoke as follows: 'Deign, Divine One, to declare to us precisely and in due order the sacred laws of each of the (four chief) castes (Varna) and of the intermediate ones. For thou, O Lord, alone knowest the purport, i.e. the rites and the knowledge of the soul, (taught

in the whole ordinance of the self-existent (Svayambhu), which is unknowable and unfathomable'. He who power is measureless, being thus asked by the highminded great sages, duly honoured them and answered, 'Listen! This universe existed in the shape of Darkness, unperceived, destitute of distinctive marks, unattainable by reasoning, unknowable, wholly immersed as it were in deep sleep. Then the divine self-existent (Svayambhu himself), indiscernible (but making (all) this, the great elements and the rest discernible, appeared with irresistible (creative power), dispelling the darkness found in Indian society. According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "Society is always composed of classes. Their basis may differ.

They may be economic or intellectual or social, but an individual in a society is always a member of a class" that is called Dalit. This is a universal fact and early Hindu society could not have been an exception to this rule expressed by Manu's law book, (The Manusmriti) and as a matter of fact, we know it was not. So What was the class that first to make itself into the caste, for class and caste, so to say, are next door neighbours and it is only the span that separates the two. A caste is an enclosed class. About subdivision of society, Ambedkar further added that, "This subdivision of a society is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these subdivision is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have

become self-enclosed units called castes". A Brahmin is purified by water that reaches his heart that is called Mahakumbh Mela, a Kshatriya by water reaching his throat, a Vaishya by water taken into his mouth and a Sudra by water touched with the extremity of his lips called Portal Mahabharata. The question is: Were they compelled to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close them of their own accord? As it was the study of enlightenment era.

Regarding the origin of caste, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said that, "The study of the origin of caste must furnish us with an answer to the question, What is the class." The caste is a closed system and class is an open system i.e. from close system to open system that people have no knowledge of the origin of the term caste, latinized meaning 'Pure'. In caste-system, an individual is confined only to his or her traditional occupation. So, there is a little knowledge to grow. But in Class, as it is open, an individual can grow as per his or her capability. And only education can bring this change. Ambedkar had also given a lot of emphasis on getting Higher Education. Here he had given prime importance to education. The religious reformation started by Martin Luther was precursor of the political emancipation of the European People. In England, Puritanism led to the establishment of political liberty. Puritanism founded the new world out of the neglected thoughts that is called Dalit Chris-

tianity which has been suppressed in Indian subcontinent. Even the Indian history supports the same conclusion. The political revolution led by Chandragupta Maurya was preceded by the religions and social revolution brought by Lord Buddha. The political revolution led by Shivaji Maratha was preceded by the religions and social reform brought by the Sufi saints of Maharashtra. The political revolution of the Sikhs was preceded by the religions and social revolution led by Guru Nanak and Ravidas. "Early History of Jammu Region" (Pre-Historic to 600 A.D.) and history of "History of Chamar Dynasty" (600-1200 A.D.) is a neglected truth brought a great social revolution in Indian subcontinent as it is the study of new race of India.

Prayagraj stampede: Administrative negligence or frenzy of devotees?

PRIYANKA SAURABH

It is unfortunate to hear about the stampede in Prayagraj, which resulted in the loss of many lives. The incident will undoubtedly give rise to widespread discussions on various media platforms. The opposition will criticize, while the government will attempt to justify its actions, but those who have died cannot be brought back. This is not the first time this has happened.

During the Kumbh Mela of the year 2013, the bath of Mauni Amavasya was on the banks of Sangam in Prayagraj on Sunday, 10 February. 35 people died due to crushing and falling. While dozens of people were injured. They were treated in the hospital for several days. In 1954, Nehru ji took a bath in Sangam on the day of

Mauni Amavasya, which was the main attraction of this fair. A tragic accident also occurred during this Kumbh Mela. During the bath of Mauni Amavasya, an elephant went out of control, and a stampede occurred. About 500 people died in this accident.

After the stampede, loudspeakers were used to control the crowd and give information. Apart from this, more than 1000 street lights were installed to illuminate the fair at night. This incident shook the whole country. After this, the use of elephants in the Kumbh Mela was banned forever. Organize a small program in your house; it takes a lot of effort to conduct it safely, but here the whole world has come in crores of people.

One must consider the limitations of a legendary city that is tasked with

ensuring the safety of 80 million people while maintaining its religious heritage. How can a hundred people live in a space designed for ten? This is an important issue to consider. Moreover, the nexus between VVIP culture and the government's pursuit of profits, which involves leasing out every available piece of land for revenue and involving middlemen, further complicates the matter. This is a matter of religious devotion, not competition or frenzy.

Some people are calling it the failure of the administration. It is very easy to write and criticize, but where there is a crowd of lakhs and crores of people, a large number of them are elderly. Where a large number of devotees are bathing at the ghats, a large number of devotees are coming out after bathing, and a large number of

One must consider the limitations of a legendary city that is tasked with ensuring the safety of 80 million people while maintaining its religious heritage. How can a hundred people live in a space designed for ten? This is an important issue to consider. Moreover, the nexus between VVIP culture and the government's pursuit of profits, which involves leasing out every available piece of land for revenue and involving middlemen, further complicates the matter. This is a matter of religious devotion, not competition or frenzy.

devotees are going to take a bath at Sangam. There is a possibility of an accident, and unfortunately

an accident has happened. Always remember. The administration cannot help everyone to take a

bath. An accident can happen anywhere. Neither is the administration at fault, nor can it be called a conspiracy of the opposition. This is just an accident. After the accident, the situation in the entire Sangam area is completely normal, but the media is creating sensation for its TRP. Whereas the media has the responsibility to report on the reason behind the incident (stampede).

Apart from this, people have come to Maha Kumbh with the same devotion and faith; they should also have a sense of duty with the same devotion. They should follow the rules, discipline, and warnings of the government with the same faith. When there is an unexpected crowd in Ayodhya and Kashi, the number of devotees participating in the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj

cannot even be estimated. Everyone should not insist on bathing only at Triveni Sangam; bathing ghats have been built and spread over forty kilometers here and there, i.e., eighty kilometers. Please cooperate in the arrangements by bathing there.

It seems that the government is focused on showing itself as the best organizer, while some people are more interested in promoting Sanatan through social media, neglecting the sentiments of common devotees. For about 45 days during Brahma Kalpa, Shahi Snan (Royal Bath) takes place daily, yet our religious leaders have not communicated it to the devotees effectively.

The real importance of Kumbh bathing has not been explained to the public by these leaders. If the religious figures who frequently appear on tele-

vision to discuss Sanatan Dharma had stressed the importance of bathing during each prahar during these 45 days of Kalpavas, the huge crowds could have been spread over different days, potentially preventing such tragedies.

Due to excessive publicity, a huge crowd gathered in Maha Kumbh. Apart from this, excessive importance given to VIPs and stopping or sending back the common people on many routes or providing separate routes for VIPs on the path of salvation is also a reason. Only a small mistake is needed for a stampede. Another thing is that influential or rich people usurp the rights of common pilgrims by using their money and push them back. Is this not a sin? Will Gangaji be able to wash away the sins of such sinners? May the departed souls rest in peace.

Potassium salt provides good alternative to sodium to cut heart risk, must be promoted: Experts

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Potassium salt may provide a good alternative to sodium, and must be promoted, said experts on Wednesday while welcoming a new recommendation by the World Health Organization (WHO) on potassium-enriched salt to combat hypertension and related heart risks.

The WHO, in its recent guideline, suggests using K-salt or potassium chloride instead of regular table salt, rich in sodium. It may reduce noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) and chronic kidney disease by lowering blood pressure.

It also lowers the risks of other conditions associated with high sodium intake, such as gastric cancer. As per the WHO, every year 80 Lakh people die due to poor diet. Of these, 19 lakh deaths are attributable to high sodium intake.

"High sodium concentration is associated with



higher blood pressure level. Long-term impact leads to hypertension and heart disease," Dr. Harshal R Salve, Additional professor, Centre for community medicine at AIIMS, New Delhi, told IANS.

The WHO guidelines reiterated to reduce sodium intake to less than 2 grams per day -- equivalent to about 5 grams of salt. It also recommended doing away with table salt as it continues to cut down sodium intake. And it also urged people to partially replace table salt with potassium.

The guideline also provides evidence-informed guidance on the use of lower-sodium salt substitutes (LSSS). LSSS are alternatives to regular salt both for discretionary use as salt added to foods by the consumer during cooking or when eating and for non-discretionary use as an ingredient present in manufactured foods and foods served at restaurants and other out-of-home settings.

These are also used in sodium-containing condiments, such as soy sauce and fish sauce, which are

common discretionary sources of dietary sodium in some countries.

These alternative salts contain less sodium than regular salt and often include potassium chloride (KCl), with or without other agents, to achieve a flavour similar to regular salt.

The replacement of some of the Sodium by KCl may provide advantages, compared with regular salt, in addition to the sodium-lowering effect, because WHO recommends increasing potassium intake from food sources to reduce blood pressure and risk of CVDs.

"LSSS like potassium may provide good alternative should be promoted," Salve said, adding that "scaling up needs a more regulatory approach, particularly for packaged food items".

The new recommendation, however, does not apply to women, children, or people living with kidney impairments. There wasn't enough data

to suggest the use of potassium-based salts in these groups.

Prof. Vivekanand Jha, Executive Director, The George Institute for Global Health India urged to "make the low-sodium, potassium-enriched salts affordable and easily available".

This will help "fight the growing problem of hypertension and heart and kidney disease in India, especially in rural areas", he added.

Jha also emphasised the need to generate evidence on the safety and efficacy of salt substitutes in special populations, such as those with kidney diseases.

Concerns have been raised about the safety of LSSS that contain potassium, because too high a level of blood potassium (hyperkalaemia) may be harmful, especially to individuals with impaired kidney function.

The WHO noted that "it is important to systematically review existing evidence on the health effects of LSSS intake".

Jitan Ram Manjhi administers pledge on TB Mukht Bharat

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Citing a good example of the 'whole of government approach' to fight the menace of tuberculosis (TB) in India, Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Jitan Ram Manjhi administered a pledge on 'TB Mukht Bharat'.

"The entire Ministry including the field offices like KVIC, NSIC, Coir Board, ni-msme, MGRI, DFOs, tool rooms, and technology centres joined in virtual mode," according to a statement from the MSME.

The Ministry of MSME is a major partner of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) in their 100-day intensified campaign on TB Mukht Bharat.

The campaign, started on December 7, 2024, and will continue till March 24, comes as India aims to end TB this year, five years ahead of the global target.

For the 100-day cam-

paign, the Health Ministry has selected 347 high-priority districts across 33 States/UTs.

"The Ministry of MSME will provide support for such initiative," Manjhi said, stressing the "need to focus on factors like clean environment around habitation, nutritious food.

Wishing the "endeavour a great success", he also advised, "to sensitise TB patients to come forward and avail the necessary treatment, especially in rural areas".

For the campaign, field offices and industry associations of MSME will provide support with "resource mobilisation, awareness generation and intensified action in prioritised States/Districts".

Further, Ni-kshay Shivir (screening camps) in MSME and industrial hubs will also be organised in consultation with the State nodal health department during Feb 3-15.

"This coordinated

collaboration is a good example of the 'Whole of Government Approach' greater impact and reach," said MSME Ministry.

As per the Health Ministry, the incidence rate of the deadly infectious diseases and related deaths has seen a major decline in India.

The incidence rate of TB in India has shown a 17.7 per cent decline from 237 per 100,000 population in 2015 to 195 per 100,000 population in 2023. TB deaths have reduced by 21.4 per cent from 28 per lakh population in 2015 to 22 per lakh population in 2023.

However, India reported 28 lakh TB cases, accounting for 26 per cent -- the highest -- global TB burden in 2024, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO).

The country also reported an estimated 3.15 lakh TB-related deaths, accounting for 29 per cent of the deaths globally.

PM-JAY scheme: Over 85.97 mn people avail free treatments worth Rs 1.2 lakh cr

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

More than 85.97 million people have so far benefited from free treatments worth Rs 1.2 lakh crore under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), according to the latest government data on Wednesday.

Launched in 2018, PMJAY provides financial protection to deprived rural families. It also identifies occupational categories of urban workers' families.

It is the world's largest health assurance scheme, extending comprehensive secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation benefits of up to Rs 5 lakh per family annually.

As per the PMJAY dashboard, as of January 29, Tamil Nadu tops the list of beneficiaries under the scheme with a whopping 90,49,496 people availing of the benefits. The state was followed by Karnataka (66,04,849), Rajas-



than (57,41,363), Kerala (54,64,674), Andhra Pradesh (49,67,217) and Gujarat (45,46,832). Lakshadweep showed the least number of beneficiaries (780). Andhra Pradesh food

Importantly, PM-JAY has no cap on family size or age.

It also ensures that pre-existing diseases are covered from day one, allowing patients to receive treatment immediately upon enrolment.

The services include a range of procedures cov-

ering all the costs related to treatment, including drugs, supplies, diagnostic services, physician's fees, room charges, surgeon charges, OT and ICU charges, etc.

It also covers a broad range of services that include medical examinations, treatment, and consultations; pre-hospitalisation expenses, medicine, and medical consumables; non-intensive and intensive care services; diagnostic and laboratory investigations; medical implantation ser-

vices; accommodation and food services; treatment complications and post-hospitalisation follow-up care up to 15 days.

Further, the dashboard also showed over 365.4 million Ayushman Cards have been issued to beneficiaries so far. As many as 31,077 public and private hospitals are empanelled under PM-JAY. Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of Ayushman Cards (5,19,78,317), while Lakshadweep had the lowest (35,343).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 29, rolled out the Ayushman Vay Vandana scheme -- an extension of the flagship Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY).

The new scheme aims to provide senior citizens with free healthcare benefits, in addition to the existing AB PM-JAY family scheme. Under the new scheme, the elderly will have a separate cover of Rs 5 lakh per year.

Fight against NTDs must center on affected communities, climate change: WHO

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

The fight against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) must be centered on affected communities and climate change impacts, said Saima Wazed, Regional Director for World Health Organization (IANS) South-East Asia on Wednesday, ahead of the World NTD day.

World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day is observed every year on January 30. The theme this year is "Unite. Act. Eliminate".

"Unite. Act. Eliminate. These three words embody our shared commitment to combating NTDs, a cause that impacts over 1.5 billion people worldwide, predominantly among the most vulnerable populations," said Wazed.

"World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day 2025 is an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to a healthier, more equitable future. Let us unite to



advocate for change, act to deliver impactful interventions, and eliminate the burden of NTDs in our Region and beyond," she added.

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a diverse group of conditions caused by a variety of pathogens (including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins) and associated with devastating health, social and economic consequences.

The diseases are called 'neglected' because they are almost absent from the global health agenda; in addition, are associat-

ed with stigma and social exclusion.

"In the South-East Asia Region, 16 NTDs remain endemic, with at least one disease present in each of the 11 Member States," said Wazed noting that significant progress has been made in eliminating NTDs in the last decade.

Noting the progress made, she said seven Member States have successfully eliminating at least one neglected tropical disease. In 2023 alone, more than 860 million people benefited from mass drug administration (MDA) and targeted inter-

ventions. MDA is a campaign strategy in which all people in an area are given treatment regardless of their disease status.

The Regional Director also cited challenges such as inadequate health system capacity, funding gaps, disparities in access to healthcare, social determinants of health, lack of tools and innovation, geopolitical instability and climate change.

These challenges "continue to hinder progress, leaving 833 million people in the Region still in need of NTDs interventions," Wazed said.

She urged to empower people affected by NTDs to ensure that systemic inequalities are addressed, and no one is left behind.

"Our fight against NTDs must center on empowering affected communities and adapting to the realities of climate change," Wazed said, while calling for person-centered approaches and community leadership.

Global study estimates Vitamin D most common deficiency in diabetics, magnesium second most

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Vitamin D is the most common deficiency among diabetics, affecting over 60 per cent of people with diabetes, according to a global analysis published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Nutrition Prevention and Health.

The analysis, based on 132 studies conducted between 1998 and 2023 involving more than 52,000 participants, also found that magnesium deficiency affects 42 per cent of people with diabetes, while 28 per cent suffer from iron deficiency. Researchers, including those from the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), Rajasthan, said that the study helps assess the global prevalence of micronutrient deficiency -- whereby levels of vitamins and minerals essential for healthy bodily function are far too low -- in people with type 2 diabetes.

Women with diabetes were found to be at



a higher risk of micronutrient deficits, also termed "hidden hunger," compared to men, the team found. The authors explained that risk factors for developing diabetes include genetic tendencies, along with environmental factors, such as a sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet and obesity. Studies have shown that micronutrients have a key role in the development of diabetes, by affecting how glucose is metabolised and insulin pathways.

However, this study was aimed to resolve conflicting evidence from previous studies that mainly

focused on one specific micronutrient, the authors said.

"The pooled prevalence of multiple micronutrient deficiency (vitamins, minerals and electrolytes) was 45.30 per cent among T2D patients," they wrote.

Further, the prevalence was found to be higher in women with the condition -- at nearly 49 per cent -- compared to men.

The analysis also found that vitamin B12 deficiency affects 29 per cent of diabetes patients globally and is even higher among those taking metformin, a common anti-diabetes drug.

Pregnant woman in Maharashtra detected with rare 'fetus in fetu' condition

AGENCIES
BULDHANA, JAN 29

A 32-year-old pregnant woman in Maharashtra's Buldhana district has been detected with 'fetus in fetu', an extremely rare condition in which a malformed fetus is located within the body of another fetus, an official said.

The rare congenital anomaly was detected a few days back when the woman, who is 35 weeks pregnant, went to Buldhana District Women's Hospital for a regular check-up, he said.

Doctors came to know about the condition during the woman's sonography at the hospital, the official said.

Obstetrician and gynaecologist at the hospital, Dr Prasad Agarwal, told reporters on Tuesday that 'fetus in fetu' is one of the rarest cases -- one in five lakh.

Only about 200 such cases have been reported (across the world) till now, that too after delivery, including 10-15 cases in India, he said.

"But I was lucky and vigilant enough to notice something very unusual with this baby, which is almost of 35 weeks, grossly normal growing fetus with a few bones and fetus-like structure in its abdomen," he said.

"It struck me immediately that this is not normal. It was 'fetus in fetu', one of the rarest cases in the world. We had asked for a second opinion and the case was confirmed by radiologist Dr Shruti Thorat," he said.

The woman has been referred to a medical facility in neighbouring Chhatrapati Sambhaji-nagar for a safe delivery and further procedure, the hospital authorities said.

White blood cell count may signal severity of Covid symptoms in women

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

A count of white blood cells (leukocytes) may be a crucial indicator for determining debilitating outcomes of Covid-19 in postmenopausal women, according to a new international study on Wednesday.

Even months after the initial diagnosis of Covid-caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus -- millions of people worldwide suffer from its ongoing effects.

Cognitive impairment and fatigue are the most common lingering symptoms, with cognitive impairment affecting 70 per cent of patients.

Older adults -- especially women -- are the most at risk, said the researchers from the US, and Singapore. "Post-acute sequelae of Covid infection significantly affects quality of life, often leading to severe disability.

This effect is particularly pronounced in women, who already experience



higher rates of cognitive impairment after menopause," said Dr Monica Christmas, associate medical director for The Menopause Society.

"By understanding underlying factors, we can better address these challenges and work to mitigate the cascade of symptoms that follow," she added.

The study, led by researchers from Rush University, Harvard Medical School, and Ohio State University, aims to better understand pre-existing risk factors that may make certain adults -- especially older postmenopausal women -- more vulnerable

to more serious ongoing symptoms.

Specifically, they examined whether leukocyte count (a widely available clinical marker of systemic inflammation) was associated with Covid disease outcomes.

The results, published online today in the journal Menopause, showed that leukocyte count is an independent predictor of Covid symptom severity in postmenopausal women.

The findings extend the evidence that low-grade inflammation is not only an outcome of Covid symptom severity but may also precede acute Covid infection.

Cabinet approves National Critical Mineral Mission with an expenditure of Rs 16,300 cr

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved the launch of the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) with an expenditure of Rs 16,300 crore and expected investment of Rs 18,000 crore by state-owned companies among others.

The Mission will encompass all stages of the value chain, including mineral exploration, mining, beneficiation, processing, and recovery from end-of-life products. It will intensify the exploration of criti-

cal minerals within the country and in its off-shore areas. It aims to create a fast track regulatory approval process for critical mineral mining projects. Additionally, the mission will offer financial incentives for critical mineral exploration and promote the recovery of these minerals from overburden and tailings.

"The mission aims to encourage Indian PSUs and private sector companies to acquire critical mineral assets abroad and enhance trade with resource-rich countries. It also proposes development of stockpile of criti-



cal minerals within the country," an official statement said.

The mission includes provisions for setting up of mineral processing parks and supporting the recycling of critical minerals. It will also promote research

and research institutions to achieve its objectives," the statement said.

The statement noted that there is a need to establish an effective framework for India's self-reliance in the critical mineral sector.

"As part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, and recognizing the indispensable role of critical minerals in high-tech industries, clean energy, and defense, the Government of India has undertaken several initiatives over the past two years to address challenges in the critical minerals sector," it said.

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Congress slams Kejriwal for diverting attention from core issues; says AAP is losing ground

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Abhishek Dutt, Congress candidate for Kasturba Nagar Assembly constituency, on Wednesday accused Arvind Kejriwal of trying to distract from important issues, following the Election Commission of India's request for proof regarding AAP's claims that Haryana was poisoning the Yamuna River.

Dutt argued that Kejriwal's approach was merely an attempt to divide the political discourse, stating that the AAP's defeat was becoming evident, with votes now shifting towards the Congress.

Speaking to IANS, Dutt said, "It is clear that the AAP will not win the election. The votes that once went to the AAP are now transferring to the Congress. Voters who earlier supported AAP are realising that the party is not in the race anymore."

Dutt also reacted to remarks made by Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, who criticised Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena for not addressing the rising ammonia levels in Delhi's water supply and following the BJP's directives.

Dutt took this opportunity to reiterate his earlier claims, accusing Kejriwal of collaborating with the BJP and not fulfilling his promises to

Delhi's residents over the past eleven years.

"It's the same Kejriwal who once aligned himself with the BJP, held meetings with RSS figures about corruption, and now he's getting exposed for his failures. For eleven years, Delhi has been deceived by this government," Dutt stated. When asked about the Congress' main competitor, Dutt firmly stated that the BJP was their direct rival in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, reaffirming the Congress' confidence in securing a significant victory. "We will win with a huge margin in the upcoming elections," he concluded.

'Vahali Dikari Yojana' helped 2.78 lakh daughters, total assistance exceeds Rs 3,000 crore: Gujarat govt

AGENCIES
GANDHINAGAR, JAN 29

The 'Vahali Dikari Yojana', which roughly translates to Dear Daughter Scheme, has benefited over 2.78 lakh girls with financial assistance exceeding Rs 3,000 crore since its launch in 2019, according to official data shared by the Gujarat government on Wednesday.

"Former Chief Minister Narendra Modi kick-started initiatives like the 'Kanya Kelavni Mahotsav' to boost girls' education in the state, and today, Minister for Women and Child Welfare Bhanu Ben Babariya continues to champion these efforts. The 'Vahali Dikari Yojana' has gained widespread participation over the years," the officials said.

In the academic year 2019-20, 12,622 daughters enrolled under the scheme, followed by 32,042 in 2020-21, 69,903 in 2021-22, 55,433 in 2022-23, 67,012 in 2023-24, and 41,649 in 2024-25. "Since its launch

on August 2, 2019, the scheme has been available to all daughters born as the first, second, or third child in a family. To further ensure inclusivity, the scheme is available to families with an annual income of 2 lakh or less. Under the initiative, eligible daughters receive a total of 1,10,000 in three instalments," the officials shared.

The first instalment of Rs 4,000 is provided when a daughter enters the first grade, followed by the second instalment of Rs 6,000 when she enters the ninth grade.

The final instalment of 1,00,000 is provided when the daughter turns 18, supporting her education or marriage. Families can apply for the scheme through the District Women and Child Welfare Officer's office or by submitting an online application via the Gram Panchayat Village Computer Entrepreneur (VCE) portal.

Such schemes are required as, according to the 2011 Census, Gujarat's

overall sex ratio stood at 918 females per 1,000 males.

Districts such as Dangs and Tapi reported higher ratios of 1,007 and 1,000, respectively, indicating a more balanced gender distribution.

Recent data on the sex ratio at birth reveals fluctuations.

In 2020, Gujarat's sex ratio at birth was 877 females per 1,000 males, showing an increase from 870 in 2019. However, this figure remains below the national average of 898.

Despite improvements in female education, dropout rates among girls remain a concern.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) conducted between 2019 and 2021 indicates that only 45 per cent of girls who began education in Class 1 in Gujarat reached Class 12, resulting in a 55 per cent dropout rate. In comparison, 59 per cent of boys completed their education up to Class 12, with a 41 per cent dropout rate.

Prime Minister also drinks same water: PM Modi blasts AAP over Yamuna 'poisoning' claims

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), dismissing its claims that the Haryana government had "poisoned" the Yamuna River. He stated that he himself drinks the same Yamuna water.

Addressing a public meeting in Delhi's Kartar Nagar, PM Modi came down heavily on the AAP for misleading the people of Delhi.

Referring to AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal's allegations against the Haryana government, PM Modi called it a "grave sin" for political gain.

"A former Delhi Chief Minister has made serious allegations against the people of Haryana. Out of fear of defeat, AAPda has lost its mental stability. Are Haryana's people any different from Delhi? Don't their families and relatives



live here? Can they poison the water that their own families drink?" the Prime Minister questioned.

Taking a direct jibe at the claim, PM Modi said, "This Prime Minister also drinks the same water. Foreign diplomats, ambassadors, and even Delhi's poor drink the same water. Does AAP think the BJP government in Haryana would poison the water to kill Modi? What kind of absurd claim is this? Was there a conspiracy to poison the judges of this country as well? Delhiites, those who deliberately

commit such sins are neither forgiven by Delhi nor by the nation." Calling the allegations an insult to the nation, PM Modi said, "This is not just an insult to Haryana; this is an insult to India, to our values, and to our character. In this country, offering water is considered a sacred duty. But these people, fearing electoral defeat, are resorting to such baseless allegations." Predicting a political backlash, he said, "This time, Delhi will teach a lesson to those spreading such lies. Their boat will

sink in this very Yamuna." The Prime Minister also highlighted the achievements of the BJP government in different states. "There are many people in the country who are still deprived of basic facilities like toilets, roads, gas connections, bank accounts, and electricity.

Many people from Uttarakhand live here in Delhi. Uttarakhand, nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, has a difficult mountainous terrain. When we formed a government there, we ensured that every village got roads. Now, the youth are returning to their villages," he said.

Highlighting his government's achievements, PM Modi said, "Before I came to power in 2014, only 3 crore rural households had tap connections. In the last five years alone, 12 crore new families have received tap water. This scheme existed during Congress rule, but we expanded it from 3 crore to 12 crore in just five years. We don't stop

schemes; we strengthen them."

Taking aim at the AAP's handling of Delhi's water crisis, he remarked, "If even the remotest villages in India can get clean tap water, why is Delhi's tap water undrinkable? Forget drinking water, even the water supplied for daily use is dirty. If the BJP can provide tap water to remote villages, we can ensure clean tap water for every household in Delhi too."

Lashing out at AAP's unfulfilled promises, PM Modi said, "AAPda has left Delhi at the mercy of the water mafia. They have sought votes in three elections in the name of cleaning the Yamuna, and even today, they continue to make the same false promises. Their shamelessness is shocking. They deliberately want Delhi's residents to struggle for water. Our Purvanchal friends are forced to worship Chhathi Maiya amid filth every year due to their failures."

ED seizes 160 sites worth Rs 300 crore in Karnataka MUDA scam case

AGENCIES
MYSURU (KARNATAKA), JAN 29

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which is investigating the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam, has seized 160 sites that were allotted to various individuals in violation of rules under the 50:50 ratio formula, sources said on Wednesday.

The ED stated that all the sites have been seized under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, as there are indications of benami transactions involving large sums of money, according to sources.

The sources said the value of these sites, based on the guidance value, is Rs 81 crore, while their market value exceeds Rs 300 crore. The ED has seized 31 sites registered in the name of one Ravi,

41 sites in the name of Abdul Wahid, 40 sites under the name of the Cathedral Society, and 48 sites belonging to various other individuals.

The investigation has revealed that MUDA registered 31 sites in a single day under Ravi's name on September 11, 2023. Among these, 12 sites are located in Kuvempunagar, while 19 are in Dattagalli and Vijayanagara -- upscale localities developed decades ago in Mysuru.

Sources further stated that 25 sites were registered under Abdul Wahid's name on March 8, 2023, and three more were on October 1, 2023.

The ED has sent the seizure order to the Sub-Registrar's office to initiate the process of confiscating the sites.

Petitioner Snehmayi Krishna had alleged in his

complaint that around 3,000 to 4,000 sites, which were meant to be allotted to poor and middle-class individuals waiting for decades, were instead given to the supporters of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and other influential persons in violation of all regulations and through document fabrication.

Earlier, the ED had suffered a setback with the Dharwad Bench of Karnataka High Court, headed by Justice M. Nagaprasanna, on Monday staying the summons issued by the ED to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife, B.M. Parvathi, and Minister for Urban Development, Byrathi Suresh, in connection with the MUDA land scam matter.

The Bench had also questioned the urgency of the ED's actions, asking, "What is the tearing hurry?" while passing the order.

CM Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathi, who has been named as the second accused in the case, was asked to appear before the ED on Tuesday (January 28).

Minister Byrathi Suresh, a close confidant of the CM, was scheduled to appear before ED officers on Monday. The High Court granted a stay on the ED's summons until February 10.

However, in a setback to CM Siddaramaiah, the ED provisionally attached 14 immovable properties having an approximate market value of Rs 300 crore under the provisions of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, in connection with the MUDA scam on January 17.

CM Siddaramaiah is accused number one in

the case and the investigation is also conducted against others who got the illegal allotments done through the MUDA. His wife B.M. Parvathi is the second accused.

"The role of ex-MUDA commissioner D.B. Natesh has emerged as instrumental in illegal allotment of compensation sites to CM Siddaramaiah's wife B.M. Parvathi," said ED in a statement.

Searches conducted during the investigation further revealed that a large number of sites, other than 14 sites allotted to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife B.M. Parvathi, have been illegally allotted by MUDA as compensation to real estate businessmen, who in turn have sold these sites at a huge profit and generated huge amount of unaccounted cash, the ED stated.

Will stand by CM Siddaramaiah in any situation, says Karnataka Minister

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, JAN 29

Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara said on Wednesday that he would stand by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in any situation emerging out of the High Court's reserved judgment on the matter of handing over the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

CM Siddaramaiah has been named as the main accused in the MUDA case. His wife is the second accused.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Parameshwara was asked whether he would support CM Siddaramaiah under all circumstances. In response, he stated, "There is no question about it."

"Let the judgment be made. We will know only when it is announced. Since the matter is reserved for orders, we will have to wait and see. Once the order is published, the future course of action will be decided," he added.

When asked about all MLAs deciding to stand with CM Siddaramaiah and alleging that the action against him is politically motivated, Parameshwara said, "We have been claiming that the MUDA case is politically motivated and that the BJP is pursuing it with political intentions."

Regarding the proposal for a second airport in Bengaluru, to be located in neighbouring Tumakuru -- his native district -- Parameshwara said, "We have demanded that the second airport of Bengaluru be set up in Tumakuru

district. It will be beneficial for the northern Karnataka region. Tumakuru serves as the gateway to 22 districts in the state. All these districts will benefit, and the airport can be easily connected to Bengaluru International Airport at Devanahalli. However, we have to consider the technical aspects."

Regarding the Metro services extension to Tumakuru, he said, "A Hyderabad-based company is preparing the Detailed Project Report (DPR). It has not been submitted yet. Once it is submitted, we will implement the project under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. The government will not be making any investment. After the DPR is ready, we will approach the Central government for approval."

If you can't fulfil duties as LG, step aside: CM Atishi to VK Saxena on toxins in Yamuna

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Wednesday hit out at Lieutenant-Governor (LG) V. K. Saxena in a letter, accusing him of peddling a "false narrative" on the toxins in the Yamuna River, and said that if he was "incapable" of fulfilling duties as the LG, he should step aside and make way for

those who are willing to act in the interest of residents of the national Capital.

CM Atishi's letter to the LG comes a day after Saxena sent her a communication expressing concern over the AAP's National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal's remark that the Yamuna River was being "poisoned" by the Haryana government. The LG had also

advised the Delhi CM to "rise above narrow politics" and slammed her for "failing" to condemn statements that can sow discord between neighbouring states.

In a letter to the LG on Wednesday, CM Atishi said, "Instead of addressing the pressing issue of dangerously high ammonia levels in Delhi's water, you have placed baseless accusations and peddled



a false narrative to deflect from your utter failure in fulfilling your responsibilities."

She asked Saxena not to "follow the orders of his political masters (BJP)" but to prioritise the welfare of the people in the national Capital.

CM Atishi wrote that the LG "bowed to his political interest instead of prioritising public interest", claiming that

despite knowing that high ammonia levels in drinking water cause severe harm, including organ damage and developmental issues, this water was supplied to households in the national Capital.

She mounted the attack on LG Saxena, saying that despite being in control of the Delhi Jal Board, he neither took meaningful steps to resolve this issue nor

demonstrated even a semblance of urgency to protect public health but prioritised "political agenda" over the well-being of the people he swore to serve.

The controversy erupted after the AAP accused the BJP-led Haryana government of the "deliberate and indiscriminate" release of untreated water into the Yamuna River, to "derail" Delhi's

water supply.

However, Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini responded with a defamation threat and said the charge was baseless.

The political blame game got a fresh twist after Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit said that he was surprised why Haryana Police was not initiating any action against AAP leaders for such "blatant lies".

UN chief speaks with presidents of Rwanda, DR Congo over conflict

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 29

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres talked over the phone with the presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda to discuss the escalating conflict in the DRC, a UN spokesman said.

When asked about the content of the conversations, Stephane Dujarric, chief spokesman for the UN secretary-general, replied at a regular briefing, "The secretary-general obviously discussed the situation in the DRC, and he's been very clear both publicly and privately for the need for Rwanda to cease support to the M23 (March 23 Movement) and withdraw from the DRC."

The M23 rebels occupy portions of Goma, the largest city of eastern DRC, while Rwanda has been denying allegations its troops were in the DRC, supporting M23, Xinhua news agency reported.



The spokesman added that during the call with Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Guterres emphasised the need to protect civilians in the DRC's fighting.

In a statement released on Sunday, the UN chief said that he was deeply concerned by the escalating violence in the eastern DRC, and reiterated his strongest condemnation of the M23's ongoing offensive and advances toward Goma. He called on the M23 to immediately cease all hostile actions and withdraw from occupied areas.

Dujarric also said at the

briefing the situation in Goma remains tense and fluid.

"M23 forces, we are told, are inside the city, and UN peacekeeping personnel and troops have largely been forced to shelter in their bases," he told reporters. "Medical facilities in Goma are reportedly overwhelmed, and essential services have obviously been disrupted."

The spokesman said the M23 controls the airport, and armed clashes continue in multiple regions, including in Masisi, Rutshuru, and Nyiragongo, further displacing civilians. He said there were risks

of a breakdown in law and order in the city, given the proliferation of weapons. The UN mission in the DRC, known as MONUSCO, said it has seen credible reports of escapees from the prison in Goma, as well as looting by civilians.

The movement of essential supplies and personnel is an urgent concern as hostilities complicate humanitarian efforts, Dujarric said. Non-essential UN personnel have been temporarily relocated from the south Kivu province capital city and the surrounding area.

"Our peacekeeping colleagues also report that protests in Kinshasa over the ongoing situation in the DRC have turned violent, with demonstrators setting fire outside of UN premises -- both the peacekeeping and some of our agencies -- as well as targeting several embassies," the spokesman said. "Looting has also been reported in Kinshasa."

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the humanitarian situation in and around Goma remains worrying. Hospitals in Goma continue to be overwhelmed, struggling to manage the influx of wounded people. Two ambulances from a local NGO (non-governmental organisation) were targeted while attempting to evacuate wounded people.

OCHA said its partners received reports of gender-based violence, the looting of property, including several humanitarian warehouses and health facilities also struck in the fighting. Electricity and water supplies are still disrupted. The phone network is operational; the internet is not fully functioning.

Dujarric said that if the situation is calm on Wednesday, "We expect aid workers to resume their efforts to respond to the enormous humanitarian needs."

North Korea's Kim openly reprimands officials accused of irregularities in effort to tighten discipline

AGENCIES
SEOUL, JAN 29

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has openly reprimanded party officials for being treated to drinks and other irregularities, calling them a "mega crime," in what is seen as an effort to tighten internal discipline, according to state media.

Kim made the remarks while guiding the 30th enlarged meeting of the Secretariat of the Eighth Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, held on Monday, in connection with "serious cases ... of violating party discipline and exercising negative privileges," Yonhap news agency reported quoting the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The meeting exposed the "wrong deeds" of officials in Onchon Country, Nampho Municipality, and Usi County of Jagang Province, the KCNA said.

The report referred to the party's findings, accusing 40 officials in Onchon of poor preparations for a plenary meeting of the county party committee



and being treated to drinking bouts at public service facilities in "an act of flagrant violation of party discipline."

Agricultural inspectors in Usi were also accused of "an unpardonable crime of inflicting sufferings on regional inhabitants and misappropriating their property at random by abusing the inviolable legal power."

Delivering a speech during the meeting, Kim called the irregularities "a mega crime which can never be pardoned" and "a grave crime of violating party discipline and moral and cultural order."

"It is useful for and beneficial to the revolution to boldly recognise such a grave deviation in the party and to deal with

it as an especially serious case in time," he also said, stressing "the transformation of cadres" as central to the new course of party building.

The Central Committee's Secretariat decided to dissolve the party committee of Onchon County and the agricultural inspection organ of the Usi Country, which will be replaced by a new organisation to be formed.

The disciplinary action appears aimed at strengthening internal discipline as Kim pushes domestic efforts for regional development under his "Regional Development 20x10 Policy" and seeks tangible economic achievements in the year marking the 80th anniversary of the party's establishment.

UN confirms US notification of withdrawal from Paris Agreement

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 29

The United Nations confirmed that it had received official notification from Washington of its withdrawal from the Paris climate change agreement.

"The United States notified the Secretary-General, in his capacity as depositary, of its withdrawal, on 27 January 2025, from the Paris Agreement of 12 December 2015," Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres, said at a daily briefing.

"According to Article 28, paragraph 2, of the Paris Agreement, the withdrawal of the United States will take effect on January 27, 2026," he said.

The spokesman reaffirmed the UN's commitment to the Paris Agreement and support all effective efforts to limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Cel-



sius, Xinhua news agency reported.

US President Donald Trump, on his first day back in the White House, signed an executive order to withdraw his country from the Paris climate accord for the second time.

Trump signed a letter to the UN's secretary general communicating the nation's withdrawal and its reasoning at the post-inauguration rally immediately after. Prior to leaving office, former President Joe Biden had submitted the nation's updated Nationally Determined Contribution target to the UN, target-

ing a 61-66 per cent reduction in US greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

The first Trump administration officially let the United States exit the Paris Agreement in November 2020, dealing a major blow to international efforts to combat the climate crisis. Joe Biden, who succeeded Trump in January 2021, signed an executive order after taking office to bring his country back into the accord.

Trump exited the Paris Agreement during his first term, and the order fulfills a campaign trail promise to do so again. The decision signals an abrupt course of reversal on the nation's federal climate policy and was followed by additional orders declaring a national energy emergency, rescissions of Biden-era climate policies and encouraging energy exploration and production on federal lands and waters.

Flights suspended after violent protests in DR Congo, AU urges M23 to lay down arms

AGENCIES
KINSHASA, JAN 29

Uganda Airlines announced the suspension of its flights to Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where several embassies were damaged, looted, and even set on fire amid mass demonstrations.

The decision was made on Tuesday after violent protests targeting foreign embassies against the dire situation in Goma, the capital of the DRC's eastern province of North Kivu, and the "inaction" of the international community, reports Xinhua news agency.

Protesters were seen on the city's main arteries, disrupting traffic, blocking commercial activities, burning tyres, and chanting slogans in front of the embassies of the United States and other Western countries and the head-



quarters of the United Nations peacekeeping mission. Part of the exterior of the French embassy was set on fire by protesters, while the nearby Ugandan embassy was also set on fire and looted. Sounds of detonation were heard in the neighbourhoods where the Rwandan embassy and the US consular service are located.

Daniel Bumba Lubaki, governor of Kinshasa, announced on Tuesday the suspension of all marches and protest movements in the city, though another peaceful march is still planned in the capital. Blaise Kilimbalimba, Kin-

shasa police commander, urged the demonstrators to remain calm and return home, warning that those sowing trouble would face serious consequences.

Hostilities resumed in Goma on Tuesday morning after a relatively calm night. March 23 Movement (M23) rebels have been attacking Goma since late Sunday.

Local sources told Xinhua that intense fighting has been ongoing between the DRC army and the rebels since early Tuesday. According to military sources, the latter have taken control of the area near the airport, a

strategic point once controlled by the M23.

Uganda said on Tuesday that the UN has evacuated part of its staff from Goma. Henry Okello Oryem, Uganda's minister of state for foreign affairs in charge of international cooperation, told Xinhua by telephone that the UN's administrative and non-essential staff have been evacuated to Kampala, Uganda's capital, as a precautionary measure amid the ongoing escalation of hostilities and territorial advances by the M23.

"The relocation and evacuation of the non-essential and civilian staff of the UN from Goma to Uganda, in this particular case, is a precautionary measure for their safety and security. We shall update on the number when the evacuation is done," said Oryem.

The African Union (AU) on Tuesday condemned the violence in the eastern DRC and called on the M23 to "lay down" its arms.

The AU's Peace and Security Council held an extraordinary ministerial meeting on Tuesday, where Bankole Adeoye, AU commissioner for political affairs, peace and security, urged "M23 to lay down arms, honour the August 2024 ceasefire agreement, and prioritise dialogue for a peaceful solution."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Sunday that he was deeply concerned by the escalating violence in the eastern DRC and reiterated his strongest condemnation of the M23's ongoing offensive and advances toward Goma.

Guterres called on the M23 to immediately cease all hostile actions and withdraw from occupied areas. More than 400,000 people have been displaced since the start of 2025 in the eastern DRC, according to the UN.

10.5 tonnes of illicit drugs destroyed in Afghanistan's Bamiyan

AGENCIES
BAMIYAN, JAN 29

Authorities of the counter-narcotics department have destroyed 10.5 tonnes of illegal drugs in central Afghanistan's Bamiyan province, the provincial police office said in a statement on Wednesday.

The contraband including opium poppy, hashish, objects used in manufacturing heroin and other toxic items was burned publicly on Tuesday, the statement said.

Police in Bamiyan banned the cultivation of poppy, drug processing, and drug trafficking in the province, Xinhua news agency reported.

Earlier on January 14, police uncovered 43 kg



of illicit drugs in eastern Afghanistan's Khost province and detained an individual on charges of involvement in drug trafficking, according to provincial police spokesman Tahir Ehrar.

The contraband, which included 43 kg of hashish and a piece of an AK-47,

was discovered outside the provincial capital, Khost city. The official added that one drug smuggler had been arrested.

The police made it clear that they would not allow anyone to produce or smuggle hashish, poppy, or the objects used in manufacturing heroin in

the province, Ehrar said.

The counter-narcotics police had also uncovered 64 kg of illicit drugs, including methamphetamine, and arrested 17 suspected drug smugglers in two provinces of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Interior had revealed earlier this month.

The contraband, which included 43 kg of methamphetamine and 21 kg of hashish, was seized during separate routine operations conducted by police in the outskirts of eastern Nangarhar and northern Kunduz provinces, it said.

A statement mentioned that 10 individuals were arrested on charges of drug trafficking and purchasing in Nangarhar, while seven others were

arrested in connection with drug smuggling in Kunduz.

Afghanistan's counter-narcotics police had also arrested 12 people on December 30 on charges of drug smuggling across seven out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

The individuals had allegedly been involved in the sale, purchase, and smuggling of contraband in the outskirts of Laghman, Bamiyan, Kapisa, Parwan, Kunduz, Herat, and Farah provinces.

A large quantity of illicit drugs, including opium, hashish, and stimulant tablets, was seized from the detainees, and their dossiers were referred to the judiciary for further investigation.

Israel vows 'unlimited' military presence in Syria

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM, JAN 29

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said that the country's military forces will remain in Syria for an "unlimited time."

"The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) will remain at the summit of Mount Hermon and in the buffer zone indefinitely," Katz said during a visit to military posts established by Israel at the Mount Hermon summit on Tuesday.

He claimed that the move is aimed "to ensure the security of Israel's citizens."

"I came here to ensure that the IDF is well-prepared in defence and offence for prolonged deployment at the Mount Hermon posts," he said.



Katz said Israel is determined to prevent Iran-linked forces and other groups not allied with Israel from gaining a foothold in southern Syria, reports Xinhua news agency.

"We will not allow hostile forces to establish themselves in the buffer zone in southern Syria -- from here to the Suwayda-Damascus axis -- and we will not rely on others for our defence," he said. "We will maintain ties with friendly populations in the area, with an emphasis on the large

Druze community."

At 2,814 meters, Mount Hermon's summit is the highest point on the eastern Mediterranean coast, overlooking Israel, Syria, and Lebanon.

Israel had already occupied a lower part of the Golan Heights in the 1967 Middle East war, however, later, annexed it in a move not recognised by most of the international community.

In December, in the wake of the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government, Israel sent ground forces into the buffer zone, a demilitarised area monitored by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, which was established by the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israel and Syria.

ARGENTINE RAILWAY WORKERS WALK OUT IN DEMAND OF HIGHER WAGES

AGENCIES
BUENOS AIRES, JAN 29

Argentine railway workers went on strike Tuesday to demand higher wages, a move criticised by President Javier Milei's government for leaving a million

passengers stranded.

Local and regional train service in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area was suspended by the six-hour stoppage, from 9 am to 3 pm local time (1200 GMT to 2100 GMT), led by the La Fraternidad

union.

The union announced the strike on January 21, demanding higher wages along with an additional 153,000 pesos (145 US dollars), 10 per cent of a worker's salary, to cover the cost of a basic food

basket and offset the inflation-driven loss of purchasing power.

The state-owned company Trenes Argentinos Operaciones released a statement on Monday that the strike would affect about a million passen-

gers.

"Due to this strike, it is estimated that the National State will lose more than 100 million pesos in the payment of fares for those who will not be able to make their trips," it said.

Railway staff are

demanding a 46 per cent wage increase to offset the loss of purchasing power since Milei's government took office in December 2023, while authorities have offered just 3.5 per cent, Xinhua news agency

reported.

Due to the strike, the Argentine government lost more than 100 million pesos in the payment of fares.

Trenes Argentinos Operaciones said that the strike did not affect

long-distance services that departed during the said time slot from and to Mar del Plata. It also has an operating agreement with the company Casimiro Zbikoski for the provision of the Posadas-Encarnación service.

Union Budget 2025 to act as catalyst for India's \$5 trillion economy goal

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

India's goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy calls for policies that promote sustainable and inclusive growth and the Union Budget 2025-26 can act as a catalyst for growth while ensuring equity and efficiency in the economy, a pre-budget survey showed on Wednesday.

As India prepares for the Budget, the economic outlook remains positive, reflecting a shared confidence among businesses in the nation's growth trajectory.

Grant Thornton Bharat's pre-budget survey showed that India is on track to become the fourth-largest global economy by 2026.



The majority of survey respondents expect economic growth between 6-6.9 per cent in FY 2025-26, while 22 per cent anticipate a stronger growth rate of 7-7.9 per cent.

Significant growth drivers include ease of doing business reforms (68 per cent), inflation and monetary policy management (57 per cent), increase in FDI and strong trade

agreements with major global economies (54 per cent), government incentives and subsidies to boost domestic consumption (51 per cent), and technological advancements (49 per cent).

Among corporate tax priorities, the Budget should streamline GST compliance procedures (44 per cent), reduce corporate tax rates for small

and medium enterprises (30 per cent), enhanced measures for resolving tax disputes (15 per cent), introduction of more tax incentives for startups (14 per cent), and introduction of new tax incentives for research and development (13 per cent).

The survey highlighted key industries that will be the growth drivers, including agriculture and food processing, automotive, consumer and retail, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, technology, financial services, real estate, and energy and renewables.

The agriculture sector is a cornerstone of India's economic growth. The previous Union Budget 2024-25, with a Rs 1.52 lakh crore allocation

towards the sector, made significant strides in productivity, research, and resilience.

"To establish India as a global leader in agriculture, the upcoming budget will need to focus on several key areas, such as streamlining exports, improving supply chains, expanding access to credit, empowering women in agriculture and promoting sustainable practices," said the report.

The Union Budget 2025 presents an opportunity to implement transformative reforms across industries. Strengthening fiscal policies, incentivising innovation, and improving regulatory efficiency will be crucial for sustained economic growth, the report emphasised.

India's digital economy to contribute one-fifth of overall economy by 2030

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

India's digital economy is projected to contribute nearly one-fifth of the country's overall economy by 2030, outpacing the growth of traditional sectors, the government has said. Over the past decade, digital-enabling industries have grown at 17.3 per cent, significantly higher than the 11.8 per cent growth rate of the economy as a whole. Digital platforms, in particular, have expanded rapidly, with an anticipated growth rate of approximately 30 per cent in the coming years.

In 2022-23, the digital economy accounted for 14.67 million workers, or 2.55 per cent of India's workforce, with the majority of these jobs (58.07 per cent) in the digital-enabling industry, according to the 'State of India's Digital Economy Report 2024'.

Though the workforce is predominantly male, digital platforms have contributed to increasing job opportunities for women, especially in sectors where mobility and safety concerns were previously barriers.

According to the report, India is the third largest digitalised country in the world in terms of economy-wide digitali-

sation, and 12th among the G20 countries in the level of digitalisation of individual users, said the IT Ministry.

"India's digital economy is expected to grow almost twice as fast as the overall economy, contributing to nearly one-fifth of national income by 2029-30. This means that, in less than six years, the share of digital economy will become larger than that of agriculture or manufacturing in the country," the ministry emphasised.

India's digital economy has emerged as a significant contributor to its economic growth, accounting for 11.74 per cent of the GDP (Rs 31.64 lakh crore or \$402 billion) in 2022-23.

Projections indicate the digital economy's share will grow to 20 per cent of gross value added (GVA) by 2029-30, outpacing agriculture and manufacturing.

Key growth drivers include the rapid adoption of AI, cloud services, and the rise of global capability centers (GCCs), with India hosting 55 per cent of the world's GCCs.

India's digital economy is a key driver of both economic growth and employment, with an increasing role in empowering women in the workforce and creating new opportunities across various sectors.

GCCs fuel record-breaking office leasing in India, to exceed 2,500 units in 3-4 years

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, JAN 29

Global capability centres (GCCs) fuelled record-breaking 77.2 million square feet office leasing in India, accounting for 36 per cent of total demand in 2024, according to a report on Wednesday.

In 2024, GCCs leased 28 million square feet, recording all-time high activity levels that represent a significant 15.2 per cent increase and further solidify their dominance in India's office markets.

With over 1,950 GCC units in India as of December 2024 and projections to exceed 2,500 in the next 3-4 years, Bengaluru's leadership is pivotal in shaping India's commercial real estate sector,

according to a JLL report.

Leasing activity in the top seven cities skyrocketed to unprecedented levels of 77.2 million square feet in 2024 - a remarkable 22.6 per cent year-on-year increase from 63 million sq ft in 2023.

At the epicentre of this extraordinary boom were GCCs, a powerhouse occupier segment that continues to shape India's commercial landscape.

From 2016 to 2024, these global R&D and business transformation hubs have accounted for an impressive 40 per cent of overall office leasing activity.

"This trend not only reflects India's rising status as the 'office to the world' but also signals a strong trajectory for sustained

economic expansion and innovation in the coming years," said Dr Samantak Das, chief economist and head of research and REIS, India, JLL.

Bengaluru remains India's premier GCC hub, leveraging its established ecosystem to attract further investment and headcount growth.

In 2024, the city captured 47 per cent of the total GCC leasing demand nationwide, showcasing its continued leadership with consistently high space take-up by GCCs.

Meanwhile, Hyderabad has emerged as a formidable contender in the GCC landscape, positioning itself as an attractive complementary location for companies seeking expansion.

MP CM discusses strengthening India-Japan ties in Tokyo

AGENCIES
BHOPAL, JAN 29

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday met Japan's Parliamentary Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Hisashi Matsumoto in Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo on the importance of Japan-India cooperation and strengthening ties at the state level.

He also met the President of East Japan Railway Company and the South Asia Committee of Keidanren, Yuji Fukusawa and held extensive discussions on investment opportunities in Madhya Pradesh. The meeting was held at the conference hall of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, focusing on technical cooperation and investment opportunities in the



railway and transport sectors.

The Chief Minister will attend several programmes, including crucial discussions with prominent industrialists and organisations.

Meanwhile, he will meet the Japan External Trade Organization President Susumu Kataoka. The primary goal of the discussions will be to explore business and industrial development opportunities in Madhya Pradesh and strengthen trade rela-

He will also attend the dinner hosted during the event and extend an invitation for the Madhya Pradesh Global Investors Summit to be organised in Bhopal on February 24 and 25.

On Tuesday, addressing the inaugural session, Chief Minister Yadav praised Japan for its resilience and emerging from the devastating earthquakes and natural disasters.

"Japan has been associated with the tradition of Gautam Buddha for thousands of years and we come from the land of Buddha, which always has a special relationship with Japan since past times," CM Yadav said.

Meanwhile, he expressed gratitude to India's Ambassador to Japan, Sibi George, who

has played a big role in connecting people from all types of business houses associated with the industry.

"Especially with regard to Japan, the goods exported from Madhya Pradesh, include products made of aluminium, organic chemicals, nuclear reactors, boiler, machinery, Mechanical Equipment and Pharmaceutical Products," CM Yadav said.

The Chief Minister mentioned that the Madhya Pradesh government has changed policies to attract investors. He noted that special policies introduced by the Madhya Pradesh government have attracted big investors in large sectors, especially in garment, logistics, food processing, ethanol, IT, pharma, and medical devices.

HSBC expects India's two-wheeler industry to clock high-single digits growth in FY26

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Although the growth in India's two-wheeler industry has moderated in recent months, it is still expected to grow in high-single digits in FY26, according to an HSBC Global Research report released on Wednesday.

The past 10-year CAGR (compound annual growth rate) for the industry is still less than 3 per cent and lower than most other auto segments. Electrification has been rather slow despite significant incentives by the government, the report stated.

"Positively, the rural segment is recovering and so is the export market. Overall, factoring in these moving parts we upgrade TVS to Buy from Hold and downgrade OLA to Hold from Buy. We retain our Buy rating on Bajaj.



Valuations look relatively undemanding now after the recent correction and earnings downside limited post revisions in 3Q," it added.

TVS arguably has the most established R&D capacity amongst the two-wheeler manufacturers. The company has been able to maintain its share in the domestic market and has gained decent

traction in EVs as well. We see this as a positive back-drop for TVS in the medium term. Finally, TVS continues to gain traction in export markets as well.

The stock has corrected by 25 per cent from the top and is now valued at 34x FY26e EPS. Admittedly, losses in subsidiaries like Norton remain a worry for us, but standalone margins have high visibility, thanks

to PLI accruals from 4Q as well, the report said.

"At the industry level, ICE scooter share is stable at 31 per cent since FY21, while EV scooters have taken market share mostly from economy MCs (75-110cc) (exhibit 2), especially urban economy MC sales. This reduces the ICE scooter cannibalisation risks for TVS. Upgrade to Buy with TP of Rs 2,800."

The report also states that since the IPO, OLA has consistently disappointed on volumes, largely led by quality and service issues. While the company has addressed the service issues and OLA is scheduled to launch an EV motorcycle soon, competition catch-up has also been aggressive. OLA's market share is down to 23 per cent, from IQFY25's peak of 49 per cent. "With waning confidence in medium- to long-term esti-

mates, we downgrade the stock to Hold from Buy. We cut our estimates; our TP is now INR70 (earlier INR100)."

HSBC has also retained its Buy rating on Bajaj given a diversified earnings profile and reasonable valuations post the recent stock correction.

However, it has lowered its TP to Rs 10,500 from Rs 11,500 as the long-term growth rate has been reduced. Export volumes are gradually improving as well.

The impending launch of e-rickshaws is an upside catalyst. The company lost market share in MCs in recent months (2024) on launches from competition in the 125cc category in particular. "We expect Bajaj's MC market share to stabilise in 2025. Further loss of market share is a downside risk," the report added.

Robust rural demand, premiumisation wave to boost India smartphone market in 2025: Samsung

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

The smartphone market in India is set to further pick up pace this year, riding on robust demand from rural markets and led by the continued rapid growth in the premium segment, Samsung Southwest Asia President and CEO, JB Park, said on Wednesday.

The strong growth in the sales of premium smartphones in the country has helped original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) like Samsung and Apple to post double-digit growth.

"2024 turned out to be a great year for Samsung. Our efforts to democratize premium experiences helped us, with Galaxy S24 breaking the record for flagship sales in India," Park said in a statement.

"We hope 2025 will be bigger for India's smart-



phone industry. We are confident that Galaxy S25 will prove to be even more popular than S24 series," Park added.

Demand in rural markets is likely to aid the adoption of premium smartphones this year.

The company said it is looking to expand its offline presence in rural markets in a big way so that consumers can experience the new AI features that are the biggest draw for its latest Galaxy series.

"In many parts of Indian

rural towns. I see there are consumers that are more attached to an experience. Today, everything is available on YouTube, Instagram, where you can see products virtually," said Park.

"Our strategy is to build experience centres across smaller towns, especially in rural markets, where you can walk in, and our promoters or field sales force can help the consumer to touch and learn and experience the technology," he added.

Indian food services market projected to reach up to \$152 billion by 2030

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, JAN 29

The Indian food services market, valued at \$80 billion in 2024, is likely to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10-11 per cent to reach \$144-152 billion by 2030, according to a report on Wednesday.

The organised food services market, currently constituting half of the overall sector, is outpacing the unorganised segment, driven by online food deliv-

ery and brand influx, said the report by Redseer Strategy Consultants.

Cloud kitchens, by leveraging shared infrastructure and resources to operate multiple brands, are excelling in scaling brands within the market. They have disrupted traditional dining models, offering scalability and flexibility to adapt to the different needs of various demographics.

Cloud kitchens grow faster and operate more efficiently by utilising

shared kitchen spaces that significantly reduce capex and overhead costs.

"The plug-and-play model of cloud kitchens facilitates scalability, with new brands reaching Rs 100 crore revenue in as little as 2-3 years, significantly faster than the 6-10 years typically taken by dine-in-focused brands," said Rohan Agarwal, Partner at Redseer Strategy Consultants.

Consumers in metro and tier 1 cities are increasingly

opting for ordering in and dining out, driven by convenience and a desire for a break from routine.

Additionally, outside meals are increasingly viewed as a social activity, offering opportunities to spend quality time with loved ones and to celebrate all occasions, the report mentioned.

Social media, pop culture and the demand for variety have fuelled the rise of niche cuisines, contributing to the rising frequency.

Centre notifies revised quality control order to boost solar energy goals

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

In a bid to boost India's ambitious renewable energy (RE) targets, the government on Wednesday notified a revised quality control order for solar photovoltaic (PV) products.

The Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) notified the 'Solar Systems, Devices, and Components Goods Order, 2025,' which revises

and supersedes the existing solar photovoltaics, systems, devices and components goods (requirements for compulsory registration) order, 2017.

"The revised order has been notified in the Gazette of India vide Gazette Notification dated 27.01.2025 under the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Act, 2016 and will come into effect 180 days from the date of publication," the ministry said in a statement.

The order covers solar

PV modules and inverters to be used in solar PV applications and storage batteries.

According to the order, solar PV modules, inverters and storage batteries must conform to the latest Indian standards (as notified by BIS) and bear the Standard Mark under a license from the BIS.

"Minimum efficiency criteria for solar PV modules are introduced which are as follows - 18 per cent for Mono Crystalline Silicon

and Thin-Film PV Modules and 17 per cent for Poly Crystalline Silicon PV Modules," read the order.

The order applies to manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers, sellers, and lessors of solar PV systems and components.

"The BIS will oversee grant of licence and enforcement of the order. Market surveillance will be done by BIS or agency notified by BIS in consultation with MNRE," according to the ministry.

Chakravarthy rises to fifth spot in T20I rankings, Rashid reclaims top spot

AGENCIES
DUBAI, JAN 29

India's mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy has made a sensational leap in the ICC Men's T20I Bowling Rankings, climbing 25 places to secure the fifth spot following a standout performance against England in the ongoing five-match series.

Chakravarthy's five-wicket haul in Rajkot during the third T20I was the highlight of the series so far, showcasing his ability to bamboozle batters with his variations and precision.

Chakravarthy's performance was instrumental in India's efforts, though they narrowly lost the match by 26 runs. His newfound position among the top five T20I bowlers underscores his rise as a significant force in white-ball cricket.

While Chakravarthy made waves, England's seasoned spinner Adil Rashid quietly re-ascend-



ed to the top of the ICC T20I Bowling Rankings. Rashid's consistent performances in the series, including an economical spell of 1/15 in Rajkot, helped England stay alive in the series, now trailing 2-1.

Rashid's resurgence at 36 years of age is a testament to his longevity and skill. Having first claimed the No.1 ranking at the end of 2023, Rashid had briefly lost the spot to Akeal Hosein but has now reclaimed it, proving his continued relevance in the shortest format.

Jofra Archer, England's fiery pacer, also made significant strides, jumping 13 spots to claim the sixth position in the rankings. Archer's two wickets in Rajkot demonstrated his knack for delivering in crunch situations, complementing Rashid's spin masterclass. Meanwhile, India's Axar Patel moved closer to breaking into the top 10, rising five places to sit in 11th position.

In the T20I batting rankings, India's rising star Tilak Varma is closing in on Australia's Travis Head for the No.1 spot.

Varma, with scores of 19*, 72*, and 18 in the ongoing series, has climbed to second place, just 23 points behind Head.

Varma's current tally of 832 points is the fourth-highest by an Indian batter in T20I rankings, behind only Suryakumar Yadav, Virat Kohli, and KL Rahul. Should he surpass Head in the remaining two matches of the series, Varma will become the youngest-ever player to top the T20I batting rankings, surpassing Babar Azam's record.

Apart from Varma, Abhishek Sharma has been another bright spot for India, making a massive jump of 59 places to reach 40th. England's Liam Livingstone (up to 32nd) and Ben Duckett (up to 68th) were also significant movers, highlighting the strong performances of both sides in the high-stakes series.

The latest ICC rankings also saw changes in the Test format following the

conclusion of the Pakistan-West Indies series, which ended 1-1. Pakistan's left-arm spinner Noman Ali leapt four places to secure the fifth spot in the Test bowling rankings after a 10-wicket haul in Multan. Noman became only the 12th Pakistan bowler to surpass the 800-point mark in Test bowling.

West Indies spinner Jomel Warrican was another big gainer, climbing 16 spots to 25th after his Player of the Series performance. Warrican's 19 wickets across the series reaffirmed his status as a rising star in Test cricket. He also moved to 24th in the Test all-rounder rankings.

India's Jasprit Bumrah continues to lead the Test bowling rankings, building on his exceptional performances during the Australia series. Meanwhile, England veteran Joe Root remains at the pinnacle of Test batting, showcasing his unmatched consistency.

Ranji Trophy: Kohli focuses on front foot shots & footwork against spinners ahead of homecoming game

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

The Delhi versus Railways Ranji Trophy league game wasn't included in the initial broadcast schedule for TV and live streaming until Virat Kohli's involvement was confirmed.

News of Kohli's participation in Thursday's match at the Arun Jaitley Stadium has spurred a flurry of activity at the venue. By Wednesday evening, the camera crews will have completed their broadcast setup within the stadium.

Furthermore, the Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) is facilitating access to free drinking water for spectators and has made available the north and old clubhouse stands for the next four days. The opening of gates 16 and potentially number six for spectators well demonstrates the impact of Kohli's return to domestic red-ball cricket.

Kohli, who was the center of attention at Delhi's practice session on Tuesday, again captivated

everyone on Wednesday. Arriving at the stadium at 8:00 AM on the eve of the match, Kohli was the first Delhi player to start his almost hour-long gym session.

A short friendly football match of about 15 minutes preceded his batting practice at the Hill B nets, where he was joined by Delhi head coach Sarandeep Singh. Just like on Tuesday, Kohli first practiced with the bat which had no sticker and was thinner as compared to his usual bats.

Under light sunshine, Kohli began his batting practice for the day by facing throwdowns delivered from 16 yards on the practice pitch. This session was a mix of Kohli going through the motions of his defensive and aggressive shots, though most of them were front foot strokes.

He defended right under his eyelids, while middled some pulls played along the ground.

There were some drives and cuts pointed towards square of the off-

side region, shots which aren't the usual features in his strokeplay. With his normal MRF sticker bat in hand, Kohli then moved towards the nets where fast-bowlers like Navdeep Saini, Money Grewal, Sidhant Sharma and Rahul Gahlot were operating.

There, he played front foot shots often, as there were more fuller balls on offer. Against Saini, Kohli played some shots, where he looked steady and brought out his trademark flick while leaving a few deliveries in the channel outside off-stump. At times, he was beaten by Grewal's pace and was further beaten by an on pads delivery by left-arm pacer Sidhant.

At 11:00 AM, it was Kohli's time to switch to the nets where left-arm spinners Harsh Tyagi and Sumit Mathur along with offspinner Sumit Sharma and couple of net bowlers were going through their shift. Kohli's initial focus there was to negotiate the deliveries on backfoot, before reverting back to front foot.

Underdog Togo are 'hungry to make history': Captain Agnamba ahead of Davis Cup clash vs India

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Togo, one of the smallest countries in Africa spanning slightly over 57,000 square kilometres, made their return to the Davis Cup in 2022 after a 19-year absence from the coveted tournament. As they look to make their first ever appearance in the World Group 1, team captain Agnamba Ali claims his side are hungry to make history.

The country's best ever performance at the Davis Cup was reaching the Europe/Africa Zone Group II semifinals in 1992. Now the side gets ready to face India at their home turf aiming to create new heights for their nation.

In an exclusive chat with IANS just days ahead of the clash that will take place at the Delhi Lawn Tennis



Association Complex in the capital on February 1-2. Team Togo captain Agnamba Ali revealed his side's mentality and thinking which has seen them earn a spot in the World Cup Group 1 playoffs.

"We like to be underdogs because I think if we play any country right now, they have to be worrying because, I mean, we've proven over the past three years that we can win. We're doing exactly that and then I can tell you

playing against Latvia at home, nobody is expecting us to win. But I know the guys, they are very hungry.

They want to make history for themselves in the country and then that's where we are. I think that's what's keeping us going," Ali told IANS.

The team consists of Padio Isak, Thomas Setodji, Liova Ajavon and M'lapa Akomlo with Thomas being the only one to have a ranking at 1256 with his

career best being 794. Togo earned promotion to the World Group 1 play-offs for the 2025 Davis Cup after beating Indonesia 3-2 in the 2024 World Group II play-offs before upsetting Latvia 4-0 in their World Group II tennis tie. Ali went on to acknowledge the effort and which has helped build the spirit of his team

"I know Togo has been absent for 19 years but we made it to Group 2 in the past. So, Togo always has had a strong team and I think the good thing that's going on with the team right now is that this is the same group of players that started it. The spirit of the team is great and the guys push each other. They want the best for themselves. They want to win and I think that's what put us in this position," he added.

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'No stress. I get it', selector reveals Konstas' response to axing for first Test vs SL

AGENCIES
GALLE, JAN 29

Nineteen-year-old Australian cricket prodigy Sam Konstas displayed composure and professionalism after being left out of the playing XI for the opening Test against Sri Lanka, according to selector Tony Dodemaide, who reassured that Konstas remains a crucial part of Australia's plans for the future and revealed the youngster's classy response to being dropped for the opener.

"A lot of the narrative has been around this tour doesn't matter. It really does, it's Test cricket. That's our priority. Leaving Sammy out was a very difficult thing. There was a long discussion there. We feel though that he's on a remarkable journey. He's a hugely talented player,



hasn't played a lot in this part of the world but he'll learn quickly obviously.

"There's a lot to like and be impressed about Sam. One of the things is his ability to take things in his stride. It's remarkable really, whether it's playing in front of 90,000 and Jasprit Bumrah at the MCG or getting told that you're left out of the Test. He was like, 'Oh yeah mate, no stress. I get it,'" said

Australian selector Dodemaide while talking with reporters at Galle.

While not guaranteeing a return for the next series, Dodemaide confirmed that Konstas is in contention for the second Test depending on the outcome of the Galle match.

"We won't preempt what's happening there, but clearly he's done a lot right hasn't he? He's an exciting talent. We're look-

ing for those successor players to come in, there will be some turnover naturally in the next couple of years or so and he's very much staked a claim. He's a hugely talented player but he's also got range in his game.

"He's got a number of gears in his game which he'll continue to develop, particularly with the experience here on these pitches that he hasn't had a lot of exposure to yet. We like Sammy. It's obvious that he's got a lot of talent and hopefully he's a long-term player for us," added Dodemaide.

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting, however, criticised the selectors for sidelining the youngster, calling it a "missed opportunity" to further develop Konstas at the international level.

Steve Smith is the best modern-day Test match player, says Vaughan

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Former England captain Michael Vaughan heaped praise on Steve Smith, suggesting that his achievement puts him in a rare category, one that invites comparisons with the legendary Don Bradman, after the right-handed batter became only the fourth Australian batsman to surpass 10,000 runs in Test cricket.

Smith crossed the milestone during Australia's first innings against Sri Lanka in the opening Test at Galle on Wednesday. Smith now joins the legendary Allan Border, Steve Waugh, and Ricky Ponting as the only Australians to have achieved this feat. Moreover, he becomes just the 15th

cricketer in the world to reach this landmark, underscoring his dominance in the longest format of the game.

"I would argue that he is the best modern-day Test match player. I think he is the best problem solver. He has a quirky technique, but he just seems to be able to pick the ball out of the bowler's hand quicker than most.

He has this amazing ability to study the field and work out what is on and what is not on any given day on a pitch," Vaughan told Fox Cricket.

"If you look at his numbers, there are only a small few who have got close to being talked about like Don Bradman. And when you are in a conversation when the Don is involved,

you know you are pretty good," Vaughan added.

Smith's milestone came in his 115th Test match, a journey that began in 2010 when he made his debut against Pakistan at Lord's.

Back then, Smith was regarded primarily as a leg-spinner, batting lower down the order. His debut match saw him pick up three wickets but contribute just 13 runs. Over the years, however, he evolved into one of the game's greatest batsmen, displaying unparalleled consistency and adaptability.

Former Australian wicketkeeper-batsman Adam Gilchrist reflected on Smith's transformation from a leg-spinner into one of Test cricket's modern greats.

Ranji Trophy: Everyone is very motivated and excited after Virat's arrival, says Delhi captain Ayush Badoni

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

There's been a different flavour to the atmosphere around the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi ever since Virat Kohli's participation for Delhi in their Ranji Trophy match against Railways, starting on Thursday, was confirmed.

The talismanic Kohli last played in the Ranji Trophy against Uttar Pradesh in Ghaziabad in November 2012. Now with him set for a homecoming in the prestigious red-ball domestic competition from Thursday, the mood has been understandably a mix of excitement and anticipation.

"We just want to end playing this upcoming

match on a good note. We are not thinking about the points table (scenario) as anything can happen. But we are going for an outright result. Everyone is very motivated and excited after Virat's arrival.

"He was just explaining to everyone yesterday to be confident. Just like he is on the field, everyone is thinking of winning. Everyone is very motivated for the match, and with Virat also here, we are even more motivated now," said Delhi captain Ayush Badoni to reporters on the eve of the match.

Badoni also confirmed that Kohli will bat at his usual number four position, which means he is likely to drop down to number five in the batting order. He also said Del-

hi's playing eleven is not decided yet, adding that with a green wicket set to be dished out, pacers could be added.

All-rounder Badoni feels very grateful that he has been the captain to Rishabh Pant and now Kohli are in the Delhi Ranji side. "It is a very good feeling when two big players are there in the team. Their presence is just enough, and I myself feel very motivated. I have handled the pressure of playing against him (Kohli). So, it will be fun to play with him," he said.

Delhi's practice sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday have been a bit more intense and long, something which hadn't been witnessed before. Badoni conceded that

Kohli's arrival has been the reason behind the change in the Delhi team's atmosphere.

"He has been very positive. The way he is on the field, it's the same he's off the field too. He is very fun loving.

The intensity is a little more in practice as it's the last match. We have to end it on a good note. With Virat's arrival, it has become a very fun atmosphere," says Badoni.

Delhi is coming into Thursday's game after a crushing ten-wicket defeat to Saurashtra in Rajkot inside two days and are now at sixth place in the points table. Badoni, who's made 400 runs with the bat and picked 12 wickets with his off-spin bowling, insisted

there will be no change in the thought process of the team in their quest of getting an outright win over Railways and that the hosts' have totally left behind what all happened in Rajkot.

"The process is the same. What we have been following, exactly it is going on. So, there is nothing that has changed, as the same process is going on. I have left it (defeat in Rajkot) completely behind.

"If all goes well, then we will win, and qualify (for the knockouts). But I am not thinking far ahead right now. But whenever I bowl, I think about how to take maximum wickets, and I think of making as many runs as possible when batting," he said.

Hockey India name 24-member women's team for FIH Pro League Bhubaneswar leg

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

Hockey India on Wednesday announced the 24-member women's team for the Bhubaneswar leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25, which will be held at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium from February 15 to 25.

India will face off against visiting teams, England, the Netherlands, Spain, and Germany, playing each team twice. Their campaign kicks off with a match against England on February 15.

Dynamic midfielder

Salima Tete will lead the Indian team as captain, with forward Navneet Kaur serving as vice captain.

The squad includes goalkeepers Savita and Bichu Devi Khariabam, while Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Nikki Pradhan, Udit, Jyoti, Ishika Chaud-

hary, and Jyoti Chhattri have been selected as defenders.

In the midfield, the team features Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Manisha Chauhan, Salima Tete, Sunelita Toppo, Lalrem-

siami, Baljeet Kaur, and Sharmila Devi. Forwards in

the squad include Navneet Kaur, Mumtaz Khan, Preeti Dubey, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, Beauty Ddungdung, Sangita Kumari, Deepika, and Vandana Katariya.

Also, the standby list comprises goalkeeper Banwari Solanki, defenders Akshata Abaso Dhekale,

and Jyoti Singh, along with forwards Sakshi Rana, Annu, and Sonam.

Notably, as per the FIH regulations, if a team has more than 4 matches scheduled to play during a FIH Pro League stage, they can revise their 24-member squad after

the first 4 matches. However, any changes must be made using players from their pre-approved substitution list.

Sonam, in particular, stand a chance to make her senior international debut after an impressive performance in the recently concluded

Women's Hockey India League, where she was the second-highest scorer.

Speaking on the squad selection, chief coach Harendra Singh said, "We are pleased with the squad we have selected for the Bhubaneswar leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25.

Chief Justice rolls out activity calendar of J&K Legal Services Authority for the year 2025

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 29

In a significant step towards strengthening legal awareness and ensuring access to justice for all, Justice Tashi Rabstan, Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh & Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority, today rolled out an Activity Calendar (Wall Hanging) 2025 of the J&K Legal Services Authority in the august presence of Justice Atul Sreedharan, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, who joined the simple but impressive ceremony virtually from Srinagar.

The Activity Calendar 2025 serves as a comprehensive road-map for legal awareness programs, legal aid initiatives and outreach



activities planned for the current year across the Union Territory of J&K. Besides highlighting key dates for National and Special Lok Adalats, it outlines awareness campaigns on social justice issues, training programs for legal aid functionaries, helpline numbers for enhanced accessibility and initiatives aimed at strengthening alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

While releasing the calendar, the Chief Jus-

tee commended the J&K Legal Services Authority for its commitment in bridging the gap between legal institutions and the legal aid seekers, particularly those from marginalized and underprivileged sections of society. The Chief Justice emphasized that the calendar will act as a guiding document for all stakeholders, including judicial officers, legal aid counsels, paralegal volunteers, and legal services institutions, to

effectively execute their responsibilities in ensuring access to justice.

Justice Atul Sreedharan, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority also underscored the importance of activity calendar in timely execution of legal aid initiatives and stressed that the calendar would serve as a strategic tool for organizing legal literacy programs, Lok Adalats, victim support initiatives and pro bono services across the UT.

The event also marked discussions on further strengthening legal aid mechanisms, enhancing digital outreach and promoting legal literacy at the grassroots level. The calendar includes special focus areas such as legal assistance to prisoners, empowerment of women and children, awareness on cyber laws, environmental justice, rehabilitation of victims of crime and undertaking of special campaigns launched by the NALSA.

DLIC in Kupwara approves 27 loan cases under Mumkin scheme

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, JANUARY 29

A meeting of District Level Implementation Committee members for implementation of Mission Youth Framework in District Kupwara was convened under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan, here today.

At the outset, the Assistant Director Employment Kupwara, Arshid Qadir Bhat who is the member secretary of the committee provided a brief introduction and achievement ensured under the Mission Youth Framework.

After threadbare discussion and deliberations, 27 loan application under Mumkin Scheme and 01 loan application under Tejaswini were approved by the commit-



tee. 06 applicants under SEI were interviewed and their business plan was approved for feasible amount by the committee. Besides, Assistant Director Employment Kupwara, ARTO Kup-

wara, Nodal Officer JKEDI Kupwara, Representatives from Lead Bank Manager Kupwara, General Manager DIC Kupwara, DSWO Kupwara and Employment Officer Kupwara participated in the meeting.

Doda Admin bids farewell to outgoing ADDC, CEO Bhaderwah TDA

J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, JANUARY 29

The District Administration Doda today bid farewell to the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Pran Singh and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Tourism Development Authority Bhaderwah Bal Krishan on their transfer.

An impressive farewell ceremony was held in the conference hall DC office to acknowledge the dedicated services of ADDC, who has been transferred as Special Secretary to the Government, Housing and Urban Development Department, and CEO Tourism as Additional Registrar, Cooperative Jammu.

The event was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh,



Senior Superintendent of Police Sandeep Kumar Mehta; Additional Deputy Commissioner Sudarshan Kumar; Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah. Sunil Kumar; Assistant Commissioner Revenue Sunil Kumar Bhutyal; Deputy District Election Officer Om Parkash; Assistant Commissioner Development Manoj Kumar, along with other district officers and staff members

of the ADDC office Doda. The officers and colleagues expressed their gratitude to the outgoing officers for their invaluable contribution towards the district's development and governance. As a mark of appreciation, a beautiful memento was presented to the outgoing ADDC and CEO Tourism on behalf of the district administration.

The Deputy Commis-

sioner lauded the outgoing officers and hailed their contributions as commendable in ensuring the smooth execution of administrative and developmental activities in the district.

The SSP also extended his best wishes and described their tenure in Doda as commendable and hoped they would continue to excel in their future responsibilities.

Ramban admin approves calendar of activities for IYC-2025, reviews working of M-PACS

J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, JANUARY 29

The 6th District Level Cooperative Development Committee (DLDC) meeting was held today under the chairmanship of District Development Commissioner (DDC) Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary to approve the calendar of activities for the International Year of Cooperatives-2025 (IYC-2025).

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Roshan Lal; Assistant Commissioner Panchayat (ACP) Ashfaq Ahmed and district heads of allied departments, DDM NABARD and other officials.

After thorough discussion, a comprehensive

calendar of activities was approved envisaging hosting of a Sehkar Mela, Health Camps, awareness & training camps in collaboration with Agriculture and allied departments.

The Committee also approved the plan for establishment of a Mini Super Bazaar at M-PACS Maitra, the opening of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendra (PMJAK) at Primary Health Centre Batote and the establishment of two food processing units. In addition to this, an exhibition showcasing organic products from cooperatives will be held as part of the celebrations.

The Committee also reviewed the implementation of decisions taken at the last two Joint Working Committee meetings. One

of the key focuses of the meeting was the establishment of a Grain storage project at Village Pernote. The Revenue Department was instructed to find a feasible site for the project.

Furthermore, the DDC directed the Deputy Registrar, Cooperatives (DRCS) and other Committee members to expedite the formation of new M-PACS, Dairy, and Fisheries Cooperative Societies. He also instructed them to identify potential Panchayats for mobilizing cooperative membership through awareness camps in collaboration with allied departments. Earlier, Deputy Registrar, Cooperatives Priyanka Sharma, delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the overall scenario of the cooperative sector in the district.

DC reviews performance of RDD in Poonch district

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, JANUARY 29

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal, convened a meeting today to assess the current status of construction of Panchayat Ghars and Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) works in the district. The meeting was held in the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex. The Deputy Commissioner conducted a detailed block-wise review of all ongoing and completed projects undertaken by the Rural Development Department under BDC/PRI/DDC works, SBM initiatives, the status of Panchayat Ghars and the audit parameters. The Block Development Officers (BDOs) were asked to actively inspect projects and collaborate with Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs) to guarantee timely project completion.

CS emphasises result oriented action plan to prevent drug abuse

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 29

Reiterating Government's commitment towards complete eradication of drug abuse, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today emphasised the need to devise a result oriented action plan to prevent and eliminate drug menace from the society through massive awareness.

The Chief Secretary was addressing a high level meeting held in this regard at the Civil Secretariat.

Among others the meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Home; Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare; Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD; Commissioner Secretary, GAD; ADGP, Jammu; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir/Jammu; Secretary RDD; Director, Information; Drug Controller; Deputy Commissioners and other concerned officers.

The Chief Secretary directed the Information Department to collaborate with other departments in raising awareness about the ill effects of substance abuse. He emphasized the impor-



tance of public awareness campaigns, including posters, slogans, advertisements on social media, public transport and outdoor spaces. He further instructed the department to produce a short film highlighting the ill effects of drugs and ways to protect individuals and society from this growing threat. Stressing a multi-pronged strategy, Atal Dulloo stated that by implementing stringent measures, we aim to dismantle drug networks, reduce drug demand and create a healthier, safer society. The awareness program will focus on educating students on prevention strategies, emphasizing the role of mental health support, engaging youth in anti-drug campaigns. To ensure widespread

outreach, the Chief Secretary directed the Police, Health, School Education, Social Welfare and Rural Development Departments to prepare a calendar of activities covering every Panchayat. This will accelerate the momentum of the Drug-Free Campaign, especially among the students and young people.

He also asked all the stakeholders to develop a comprehensive action plan to reach every village across Jammu & Kashmir, ensuring that no community remains untouched by the anti-drug awareness initiatives. "Youth are the future of our nation, and it is our collective responsibility to protect them from this serious challenge," he added.

DC Bandipora chairs Vidyalaya Management Committee meeting

J1 NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, JANUARY 29

The Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Manzoor Ahmad Qadri Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Vidyalaya Management Committee (VMC) and DLMC at the Mini Secretariat, Bandipora.

The meeting discussed various measures for operationalization of the new building of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV) Bandipora including construction of a link road at JNV Madar and road construction at JNV Brar, alongside addressing various infrastructure issues that need urgent attention.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the Chief Medical Officer to arrange counselors to provide guidance to adolescent students ahead of their examinations aimed to offer emotional and psychological support to the students, ensuring they are well-prepared and confident.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner M. A. Qadri instructed the concerned from Jal Shakti Department and Power Development Depart-



ment (PDD), to facilitate water and electricity connections for the new JNV school building, once all required formalities are completed by the institution.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of ensuring quality education and the welfare of students in the district and reiterated the District Administration's commitment to improving educational infrastructure and facilities across the

district.

The meeting was attended by ADC Zaffar Husson Shawl, Chief Education Officer Bandipora Kishore Kumar, Chief Medical Officer Rafi Ahmad Salathi, Assistant Director FCS&CA, Dr.Naseer Ahmad, Executive Engineer R&B Mohammad Hussain, Executive Engineer PDD, Principal JNV Bandipora (Member Secretary), Mohammad Parvaiz, Officers from PHE and other concerned.

Healthy baby competition held at CDPO Office Udhampur

J1 NEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 29

Healthy baby competition (Poshan Project Udhampur) was organised at CDPO office premises Udhampur today.

The event was inaugurated by District Programme Officer, Poshan Subhash Chander Dogra and organised under the guidance and directions of Deputy Commissioner Saloni Rai to educate the public regarding the good health of each and every child. The 19 contesting children reached the project level competition after passing AWC level, Panchayat/Ward level and Sector level contests. A lecture on the health, pregnant & lactating mothers was delivered by Dr Sunaina. 1st Position was won by Abhijeet Sharma while Adheesh Jamwal and Sakoon Pandotra bagged the second and third position. Gifts were distributed and light refreshment was also served to the participants. The parents present on the occasion were advised to carry this message across the society to ensure the provision of balanced diet to their children to make the nation healthy.

SWD hosts Cutting, Tailoring training for women at Panchayat Goran-Samba

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, JANUARY 29

A one month Livelihood Training Programme in cutting and tailoring commenced today here at Panchayat Goran. The training has been organised by SANKALP: HEW, Mission Shakti, in collaboration with REACHA Organisation. More than 40 local women were enrolled for livelihood training. The main aim of the programme is to impart skilling to Rural Women to make them eligible for self employment schemes. The SANKALP: HEW team encouraged the beneficiaries and motivated them to open their own setup through which they can generate their own livelihood. The team imparted awareness to women and girls about the theme of "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao", explaining the Women Centric schemes.