

**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
- Joint and muscle pain
- Diarrhea
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Double vision
- Steady but painless or mild, brief, aches or itches
- Redness

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

# JINDRAH IMAGES

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## J&K Budget 2025-26: Will Omar-led Govt deliver on free electricity, women's stipend, job creation promises?

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 30

As the forthcoming 2025-26 budget session is set to commence from March 3 this year, the million dollar question remains that whether the Omar Abdullah led dispensation will fulfill its poll-pledges - topping among them is 200 units of free electricity and creation of more than three lac government jobs for the youth here.

As per the inputs received by the news

agency, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is expected to hold discussions with key stakeholders, while the government is set to prioritize electoral guarantees in the upcoming budget.

According to official sources, the budget session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly is proposed to commence on March 3- the first annual budget presentation for the region in six years.

A proposal to convene the session was recently approved in a cabinet

meeting and sent to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. The final duration of the session will be determined by Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, following consultations with the Business Advisory Committee.

For the first time as Finance Minister, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah will present the state budget in the assembly.

During his previous tenure as Chief Minister,

**The Omar Abdullah-led government is expected to focus on fulfilling key electoral promises, including:**

- 200 units of free electricity for eligible households
- Rs 5,000 per month for economically weaker women
- 12 free LPG cylinders per year
- Expanded ration distribution
- Job creation (3 lakh government jobs)
- Boosting agriculture and horticulture
- Promoting tourism and industrial growth

Abdullah oversaw the Home, General Adminis-

tration, and other department allocations for key legisla-

ly handled finance. The budget must be approved before March 31, and while Union Territories typically have shorter budget sessions than states, this session may extend for several weeks.

Currently, the Jammu and Kashmir government consists of six ministers, including the Chief Minister. The Business Advisory Committee will decide on time

allocations for key legislative activities, including: Debate on the motion of thanks to the Lieutenant Governor's address, discussions on budgets and grants of various ministries, debates on private members' resolutions and bills and other government business

The last budget for Jammu and Kashmir as a state was presented in January 2018 by then Finance Minister Dr. Haseeb Drabu, amounting to Rs 80,313 crore for FY 2018-19. However, following the dissolution of

the assembly in June 2018, the State Administrative Council (SAC) adopted a budget of Rs 88,911 crore for FY 2019-20. From 2020-21 to 2024-25, budgets were presented and passed in Parliament in the absence of an elected assembly. The 2024-25 budget, passed by Parliament, stood at Rs 1,18,728 crore, a slight increase from the Rs 1,18,500 crore budget of 2023-24.

These guarantees are likely to be key priorities in the budget, and

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### Army foils infiltration bid in Poonch

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 30

Army on Thursday foiled an infiltration bid by a group of heavily-armed terrorists along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu's Poonch district, officials told the news agency.

"Alert Army troops picked up the movement of the terrorists trying to sneak into this side from across the LoC in

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### J&K government faces backlash over deleted social media post announcing SPO honorarium hike

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 30

The Jammu and Kashmir government found itself under fire on

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

### Govt orders transfer of several IPS officers

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 30

The Jammu and Kashmir government has ordered the transfer and posting of several senior IPS officers.

According to an order, a copy of which lies with the news agency, Vijay Kumar (IPS, AGMUT:1997), ADGP has been relieved from Jammu and Kashmir

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

## Bharat set to become third largest economy by 2027: LG

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JAN 30

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday expressed optimism that Bharat is on track to becoming the third-largest economy in the world by 2027.

Speaking at the Shanti Doot Sammelan organized by the Gandhi Global Family here, the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency, highlighted the country's economic growth and social progress over the past decade. "In the past 10 years, our country has witnessed unprecedented growth. By 2027, Bharat will be the third-largest economy in the world," he said.

LG Sinha paid rich tributes to father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary and stated that "Bharat is all set to fulfill Babu's dream



of becoming Vikhsit."

He noted that 25 crore Indians have risen above the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category in the last decade, reflecting the government's commitment to inclusive development.

Citing a recent State Bank of India (SBI) report, he pointed out that rural poverty, which stood at 26% in 2012, has now been reduced to less than 5% in 2024.

**DREAMS BAPU HAD ENVISIONED BEING FULFILLED**

Emphasizing Mahatma Gandhi's ideals, the LG said, "The dreams Babu had envisioned are being fulfilled. Gandhiji always wanted every section of society to be empowered, and his principles continue to provide us with a roadmap for Viksit Bharat." He added that by following

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

## Life returning to normal in Badhaal after 17 mysterious deaths

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 30

After 54 days of uncertainty, life in Badhaal, Rajouri is finally returning to normal following a mysterious illness that claimed 17 lives.

Over the last seven days, no new cases have been reported, and most of the previously admitted patients have recovered, which has brought some relief to the fear-stricken community.

Locals speaking to the news agency said that though delayed, the government's preventive measures have helped in containing the crisis. However, they demand urgent answers regarding the exact cause of the deaths so that proper safety measures can be put in place and that the residents can resume normal life without fear.

The first death in Badhaal

was reported on December 8, and since then, more than 50 days have passed without the government being able to determine the cause.

Locals expressed frustration over the slow pace of the investigation, saying the issue should have been treated as a health emergency and resolved on priority.

A government official informed KNO that most patients admitted at Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri have recovered, though they remain under observation. He said that antidotes given to the affected patients have been effective, but authorities still lack conclusive evidence about the cause of the deaths and are awaiting Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) reports.

MLA Budhal Javed Iqbal Choudhary, speaking to

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

### 5 IAS officers transferred, Nitish Rajora is new Director Info

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 30

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday ordered the transfer and posting of five senior IAS officials in the interest of administration.

As per an order, a copy of which lies with the news agency, Jatin Kishore (IAS, AGMUT:2020), Additional Secretary in the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat and holding additional charge as



Director, Information J&K, has been transferred and

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

## At Mumbai OTM, CM Omar champions J&K's tourism growth, cultural showcase

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
MUMBAI, JAN 30

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursday visited the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Pavilion at the Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) 2025, Asia's largest travel trade show, being held at the Jio World Convention Centre here.

The event, which runs from January 30 to February 1, has brought together exhibitors



and buyers from across the globe, providing a platform for destinations to showcase their unique offerings.

This year, Jammu and Kashmir has made a strong impression with the participation of 120 tourism trade and travel operators, highlighting the region's unparalleled tourism potential. From its breathtaking landscapes to its rich cultural heritage, the

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4**

## Uncertainty looms over NC alliance as Congress begins preparations for Nagrota By-Election

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 30

The Congress party has kick started its preparations for the upcoming by-election in the Nagrota assembly constituency, which fell vacant following the demise of BJP MLA Devendra Singh Rana.

While the election date is yet to be announced, the political maneuvering has already begun, with the Congress setting up its office in the constituency and weighing potential candidates.

Details available with news agency reveal that the 2024 assembly elections, Congress

had fielded local Sarpanch Balbir Singh, who lost the seat to BJP's Devendra Singh Rana.

Singh had secured only 5,979 votes, while National Conference (NC) candidate Jogendra Singh garnered 17,641 votes. The late BJP leader emerged victorious with a commanding 48,113 votes.

Former minister and ex-MLA Balwan Singh, who won the seat in 1983, has now emerged as a strong contender for the Congress ticket. Another key factor in the electoral battle is the late Devendra Singh Rana's daughter, who is being considered a frontrunner for the BJP's ticket.

The bigger question looming over the by-election is whether NC and Congress will once again contest separately or field a joint candidate. In the 2024 assembly elections, both parties had a pre-poll alliance but fought a "friendly contest," leading to a split in votes. Collectively, they secured around 25,000 votes, indicating that a united front could pose a strong challenge to the BJP.

Sources told KNO that the National Conference is yet to decide whether to contest the seat, given Devendra Singh Rana's long association with the party before switching to the BJP. Rana was once a close

confidant of former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, making NC's decision on whether to contest or support Congress crucial in shaping the electoral dynamics.

Congress has intensified its groundwork, with senior party leaders actively engaging with workers in Nagrota. A public meeting is expected soon, featuring top leaders, as the party aims to consolidate its support base.

Meanwhile, J&K Congress President Tariq Hameed Karra is in Jammu, strategizing with local leaders to strengthen the party's position in the constituency. KNO

### First Budget of NC-Led Government

## LG Summons Assembly from March 03, to Begin with His Address

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JAN 30

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has summoned the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly from March 03 for the first budget to be presented by the National Conference-led government.

According to a notice from the Legislative Assembly secretariat, as per news agency, the LG has summoned the Assembly from March 03.

"I, Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant

Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, in exercise of the powers conferred upon me under Section 18(1) of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019, do hereby summon the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly to meet at Jammu on Monday, the 3rd day of March, 2025 at 10:00 AM," reads the order issued by the LG.

The session will start with the LG's address to the MLAs on the same day at 10:00 AM.

"I, Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, under the provisions of Section 21(1) of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019, call upon the Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir to assemble in the Legislative Assembly Complex at Jammu on Monday, the 3rd day of March, 2025 at 10:00 AM to hear my address."

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## DIPR hosts 2nd Edition of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Memorial Lecture Series

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 30

Department of Information & Public Relations, Jammu & Kashmir organized the second edition of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Memorial Lecture Series today here at the Convention Center.

The event brought together eminent scientists who delivered insightful lectures on various topics, paying tribute to the visionary legacy of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India and a pioneer in space and missile technology. The theme of the Lecture Series for the second edition was, "The Power of Dreams: How big ideas can transform the world."

The lecture series featured two distinguished speakers who shared their expertise and inspired the audience with their thought-provoking presentations.

Dr. Vellanki Seshagiri Rao, a former Distinguished Scientist, Associate



Director at ISRO, and former Satish Dhawan Professor at ISRO, delivered a lecture on the theme: "From Classroom to Cosmos - The Inspirational Journey of Science and Technology in Space Exploration."

Dr. Rao's lecture highlighted Dr. Kalam's belief that knowledge and innovation, when nurtured in classrooms, can propel humanity to unimaginable

heights, even to the cosmos. He emphasized the importance of fostering scientific curiosity and innovation among students to drive India's future advancements in space exploration.

Dr. Manoj Kumar Patariya, Adjunct Professor at NIAS, IISc, and former Director of CSIR and Adviser, DST, Ministry of Science & Technol-

ogy, Government of India, spoke on the theme: "Visionary Leadership - Transforming Dreams into Reality." Dr. Patariya's lecture focused on the role of visionary leadership in turning ambitious dreams into tangible achievements, drawing inspiration from Dr. Kalam's life and work. He underscored the importance of perseverance, innovation, and leadership in achieving

breakthroughs in science and technology.

In his welcome address, Director Information, Jatin Kishore, spoke about Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's monumental contributions to missile technology and space organizations. He highlighted Dr. Kalam's role as a mentor and inspiration to countless scientists and students, emphasizing how his legacy continues to guide

India's scientific and technological progress.

The event was attended by Joint Director Information (Hqrs), Vivek Puri, Joint Director Information Jammu, Atul Gupta, Deputy Director Information (PR&AV), Deepak Dubey, Deputy Director Information (Central), Sunil Kumar, Deputy Director (PR) Jammu, Deputy Director (Hqrs) Jammu, Information Officers, Accounts Officers and other staff members.

Students from various institutions, including IIM Jammu and IIMC Jammu, actively participated in the lecture series, showcasing their enthusiasm for science and technology.

The lectures were followed by an engaging question-and-answer session, where students posed thoughtful questions to the guest speakers. The speakers responded with patience and clarity, providing insightful answers that further enriched the learning experience for all attendees.

## Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign 2025 launched



JNEWS SERVICE  
RAMBAN, JANUARY 30

World Leprosy Day was observed today at District Hospital Ramban and all medical block levels across the district under the supervision of Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr. Kamal Ji Zadu, along with District Health Officer Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, Orthopedic Specialist Dr. Mohd Rafi and Physician Dr. Mohd Syed.

As part of the observance, a rally was organized to raise awareness about leprosy, focusing on its early detection and elimination of social stigma associated with the disease. The rally

witnessed active participation from Senior and junior staff of District Hospital Ramban and students of Government ANM School Ramban.

On this occasion, the SPARSH Leprosy Awareness Campaign 2025 was also launched, which will continue from January 30 to February 13, 2025. The campaign aims to educate communities, promote early diagnosis, and ensure stigma-free treatment for leprosy patients.

Authorities urged the public to support the initiative by spreading awareness and ensuring timely medical intervention for those affected by leprosy.



Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha bid farewell to the Additional Secretary, Shri Jatin Kishore, and Physician, Dr Vijay Sagar at a function organised at Raj Bhawan today. The function was attended by officers of Raj Bhawan.

The Lieutenant Governor felicitated Sh. Jatin Kishore and Dr. Vijay Sagar with a memento and expressed his appreciation for their professional conduct and sincere dedication with which they discharged their duties at Raj Bhawan. The Lieutenant Governor on Thursday appointed Sh. Jatin Kishore as Deputy Commissioner, Ganderbal. Dr. Vijay Sagar is attaining the age of superannuation on 31st January.

The Lieutenant Governor wished them good health, prosperity, and success in future.

## Horticulture Department organises farmers' awareness program at Satwari



JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 30

The Department of Horticulture Jammu today conducted a farmers' awareness camp/ kisan mela at Satwari under the aegis of Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) scheme.

Member Legislative Assembly Dr. Narinder Singh Raina was the chief guest, while former BDC Chairman Daleep Kumar presided over the event.

While addressing the gathering of more than 100 farmers including women farmers, MLA Dr. Narinder Singh Raina impressed upon them to associate with the Horticulture department and avail the benefits of different farmer friendly schemes of the department. He appreciated the role of the department in creating awareness among the farming community about the various schemes of the department.

Joint Director Horticulture Jammu Vikas Anand welcomed the guests and briefed them about the progress made in respect of plantation and other

works in the area. He said that the camp was organized to generate awareness about the central and UT government schemes of the department, especially HADP with a motive to enhance the farmers' income. He also stressed the importance of these initiatives in promoting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing the economic stability of farmers.

Earlier, Chief Horticulture Officer Jammu Rakesh Kotwal deliberated on the upcoming Spring Season Plantation. He briefed the farmers in detail about the various government schemes of the department especially Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and elaborated on the benefits these schemes offer, particularly to unemployed youth. He said that HADP is designed to provide comprehensive support, enabling farmers to harness modern techniques and resources for better productivity and profitability.

HDO Satwari Dheeraj Sharma conducted the proceedings of the programme.

## Awareness on Women's dignity, empowering held at Ganderbal

JNEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 30

In a significant initiative for women's rights and protection, Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti, Ganderbal, in collaboration with TLSA Ganderbal, Special Cell for Women, and ICDS conducted an impactful awareness camp at Dar Mohalla Chunt Walivar, under the supervision of the District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) today.

The camp focused on the NALSA (Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children) Scheme, 2015, providing crucial information about legal protections, rehabilitation support, and measures to combat trafficking and exploitation.

Legal experts and government officials discussed the importance of community vigilance,



legal aid services, and the role of law enforcement in preventing gender-based crimes.

In addition to the legal framework, the camp also highlighted various women-centric government schemes, such as financial assistance programs, skill development initiatives, and the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative, aimed at empowering women and promoting gender

equality. As part of the BBBP initiative, Sankalp Hub distributed baby kits and blankets to nursing mothers, reinforcing its commitment to maternal and child welfare.

The camp witnessed active participation from women in the region, who engaged in discussions, sought legal guidance, and shared concerns about gender-based violence and exploitation.

## Holistic Agriculture Development Programme Group of Kishtwar farmers flagged off for 3-day "Exposure Visit"

JNEWS SERVICE  
KISHTWAR, JANUARY 30

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan today flagged off a group of farmers on three 3 Day "Exposure Visit" to Doda and Baderwah under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

The flag-off ceremony was held at the Mini Secretariat, New DC Office, where a group of more than 50 farmers, including women farmers from different parts of the district, embarked on this educational tour.

Key components of the HADP exposure visit include the promotion of year-round mushroom cultivation and the promotion of commercial floriculture.

The exposure visit will take farmers to KVK



Bhaderwah, the Food Processing Centre, the High-Tech Poly Greenhouse in Doda, and the Controlled-Condition Cropping Room in Bhaderwah. This initiative aims to enhance their knowledge and skills in soil health management, sustainable hill agriculture, and modern farming techniques.

Additionally, the visit will focus on educating farmers about various beneficiary-oriented schemes, advancements in agricultural technology,

and opportunities to interact with progressive farmers in the floriculture sector and agricultural scientists. The farmers are being accompanied by Chief Agriculture Officer (CAO) Amjad Husain Malik, who, along with experts, will guide them through various renowned agricultural units. The participants will also gain hands-on experience in the manufacturing process of value-added agricultural products.

## DLSA Srinagar conducts inspection of Psychiatric Hospital, Prison Legal Aid Clinic

JNEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 30

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Srinagar, conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Prison Legal Aid Clinic at Central Jail, Srinagar, and the Legal Aid Clinic at Psychiatric Hospital, Rainawari.

The event was held under the chairmanship of Jaffer Hussain Beg, Chairman DLSA Srinagar/Principal District & Sessions Judge, Srinagar, and was supervised by Ms. Nusrat Ali Hakak, Secretary DLSA Srinagar.

The objective of the inspection was to assess the accessibility and quality of legal aid services provided to prisoners,



ensuring that they receive timely legal representation and support.

During the visit, she closely monitored the functioning of the legal aid services in the prison and interacted with the jail para-legal volunteers (PLVs) to evaluate their role in assisting inmates with legal aid and awareness.

Meanwhile, an awareness programme was also organized for jail inmates, where Saad Ganaie, Chief Legal Aid Defense Coun-

sel, along with Assistant Legal Aid Defense Counsels, Urba Rashid and Sehar Nazir, served as resource persons.

They educated the inmates about their legal rights and the availability of free legal aid services. Emphasis was placed on how prisoners can access these legal services, ensuring that they are not deprived of legal representation due to financial constraints. The session aimed at empowering inmates with knowledge

about their rights and the legal avenues available for their defense and rehabilitation.

In addition to the prison inspection, Secretary DLSA also inspected the Legal Aid Clinic at Psychiatric Hospital, Rainawari.

The objective was to review the operation of the clinic and assess the performance and effectiveness of para-legal volunteers in delivering legal services to patients undergoing psychiatric treatment.

The inspection focused on ensuring that individuals receiving treatment at the hospital have access to necessary legal assistance, particularly in matters related to mental health rights, legal representation, and other welfare concerns.

DLSA Srinagar remains committed to strengthening legal aid mechanisms and ensuring that vulnerable sections of society, including prisoners and individuals in psychiatric care, receive timely and effective legal support.

## Mission Director reviews progress of JJM works in District Reasi



JNEWS SERVICE  
REASI, JANUARY 30

Mission Director J. Jeevan Mission (JJM) J&K UT Khurshid Ahmad Shah conducted a detailed review of the ongoing JJM works in District Reasi at a meeting held here today.

The Executive Engineer PHE Division Reasi gave a detailed Presentation about the progress achieved in implementation of JJM in the District. It was informed that 69 Schemes out of 121 Schemes have been completed in the district as on date.

The Mission Director JJM emphasized the importance of completing all pending schemes and works and ensuring the quality of the works being

executed. He stressed on achieving 100% "Har Ghar Jal" certification for covered villages.

The chair urged all stakeholders to work on a war footing to achieve the set targets and ensure seamless implementation of JJM in District Reasi.

The review meeting was attended by Superintendent Engineer PHE (Mech.) Bodhranj Bhagat, Executive Engineer and MID Dharmari, Executive Engineer JPDCL, AEEs, AEs, JEs, DPMU and officers from forest, PMGSY, besides Sunil Khoul and Vijay Arora, Consultants for the district.

The Mission Director also inspected a number of Water Supply Schemes being implemented in the District.

## District-Level NCORD meeting held to strengthen anti-drug measures in Samba



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, JANUARY 30

Additional Deputy Commissioner Samba, Jagdish Singh, today chaired the district-level committee meeting under the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) here at the DC Office. The meeting focused on reviewing and reinforcing measures to curb drug abuse and illicit narcotic trade in the district.

The meeting was attended by Additional SP Samba Garu Ram, Chief Education Officer, SDM Vijaypur and Ghagwal, GM DIC, Chief Medical Officer, Tehsildars, district officers

and other concerned officials.

Discussions centered on countering drug abuse, identifying high-risk areas and reviewing the action taken on directives from the previous NCORD meeting. Stressing the need for a comprehensive approach, the ADC directed all stakeholders to conduct awareness drives in schools, colleges, and communities, ensuring active involvement of parents to protect the youth from substance abuse.

The ADC further underscored the importance of sustained law enforcement efforts, urging agencies to intensify vigilance

against drug trafficking. He asked district officers to submit a monthly progress report for the compilation of a coffee table book, documenting the administration's anti-drug initiatives.

In a significant move to curb the misuse of prescription drugs, the CCTV cameras have been installed in medical shops across the district. Additionally, officers were directed to hold regular sub-divisional meetings, install awareness signboards in Nasha Mukh Panchayats and conduct random checks on medicinal stores to enforce computerized billing.

## DLSA Ganderbal organises awareness prog on Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, JANUARY 30

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ganderbal in collaboration with District Administration, Ganderbal organized a legal awareness program on the Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) (POSH) Act, 2013 today, at Tehsil Office Complex Wakura.

The event was held under the supervision of Abdul Nasir, Chairman, DLSA (Pr. District & Sessions Judge), Ganderbal and guidance of Sheikh Babar Hussain, Secretary, DLSA Ganderbal, aimed to provide safe and secure environment for women at workplace.

Advocate Sajid Irfan, Deputy Legal Defense Counsel Ganderbal, delivered an insightful speech, elaborated on the legal framework of Act and also highlighted the object of POSH Act.

He said the Act is applicable to all women irrespective of their age or employment status, working in organised or



unorganised sector and the Act casts an obligation upon every employer to create an environment which is free from sexual harassment.

He explained the procedure for filing complaints under the POSH Act in detail, empowering participants to take action against sexual harass-

ment.

Advocate, Asif Mustafa, emphasized the importance of the POSH Act in creating a safe and equitable work environment for women and encouraged proactive measures for its implementation. He added that POSH act has undoubtedly laid a strong foundation for workplace safety.

He emphasized the need for participants to spread awareness about the POSH Act among their colleagues, promoting a culture of respect and safety in the workplace and added that the Ministry has developed an online complaint management system titled the Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box, www.shebox.nic.in) for registering complaints related to sexual harassment of women at workplace.

The event was also attended by the Tehsildar Wakura, Officials of Rural Development Department, Health Department, Staff members of various schools and PLVs (Adhikar Mitras) of DLSA, Ganderbal.

## GCW Parade organises seminar on Punjabi Sufi Poetry



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 30

The Department of Punjabi and Department of Music of Government College for Women, Parade Ground, in collaboration with the Punjabi Lekhak Sabha Jammu, organized a one-day seminar on Punjabi Sufi poetry.

The program uniquely combined discussions on Punjabi Sufi poetry with captivating performances of Sufi singing by students and faculty from the departments of Literature and Music.

The keynote speaker for the first session was Professor Jagdish Singh, Director of Naad Pragaas, a research-oriented organization based in Sri Amritsar. Professor Singh has played a pivotal role in advancing academic practices through the lens of Shabad Darshan. His lecture explored Punjabi Sufi

poetry from two perspectives: the ongoing journey of spiritual experience and a critical worldview.

The second session featured Sufi singing, where teachers, students, and alumni from various institutions, including Govt MAM College, GDC Bishnah, IMFA, and the Music Department of Host College, enthralled the audience with their performances. The seminar aimed to reconnect participants with the rich heritage of Punjabi Sufi music and poetry, delving into its thought processes, mystical experiences, and critical insights.

The seminar was chaired by Dr. Ravender Tickoo, Principal of the college. Dr. Jasmeet Kour, head of the Music Department, expressed gratitude to all the dignitaries whose esteemed presence contributed to the seminar's success.

## Dy CM Surinder Choudhary holds Public Outreach Program at Seri

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SERI, (RAJOURI), JANUARY 30

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, conducted a public outreach program at Seri to take stock of issues and concerns of local residents besides reviewing development works there.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from the public, who raised various developmental concerns and sought immediate intervention from the administration in redressal of the same.

Among the key issues highlighted by the people included construction of multi-storey building for government offices, upgradation of schools, acute shortage of teaching and medical staff in schools and Primary Health Centre (PHC) at Seri.

Additionally, the public demanded deployment of technical staff, installation of an X-ray machine and laboratory facilities, provision of a dental chair and establishment of new veterinary centres at Kalal and Sail.

Other pressing concerns included pending Administrative Approval (AAA) for a grid station, requisition of electricity poles and wires, installation of



new transformers and upgradation of existing ones in various panchayats. The people also sought expeditious execution of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) works, bifurcation of panchayats and construction of check dams.

The Dy CM issued directions for prompt action and redressal of grievance of general public on priority basis.

He instructed for rationalisation of staff in schools and health institutions to address the deficiencies. He emphasised that the work under Jeevan Mission (JJM) must be executed as per guidelines to ensure water supply reaches every panchayat.

He asked the officers not to solely rely on feedback

from field staff but to personally visit each panchayat and assess the ground situation.

The Dy CM reiterated that corruption would not be tolerated and firmly stated that the "commission culture" must end. He asked the concerned departments to ensure availability of essential public amenities.

The Dy CM ordered a strict ban on mining activities near water sources to prevent environmental degradation and safeguard drinking water supply.

The outreach program was attended by ADDC Rajouri, Raj Kumar Thapa; ADC Nowshera, Babu Ram Tandon; ADC Sunderbani, Rajeev Magotra, along with other district and sectoral officers.

## National Awardees unique treasure of art, talent

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 30

In a bid to benefit from the colossal experience gained over years of perseverance and patience in the field of art and crafts, the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, today organized a meeting with the National Awardees to obtain firsthand feedback from them in their respective crafts and way forward.

Structured meetings with these stalwarts shall help the Department to frame a strategy to boost sale and export of exquisite handmade products and encourage new artisans and weavers to set up their own startup ventures.

The meeting was attended by Abdul Majeed Mir (Aari Staple), Ghulam Nabi Dar (Walnut Wood Carving), Hakeem Manzor Ahmad (Papier Mache) and Manzoor Ahmad



Khan, Mansoor Ahmad Makaiya & Nisar Ahmad Khan, all in the field of Kani weaving.

During the discussions with Director Handicrafts and Handloom, Musarat Islam, the National Awardees appreciated the role of the department in safeguarding the welfare of artisans and promotion of genuine craft products. They also lauded the recent efforts of the Department in curbing sale of counterfeit items in the name of hand-made products, which are bringing a bad name to the rich heritage of Kashmir.

The Director described them as unique pack-

age of art and talent that the department wears as a badge of honour. He assured the National Awardees of scaling up GI tagging, certification and QR coding of handmade items in its PTQCC, IICT labs and Quality Control labs so that customer confidence is secured. "The department has requested these master craftsmen to share their views for promotion of unique Kashmir crafts," he added. He also requested the Awardees to partner the initiatives of the Department in capacity building of new artisan and weavers so that the rich crafts of Kashmir are saved for posterity.

## Handicrafts & Handloom Dept bids adieu to G. R. Ahanger on retirement



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 30

The Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, today bid adieu to its National Awardee employee in the School of Designs, Ghulam Rasool Ahanger, who retired as Assistant Craftsmen after putting in 28 years of exemplary service.

In a felicitation function, Director Handicrafts

and Handloom, Kashmir, Musarat Islam, lauded the efforts of the official, who had gained great expertise in the field of wood carving. "His retirement has left a deep void in the department and his absence shall be severely missed," he stated.

Handicrafts and Handloom Department wished Ghulam Rasool Ahanger a very happy post-retirement life.

## DC flags off Awareness Van under Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign at Samba



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, JANUARY 30

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Samba Rajesh Sharma today flagged off an awareness van from the District Office Complex, Samba, marking the launch of the Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign.

The initiative is being carried out under the over-

all supervision of Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr. Vidhi Bhatial.

The campaign will be observed across all health institutions in District Samba from January 30 to February 13, 2025, under the theme "Fortnight IEC Activities."

It aims to educate the public about the signs and symptoms of lep-

rosy, its prevention, early diagnosis, and the availability of free treatment in

government health institutions. The campaign also emphasizes the need to

eliminate stigma and discrimination against individuals affected by leprosy.

## MVD conducts Road Safety signature Campaign, awareness drive in Poonch

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, JANUARY 30

As part of the ongoing National Road Safety Month, the Motor Vehicles department Poonch conducted a signature campaign to spread awareness among the public about traffic rules and safe driving. The campaign was initiated by Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal, who is the Chairman District Road Safety Com-

mittee in the lawns of the DC Office complex with a message to the people of Poonch to abide by the road safety rules in order to avoid accidents and save precious lives.

The Deputy Commissioner also took a selfie with the road safety selfie boards installed at the venue.

Assistant Regional Transport Officer Basharat Mahmood urged people to adopt Road safety princi-

ples in their daily life. He also requested the parents not to give motor bikes and vehicles to their young children till they attain a valid Driving license. Dy. SP Traffic Rajouri-Poonch Shiv Kumar also participated in the event

Later, a joint awareness drive was conducted at Naka Wali Chowk P where commuters were advised to wear seat belts while driving and drive within speed limits

NORTHERN RAILWAY		
E-Auction Notice		
The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:		
Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFZR-CTG25-3	11.02.2025 at 11:00 Hours	Allotment of Catering stalls on contract at Khem Karan, Muktsar, Tarn Taran, Sahnewal, Kartarpur, RCF Kapurthala Halt, Nawan Shahar Daoba, Nakodar, Verka, Jagraon, Firozpur City & Fazilka Railway Stations.
EAFZR-CTG25-4	12.02.2025 at 11:00 Hours	Allotment of Catering stalls on contract at Hillar Shahabad, Anantnag, Bari Brahmana, Samba, Dinanagar, Nagrota Surian, Nurpur Road, Guler, Nagrota, Palampur Himachal, Tanda Urmur, Bhogpur Sirwal and Kot Kapura Railway Stations.
EAFZR-PRKG25-2	14.02.2025 at 12:30 Hours	Allotment of Parking lot on contract at Beas & Kapurthala Railway Station.
For other details and registration, please visit Railway website <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>		
No. MC/38015/Pub/E-Auction/FZR/22 Date: 30.01.2025		
		332/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

## DC Reasi reviews working of Revenue Department



J NEWS SERVICE  
REASI, JANUARY 30

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nidhi Malik chaired a comprehensive review of the Revenue Department to assess digitization of land records, including Jamabandies, eviction of encroachments from state land, status of revenue court cases, SAMITVA schemes, online services on the Jan Sugam portal and land acquisition cases. The meeting focused on

expediting critical processes to enhance efficiency and transparency in revenue administration. The Tehsildars were asked to complete the verification of digitalized Jamabandies within a week and address concerns related to dual verification. Stressing the importance of safeguarding state land, she instructed revenue officials to ensure no fresh encroachments occur and to expedite the resolution of pending

revenue court cases. Additionally, she emphasized the need for increased field visits, particularly to schools, to strengthen on-ground monitoring and governance.

The DC underscored the importance of adhering to construction regulations, urging officials to encourage citizens to obtain proper permissions and take stringent action against illegal structures. She reiterated the administration's commitment to transparent and effective revenue management, calling for proactive measures to streamline online services and improve overall service delivery. Meeting was attended by ACR Anshumali Sharma, SDM Piyush Dhotra, SDM Mazzahir Hussain and Tehsildar's.

## Shri Ram School wins First Prize In Patriotic Song



J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JAN 30

The Shri Ram Universal School in Jammu has Achieved a Commendable feat by earning first place in the Patriotic Song Singing Competition 2025, organized by the Department of Information & Public Relations in UT of Jammu & Kashmir. The school showcased exceptional talent and dedication in the group song competition category.

On January 29, 2025, the students and staff gathered at MA Stadium for a heartfelt felicitation ceremony. A momentous occasion unfolded as the school was presented with a cash prize of Rs 10,000

from the Honorable Lieutenant Governor of UT of Jammu & Kashmir, Shri Manoj Sinha.

In celebration of this achievement, a special assembly was held to honour the efforts of the students and their dedicated music teachers, Akash Sangral and Prakash Bhatti. During the assembly, the management distributed the prize money among the participating students and teachers as a token of appreciation for their hard work and dedication. They also expressed deep appreciation for their hard work which has brought immense pride to the school and inspired the entire community.

## Mission Shakti Jammu conducts Menstrual Hygiene Awareness Session at GGHSS Nowabad

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 30

Mission Shakti SANKALP HEW Jammu- Social Welfare Department conducted an awareness session on menstrual hygiene today at Government Girls Higher Secondary School Nowabad under the aegis of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP).

The objectives of the session was to educate students about menstruation and its biological significance, promote safe and hygienic practices, address myths and misconceptions, encourage confidence and open discussions on menstrual health.

The target audience was the girls from secondary classes Female teachers and school staff. The officials explained the menstrual cycle in simple terms, the role of hormones and why periods happen, Hygiene & Safe Practices, importance of



using clean sanitary products (pads, menstrual cups, cloth pads), how to change and dispose of sanitary products properly, preventing infections through proper cleaning and drying of reusable

cloth pads, addressing cultural and social stigmas, encouraging open discussions with family members. Further the Officials of Mission Shakti distributed Sanitary Napkins among the girls.

## CMO Doda flags off Sparsh Leprosy Rally-cum-Awareness Van

J NEWS SERVICE  
DODA, JANUARY 30

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Doda today flagged off the Sparsh Leprosy Rally-Cum-Awareness Van, marking the launch of an exten-

sive awareness drive under the Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign. The initiative aims to educate the public about leprosy, eradicate misconceptions, and promote early detection and treatment across the district.

The event was attended by BMO Ghat, Dr. Abdul Gafoor, Principal ANMT Doda, Smt. Vidya Kotwal, Javed Iqbal (Head Assistant), Mohd Shafi Attu (Health Educator), Sanjeev Rana (I/C Legal Section), Mohd Faheem Butt (FLO

NCD), along with Leprosy Staff members Mr. Ram Raj and. Sajad Ahmed (both PMAs) and the staff of ANMT School, among others.

The CMO emphasized the importance of awareness in eliminating the stigma surround-

ing leprosy and urged people to avail themselves of free diagnosis and treatment services provided by the health department. The awareness van will traverse different areas of the district, disseminating vital information and

encouraging community participation in the fight against leprosy. The initiative is part of a broader effort to achieve a leprosy-free society by ensuring early detection, timely medical intervention, and public sensitization.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

### J&K Budget 2025-26: Will...

the NC led dispensation will ensure their inclusion in government expenditure plans.

According to sources, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has requested a Rs 20,000 crore special package from the Union Government in a recent meeting with the Union Finance Minister and other central ministers. If approved, this package may be included under a specific budget component.

Additionally, the Jammu and Kashmir Finance Department has instructed Administrative Secretaries to cut down on unnecessary expenses while preparing budget proposals. This move aims to curb wasteful government spending and promote fiscal discipline—(KNO)

### Bharat set to become...

Gandhiji's philosophy, India can achieve great heights and show a new direction to the world. "We are striving to make Bharat Viksit by 2047, and this mission aligns with Bapu's lifelong commitment to wiping tears from every eye," he remarked.

LG Sinha also recalled Gandhiji's Karachi Convention of 1931, where he advocated for justice and equality, noting that the vision outlined then is now becoming the foundation for a developed India.

Highlighting the progress made in women's empowerment, the Lieutenant Governor said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has opened new avenues for women, enabling them to excel across sectors. "Girls have been outperforming boys in academics, proving that they are no less than men," he added.

### PRaises HOLISTIC AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN J&K

Turning to agriculture, LG Sinha praised the Holistic Agricultural Development Programme (HADP) for farmers in Jammu and Kashmir, which has led to a revolution in farming practices. "Farmers are adopting innovative methods, proving their capability to achieve new heights. Gandhiji always recognized the wisdom of Indian farmers, and today, their contributions are shaping a self-reliant India," he said.

LG Sinha also underlined the government's efforts to create employment opportunities for the youth, emphasizing the need for collective action.

"People want Swaraj, and I want Swaraj too. But first, we must take the initiative; only then will the government follow," LG Sinha quoted Gandhiji as having said.

GANDHIJI'S PRINCIPLES GUIDING FORCE FOR US Referring to the principles and values of Mahatma Gandhi, LG Sinha said, "The principles and values of truth and non-violence to which Gandhiji was always committed are beyond time and place. They are as relevant today as they were during his lifetime. He has guided us for peaceful resolution of differences and well-being of every Indian."

The Lieutenant Governor honoured the family members of the army brave-hearts, and also paid homage to all the leaders, fighters, and martyrs who devoted themselves towards India's freedom. "The world, that we live in today, is witnessing conflicts. In many parts of the globe, societies are facing disruption because of ongoing aggression. In such a scenario, the need for peace and non-violence is deeply felt. I am confident in this situation Bapu's ideals will show the right path to humanity," LG said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon every section of the society to rededicate themselves to the ideals and values of Mahatma Gandhi and come together for

the cause of empowerment of poor, youth, women and farmers and make their valuable contribution to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the Gandhi Global Family J&K, for its constant endeavours to promote Gandhian values and spreading the noble message of Truth, Non-Violence and Social Harmony.

Responding to the demand put forth by the President of Gandhi Global Family J&K, Padma Shri Dr S.P. Varma, Lieutenant Governor assured that the month-long Gandhi Jayanti celebrations will continue across J&K as per the past practice.

He said that humanity can achieve the right path and goal of peace, harmony and development in Jammu Kashmir, the country and the world only by following the ideals of Bapu.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor was honoured with Shanti Doot Samman by the Gandhi Global Family.

Padma Shri Awardees including Dr. S.P. Varma, Prof. Vishwa Murti Shastris, Dr. Jitendra Udhampuri, and Romalo Ram; meritorious students and Youth were also felicitated by the Lieutenant Governor with Gandhi Doot Samman.

A two-minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the Father of the Nation and the martyrs who made supreme sacrifice in the struggle for India's freedom. A pledge was also administered to uphold and promote Gandhiji's vision, ideals and philosophies.

Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Anand Jain, ADGP Jammu; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu; retired and serving officials of Civil Administration, Police and Security Forces; members of Gandhi Global Family; family members of martyrs and freedom fighters, representatives of various social organizations and students in large numbers were present.

Yudhvir Sethi, Member of Legislative Assembly, Jammu East; Arjun Singh Raju, Member of Legislative Assembly, Ramban and prominent citizens were also present on the occasion. KNO

### Life returning to...

KNO, criticised the delayed investigation and expressed concern that no official FSL or test reports have been released even after nearly two months. The situation remains in the realm of 'guesswork', with no confirmed scientific findings, he said.

The MLA accused GMC Jammu of negligence, holding them responsible for the deaths of 12 children. He vowed to push for a full-fledged investigation. "There must be a swift inquiry process," he said, adding that authorities must prioritise finding the root cause of these deaths. KNO

### 5 IAS officers...

posted as Deputy Commissioner, Ganderbal. Shishir Gupta (IAS, AGMUT:2020), Additional Deputy Commissioner, Jammu, has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Shopian. Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar (JKAS), whom he replaces, will report to the General Administration Department for further posting.

Nitish Rajora (IAS, AGMUT:2021), Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Jammu (North), has been transferred and posted as Director, Information J&K.

Rakesh Kumar (IAS, AGMUT:2021), Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Hiranagar, has been transferred and posted as Additional Deputy Commissioner, Jammu.

Shubhankar Pratyush Pathak (IAS, AGMUT:2022), Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Akhnoor, Jammu, has been

transferred and posted as Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Uri, Baramulla. He replaces Javid Ahmad Rather (JKAS), who will report to the General Administration Department for further posting. KNO

### At Mumbai OTM...

pavilion showcased why Jammu and Kashmir is a must-visit destination for travelers worldwide.

During his visit, the Chief Minister interacted with stakeholders, including travel operators, artisans and tourism officials and inquired about the arrangements in place for their participation. He also conducted a detailed inspection of the pavilion, appreciating the efforts to present Jammu and Kashmir's diverse offerings creatively.

The Chief Minister emphasized the government's unwavering commitment to tourism promotion, stating that Tourism is a top priority for his government and are dedicated to positioning Jammu and Kashmir as a global tourism hotspot. "Our participation in events like OTM is a step toward achieving this vision", Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said.

He directed the Tourism Department to ensure maximum outreach by actively engaging in major travel marts across the country and internationally.

The Chief Minister reiterated that his government is committed to supporting the tourism industry and ensuring that Jammu and Kashmir continues to shine on the global stage.

During his visit, chief minister was accompanied by Advisor to CM Nasir Aslam Wani, Additional Chief Secretary to CM Dheeraj Gupta, Director Tourism Kashmir and MD JKTDCC.

On the occasion, the stakeholders expressed optimism about forging new collaborations and attracting more visitors to Jammu and Kashmir. KNO

### LG Summons Assembly...

reads another order from the LG.

The cabinet led by Omar Abdullah last week recommended the LG to summon the assembly in the first week of March, something which was objected to by Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone, citing the holy month of Ramadhan.

According to the Legislative Assembly secretariat, each MLA cannot submit more than ten starred and ten un-starred questions by or before February 10, 2025. The MLAs also cannot submit more than three bills by or before February 10, 2025. They can submit a maximum of four resolutions by or before February 16, 2025—(KNO)

### Army foils infiltration...

Khari Karmara area, leading to a gunfight between the two sides," the officials said, adding, "Soldiers fired after observing suspicious movement along the Line of Control in the Poonch sector. Terrorist movement detected in Poonch sector along the Line of Control. Alert troops opened fire leading to a heavy exchange of fire. Operations are underway," Indian Army's White Knight Corps posted on X.

However, there is no clarity on casualties but reliable sources said that "at least two terrorists were hit by the bullets in the Army firing but it was not immediately known whether they were dead or injured."

Reinforcements have rushed to the scene with thick foliage and a search operation is underway, the officials said, adding further details are awaited. KNO

### J&K government faces...

Thursday after official social media accounts of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the National Conference (NC) announced a hike in the monthly honorarium for Special Police Officers (SPOs).

The posts, which quickly went viral, were later deleted, prompting clarification from the NC.

The party said the person who put it on social media has been taken to task and divested of his responsibility as social media Advisor to Vice President Omar Abdullah.

"A recent post concerning SPOs' honorarium was put out from various handles connected to the party and the Chief Minister. This post should not have been put out and was done without any attempt to verify or cross-check the information being put out. While we have been strongly advocating for an increase in the honorarium and are making every effort to see this done, it hasn't happened till now," NC statement said.

"The person responsible has been taken to task and has been divested of his responsibility as Social Media advisor to VP JKNC."

The since-deleted post on Abdullah's Instagram handle announced a hike in the honorarium of SPOs

"Delighted to announce a hike in SPO honorarium for Jammu & Kashmir: New recruits to get Rs 12,000 monthly; after 5 years: 18,000; after 10 years: 24,000; and after attaining 15+ years of service, the SPOs will get Rs 30,000 per month salary. #ApkiSarkaarApkeSath," he said.

The post quickly drew scrutiny, with political leaders questioning its validity and accuracy.

J&K Peoples Conference President and Handwara MLA Sajad Lone sought clarification, pointing out that SPO salaries are funded by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) through Security-Related Expenditure (SRE).

"Is it true? The salaries of SPOs are funded by MHA through SRE. Still, if the state government has created or invented a way to supplement their salaries-some clarification on that. Per se, it is MHA domain. Reposted-as NC deleted the post," Lone said on X.

Former Srinagar Mayor Junaid Mattu also criticized NC.

"On ONE hand we have @JKNC and the @CM JnK constantly telling us that the Home Dept and L&O don't come under the elected Government. On the other hand, they claim credit for the increased honorarium of SPOs of @JmuKmrPolice with a cutout of the CM's picture! Post deleted now?" he said

### Govt orders transfer...

to take up a new assignment in the Delhi segment of the AGMUT Cadre.

S.J.M. Gillani (IPS), Director General of Police (DGP) and Managing Director of Police Housing Corporation, will now hold the additional charge of Commandant General, Home Guards, Civil Defence & SDRF, J&K, until further orders.

Anand Jain (IPS), ADGP Jammu Zone, has been transferred and posted as ADGP Armed, J&K.

Bhim Sen Tuti (IPS), IGP (POS), PHQ, who was holding additional charge of IGP (Hqrs) PHQ, IGP (Technical Services), and IGP (Telecom), has been transferred and posted as IGP Jammu Zone.

Suleman Choudhary (IPS), IGP Traffic, J&K, will now hold additional charge of IGP (POS) PHQ, IGP (Hqrs) PHQ, IGP (Technical Services), and IGP (Telecom) until further orders. KNO

## DC inspects NH-1C Land Acquisition Site and Government School in Katra



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
REASI, JANUARY 30

Deputy Commissioner Nidhi Malik today conducted a spot inspection of NH-1C at Kotli Manotarian village to assess land acquisition for the construction of a 20-meter span bridge. She directed the concerned authorities to ensure timely disbursement of compensation to the landowners and instructed immediate commencement of the bridge

construction to enhance connectivity in the region. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner also inspected Government High School Bhagga, where she reviewed classroom conditions and checked the teachers' attendance register. She emphasized the proper utilization of school grants for cleanliness and maintenance. Additionally, she mandated that the school sweeper be present daily to maintain hygiene standards.

To ensure accountability, DC Nidhi Malik directed the Tehsildar to conduct regular school inspections. She instructed strict action against the in-charge if cleanliness standards were not met, reinforcing the administration's commitment to improving educational infrastructure and student well-being. ACR Anshumali Sharma, SDM Katra Piyush Dhotra, Tehsildar Katra, XENs were present.

## DC Budgam inspects progress of work on Multipurpose Community Hall, Sheikhpora Pandit Colony

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BUDGAM, JANUARY 30

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam Akshay Labroo today visited the construction site of Multipurpose Community Hall at Pandit Colony, Sheikhpora Budgam to assess the progress of ongoing work. He was accompanied by CPO Budgam Irfan Giri, Executive Engineer R&B Budgam, AEE R&B Budgam, senior officials and engineers. While inspecting the ongoing construction work, he directed the officials and engineers to ensure high standards of



quality and workmanship. DC stressed that the Multipurpose Community Hall shall serve as a key social & community infrastructure for the PM package employees & their families residing within the Transit Accommodation at Sheikhpora, Budgam, and instructed the concerned departments accordingly to ensure its completion on time for the use of people. While emphasizing the importance of timely completion, he directed the concerned departments to ensure that the project is completed within the stipulated timeframe. He also stressed the need for strict adherence to construction guidelines and the optimal use of resources.

## Transport Commissioner inaugurates road safety awareness program at Warehouse

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, JANUARY 30

As part of the ongoing Road Safety Month, Transport Commissioner J&K Vishesh Paul Mahajan inaugurated a road safety awareness program at Warehouse Jammu to promote responsible driving and minimize accidents. The Transport Commissioner was accompanied by Regional Transport Officer Jammu Pankaj Bhagotra, ARTOs, officials from MVD and representatives from several Transport unions.

Speaking on the occasion, the Transport Commissioner emphasized that road safety is not just a one-day affair but a lifelong commitment. He stated, "Every day should be observed as Road Safety Day and following traffic rules, stay-



ing vigilant, and promoting responsible driving should be part of our daily routine, not just during special campaigns." he added. Highlighting the significance of adopting Traffic related disciplines he strongly urged people to avoid drunk driving, emphasizing that alcohol impairs judgment, slows

reflexes, and significantly increases the risk of fatal accidents. He highlighted that strict action will be taken against those caught violating rules. He further reiterated the dangers of over speeding, rash driving, and breaking traffic rules, stressing that a few minutes of impatience on the road can cost precious lives.

## DC reviews implementation of Land Use Regulations in Doda District, Approves 4 CLU cases

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, JANUARY 30

Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee on the Change of Land Use (CLU) here in the Mini Conference Hall to review implementation of the land use regulations and policy compliance in the District. The meeting also scrutinized the petitions seeking Change of Land Use and approved 4 cases. The meeting focused on streamlining the land conversion process while ensuring planned and sustainable development across the district. Officials from Revenue, Town Planning, and Rural Development departments participated, providing inputs on pending applications and adherence to government policies. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need to balance develop-



ment with environmental sustainability. He directed officials to prevent unauthorized land conversions to avoid haphazard urbanization. The committee also discussed expediting pending CLU cases, ensuring transparency in approvals, and maintaining proper records to prevent legal disputes. Harvinder Singh stressed the importance of a robust monitoring mechanism to track land conversions and prevent the misuse of agricultural land for non-permissible activities. A total of five CLU cases were deliberated upon, out of which four were

approved after a thorough evaluation. The Deputy Commissioner instructed officials to expedite the issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for approved cases, ensuring all necessary documents are duly verified. He also emphasized the need for public awareness regarding land use policies, directing officials to educate citizens about legal procedures and environmental impacts. The meeting concluded with a commitment to ensuring a transparent, balanced, and sustainable approach to land development in Doda district.

## DC Bandipora visits under-construction JNV site Brar, reviews progress of ongoing works

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BANDIPORA, JANUARY 30

The Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, on Thursday visited the site of the under-construction Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV) at Brar to review the ongoing construction activities and took stock of the progress made in the construction work and ensuring that the project is completed within stipulated time.

Principal JNV Bandipora Mohammad Parvaiz briefed the Deputy Commissioner regarding various ongoing works and issues pertaining to JNV. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner inspected various sections of the site and emphasized the importance of adhering to quality standards and timelines to ensure the timely completion of the educational facility.

M.A. Qadri further instructed the concerned to expedite the work and ensure that all safety protocols are followed at the construction site besides directed regular monitoring to ensure the quality and timely completion. During the visit the Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Chief Planning Officer Mohammad Maqbool Lone, Executive Engineer R&B Mohammad Hussain and other concerned



## DDC reviews implementation of FPO Scheme in Doda District

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, JANUARY 30

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Harvinder Singh today chaired a meeting of the District-Level Monitoring Committee to review the progress of the Central Sector Scheme for the formation and promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Manesh Kumar; DDM NABARD Rakesh Kumar and representatives from other implementing agencies, including NCDC, SFAC, NAFED, and FDRVC, along with Cluster-Based Business Organizations. The progress of FPOs operating in the district

was reviewed in detail. Discussions focused on the number of shareholders, the status of equity grants and the paid-up capital of these organizations. The DDC emphasised the need for effective coordination between implementing agencies and stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the scheme and

maximize benefits for farmers. The DDC directed concerned officials to expedite the formation and strengthening of FPOs, ensuring their sustainability and market linkage. He also stressed capacity-building measures and financial support mechanisms to enhance the economic viability of farmer collectives.

## 7 Day NSS Special Winter Camp concludes at GDC Neeli Nallah



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 30

NSS Unit, "Sewak", Government Degree College Neeli Nallah, Udhampur, successfully organized "Seven Day Special Winter Camp" under the theme "Not Me, But You," which concluded today. The camp aimed to provide an opportunity to NSS volunteers to engage in social service activities, such as community outreach and environmental conservation. The seven day camp featured varied activities


organized under the guidance of Prof. Shaista Yasmeen, NSS PO. The college Principal Prof. Dr. Seema Arora inaugurated the winter camp and said "As we embark on this special winter camp, I want to remind you that this is not just an event, but an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. Your participation in this camp will not only help you develop new skills and build lifelong friendships, but also enable you to contribute to the betterment of our society."

## Chairman DDC Kupwara inaugurates H&W Centre Panditpora, Tourist Spot Lokipora

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KUPWARA, JANUARY 30

Chairman District Development Council Kupwara, Irfan Sultan Panditpora today inaugurated Health & Wellness Centre and Tourist Spot Lokipora in Qaziabad block of district Kupwara in presence of Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan. Besides, Assistant Commissioner Development Kupwara, BDO Qaziabad; residents of the area were also present on the occasion. While inaugurating

Tourist Spot in Qaziabad, Panditpora reiterated long pending demand of the local people to develop the area as tourist destination. He added that the area has a good potential of tourism and hoped that the administration will explore its full potential for the development and welfare of the people. Later, the Chairman DDC visited Panditpora village where he inaugurated the newly constructed building of Health & Wellness Centre in presence Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan.



UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

### OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION BAKSHI NAGAR, JAMMU

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
e-NIT No.61of 2024-2025 Dated. 29-01-2025

For and on behalf of the **Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir** e-tenders are invited on **percentage basis** from approved and eligible Contractors registered with Union Territory of J&K, CPWD, Railways, MES and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works :-

S. No	Name of Work	Name of Division	Advertised Cost (Rs. in lacs)	Cost of document (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Time Allowed for complete-on	Time and date of opening of tender	Class of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Repair and Renovation of BEd Teaching Block and Construction of concrete Platform under electric transformers Classrooms at GCOE Jammu	PWD (R&B) DIVISION BAKSHI NAGAR Jammu	9.85	600	2% of Advertised Cost	30 Days	05-02-2025 (12.00Pm)	"A,B,C&D" Class

**Position of AAA: Accorded**  
**Position of TS: Sanctioned**  
The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website <http://jktenders.gov.in> as per below schedule:-

Sl	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	30-01-2025
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	30-01-2025
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 30-01-2025 to 04-02-2025 upto 1800 Hrs
3	Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting	XXXXXXXX at XXXX Hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) DIVISION BAKSHI NAGAR Jammu
4	Bid submission Start Date	30-01-2025
5	Bid Submission End Date	04-02-2025 upto 1800 Hrs
6	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	05-02-2025 on or after 1200 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) DIVISION BAKSHI NAGAR Jammu
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of **e-challan through Treasury indicating Treasury Voucher No. & date, e-NIT No. and name of work duly crediting to MH 0059 (Revenue) favoring Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) DIVISION BAKSHI NAGAR Jammu and upload the same i.e treasury challan / receipt, Earnest money / Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) DIVISION BAKSHI NAGAR Jammu.** The CDR/FDR/BG shall be valid for 45 Days beyond the bid validity period. The original instruments in respect of cost of documents, EMD and relevant documents of L1 be submitted to the Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) DIVISION BAKSHI NAGAR Jammu at the time of allotment.

No: - EE/R&B/BN/8905-24  
Dated:- 29-01-2025

(Er. Sandeep Gupta)  
Executive Engineer  
PWD (R&B) Division  
Bakshi Nagar Jammu

DIP/J-9658/24  
Date: 30-1-25

## EDITORIAL

Deliberation over  
J&K's Statehood

The debate over restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood continues to gain momentum, with demands from almost all major political parties, including the National Conference (NC), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Congress, and several regional and independent leaders. However, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has urged the Union Government to exercise caution, emphasizing that the right conditions must be in place before any significant move is made. The demand for restoring J&K's statehood is rooted in the need to revive democratic processes, improve governance, and ensure a sense of political stability in the region. Political parties argue that reinstating statehood would reinstate the people's trust in the democratic framework and help address the governance issues that have persisted since the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019. However, the BJP's cautious approach signals a broader concern—one that prioritizes security, administrative readiness, and long-term stability over immediate political expediency. During the first session of the Legislative Assembly, Leader of the Opposition Sunil Sharma voiced apprehensions regarding what he termed as the "undemocratic and unconstitutional" actions of the ruling party, warning that such moves could delay the restoration of statehood. Sharma's remarks highlight the ongoing political discord in the region, where even the demand for statehood is entangled in partisan struggles. The BJP maintains that while statehood remains an eventual goal, the current circumstances do not justify an immediate transition. Party leaders argue that the Centre must ensure that robust security and administrative frameworks are in place before such a move is undertaken. The concern stems from the belief that premature statehood could be exploited by anti-national elements, potentially leading to security challenges and political instability. Security considerations remain a central argument in the BJP's stance. Although Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a decline in terrorist activities and separatist movements, sporadic incidents still pose a threat to the region's stability. The party believes that granting statehood prematurely could provide adversaries with an opportunity to destabilize the region, undoing the progress made in terms of law and order since August 2019. Moreover, the BJP asserts that the Union Territory status has allowed the central government to exercise direct oversight over development projects, streamline governance, and enhance transparency. According to party leaders, reverting to statehood without ensuring administrative preparedness might disrupt ongoing developmental initiatives and governance mechanisms, potentially reintroducing inefficiencies that previously plagued the region. While the demand for statehood is widespread and justified in terms of democratic representation and local governance, the BJP's insistence on a phased and strategic approach cannot be ignored. The challenge lies in striking a balance between addressing democratic aspirations and ensuring that stability and progress are not compromised in the process. The Union Government, while considering these demands, must carefully evaluate the region's security, administrative readiness, and political environment before making a final decision. A well-calibrated approach—one that assures both democratic restoration and sustainable stability—will be essential in determining the future trajectory of Jammu and Kashmir.

## Technology in Education: A Step Toward the Future

BY MOOL RAJ

In today's rapidly evolving world, the integration of technology into education has become not just a convenience, but a necessity. As an advocate for the innovative potential of technology, I firmly believe that embracing digital tools and platforms can transform education, making it more accessible, engaging, and personalized. In fact, when used correctly, technology can elevate the learning experience in ways that traditional methods simply cannot match.

First and foremost, technology allows for unprecedented access to information. Gone are the days when students had to rely solely on textbooks or classroom materials. With the internet, a wealth of knowledge is literally at students' fingertips. From online libraries to interactive tutorials, educational videos, and research databases, the scope of learning is limitless. This democratization of knowledge has leveled the playing field,

enabling students from all walks of life to access the same resources regardless of their geographical location or socioeconomic background.

Moreover, technology enhances the learning experience by fostering a more personalized approach. In a traditional classroom, it is nearly impossible for a teacher to cater to the individual needs of every student. However, with the advent of adaptive learning software and online educational tools, students can now progress at their own pace. These tools can identify areas where a student struggles and provide additional resources and exercises to address those gaps. This not only improves learning outcomes but also boosts student confidence as they can learn at a pace that suits their abilities.

The interactivity that technology enables is another powerful factor in its favor. Tools such as virtual reality (VR), gamified learning platforms, and educational apps turn what was once a monotonous task into an exciting challenge. Students become more engaged when they are allowed to interact with the content, whether through immersive simulations or interactive quizzes. This increased engagement leads to better retention of information and a more enjoyable learning process overall.



Furthermore, technology facilitates collaboration and communication in ways that are not possible in a traditional setting. Online platforms enable students to work together on projects, discuss topics in forums, and even participate in virtual classrooms that bring together peers from around the world. The ability to collaborate with others, regardless of location, not only enriches the learning experience but also prepares students

for the increasingly globalized and interconnected workforce they will enter after graduation. Critics often point to the potential drawbacks of technology in education, such as the risk of distraction or the digital divide. While these are valid concerns, they are not insurmountable. With proper guidance, students can learn to use technology responsibly and pro-

actively. Teachers and parents play a crucial role in setting boundaries and encouraging focused use of digital tools. As for the digital divide, efforts to provide affordable internet access and digital devices to underserved communities are essential to ensure that every student benefits from the opportunities that technology offers.

In conclusion, I am strongly in favor of incorporating technology into education. Its ability to provide access to information, personalize learning, foster interactivity, and encourage collaboration makes it a valuable tool in today's educational landscape. As we continue to move forward into an increasingly digital world, it is essential that we embrace technology not just as a supplement to traditional education, but as a powerful force that can drive progress and innovation in the classroom.

**THE AUTHOR IS A REGULAR COLUMNIST AND FREELANCE WRITER**

## The timeless value of soft skills in the fast-paced world

VIJAY GARG

In a world that often uses wealth and appearances as markers of success, the true essence of human interaction—soft skills—frequently takes a backseat.

We are often judged by factors that may not be relevant in the long run. Wealth, physical features, the name of the school or college we attended, flashy clothes, and many more, are the parameters used to measure our success. We forget that soft skills are equally, if not more, important. I waited patiently for my turn in the check-in queue at the airport during a recent visit to Mumbai. The young lady behind the counter handed the boarding pass to the passenger and guided her to walk some distance to get a wheelchair.

The older lady cryptically remarked that the wheelchair was expected to come to her instead of the other way around. The counter girl looked clueless. Later in the evening, I walked over to the express check-in counter at the hotel. I waited patiently as the gentleman bent down to retrieve something



before completing my formalities.

Another counter lady walked by looking at me. Since the man did not resurface even after a lapse of time, I looked at the gentleman behind the adjoining table, who offered to assist me, explaining that the computer system at the other counter was not working. None from the crowd at the reception had bothered to assist me.

The private company I worked for won laurels year after year as the best

business schools or the best in the hospitality industry. One would expect them to understand soft skills, unlike those working in the government sector. I was witness to and on the receiving end of a raid by an enforcement agency while working in a private company.

The officials barged into the office accompanied by uniformed policemen. Orders were rudely barked at me not to touch the telephone. My mobile

phone was snatched from my hands.

The officials remained in the office for more than 24 hours during which I, and the other team members, were not allowed to contact our families. We were made to feel like criminals for no reason. I was recently stopped by a traffic policeman after I had crossed a legitimate green traffic signal.

I was perplexed. Another policeman sauntered over to ask me the reasons for my arguing with the

other official. He rudely reprimanded me when I showed my ignorance of the matter. The policeman had stopped me apparently for crossing the red signal. Fortunately for me, there were cameras at the crossing, which proved my innocence.

We face a similar lack of soft skills in our personal lives. Decades earlier, my wife and I were not given a table for lunch at a famous restaurant in Delhi.

We were a newly wedded young couple and were probably not dressed the same way as their regular clientele. An attractive personality, a good education and a good job are enough for parents to settle marriages of daughters to strangers, not knowing if the young man will treat the girl well.

There are countless examples. I was taught to be a good human being. The children of today are more intelligent and smart. All that we need to do is to teach them to be a better person each succeeding day. Soft skills will follow.

**Vijay Garg Retired Principal Educational columnist street kour Chand MHR Malout Punjab**

## The Gandhian ethos: A guide for a polarised world

RAJDEEP PATHAK

On January 30, 1948, three gunshots ended Mahatma Gandhi's life but failed to extinguish the ideals he stood for. The physical silencing of Gandhi only immortalised his message of nonviolence, reconciliation and understanding. Seventy-seven years later, his teachings remain as vital as ever, resonating loudly in a world increasingly fraught with impatience, intolerance, and polarisation. In the face of these challenges, Gandhi's life work continues to urge humanity to rediscover the virtues of patience, empathy, and constructive dialogue.

In our polarised global society, where divisions grow deeper and disagreements often turn hostile, Gandhi's philosophy offers a beacon of hope.

The sound of silence left by those three bullets asks a poignant question: Can humanity heal its divisions without resorting to violence? Though Gandhi's message arose in a specific historical context, its relevance transcends time, providing an antidote to the impatience and discord threatening our shared humanity today.

## Reviving Gandhian Ideals in Education

The urgency of restoring values like patience, dialogue and empathy is most pronounced in the education of younger generations. Early exposure to these principles can shape the leaders of tomorrow. Initiatives like Taking Gandhi to Schools integrate Gandhian philosophy into children's lives through storytelling, discussions, and experiential learning. These

programmes go beyond preaching; they immerse students in the practice of nonviolence and coexistence. For example, lessons on managing classroom conflicts teach students to approach disagreements with empathy and active listening—skills they carry into the broader world.

Educators and community leaders are also being empowered to foster these values. Workshops on non-violent communication, mediation and conflict resolution turn abstract concepts into actionable practices. These tools have been successfully applied in diverse settings, from resolving domestic disputes to rebuilding trust in conflict-ridden communities. The Gandhian ethos of reconciliation—rooted in forgiveness, nonviolence and dialogue—provides a framework for healing



even the most entrenched divisions.

## The Transformative Power of Reconciliation

Gandhi's approach to reconciliation was not just about resolving conflicts but about restoring relationships. He believed in confronting injustice with courage, yet harboring no hatred for the wrongdoer. This philosophy promotes harmony over revenge, emphasising understanding and collective wellbeing. Archbishop Desmond Tutu echoed this belief, stating, "True rec-

onciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth." Similarly, Nelson Mandela, inspired by Gandhi, viewed forgiveness as a tool for lasting peace, asserting, "Courageous people do not fear forgiving, for the sake of peace."

By embedding these principles into education and social discourse, Gandhi's legacy becomes more than a commemoration; it becomes a lived reality. Seminars and discussions on topics like forgiveness, interfaith harmony, and dialogue encourage par-

ticipants to reflect deeply and adopt these values. Immersive experiences like these inspire young minds to embrace nonviolence as a powerful force for change.

## Gandhi Smriti: A Living Tribute

At the heart of Gandhi's enduring legacy is Gandhi Smriti, the site where he spent his final days. Located at 5, Tees January Marg in Delhi, this historic place, once Birla House, holds profound significance. Gandhi arrived here on September 9, 1947, after finding his intended residence occupied by refugees from West Punjab following Partition.

Today, Gandhi Smriti is a national memorial, home to museums, Gandhi's preserved room, and the prayer ground where he held evening meetings. It attracts visitors from

around the world, serving as a place of pilgrimage and a reminder of the tragedy that ended his life. Yet, Gandhi Smriti is more than a heritage site; it is an educational hub where people of all ages, especially children, learn about courage, compassion, and responsible citizenship.

Every year, on Gandhi's birth and death anniversaries, children perform musical tributes at the evening prayer meet. These events embody Gandhi's belief that peace must begin with the young: "If we are to teach real peace in this world... we shall have to begin with the children."

## A Call to Action

The principles Gandhi championed—nonviolence, reconciliation, and understanding—are not relics of the past but vital tools for addressing

modern challenges. His teachings remind us that change begins with small acts of kindness, empathy, and constructive dialogue. By nurturing these values in young hearts, we lay the foundation for a more harmonious future. As we commemorate Gandhi's life and philosophy, let us remember that the silence left by those three bullets was not an end but a beginning. It calls on us to transform divisions into unity, hostility into understanding, and despair into hope. The path to peace may be long and arduous, but it begins with the courage to believe in the power of nonviolence and the quiet persistence of nurturing hope in the hearts of the next generation.

**(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)**

## NIT Rourkela's new eco-friendly treatment to remove carcinogenic dyes from wastewater

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

Researchers at the National Institute of Technology Rourkela on Thursday announced an innovative process for efficiently treating industrial wastewater contaminated with persistent dyes that can cause cancer.

The research, supported by Anusandhan National Research Foundation, showed that combining nanocomposite-based ceramic membranes with microbubble technology can help enhance dye removal efficiency.

Wastewater from industries like textiles and dye manufacturing often contains harmful dyes that are difficult to remove with traditional filtration methods. Dyes



such as Bismarck Brown R are small enough to pass through microfiltration membranes, making them particularly challenging to treat. These dyes can cause significant environmental and health issues due to their intense colour and potential carcinogenic properties.

Conventional treatment methods, such as those relying on Ultraviolet

(UV) light, often struggle with large-scale applications, especially when separating dye particles from water. To address these challenges, the team developed a cutting-edge treatment system that combines two advanced technologies.

The first is a ceramic membrane coated with an industrial-waste-derived Zeolite and Zinc Oxide

nanocomposite. This photocatalyst can break down dye molecules when exposed to light.

The second technology incorporates microbubbles, generated via a simple air diffuser, to enhance mass transfer and improve the breakdown process.

A continuous tangential flow membrane photoreactor was designed and tested using both simulated and real wastewater from a local dyeing factory.

"Our hybrid system successfully achieved 95.4 per cent decolourisation of Bismarck Brown R and 94 per cent removal of chemical oxygen demand (COD) in just 90 minutes," said Prof. Sujit Sen, Department of Chemical Engineering at NIT.

"The nanocomposite performed well under visible light, making this approach suitable for practical wastewater treatment applications," he added. The potential applications of this hybrid system are vast. It offers a more efficient and cost-effective alternative to conventional oxidation methods, which often rely on expensive chemicals and complex equipment.

The technology could also be applied across industries such as textile manufacturing, and chemical industries such as steel, petrochemicals, and pharmaceuticals, where robust wastewater treatment is required.

The research has been published in the Journal of Environmental Chemical Engineering.

## SRMC gives fresh lease of lives to six patients with simultaneous organ transplants

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, JAN 30

In a rare medical feat, the Chennai-based Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre (SRMC) provided a fresh lease of life for six patients by performing six simultaneous surgeries, including two for harvesting organs from two brain dead patients, in a record 24 hrs.

A SRMC release here said after harvesting the organs from two brain dead patients (a man and a woman), it readied six operation theatres and performed transplant surgeries.

"In a rare medical feat of its kind in India, SRMC simultaneously pressed into service six operation theatres—two for harvesting organs from two brain-dead patients and four for performing organ transplants—in a record time of 24 hours with 30 doctors

and 50 paramedics completing the procedures successfully", it said.

The other scheduled surgeries were also completed, displaying the skilful coordination of all departments and the wholehearted support of the Tamil Nadu Health Department to transport the harvested organs seamlessly. The management of SRMC expresses its gratitude to one and all for help creating this feat in the medical tourism capital of India.

Two brain-dead patients, a 33-year-old man and a 52-year-old woman, saved six lives as their families have opted for organ donation at SRMC.

The multi-organ donations occurred within a span of 24 hours—on January 16 and 17, respectively.

After getting approval from both families, SRMC doctors harvested four kid-

neys, two livers, pancreas, heart valves, small bowel, stomach and four corneas.

The SRMC team performed two kidney transplants, two liver transplants and two cornea transplants.

The Heart valves, two kidneys, pancreas, small bowel, and stomach were allocated to other hospitals through the Transplant Authority of Tamil Nadu (TRANSTAN), the nodal agency for organ transplant approval and donation.

According to the doctors, P. Sathish Kumar (33), a resident of Alapakkam colony in neighbouring Chengalpattu district was admitted to SRMC on January 15 with complaints of headache, numbness of the upper limb and loss of consciousness and was diagnosed with large acute intraparenchymal hemorrhage in left ganglio capsular region.

## WHO chief congratulates Guinea for eliminating human sleeping sickness

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Thursday congratulated Guinea for eliminating human African trypanosomiasis or sleeping sickness -- a neglected tropical disease.

Human African trypanosomiasis is a vector-borne parasitic disease caused by infected tsetse flies.

The symptoms typically include fever, headaches, joint pain, and, in advanced stages, neurological symptoms like confusion, disrupted sleep patterns, and behavioural changes.

It is the first neglected tropical disease to be eliminated in the country and is an important achievement in this public health field on World Neglected

Tropical Diseases Day, marked every year on January 30.

"Congratulations, #Guinea, for eliminating human African trypanosomiasis or sleeping sickness," said Ghebreyesus, in a post on the social media platform X.

"This milestone is a testament to the dedication of the health workers, communities, and the government, but also a beacon of hope for nations still battling neglected tropical diseases," he added.

What is sleeping sickness?

In human African trypanosomiasis, parasites are passed to humans through the bite of infected tsetse flies, which acquire the infection from humans or animals carrying the pathogenic parasites.

The disease are caused by two types of parasitic

protozoans.

Trypanosoma brucei gambiense is found in 24 countries in West and Central Africa. These account for more than 92 per cent of cases.

Trypanosoma brucei rhodesiense is found in 13 countries in East and Southern Africa. It accounts for the remaining 8 per cent of cases.

To curb the sleeping sickness, public health officials work to reduce the reservoirs of infection and cut down the presence of the tsetse fly.

Screening of people at risk is also an essential task that helps identify patients earlier in the disease development.

If diagnosis is made early, it is possible to avoid complicated and risky treatment procedures during the advanced stage and to improve the cure prognosis.

"The elimination of sleeping sickness is the result of many years of effort by the Guinean government, its partners, and communities in the overall context of the national policy to combat all neglected tropical diseases," said Dr Oumar Diouhe, BAH, Guinea's Minister of Health and Public Hygiene.

Meanwhile, Guinea has been added to the list of seven other countries validated by the WHO for eliminating the gambiense form of human African trypanosomiasis. This includes Togo (2020), Benin (2021), Côte d'Ivoire (2021), Uganda (2022), Equatorial Guinea (2022), Ghana (2023) and Chad (2024).

The rhodesiense form of the disease has been eliminated as a public health problem only in Rwanda in 2022.

## Psychological health more important for Indian manufacturing employees: Report

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 30

Manufacturing sector employees at the best workplaces in India are 2.7 times more likely to stay in psychologically healthy environments, and the overall view of manufacturing as a great place to work has risen to 87 per cent in 2025, according to a report on Thursday.

As India's manufacturing industry advances toward Industry 5.0, the need for companies to prioritise not just technological innovation, but also the well-being of their workforce, has never been more critical, said the report by Great Place To Work.

"As the industry advances toward Industry 5.0, the focus isn't just on smarter machines but on fostering workplaces that prioritise employee well-being. To



accommodate the needs of their workforce.

For their business and corporate employees, these companies have adopted flexible work models, extended paid leave, and created opportunities for career growth and leadership development.

combat employee burnout, organisations are taking steps to improve work-life balance, make leaders more approachable, and enhance employee engagement," said Balbir Singh, CEO, Great Place To Work, India.

"Leading organisations are building a culture of trust and psychological safety, and when employees feel valued, they are 2.7 times more likely to stay. To overcome challenges, organisations need to continuously listen and empower their employ-

ees, to shape the industry's future," he added.

The report showed that even as companies continue to foster positive and inclusive cultures, challenges remain.

The voice of employees consistently highlights the need for more action around psychological safety, care, and equitable growth.

Best Workplaces have responded by implementing mechanisms for regular feedback, ensuring fair task allocation, and introducing flexible shifts to

These have also expanded benefits packages to include wellness programmes, zero-interest loans, bonuses, and a broader range of support systems to meet the diverse needs of their teams, the report said.

Some of the best workplaces for manufacturing recognised for their exceptional culture and employee satisfaction, listed in the report include Apollo Tyres, Orient Cement, Tata Steel India, Amara Raja Power Systems, Sula Vineyards, and Bajaj Energy.

## New AI tool to find previously unknown signs of stillbirth, complications

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

A new artificial intelligence-based model on Thursday has shown previously unidentified combinations of risk factors linked to serious negative pregnancy outcomes, including stillbirth.

A team of US researchers including from the Universities of Utah and Brown conducted an AI-based analysis of almost 10,000 pregnancies in the country. It included information on social and physical characteristics ranging from pregnant people's level of social support to their blood pressure, medical history,



and foetal weight, as well as the outcome of each pregnancy.

There may be up to a 10-fold difference in risk for infants who are currently treated identically under clinical guidelines, revealed the results, published in the journal BMC Pregnancy and Child-

birth. Foetal sex, presence or absence of pre-existing diabetes and the presence or absence of a foetal anomaly such as a heart defect could determine the risk.

The AI model helped identify a "really unexpected" combination

of factors that revealed higher risk, said Nathan Blue, from Utah's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

The model can progress toward making "more personalised risk assessment and pregnancy care", he added.

The findings showed that female babies could be at higher risk than males if the mother has pre-existing diabetes. Usually, female foetuses are at slightly lower risk for complications than male foetuses -- a small but well-established effect.

"The AI model detected something that could be used to inform risk that not even the really flexi-

ble, experienced clinician brain was recognising," Blue said.

The researchers were especially interested in developing better risk estimates for foetuses in the bottom 10 per cent for weight, but not the bottom 3 per cent.

These babies are small enough to be concerning, but large enough that they are usually perfectly healthy.

While current clinical guidelines advise intensive medical monitoring for all such pregnancies, the team found that within this foetal weight class, the risk of an unhealthy pregnancy outcome varied widely.

## Study decodes how microbes help detoxify our atmosphere

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 29

A team of Australian researchers has found key understanding of how microbes consume huge amounts of carbon monoxide (CO) and help reduce levels of this deadly gas.

According to a recent study published in the Science Direct journal, more than two billion tonnes of CO is released into the atmosphere globally each year. However, microbes consume about 250 million tonnes of

this, reducing CO to safer levels.

The latest study led by Monash University researchers showed that microbes consume CO present in the atmosphere by using a special enzyme, called the CO dehydrogenase.

This enzyme helps them to extract energy from this universally present but highly toxic gas. The study, published in the journal Nature Chemical Biology, reveals how this enzyme extracted atmospheric CO and powered cells.

"This enzyme is used by trillions of microbes in our soils and waters. These microbes consume CO for their own survival, but in the process inadvertently help us," said Ashleigh Kropp, from the Monash Biomedicine Discovery Institute's (BDI).

Dr David Gillett, from the varsity showed that the microbes help clean our atmosphere as well as counteracts air pollution -- a known killer. The microbes also help reduce global warming given CO is indirectly a greenhouse gas.

## Australian research finds genetic diversity of plants, animals in decline globally

AGENCIES  
SYDNEY, JAN 30

Australian-led international research published on Thursday showed that genetic diversity in plants and animals has declined over the past three decades. The research, which was published by the University of Sydney, analysed the genetic diversity of 628 species of animals, plants, and fungi across all terrestrial and most maritime realms between 1985 and 2019, Xinhua news agency reported.

The team, which included researchers from China, the United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, Sweden, and Poland, found that



two-thirds of the species analysed are declining in genetic diversity. Maintaining genetic diversity is considered crucial for conservation because it allows species to adapt to changing environments by providing a wider range of genetic traits.

Catherine Grueber, lead author of the study from

the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Sydney, said that there is cause for hope, with the research finding that conservation efforts are sustaining, and in some cases increasing genetic diversity.

"There is no getting around the fact that biodiversity is declining at unprecedented rates across the globe, but there are glimmers of hope," Grueber said.

"The action of conservationists is reversing these losses and helping to create genetically diverse populations that can better meet the challenges of the future," she added.

The loss of genetic diver-

sity was particularly high among birds and mammals. Key drivers identified included land-use changes, disease, natural environmental events (wildfires, floods, river changes, and pre-industrial climate change), and human activities such as harvesting and habitat destruction.

Researchers found that conservation efforts that could improve genetic diversity include controlling pest or feral species, population control where some individuals are removed from populations to improve conditions for those that remain, and introducing new individuals to populations for breeding.

## SSE hosp launches Microwave Ablation for cancer cure

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, JAN 30

The Chennai-based Sringeri Sharada Equitas (SSE) hospital has launched Microwave Ablation treatment for treating and curing cancer patients at an affordable cost.

A SSE hospital release here on Thursday said microwave ablation uses microwave energy for generating heat to kill, shrink cancerous tumor cells in organs such as kidney, lungs and liver. A team of Interventional Radiologists and Oncologists place a small microwave antenna inside a tumor to slow down the progression of tumor growth and shrink them so that they can be safely removed by surgery or surgery can be avoided. "Doctors utilize a CT scan to locate the tumor and insert the antenna through a small incision, guiding the probe to the tumor with

continued imaging assistance. Once the energy source is activated, heat shrinks and kills cancerous tumor cells, turning them into scar tissues. Heat also helps close blood vessels nearby, and patients are typically at a lower risk of blood loss", it said.

The Microwave Ablation treatment spares majority of healthy tissues and can be repeated as often as necessary, most patients can resume a normal routine within a few days, it was less painful than an open surgery to remove tumors, alleviates pain and other debilitating symptoms caused by tumors (Palliative), it uses image guidance (CT) to provide precise areas for ablation and it can be combined with other treatment options when needed, especially in Stage IV disease.

Dr. Vaithiswaran Velayudam, Medical Director, Sringeri Sharada Equitas Hospital said, the "Primary

objective of ablation therapies like Microwave Ablation is to eradicate malignant cells using a minimally invasive technique under imaging guidance, while preserving healthy tissue with a sufficient safety margin surrounding the ablated lesion.

Ablation therapy can be performed via a percutaneous, laparoscopic or intraoperative approach under ultrasound, MRI or CT guidance for adequate localization and monitoring of the ablation process. Importantly, it can be used only for highly selected Tumors and mostly in Metastatic Disease to avoid major surgeries, he said.

Dr. K Kanmani Kiruba, Consultant Radiologist, said, "Microwave technology is a new thermal ablation technique for treating different types of tumors, providing the benefits of radiofrequency and the substantial advantages along with it.

## Prez, PM Modi and other Union minister pay tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat on his 77th death anniversary.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Manohar Lal Khattar, MoS Defence Sanjay Seth, Chief of Defence Staff, and Chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force were also present on the occasion and paid tribute to 'Father of Nation'.

India today observes Martyrs' Day every year on January 30 to mark the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and to honour his contribution towards the freedom of the country.



Earlier, taking to X, PM Modi said, "Tributes to Pujya Babu on his Punya Tithi. His ideals motivate us to build a developed India."

I also pay tributes to all those martyred for our nation and recall their service as well as sacrifices."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary.

Shah stated that his thoughts towards cleanliness, self-reliance and empowerment of rural India will continue to inspire the countrymen. "On behalf of the grate-

ful nation, I pay my tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, the leading figure of the Indian freedom movement, who popularized the Indian values of truth, non-violence and fight against injustice across the world, on his death anniversary. Mahatma Gandhi strengthened the freedom move-

ment by binding the country in the thread of unity. His thoughts towards cleanliness, self-reliance and empowerment of rural India will continue to inspire the countrymen," Shah posted on X.

Union Health Minister JP Nadda, and BJP President also paid tributes to Gandhi.

"I pay my tributes to the eternal worshipper of truth and non-violence, the great leader of the Indian freedom movement, the 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary" he wrote on X.

"Bapu's ideas centered on Swadeshi and self-reliance are paving the way for a self-reliant and developed India. His life ideals will always inspire the entire humanity" he said.

## Fresh petition filed in Calcutta HC on 'threat culture' in Bengal medical colleges

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, JAN 30

A fresh petition was filed before the Calcutta High Court on Thursday on the alleged "threat culture" prevailing at different medical colleges and hospitals in West Bengal.

A division bench of Chief Justice T.S. Sivagnanam and Justice Hiranmay Bhattacharya has admitted the petition and the matter might come up for hearing next week.

The petitioner had claimed that despite lots of dialogues and deliberations on the issue of "threat culture" in the past, there had not been any improvement in the matter as of date.

The petition was filed just a day after a single-judge bench of Justice Jay Sengupta sought a report from the state-run R.G.



Kar Medical College & Hospital in Kolkata on the allegations of the "threat culture" at that premium medical institute.

In the report, Justice Sengupta directed the R.G. Kar authorities to provide details taken to prevent instances of "threat culture" there as well as the details on whether the accused doctors were given chances to present their sides of arguments in the matter.

The issue of "threat culture" at different state-run medical colleges and hospitals in Kolkata, including R.G. Kar, surfaced following the ghastly rape

and murder of a woman junior doctor of the same hospital within the hospital premises in August last year.

The former and controversial principal of R.G. Kar Sandip Ghosh and his close associates were then identified as the main steering personnel behind running this threat culture. Shortly after that several doctors accused of running that "threat culture" were suspended by the respective college councils. However, the court had stayed such suspensions in many such cases on the grounds that the accused doctors were not allowed to present their sides of the argument. The court also observed that the state Health Department will have the final say regarding the suspension of the accused doctors.

## Mahatma Gandhi an ideology and ideology never dies: Cong on Bapu's death anniversary

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

The Congress on Thursday paid tributes to the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary and described him as an "ideology which never dies."

In a post on social media platform X, the Congress also said that till the time a single person who believes in truth and non-violence is alive, Mahatma Gandhi will be alive.

Highlighting that scientist Albert Einstein respected Bapu a lot, the Congress shared a quote by him for the great leader, "Generations to come, will scarce believe, that such a man as this one, ever in flesh and blood walked

upon this Earth."

The Congress further shared that "Bapu's principles teach us to follow the path of justice and equality".

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge paid floral tributes to the great leader at the Gandhi Memorial, Raj Ghat.

Sharing a video on social media on Mahatma Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi said: "The British tried to threaten him. He was fearless. He was imprisoned. Three bullets were pumped into his chest, still, he was not frightened."

"On one side, you have Mahatma Gandhi, while on the other, you have

Nathuram Godse. On one side, a brave, humble and simple man, but the man who believed in the future and India, propagated non-violence and searched for the truth, while on the other side, Godse, violent, angry, unable to face the reality of his own life.

"The reason he shot Mahatma Gandhi was that he could not face his life. So he had to take out his anger on somebody and he chose to take out his anger on the man who represented the essence of India," the LoP said.

"Mahatma Gandhi is not only a man but the soul of India and is alive in every Indian," LoP Rahul Gandhi wrote on X.

"The power of truth, non-violence and fearless-

ness can shake the roots of even the biggest empire - the entire world takes inspiration from his ideals. Hundreds of salutations to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma, our Bapu on his Martyrdom Day," his post in Hindi read.

Terming Mahatma Gandhi as the nation's guiding light, Congress President Kharge said "his ideals of 'Satya', 'Ahimsa', 'Sarvodaya' and 'Sarva Dharma' 'Sambhava' continue to light our path".

Giving a call to protect the country's unity in diversity and ensuring justice and equality for everyone, Kharge said: "We must commit to fighting against those who want to destroy his ideals of equality and upliftment for all."

## Honour killing case: Karnataka court sentences woman's brothers, uncles to death

AGENCIES  
GADAG (KARNATAKA), JAN 30

The Gadag District and Sessions Court in Karnataka sentenced four men to the death penalty on Thursday after finding them guilty in an honour killing case. The men had brutally attacked and hacked to death a couple, Ramesh Madara and Gangamma Rathod, following their inter-caste marriage.

The convicted individuals are Shivappa Rathod, Ravikumar Rathod, Ramesh Rathod, and Parashurama Rathod - all relatives of the victim, Gangamma Rathod. Ravikumar Rathod and Ramesh Rathod are Gangamma's brothers, while Shivappa and Parashurama Rathod

are her paternal uncles. Parashurama Rathod was employed as a driver with the RTC.

The shocking incident took place in Lakkalakat village, near Gajendragarh in Gadag district, when the couple returned to their native village to celebrate Diwali. Gangamma's brothers had barged into the couple's residence, dragged them outside, and brutally hacked them to death in front of their children. The accused attacked them with knives, sharp-edged weapons, stones, and sticks in full public view. The brutal killing sent shockwaves across the state and raised serious concerns. The police later arrested the accused.

The crime occurred on November 6, 2019. Ramesh Madara's family filed a complaint at the Gajendragarh police station. The police registered a case under IPC Sections 427 (mischievous causing damage), 449 (house trespass with intent to commit a serious crime), 302 (murder), and 506(2) (criminal intimidation involving severe threats). After completing the investigation, they submitted a charge sheet against the accused in court.

The victims, 24-year-old Gangamma Rathod and 29-year-old Ramesh Madara fell in love and got married on April 2, 2017, at the sub registrar's office. Gangamma hailed from the Banjara community

and Ramesh Madara hailed from the Scheduled Caste community.

Despite opposition from their parents, the couple had moved to Shivamogga and settled there.

The couple had two children, a three-year-old boy and a two-month-old baby girl. Karnataka State Human Rights Commission had recently flayed the state government for not submitting the Action Taken Report (ATR) in connection with this case.

The Registrar of the State Human Rights Commission has issued a warning to the Social Welfare Department's Principal Secretary P. Manivannan and stated that the lapse would be considered seriously.

## MP: Three workers killed, several injured as scaffolding collapses at cement factory in Panna

AGENCIES  
PANNA, JAN 30

At least three workers were killed and around two dozen injured after a scaffolding at JK Cement factory collapsed during construction work in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday.

The incident occurred when labourers were laying a ceiling slab of the under-construction building, resulting in the collapse of the scaffolding they were standing on.

Talking to UNI, an official of Pawai in Panna district confirmed the death of three workers in the incident.

Reports said that around two dozen workers have been injured, and efforts are being made to gather information from factory management.

Meanwhile, police sources said that construction work was going on in the premises of JK Cement



Factory, spread over several acres in the Simaria police station area, about 50 km from here.

Centring, slabs, and other construction material suddenly fell during the construction work of a large building around 10 am. Due to this, many workers were buried.

Rescue and relief operations have been initiated at the site, with police and administration officials also reaching the spot.

Sources said that the identity of the deceased

and injured workers could not be ascertained at the moment, and an investigation is underway.

Local MP and BJP state president Vishnudutt Sharma has directed the district administration to provide immediate relief to the victims at the cement factory accident.

In a statement, Sharma said that he has discussed with the district administration in this regard and has directed the administration to provide immediate assistance in the accident.

## CEC Rajiv Kumar eyeing post-retirement job: Kejriwal on Yamuna row

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday criticised the Election Commission's decision to dismiss his Yamuna 'poison' plea for lack of evidence, claiming that CEC Rajiv Kumar is favouring the BJP as he is looking for a post-retirement job.

Addressing a media conference, the former Delhi Chief Minister raised doubts over the rejection of his plea by the ECI, indirectly blaming the poll panel for favouring rivals, the BJP and the Congress.

CEC Rajiv Kumar is scheduled to retire on February 28 after a three-year stint in the election body.

"The ECI is indulging in politics and ignoring the glaring violation of the model election code. It can't see the distribution of bedsheets and money taking place. We have complained about the



violations, but CEC Rajiv Kumar is not acting as he is looking for a post-retirement job," he said.

"I want to tell Rajiv Kumar ji that history will never forgive him for the damage he has caused to an institution like the Election Commission," Kejriwal said.

His outburst against the CEC came within hours of the poll panel expressing dissatisfaction over Kejriwal's reply on the Yamuna 'poison' issue, saying that "no factual, legal matrix with evidence has been provided to support his statement".

Speaking to media per-

sons, Kejriwal admitted that the level of ammonia in the river water has now come down to 3 ppm from 7 ppm till a few days back, but alleged politics was being done over the issue over the past few weeks under which the ammonia level was raised by Haryana.

He said he is sending four bottles of the "contaminated water" to BJP and Congress leaders, including Home Minister Amit Shah, Delhi unit chief Virendra Sachdeva, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini (all BJP) and Rahul Gandhi.

"These water bottles have chlorinated water from the river which had high levels of ammonia and is unsafe. I challenge the leaders from other parties to drink this," he said, calling CM Saini's recent visit to the Yamuna bank in Delhi and drinking its water a "gimmick".

He said the water flowing into Delhi from Haryana had high levels of ammonia - up to 7 ppm - which could have caused irreversible damage to organs if it had been used in the DJB treatment plant.

"Letting raw water with 8 ppm ammonia get chlorinated at Delhi Jal Board treatment plants would have converted it into poison," he said, adding that the four bottles containing samples of this type of water with high ammonia with chlorine are being sent to BJP and Congress leaders.

The AAP national convener said Chief Minister Atishi had called her Haryana counterpart Saini several times over the past

few weeks to request him to check the high ammonia level in Yamuna water but he made hollow promises and later refused to take her calls.

Refusing to be cowed down by threats of rival leaders to file cases against him or put him in jail over the Yamuna 'poison' issue, Kejriwal said: "I will not let poisoned water flow into Delhi taps. I am not afraid of going to jail."

Safe drinking water and cleaning of Yamuna are key issues on which the ruling AAP is facing heat from rivals BJP and Congress ahead of the February 5 Assembly election, whose result will be declared on February 8.

Kejriwal's Yamuna 'poison' claims appear to be an attempt to shift the blame for Delhi's water woes to Haryana and rival BJP which, in turn, has blamed the AAP for its failure to deliver on its promises of clean Yamuna and 24x7 safe water supply in the city.

## Nadda hits back at Kejriwal, shares break-up of high ammonia levels at Delhi's entry and exit

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

Union Minister and BJP National President J.P. Nadda on Thursday blasted the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over its claim that the Yamuna River was being "poisoned" by the Haryana government.

Nadda shared an infographic showing pollution levels rising sharply after the river enters Delhi, accusing the AAP govern-

ment of negligence and failed governance.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal had alleged that the BJP was "poisoning" Delhi's water supply to create chaos ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections. He said that the people of Delhi get drinking water from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, but the Haryana government has "mixed poison" in the water coming to Delhi from the

Yamuna. He claimed that it was only due to the vigilance of Delhi Jal Board engineers that this water was stopped.

Reacting to this, Nadda posted on X, "AAP-Da's blame game on Yamuna pollution exposes its inefficiency and failed governance. For over 10 years, Arvind Kejriwal government has delivered nothing but corruption, lies, and hollow promises. Despite receiving Rs 8,500

crores from the Central Government, no meaningful work has been done to clean the river."

Citing pollution data, Nadda wrote that the infographic from Info in Data showed how pollution spikes as soon as the Yamuna enters Delhi.

"The infographic from Infoindata shows how pollution spikes as soon as the Yamuna enters Delhi. Instead of taking responsibility, AAP-Da government

has started spreading fear among people for political gains. Arvind Kejriwal should apologise to the people of Haryana and Delhi for his statement," he added.

The infographic, citing the Central Pollution Control Board and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee, highlighted the rise in Biochemical Oxygen Demand and ammonia levels along the Yamuna's course through Delhi.

The entry point at Palla had BOD at 2 mg/l and ammonia at 5.5 mg/l. At Wazirabad, BOD rose to 7 mg/l, then spiked to 47 mg/l at ISBT Bridge, and stood at 44 mg/l at Okhla Barrage. The exit point at Asgarpur showed BOD at 85 mg/l and ammonia at 56.1 mg/l. Higher BOD indicates lower water quality, while ammonia is a severe water pollutant affecting aquatic life and human health.

The Election Commission of India has also expressed dissatisfaction with Kejriwal's response regarding the Yamuna water claims. The ECI noted that he had not provided any factual, legal matrix with evidence to support his statement.

The Commission had sought an explanation from Kejriwal following complaints from BJP and Congress candidate Sandeep Dikshit from the New

Delhi Assembly constituency. In his reply, Kejriwal stated that it was undisputed that there was 7 ppm ammonia in Yamuna water and that a Delhi Jal Board letter admitted toxicity was 700 per cent higher than the permissible limit.

He blamed Haryana for the crisis, saying that the root cause identified by the DJB letter was the indiscriminate discharge of industrial waste by Haryana.

# 18 bodies pulled out from Potomac River after Washington plane crash

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, JAN 30

A mid-air collision over the Potomac River near Washington's Reagan National Airport has claimed at least 18 lives, as rescue teams continue to search for survivors, according to local media reports.

The crash involved American Airlines Flight 5342 and a Black Hawk military helicopter.

The military helicopter was carrying three soldiers when it collided with the regional passenger jet, which had 60 passengers and four crew members on board while approaching the airport for landing.

No survivors have been found so far, CNN reported.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) confirmed that the collision occurred around 9 p.m. local time on Wednesday.

As a result, all takeoffs and landings at the airport were temporarily halted



while emergency teams worked at the crash site.

The Pentagon and the Army are investigating the crash, said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

He wrote that the investigation was "launched immediately."

"Absolutely tragic. Search and rescue efforts still ongoing. Prayers for all impacted souls, and their families," Hegseth added.

President Donald Trump issued a statement expressing his concern over the tragic accident.

"I have been fully briefed on the terrible

accident which just took place at Reagan National Airport. May God bless their souls. Thank you for the incredible work being done by our first responders. I am monitoring the situation and will provide more details as they arise," the statement read.

Meanwhile, Texas Senator Ted Cruz acknowledged that the crash resulted in multiple fatalities.

"I am closely monitoring the situation at DCA, and I will receive a briefing from the FAA tomorrow. While we don't yet know how many on board were

lost, we know there are fatalities. Please join Heidi and me in praying for all involved as the search and rescue is underway," he posted on X.

The FAA confirmed that a PSA Airlines Bombardier CRJ700 regional jet, operating as Flight 5342 for American Airlines, was on approach to Runway 33 when it collided midair with a Sikorsky H-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will lead the investigation into the cause of the accident.

Emergency response teams, including the Metropolitan Police Department and the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, were deployed swiftly to conduct search and rescue operations.

Boats are actively scanning the Potomac River, searching for potential survivors.

In response to the

crash, the Reagan National Airport posted an update on X: "All takeoffs and landings have been halted at DCA. Emergency personnel are responding to an aircraft incident on the airfield. The terminal remains open. Will update."

Kansas Senator Jerry Moran also reacted to the incident, noting that the passenger plane had departed from Wichita, Kansas. "Learning that a plane inbound from Kansas was involved in a crash at DCA. I am in contact with authorities. Please join me in praying for all involved," he posted on X.

Authorities have urged the public to avoid the area to allow emergency personnel to carry out their duties effectively. Multiple agencies are working together in a coordinated effort to manage the crisis and provide assistance.

Rescue operations are ongoing, and further updates are awaited.

# Congressional Caucus on India has a new Republican co-chair

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, JAN 30

Democratic US lawmaker Ro Khanna on Wednesday announced that Republican colleague Rich McCormick will join him as the co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on India, replacing Mike Walz, who is now the National Security Adviser to President Donald Trump.

Representatives Andy Barr and Marc Veasey will continue serving as vice co-chairs and Brad Sherman, who formerly served as chair, will continue to serve as chair emeritus.

The India caucus is committed to strengthening the relationship between the U.S. and India. It grew to a record number of 145 members in the previous 118th Congress, with the joining of 35 new members.

"A strong partnership with India is critical for our economy and national security. It is an honour to continue serving as co-chair of the India Caucus and to welcome Rep. Rich



McCormick as the caucus's new co-chair. Rep. McCormick has supported policies to strengthen the US-India relationship, and I look forward to working with him. I am grateful to Reps. Veasey and Barr for their continued leadership in the role of vice co-chairs," said Khanna.

Representative McCormick said: "I am honoured to co-chair the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans with my good friend Rep. Ro Khanna. I have the great privilege of serving many hard-working Indian Americans in my

district and will continue to strengthen our relationship with India. The dedication, innovation, and contributions of this diaspora enrich our community and strengthen the bonds between our two nations. Together, let's continue to champion the values of opportunity and collaboration that define both America and India."

"I am honoured to continue serving as vice co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans. The U.S.-India partnership is built on shared values of democracy, economic freedom, and security cooperation. Strengthening this relationship is critical to advancing our mutual interests in trade, technology, and defence. I look forward to working alongside my colleagues to further deepen the ties between our two great nations and to support the vibrant Indian American community that contributes so much to our country," said Representative Barr.

# Australian PM labels caravan filled with explosives in Sydney as 'act of terrorism'

AGENCIES  
CANBERRA, JAN 30

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has agreed with police assertion that a caravan full of explosives in Sydney was an act of terrorism.

Authorities in the state of New South Wales (NSW) announced on Wednesday night that the caravan filled with explosives was found in the suburb of Dural - about 25 km northwest of central Sydney -- on January 19, reports Xinhua news agency.

Speaking at a press conference, NSW Police Deputy Commissioner David Hudson said that a major investigation had been launched into whether the explosives were intended to be used in an antisemitic attack. NSW Premier Chris Minns labelled the caravan filled with explosives as an act of terrorism.

When asked on Thursday if he agreed with Minns' assertion, Albanese said he "certainly" did. "It's clearly designed



to harm people, but it's also designed to create fear in the community," he told Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) radio.

He said that NSW Police has not yet formally designated it as an act of terrorism but that the counter-terrorism team is investigating the incident.

The owner of a caravan found filled with explosives in northwest Sydney, the capital city of Australia's state of New South Wales (NSW), is already in police custody, authorities have said.

NSW Police Commissioner Karen Webb, state Premier Chris Minns and

deputy police commissioner David Hudson Thursday said that the owner of the caravan was already in custody at the time of its discovery. They said that the owner had been arrested for alleged offences being investigated by a strike force investigating hate crimes.

Minns and Hudson on Wednesday night said that the caravan was found filled with enough explosives to cause a "mass casualty event" and documents indicating they were intended to be used in an antisemitic attack about 25 km northwest of central Sydney on January 19.

Webb said on Thursday that no detonator was found in the caravan.

"It's important that the public understands that not only has the caravan been removed and the contents removed from the public, but also the owner is out of play and in custody," she said.

"So the risk to the public has been mitigated early on."

Over 100 officers from multiple agencies have been assigned to investigate whether the caravan was preparation for a terrorism event, Webb said.

Both Webb and Minns defended the decision to keep the discovery secret for 10 days, saying it had allowed authorities to sift through the available evidence.

"If the police believe that covert means are the best way of locking up people who are responsible for these actions, that's what needs to happen," Minns said.

He promised that investigators would leave "no stone unturned".

# Situation in DR Congo's Goma calmer, with sporadic shooting and looting reported: UN

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, JAN 30

Situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) city of Goma is calmer but still tense, with some violence hampering humanitarian operations, a UN spokesman said. Stephane Dujarric, chief spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said that the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, known as MONUSCO, reported sporadic shooting but an overall reduction in exchanges of fire within the city. Continued clashes were reported in surrounding areas, including in Sake, northwest of Goma, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The mission's priority right now remains the protection of its personnel, its assets and the many civilians sheltering within UN premises," Dujarric said at the daily briefing. "UN peacekeepers are planning on sending patrols today (Wednesday) in Goma to assess the situa-



tion, to conduct resupplies and assess routes."

Earlier, MONUSCO said some peacekeepers had sought shelter in bunkers.

Dujarric said that the situation was also calm in the capital, Kinshasa, despite calls for protests. "The main roads are reported to be empty, and supermarkets are closed due to high risk of looting."

He said that in addition to the one Uruguayan and two South African peacekeepers killed earlier in the week, the number of UN peacekeepers injured since the most recent assault by the M23 rebels is 22.

"We reiterate that attacks against UN peace-

keepers are not only unacceptable but may also constitute a war crime," the spokesman said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported violence and looting of humanitarian warehouses continued in Goma, impacting the ability of aid workers to respond and putting them at risk.

OCHA said that since the escalation of fighting, its humanitarian partners recorded more than 2,000 people wounded. Several bodies remained in the streets, while water and electricity supplies remained cut off since Sunday.

"We call for the swift resumption of these services, as well as for the protection of humanitarian warehouses and the facilitation of medical evacuations for people who have been injured," Dujarric said.

OCHA said the airport's closure means that flows of humanitarian cargo and rotations of humanitarian personnel were suspended. Most roads connecting Goma to the rest of the country are also closed. However, the border with Rwanda is open, and additional humanitarian teams can enter the DRC.

"Humanitarian Coordinator Bruno Lemarquis calls on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and to end the violence targeting civilians," OCHA said. "He reiterates his call for the establishment of a secure humanitarian corridor to guarantee unhindered humanitarian access and the creation of a border crossing to facilitate the movement of people fleeing violence."

# Turkish president meets Hamas delegation following Gaza ceasefire

AGENCIES  
ANKARA, JAN 30

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with a Hamas delegation, which included Muhammad Darwish, head of the Shura Council, Erdogan's office said in a statement.

The meeting was attended by key Turkish officials, including Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, National Intelligence Organization Chief Ibrahim Kalin, Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun, Senior Advisor for Foreign Policy and Security Akif Cagatay Kilic, and Presidential Chief of Staff Hasan Dogan, said the statement.

Erdogan told the delegation in the meeting Hamas's "471-day struggle in Gaza reaffirmed the spirit of resistance will endure," Xinhua news agency reported quoting the semi-official Anadolu Agency.

Turkiye will continue to



"expose realities in Gaza," Erdogan reportedly said, expressing hope for the successful completion of the Gaza ceasefire.

Erdogan has often expressed Turkiye's strong stance on the Palestinian issue and has maintained communication with both Hamas and international actors regarding the conflict.

A three-phase ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas took effect on January 19, initiating six weeks of calm and raising hopes for an end to 15 months of Israeli assaults on Gaza that devastated

the enclave and for the release of dozens of hostages held there.

On Saturday, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced the completion of the second phase of a prisoner-hostage exchange between Hamas and Israel, implemented under the initial terms of the ceasefire agreement.

Earlier in the day, Israel has received a list of hostages expected to be released from Hamas captivity in Gaza on Thursday, including three Israeli and five Thai nationals, Israeli sources said.

# Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger formally exit ECOWAS

AGENCIES  
ABUJA, JAN 30

The memberships of the three West African countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have been formally withdrawn from the 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), one year after the three junta-led nations jointly declared an intention to exit the regional bloc.

The ECOWAS Commission said in a statement that the withdrawal took effect Wednesday. It is a historic exit from the bloc, founded in 1975 to promote economic integration in all economic activities, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial matters, and social and cultural affairs, Xinhua news agency reported.

The commission, however, said it had decided "to keep ECOWAS' doors open" in the spirit of "regional solidarity and in the interest



of the people." It directed, until further notice, all relevant authorities within and outside its member states to, among others, recognise national passports and identity cards bearing the ECOWAS logo held by the citizens of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger and continue to treat goods and services coming from the countries per the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme and investment policy.

The commission also directed its organs to allow citizens of the three affected countries to continue to enjoy the right of visa-free movement, residence, and establishment in accordance with the ECOWAS protocols until

further notice and fully support and cooperate with ECOWAS officials from the three countries in their assignments for the community.

"These arrangements will be in place until the full determination of the modalities of our future engagement with the countries by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government," the ECOWAS Commission said, adding that it has set up a structure to facilitate discussions on these modalities with each of the three countries.

On January 28, 2024, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger jointly declared an intention to withdraw from ECOWAS in response to

earlier sanctions imposed by the regional bloc to pressure military juntas in those countries to return to constitutional order. The move sparked concerns among members of ECOWAS, headquartered in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, which later lifted the sanctions.

On December 15, 2024, ECOWAS, at the end of its 66th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, gave Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger a six-month grace period from January 29 to July 29 this year to reconsider their decision to exit the economic bloc. The decision was to use the six-month grace period as a transitional period and keep the West African bloc's doors open to the three countries during the period, Omar Touray, president of the ECOWAS Commission, told reporters in Abuja at the time.

"The authority acknowledges that by the provisions of Article 91 of the revised ECOWAS Treaty, the three countries will officially

cease to be members of ECOWAS from January 29, 2025," Touray added.

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger created the Confederation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) on July 6, 2024 after they announced their withdrawal from ECOWAS on January 28, 2024.

On Tuesday, demonstrations took place simultaneously in the three countries of the AES to mark the first anniversary of their withdrawal from ECOWAS.

In Niamey, the capital of Niger, several thousand people on Tuesday marched from Place Toumo to Place de la Concertation. "The people of the AES gathered today to support the Confederation of the Alliance of Sahel States in its revolutionary approach, to celebrate the first anniversary of the exit from ECOWAS, to say no to the CFA franc, and to warn against the actions of French President Emmanuel Macron," said Abdoulaye Seydou, coordinator of the M62 Movement, one of the organizers.

# Centre approves scheme to boost MSME manufacturing sector

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

The government has approved the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS-MSME) that would facilitate loans up to Rs 100 crore for purchase of plant and machinery/equipment for eligible firms.

The scheme would provide 60 per cent guarantee coverage by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) to member lending institutions (MLIs) for credit facility upto Rs 100 crore, sanctioned to eligible MSMEs under MCGS-MSME for purchase of equipment/machinery,



according to the Ministry of Finance.

According to the scheme, the borrower should be an MSME with valid Udyam Registration Number, loan amount guaranteed should not exceed Rs 100 crore, project cost could be of higher amounts also and mini-

mum cost of equipment / machinery is 75 per cent of the project cost.

"Loan upto Rs 50 crore under the scheme shall have repayment period of upto 8 years with up to 2 years moratorium period on principal instalments. For loans above Rs 50

schedule and moratorium period on principal instalments can be considered," according to the scheme.

Upfront (initial) contribution of 5 per cent of the loan amount shall be deposited at the time of application of guarantee cover and annual guarantee fee on loan under the scheme shall be zero during the year of sanction.

During the next three years, it shall be 1.5 per cent per annum of loan outstanding as on March 31 of previous year. Thereafter, annual guarantee fee shall be 1 per cent per annum of loan outstanding as on March 31 of previ-

ous year.

"The scheme will be applicable to all loans sanctioned under MCGS-MSME during the period of 4 years from the date of issue of operational guidelines of the scheme or till cumulative guarantee of Rs. 7 lakh crore are issued, whichever is earlier," according to the ministry.

Manufacturing sector currently comprises 17 per cent of the nation's GDP and over 27.3 million workers.

"The MCGS-MSME scheme is expected to give a major boost to manufacturing and, thereby, to 'Make in India,'" said the ministry.

# SK Telecom's AI assistant 'aster' to feature connection to major apps

AGENCIES  
Seoul, Jan 30

SK Telecom's envisioned artificial intelligence (AI) assistant service for global users will likely feature connections to popular online applications, such as Google Calendar, sources said on Thursday.

The AI assistant, named aster, is expected to help users create to-do lists and make reservations for transportation and accommodations based on their schedules on Google Calendar, according to the sources, reports Yonhap news agency.

Aster is an advanced AI agent designed to help users organise their daily routines through features

like planning, execution, reminders and advice. It is scheduled to be officially launched in North America in the second half, following the start of a beta service in March.

It will operate autonomously as an "agentic AI," capable of making complex decisions and taking actions based on conversational interactions with users.

SK Telecom is also considering integrating aster with other popular online applications, such as the business review website Yelp and taxi-hailing apps like Uber and Lyft.

Additionally, the Korean company is working to incorporate the AI search engine Perplexity into aster.

"We will decide what

kind of application programming interface to adopt for our actual service after receiving consumer feedback from our beta service for North American users in March," an SK Telecom official said.

Earlier this month, the company said it will begin a beta service of its artificial intelligence agent "aster" in March, targeting North American customers. SK Telecom said the North American launch will serve as a test of its AI agent service in the global market.

"Unlike other AI agents, which simply provide answers to users' needs, aster takes actions in response to users' requests and plans," SK Telecom said.

# US Fed pauses rate cut as RBI likely to go for steps to spur growth

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

As the US Federal Reserve paused the rate cut cycle, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has started with liquidity easing and the rationale for 25bps rate cut in February is compelling, industry watchers said on Thursday.

The Fed held rates as was widely expected at 4.25 per cent-4.50 per cent, with Fed Chair Jerome Powell saying that the US central bank is in "no hurry" to move rates lower in the foreseeable future due to prevailing uncertainty over US President Donald Trump's policies and their impact.

"A resilient labour market and a steadily growing economy give the Fed ample elbow room to assess incoming data as it comes, with the FOMC of the view that mate-



rial declines in inflationary pressures need to be seen for the next bout of rate cuts," said Akshay Chinchalkar, Head of Research, Axis Securities.

That's in line with how traders are thinking - the first rate cut for this year is not priced in before June with a total of two cuts aggregating 50 bps expected for the full, he mentioned.

Fed's expectation is to deliver two rate cuts in

2025 and that could begin in the late Q2 of the year.

On the domestic front, the Central Bank has started with liquidity easing and the rationale for 25bps rate cut in February is compelling, said Ankita Pathak, Chief Macro and Global Strategist at Ionic Wealth by Angel One.

According to brokerage firm Jefferies, the RBI's monetary policy committee meeting, scheduled on February 7, is likely

to spring some positive surprises with a growth-favoured approach.

The recent move by the central bank to provide liquidity is a positive indicator, the report said. It was referring to the RBI's announcement this week that it would inject Rs 1.5 lakh crore liquidity into the banking system in the coming weeks till the end of February.

The RBI had, in its monetary policy review on December 6, slashed the cash reserve ratio (CRR) for banks by 0.5 per cent to make more funds available for lending to spur economic growth but kept the key policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent with an eye on inflation.

The CRR cut infused Rs 1.16 lakh crore into the banking system and was aimed to bring down market interest rates to spur growth.

# INDIAN STOCK MARKET OPENS FLAT AS US FED PAUSES RATE CUT CYCLE

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 30

The domestic benchmark indices opened flat on Thursday as the US Federal Reserve meeting voted unanimously to pause the rate cut cycle, which started last September and has delivered 100 bps of cut to date.

The Sensex was marginally up 49 points or 0.065 per cent at 76,582.44, and the Nifty was up 43 points or 0.18 per cent at 23,197.20. About 1,539 shares advanced, 701 shares declined and 128 shares unchanged.

The FOMC in the US paused rates at 4.25-4.5 per cent. Fed has promised to be data dependent, promising the markets that it is not on a "preset course".

"Additionally, it has continued to reduce its holdings of treasury securities, agency backed debt and



mortgage-backed securities.

In line with expectations, the policy was largely a non-event," said Ankita Pathak, Chief Macro and Global Strategist at Ionic Wealth by Angel One.

US markets are closely watching the Chinese AI evolution and that is being a bigger driver of heavy weights like tech.

According to Dhawal Ghanshyam Dhanani,

Bajaj Finserv, Maruti Suzuki India and Hindustan Unilever added to Nifty 50 index, while Tata Motors, Infosys, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. weighed on the Nifty 50.

On the NSE, nine sectors advanced and three declined out of 12. The NSE Nifty Realty rose the most, and the NSE Nifty Auto declined the most.

On January 29, the foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers for the 19th consecutive session as they sold equities worth Rs 2,586 crore, while domestic institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 1,792.71 crore on the same day.

"Ahead of the Union Budget, there was a spike in some fertiliser and railway stocks, and today's movement will show if this is just a one-day trend or the start of something new," said market experts.

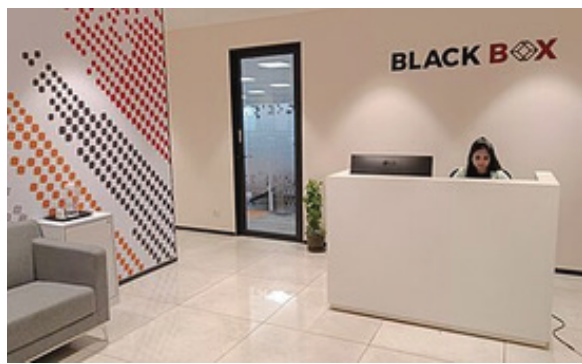
# Black Box continues to power next-gen digital infrastructure with order wins across industry verticals

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, JAN 30

Black Box Limited, Essar's technology arm, on Thursday, announced its order wins across industry verticals. A leading global digital infrastructure integrator, Black Box is trusted by Fortune 500 companies worldwide.

Black Box, with a presence across 35 countries and six continents, empowers businesses to accelerate growth and enhance user experiences through cutting-edge solutions in network integration, digital connectivity, data centre services, modern workplace, and cybersecurity.

Serving key industries like Financial Services, Technology, Healthcare, Consumer & Retail, and



Manufacturing, the company delivers transformative solutions driving success in the digital age.

Black Box has made significant investments in its go-to-market strategy, focusing on both industry verticals and horizontal solutions to expand its share of wallet from the top 300 customers across diverse industries.

The company's pipeline

for digital infrastructure, across industry verticals including hyperscalers, continues to grow, positioning Black Box for sustained growth and market leadership.

Black Box continues to see strong and sustained demand from hyperscalers in its Technology vertical. The company continues to gain momentum in its data centre infrastruc-

ture projects, highlighted by the recent allocation of three large sites in the United States by one of the world's largest hyperscaler for their new data center build-out. In addition, the company has won orders worth Rs 250 crore from this long-term hyperscaler customer.

Black Box continues to work with large hyperscalers, who have reiterated that they are continuing to enhance their capital spending on creating next-generation digital infrastructure. The company believes that AI efficiencies and AI-driven models will accelerate the demand for IT infrastructure due to the higher adoption and consumption of AI across various industries.

Continuing with its focus and momentum on

other digital infrastructure solutions and industry verticals Black Box has also recently won a cybersecurity order of around Rs 100 crore from a large municipal corporation, a large network integration project from a global telecom operator, and an airport order amounting to around Rs 45 crore. The company believes the demand for digital infrastructure across industry verticals will remain robust driven by the need for better end-user experience.

Black Box remains focused and committed to building the next-generation digital infrastructure for its global clients. It sees this decade as the era of a highly digital world, offering sustained business growth opportunities.

# iPhones gain 7 pc India smartphone market share in 2024, grow 23 pc YoY

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

Apple iPhones registered 7 per cent India smartphone market share in 2024, rising on robust local production and growing premiumisation trend in smaller cities, a report showed on Thursday.

On year-on-year basis, iPhones registered 23 per cent growth and iPads an impressive 44 per cent growth in the country, according to data shared by CyberMedia Research (CMR) to IANS.

"Apple's strong growth momentum in CY2024, fuelled by double-digit expansion in both iPhones and iPads, was driven by favourable tailwinds from smartphone premiumisation, alongside a robust push by Apple

in domestic manufacturing and retail expansion," said Prabhu Ram, VP-Industry Research Group, CyberMedia Research (CMR).

India's aspirational middle class is increasingly investing in premium devices, not only as lifestyle statements but also for their advanced technological capabilities.

"The enduring aspirational appeal of iPhones and iPads continues to be a key driver of market growth for Apple, with sufficient headroom to grow in CY2025 and beyond. It is still early days for Apple in India," he noted.

In the October-December quarter (Q4) of 2024, Apple, with its aspirational image and rising footprint, entered the top 5 smartphone players in India for the first time, garnering

nearly 10 per cent market share by volume.

Last year, the tech giant made new exports as well as domestic sale records, driven by the government's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and aggressive retail expansion.

The company's strategic approach in India over the past year has resulted in significant achievements and increased market importance.

Apple's India shipments were set to cross 11 million marks in 2024.

Apple's growth in India is expected to continue with significant momentum in the coming year, driven by aggressive retail expansion, targeted marketing strategies, and a deeper penetration into the aspirational Indian market, said Ram.

# Whirlpool to reduce stake in India unit, stock tanks 20 pc to hit lower circuit

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

US-based home appliances company Whirlpool Corporation on Thursday announced plans to reduce its ownership in its Indian subsidiary, Whirlpool of India Limited, to around 20 per cent by mid to late 2025.

In the early trade, the shares of Whirlpool India dropped by 20 per cent to

hit the lower circuit, trading at Rs 1,262.

The company, which currently holds a 51 per cent stake, said in a stock exchange filing that it would sell shares in one or more transactions but will remain the largest shareholder even after the sale.

Whirlpool expects to generate net cash proceeds of \$550 million to \$600 million from this

planned stake reduction.

Despite the sale, the company reaffirmed its commitment to the Indian market. In a stock exchange filing, the company stated that Whirlpool India would continue to be an important part of its global business and has strong long-term growth potential.

"Whirlpool India will remain a relevant part of Whirlpool Corp's port-



folio and we continue to believe Whirlpool India has a strong long-term trajectory for growth," the company said in its filing.

The company also emphasised that the move would give Whirlpool India more flexibility to adapt to changing industry trends and accelerate its growth.

"By reducing our stake, we are allowing Whirlpool India to operate with great

er independence, which will help it focus on faster expansion," the statement said.

The consumer electronics firm also reassured that its brand licensing, technology agreements, and transition plans would remain in place to support business continuity and long-term growth.

Jim Peters, the company's Chief Financial and Administrative Offi-

cer, said the company has taken significant steps to strengthen its financial position, including repaying \$500 million in debt and improving our working capital.

Peters further added that the company's financial strategy for 2025, including the planned stake sale, aims to maximise shareholder value and enhance the company's balance sheet.

## FIH Pro League: Angad, Arshdeep get senior team call-ups as Hockey India name squad for Bhubaneswar leg

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

Hockey India on Thursday announced a 32-member men's squad ahead of the Bhubaneswar leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25, which will be held at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium.

Veteran drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh will continue to lead the side with deputy Hardik Singh by his side. India will kick-start its campaign with matches against Spain, Germany, Ireland and England from February 15 to 25, playing each team twice.

Impressive performances in the junior team and the ongoing Hockey India League have won 22-year-

old Angad Bir Singh and 20-year-old Arshdeep Singh their first senior team call-ups for the upcoming FIH Pro League matches.

The squad includes first-choice goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak along with Suraj Karkera and Prinedeep Singh. Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Captain Harmanpreet Singh, Sumit, Sanjay, Jugraj Singh, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Varun Kumar and Yashdeep Siwach will be stationed in defence.

In the midfield, the team features Rajkumar Pal, Shamsher Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vice Captain Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh and Rajinder Singh.



Playing in the attack will be Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh, Gurjant Singh, Bobby Singh Dhami, Shilanand Lakra,

Dilpreet Singh, Arajjeet Singh Hundal, Uttam Singh and lastly, Angad Bir Singh and Arshdeep Singh make the cut.

Speaking on the squad

selection, Indian Men's Team Head Coach Craig Fulton stated, "Extremely happy with the squad we have selected for the upcoming Bhubaneswar leg matches of the FIH Pro League 2024-25. I believe this team can win us games, perform in harmony, and most importantly, play an impressive brand of hockey. Looking forward to training with the players in the camp and starting our Pro League campaign on the right note."

"I have been scouting these players over the last few weeks and am excited to see what they do against some of the best international teams in the world."

he added.

Goalkeepers: Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Suraj Karkera, Prinedeep Singh, Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh, Rajinder Singh

Midfielders: Rajkumar Pal, Shamsher Singh, Manpreet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh, Gurjant Singh, Angad Bir Singh, Bobby Singh Dhami, Shilanand Lakra, Dilpreet Singh, Arajjeet Singh Hundal, Uttam Singh, Arshdeep Singh.

Forwards: Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh, Gurjant Singh, Angad Bir Singh, Bobby Singh Dhami, Shilanand Lakra, Dilpreet Singh, Arajjeet Singh Hundal, Uttam Singh, Arshdeep Singh.

## 38th National Games: Momentum builds as Beach Handball league matches on Day 3

AGENCIES  
DEHRADUN, JAN 29

Rajasthan's Baldhari, Services' Deepak Ahlawat, Haryana's Prachi, and Assam's Tarali continued their impressive gameplay, scoring the highest goals for their respective teams in Beach Handball in the 38th National Games here on Wednesday.

These players ended up playing a crucial role in their respective team's victory in league matches on the third day of the Beach Handball competition which witnessed stellar performances from the players.

The Beach Handball League's third day was a spectacle of skill and determination, captivat-

ing fans with fast-paced matches.

The stage is set for even more gripping encounters in the coming days.

In Pool A in the men's category, Uttarakhand suffered a defeat against Services with scores of 15-18 and 16-19. Services' Deepak Ahlawat was the standout player, scoring 16 goals, and leading his team to victory.

In another match in the same pool, Jharkhand defeated Telangana with scores of 20-18 and 20-14. Despite G. Ramesh of Telangana scoring 17 goals, his team couldn't secure a win. Syed Azhar Hussain of Jharkhand contributed significantly with 16 goals, ensuring his team's victory.

## BAI-REC to host first-ever BWF Level 1 course in India

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

Continuing its effort to create a standardised coaching structure and build a strong network of qualified coaches, the Badminton Association of India (BAI), in association with REC Limited (a leading Maharatna company under the Ministry of Power) and the Sports Authority of India (SAI), will conduct the first-ever BWF Level 1 Course for coaches along with BAI Level 1 (Advanced) Courses at multiple venues in February and March.

The advanced coaching courses are part of BAI's continuous efforts to up-skill grassroots coaches and also encourage top players to take up coaching after

they retire. The BWF Level 1 courses, which are supported by both the REC Limited and SAI, will be held in Goa, Raipur, and Guwahati with each state association allowed to nominate preferably one male & one female representative between the age of 25-45, who fulfil the basic criteria of having represented the state in National or Zonal championships and have coaching experience of three years with the association.

The first leg of the coaching courses began in Goa on Monday while the second edition will be held in Raipur from February 4-10, 2025. Guwahati will host the third edition from February 12-18, 2025.

Speaking about the initiative, BAI Secretary Gen-

eral Sanjay Mishra said, "For the last few years, BAI has been working toward creating a standardised coaching structure to ensure that every player in the country gets the same quality of coaching from the grassroots to elite level.

Having successfully conducted the grassroots coaches' courses last year, it was a natural progress to now conduct the BWF Level 1 and BAI Level 1 (Advanced) courses to upskill the coaches further."

Last year, BAI launched its first-ever Grassroots Coaches training program through which it trained around 250 coaches with training imparted to them across 112 days from March to October 2024.

## Champions League: Liverpool, Barca finish league stage in top 2, Arsenal in round of 16

AGENCIES  
EINDHOVEN, JAN 30

Liverpool ended the Champions League league phase in top spot despite a 3-2 defeat away at PSV Eindhoven on the final matchday.

The frantic first half at Philips Stadium on Wednesday night saw the Reds twice take the lead, first via a penalty from Cody Gakpo - at the home of his former club - and then Harvey Elliott.

Johan Bakayoko and Ismael Saibari equalised for the Eredivisie hosts, however, and Ricardo Pepi's close-range strike took them in front in added time.

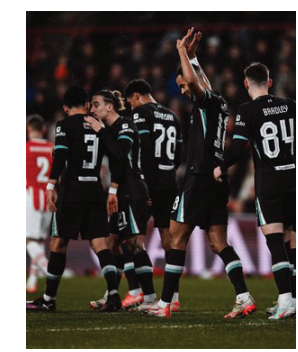
There were no further additions to the scoresheet

after the break, halting Liverpool's 100 per cent record in the opening stage at the last hurdle.

Arne Slot's men will resume the Champions League campaign in the last 16 in March against one of Paris Saint-Germain, Benfica, Monaco or Brest.

PSV, meanwhile, booked their knockout phase play-off place after an entertaining victory against Liverpool.

Elsewhere, FC Barcelona have ensured a top two finish in the Champions League group stage with a 2-2 draw with Atalanta but have missed out on the chance to finish top of the table despite PSV Eindhoven delivering a wonderful favour by beat-



ing leaders Liverpool.

Atalanta twice came from behind to deny Barcelona the victory that would have sealed top spot for the Blaugrana.

Lamine Yamal converted from close range after collecting a Raphinha pass, but Ederson levelled with a powerful effort. Ronald Araujo's precise header from an inswing-

ing Raphinha corner then looked to have secured maximum points, only for Mario Pasalic to hit back seven minutes later for La Dea, who go into the knockout phase play-offs after missing out on the top eight.

Barcelona will be back in European action in late February, when the opposition will be one of Monaco, Brest, PSG or Benfica.

Meanwhile, Arsenal finished third in the Champions League table to secure a spot in the last-16 thanks to a comeback 2-1 victory against Girona.

All the goals came in the first half, and Arnaut Danjuma gave the hosts a surprise lead against the run of play, but the gun-

ners turned things around with two goals in four minutes thanks to a Jorginho penalty and a fine Ethan Nwaneri effort.

Raheem Sterling missed a penalty deep into second-half stoppage-time, but enough had been done for Arsenal to secure their sixth win from eight matches in the competition this term to finish only behind Liverpool and Barcelona.

Gunner will next face the winners of the play-off between the teams who finished in 13th or 14th, or 19th or 20th.

The teams who finished in those positions are AC Milan (13th), PSV Eindhoven (14th), Feyenoord (19th) and Juventus (20th).

## U19 WC: Aussie skipper backs her side to bounce back after shock loss to Sri Lanka

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

Australia captain Lucy Hamilton believes her side's unexpected loss to Sri Lanka in their final Super Six contest in Bangi on Wednesday could serve as a wake-up call and help propel them towards victory at the ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup 2025.

Despite having already secured a semi-final spot,

Australia faltered against Sri Lanka, struggling to chase down a modest target of 100. The Aussies were undone by spin, managing only 87/8 in response to Sri Lanka's 99/8.

Hamilton, however, remains confident that her side can learn from the setback and put in a stronger performance when they face South Africa in the semi-final at Kuala Lum-

pur's Bayuemas Oval on Friday.

Reflecting on the defeat, Hamilton acknowledged that the loss served as a reality check for her team. "I think it was a really good day for just bringing us down to earth and reiterating that it's a really tight competition," Hamilton said after the match.

"All the girls are really excited and looking forward to getting out there

and playing the semi-final. We will take a lot from today's game knowing other teams have a lot of spinners as well, so just adapting to those conditions quicker will be key."

Australia's bowlers performed admirably, restricting Sri Lanka to just 99/8, but their batting lineup struggled to adjust to the slow conditions. Sri Lanka's spinners dominated, claiming all seven

available wickets and applying relentless pressure throughout the chase.

With none of Australia's batters yet registering a half-century in the tournament, concerns remain over their form heading into the knockout stage. Talented 15-year-old all-rounder Caoimhe Bray is the only Australian player in the tournament's top 10 run-scorers, making her a

## Inglis smashes second-fastest ton on Test debut against Sri Lanka

AGENCIES  
GALLE, JAN 30

Australian batter Josh Inglis scored a blistering 102 off 93 balls on his debut against Sri Lanka on day 2 of the first Test on Thursday.

Josh Inglis smashes second-fastest century on Test debut against Sri Lanka

Galle, Jan 30 (IANS) Australian batter Josh

Inglis scored a blistering 102 off 93 balls on his debut against Sri Lanka on day 2 of the first Test on Thursday.

Inglis reached to his maiden Test century in just 90 balls, making it the second-fastest century on Test debut in cricket history behind former Indian opener Shikhar Dhawan's 85-ball ton against Australia in 2013 in Mohali.

The right-hander, who plays for Western Australia, reached the landmark in style, punching a delivery off the back foot for three runs to bring up his hundred.

However, he fell shortly afterwards, trying to maintain the tempo with the visitors approaching 600, chipping a catch to cover, ending his innings with 102 off 93 balls.

## NZ had massive feeling of belief after warm-up against SA & win over India, says Kerr

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, JAN 30

Amelia Kerr's exceptional all-round contributions were instrumental in New Zealand's 2024 Women's T20 World Cup triumph in Dubai, and fulfill their long-held ambitions coming after two runners-up finishes.

New Zealand's win was enhanced by Amelia receiving the Player of the Tournament award for her impressive 15 wickets, the most by any bowler in the competition's history and scoring 135 runs. On top of everything else, Amelia was the recipient of two major honors at the recent ICC Awards.

She won the Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year award, following Suzie Bates as the second New Zealand player to receive this honor, and also claimed the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy, making her the first New Zealand player to win the Women's Cricketer of the Year award.

Reflecting on the time where she felt the tide was in her and New Zealand's favour in 2024, Amelia felt it began from two matches in the World Cup: the warm-up against

South Africa, where she top-scored with 37 in an eight-wicket win and the 58-run victory over India, with her returns being 13 and 1-19.

"I guess the World Cup was pretty special for the White Ferns. For the team, a turning point was one of the warm up games against South Africa. Then we won the first game against India, and there was this belief around the group. For me, nothing changed in terms of my game or how I prepared or my process."

"Sometimes things go your way, and sometimes they don't. But I had worked on a few things with my bowling, which helped, to keep things simple and back what I do best. Again, conditions also suited me. So there wasn't necessarily a turning point. But I think there was a massive feeling of belief that the team carried after a couple of those warm up games," Amelia told IANS in a virtual chat organised by ICC.

From there, it was no looking back for Amelia as her bowling returns read as: 4-26 against Australia, 2-13 against Sri Lanka, 3-14 against Pakistan, 2-14 against West

Indies and 3-24 in the title clash against South Africa, where she put cramps behind to lead New Zealand to glory. A great googly and the support of her spin-bowling group and coach Paul Wiseman contributed significantly to Amelia's success as a leg spinner in 2024.

"I think one is the spin group we have within the White Ferns, and I absolutely love bowling with them. We compete really hard, and Paul Wiseman's been outstanding in terms of challenging me to be better, but also building confidence. I think a lot of work in the T20 game was the development and confidence to bowl my wrong'un and a whole lot more, and it came out well."

"As a leg spinner, you are bowling different variations, and sometimes it's hard to get both going at the same time. But I guess having the confidence and support I had from the support staff definitely helped me as they kind of bought into the game plan I'd spoke to them about."

A week in advance, Amelia got a call informing her about winning two ICC awards. The T20 World Cup victory and her



outstanding performances immediately sprang to Amelia's mind. It also reminded her of leading an all-boys team to victory in Wellington, sparking her ambition to play for the White Ferns.

"The award's nice, but it's not what you play for. Growing up in my family, they were never too worried or bothered about awards. But I remember when I was about 11 or 12, our team won the whole competition in Wellington."

"That was pretty special, as I was the captain of the side, which was an

all boys team. We were the first team to win from Tawa, which was special. From that moment, that's when I felt I wanted to be a White Fern and decided that I'm going to train as much as I can to try achieve that."

In 2010, as a nine-year-old school kid, Amelia used to write stories about winning a World Cup with Sophie Devine and Suzie Bates, something which became a reality in 2024. The success of the New Zealand cricket team in the 2024 World Cup demonstrates the significant impact that positive role

models can have on the next generation of cricketers.

In honour of the team winning the T20 World Cup, there was a nine-day tour happening in cities from south to north of the country, where fans and young kids met players, took photos, and see the trophy up close with wonder and awe.

Amelia, whose triumph over mental health struggles also makes her an inspirational figure, aims to inspire future New Zealand cricketers through her dual ICC awards and playing a pivotal role in the team's T20 World Cup triumph.

"About me watching the White Ferns when I was nine years old, and that inspired me to be one to now winning the World Cup, hopefully that means more young kids in New Zealand want to represent the country in cricket, whether they're boys or girls."

"The fact that the women's game has grown so much over the years means that young girls can also see it's a career option, and something they can do for a living. I just think New Zealand's so small and for the coun-

try to get right behind and around us, it is special. But people like a success story and for a small country to do it, you hope that it inspires a lot of people in New Zealand."

Many see Amelia as the key link between veteran players like Sophie Devine, Suzie Bates, and Lea Tahuhu and a new generation of players, including herself, Izzy Gaze, Rosemary Mair, and Georgia Plimmer, something which she agrees with.

"It's a really nice position for me to be in. I have great relationships with the older girls in the team because I've played with them for the last eight to 10 years. So I guess I've been through different experiences with them within that time."

"With the young group coming through, obviously I debuted at a young age and I'm closer in age to them. So I feel like I can relate to those players and have had experiences to some degree that are similar to both sides. Everyone's story is different, but I feel like I'm in a position where I can connect and relate with both spectrums."

With 2025 already up and running Amelia has

another hectic year in hand. Commitments with the Mumbai Indians will bring her to India next month for 2025 WPL, before a stint in The Hundred beckons. With India set to host 2025 Women's ODI World Cup, all eyes will be on Amelia again to lead New Zealand to glory yet again.

On her immediate wishlist though are adding a slider to her bowling repertoire and improving her power-hitting game. "I don't think anyone's ever the complete product, and that's why we keep playing the game, because we want to keep getting better. For me, I feel like if I was 24 and said I'm the best I can be, I think that would be pretty sad. So I want to keep getting better and better."

"In the men's game, a 24-year-old's not at the peak, and I think that's the same in the women's game."

With players getting stronger and older, just banking on more hours. But with my bowling, I think the accuracy, potentially developing a slider into my game and having a bit more confidence within my bowling to mix up my pace as well."

## Dairy cows distributed among beneficiaries under ABDP

JI NEWS SERVICE  
ANANTNAG, JANUARY 30

The Department of Animal Husbandry, Anantnag, distributed 11 dairy cows to beneficiaries under the Aspirational Block Development Programme (ABDP) at the Veterinary Hospital in Mehdikadal.

The event aimed to enhance dairy farming in the region and promote sustainable livelihoods for local farmers. Dr. Javid, the Chief Animal Husbandry Officer (CAHO) of Anantnag, addressed the gathering on the occasion, highlighting the significance of the initiative in improving dairy production and providing economic support to the farming community. He



emphasized the department's commitment to strengthening the agricultural sector by providing quality livestock and support to local farmers. The distribution of the cows is expected to help increase milk production, improve the livelihoods of dairy farmers, and contribute to the overall development of the region's rural economy. Farmers

who received the cows expressed their gratitude, recognizing the potential of this program in boosting their dairy businesses. This initiative is part of a larger effort by the Department of Animal Husbandry to improve animal husbandry practices and promote the growth of the dairy industry in Anantnag and surrounding areas.

## District Leprosy Society Doda observes Anti-Leprosy Day in Doda

JI NEWS SERVICE  
DODA, JANUARY 30

Under the aegis of the District Leprosy Society, Doda, the health department organized a series of events to observe Anti-Leprosy Day, focusing on raising awareness about leprosy and eliminating the stigma associated with the disease today.

In this connection, an awareness programme was held at the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Office, Doda, graced by CMO Doda, Dr. Om Kumar. The event highlighted the significance of early detection, treatment, and community participation in leprosy eradication. A pledge was administered to all participants, reaffirming their commitment to spreading awareness and supporting the



cause. A separate awareness session was also conducted at ANMT School, Doda, where Medical Officer (Leprosy), Dr. Javed Ahmed Parry, briefed participants on leprosy, its symptoms, treatment, and the need for collective efforts to eliminate the disease. CMO Doda, Dr. Om Kumar, also addressed the gathering, emphasizing the government's initiatives for

leprosy eradication and the importance of public awareness. The event also marked the launch of "Spash" – a fortnight-long Leprosy Awareness Campaign, aimed at intensifying efforts to educate people across the district about leprosy prevention, early detection, and treatment. Similar awareness programmes were also conducted across all medical blocks of the district,

including Assar, Bhaderwah, Gandoh, Ghat, and Thathri, ensuring widespread sensitization on this important health issue.

The observance of Anti-Leprosy Day in Doda reaffirmed the health department's commitment to a leprosy-free society through education, awareness, and timely medical intervention.

The event was attended by BMO Ghat, Dr. Abdul Gafoor, Principal ANMT Doda, Vidya Kotwal, Javed Iqbal (Head Assistant), Mohd Shafi Attu (Health Educator), Sanjeev Rana (I/c Legal Section), Mohd Faheem Butt (FLO NCD), along with Leprosy Staff members Ram Raj and Sajad Ahmed (both PMAs) and staff of ANMT School, among others.

## Power Shutdown

JI NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 30

In view of upgradation of 33 KV Wanpoh SICOP Line from 100 Sq mm ACSR to 200 Sq mm ACSR, the power supply to Receiving Stations including Shamshpora, SICOP, Zirpara, Veeri, Cheniwader, Shuhul Flour Mill and feeding areas including Veer, Srignufwara, Zirpara, Shamsipora and Bijbehara SICOP areas shall remain affected on February 03, 05 & 07 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

Similarly, in view of shifting of electrical utilities along the road, the power supply from 33 KV Badampora Wangipora Tap Line to receiving stations including Batwina, Wangipora, Nowgam and feeding areas including Batwina, Nowgam, Wangipora, Zazna, Ahan, Waskura, Kharbagh, Guzhama, Sumbal, Nesbal shall remain affected on February 01 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

## 2025: The International Year of Cooperatives

### JK makes significant strides in strengthening Cooperative sector: Javed Dar

JI NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 30

As the United Nations Organization (UNO) has declared 2025 as the international year of Cooperatives under the theme 'Cooperatives build a better world', Minister for Cooperative, Agriculture Production and Rural Development departments, Javed Ahmad Dar, today said that the Jammu and Kashmir has made significant strides in strengthening Cooperative sector for welfare and progress of farmers and rural communities.

He said that special focus is being given on the cooperative sector globally and J&K is also keenly focusing on promotion of the sector and all serious efforts shall be made under the theme, decided by UNO.

The Minister said that computerisation of 537 Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) at a cost of Rs. 1746.27 lakh has significantly strengthened cooperative sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

Highlighting the importance of digitization of PACS, the Minister said that it has enhanced operational efficiency, improved transparency and promoted financial inclusion, ensuring better service delivery for farmers and rural communities.

Under the Central Ministry, a series of transformative initiatives including UT level Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), have been implemented to modernize and expand cooperative institutions across the region. Improving



healthcare access to the people, establishment of 46 Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras (PMJAKs) through PACS have been established, making quality medicines available at affordable rates and reducing healthcare costs for rural populations.

The Minister added that the Cooperative network

has been further strengthened with the launch of 144 Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendras (PMKSKs), which act as one-stop agricultural service hubs. "These centers provide farmers with high-quality seeds, fertilizers and expert advisory services to boost agricultural productivity and sustain-

ability and empower farmers with the necessary resources and knowledge," asserted the Minister.

In a major step towards digital inclusion, 480 Common Service Centers (CSCs) have been established through PACS, bridging the rural-urban digital divide. "These centers offer access to online government services, e-governance platforms, banking, and financial assistance, ensuring seamless service delivery to rural populations" the Minister said.

Additionally, 61 PACS have been transformed into Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) to enhance market access and bargaining power for farmers.

The Minister said that six PACS have been identified

for godown construction to enhance storage capacity, minimise post-harvest losses and improve food security besides comprehensive updation of cooperative society records on the National Cooperative Database (NCD) Portal, ensuring greater transparency and efficiency.

He added that successful efforts are being made for revival of defunct cooperatives besides modernisation. About six cooperative super bazaars have been upgraded with seven more planned for construction. Besides, Thirteen cooperative mini-super bazaars are also under development at block headquarters. Infrastructure improvements have been extended to the education sector, with smart classrooms and science labs established in five cooperative schools, added the Minister.

## Dy CM lays foundation stone for development works at Nowshera

JI NEWS SERVICE  
NOWSHERA, (RAJOURI)  
JANUARY 30

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today laid foundation stone for upgradation of Conference Hall at PWD Dak Bungalow, Nowshera, and remodelling of Palaash Nowshera.

The upgradation of the conference hall, to be raised with a sanctioned cost of Rs 249.39 lakh, aims to improve conference and meeting facilities in the region.

Speaking on the occasion, Surinder Choudhary emphasised the government's commitment towards strengthening infrastructure to facilitate efficient governance and better service delivery. He highlighted that the upgraded conference hall will serve as a modern venue for official meetings, public interactions and

other important deliberations.

Additionally, the Remodelling work on Palaash Nowshera, to be done with an estimated cost of Rs 107.48 lakh, was also launched by the Deputy Chief Minister. The project aims to provide a better environment for the residents.

Officials from the Public Works Department (PWD), local administration and public representatives were present at the event. They reiterated their dedication towards ensuring the timely completion of both projects with high-quality standards.

These infrastructure development initiatives are part of the broader agenda of present administration to improve public service facilities and urban amenities in Nowshera, reinforcing the government's focus on holistic regional development.

## Identify vulnerable groups, conduct regular testing for early detection of TB: Sakeena Itoo asks DCs

JI NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, JANUARY 30

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today asked the Deputy Commissioners to identify vulnerable groups in their respective districts and conduct regular testing at these places for early detection of Tuberculosis (TB).

The Minister passed on these directions while chairing a high-level meeting held to review progress on implementation of 100-Day Tuberculosis (TB) Elimination Campaign across Jammu and Kashmir.

Secretary Health and Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah; Mission Director, National Health Mission; Deputy Commissioners of all districts; Director Finance Health and Medical Education; Director Health Services Jammu/Kashmir; Director Coordination New Medical Colleges; Principals of all Government Medical Colleges; CMOs of all districts and other concerned officers also attended the meet-



ing, either in person or through video conferencing.

During the meeting, the Minister impressed upon the concerned Deputy Commissioners and respective CMOs to intensify testing and early detection activities, particularly in Gold Zone districts so that they also can achieve the status of TB free districts. She also instructed the health officials and district administrators to increase the frequency of screenings, conduct aggressive outreach programs and enhance community participation to curb spread of the disease effectively. "Involve PRIs, ULBs and local religious preachers into the campaign as they have maximum reach to far off

areas as well", Sakeena said.

The Minister further called for identifying vulnerable groups in all districts, whether TB free or not. She also called for regular screening in TB free declared districts so that the TB is not relapsing there. "Continuous testing and active surveillance are essential to prevent re-emergence and ensure the long-term success of elimination efforts", she maintained.

The Minister urged the officers, particularly both the Directors of health services, to stay vigilant, conduct routine screenings and engage with at-risk populations to detect any undiagnosed cases early.

While reviewing different aspects of 100 days

TB Elimination Campaign, Sakeena Itoo called for deployment of mobile testing vans for door-to-door screenings in far off areas for TB testing. "Strengthen diagnostic infrastructure at the grassroots level as it is imperative for maintaining a healthy society", Sakeena said.

She called for enhanced coordination among the district TB officers, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, local health units, local NGOs and Mohalla Committees to reinforce participation in TB prevention strategies.

The Minister also called for launching comprehensive awareness programs in collaboration with schools, colleges and local self-help groups to educate people on symptoms

and preventive measures.

During the meeting, MD NHM gave a detailed presentation on the progress on implementation of 100 days TB Elimination Campaign across Jammu and Kashmir. He informed that the campaign aligns with Union Government's vision of achieving TB-free India by 2025 by accelerating TB detection, treatment and eradication efforts across country.

The Minister also assessed measures being taken by respective district administrations and health department regarding the fight against drug menace across Jammu and Kashmir. She called upon the Deputy Commissioners for maximum deterrence in coordination with law enforcement agencies so that the society gets rid of this menace, which is destroying future of our youth.

The Minister asked the Deputy Commissioners for formation of squads in collaboration with Colleges and Higher educational institutions to conduct regular surprise inspections in these places. "Elimination of drug

menace requires a collaborative approach, involving government agencies, healthcare providers and the general public. We need to work in cohesion in ensuring that our society is free of this menace", she stated.

She reiterated that the Omar Abdullah led government is committed to safeguard the health and well-being of its citizens. "By addressing both the root causes and consequences of drug abuse, the government aims to foster healthier and more prosperous future for Jammu and Kashmir", Sakeena maintained.

The Minister further asked all Deputy Commissioners for rehabilitation of drug abuse victims by giving them skill and self-employment training in different courses during their time in drug de-addiction centres so that they can have employment avenues after rehabilitation. She also asked them for augmentation of infrastructure in their respective district so that this menace can be dealt with effectively.

## District-Level NCORD meeting Reasi admin gears up to launch massive anti-drug awareness drive



JI NEWS SERVICE  
REASI, JANUARY 30

Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Reasi Sukhdev Singh Samayal on Thursday chaired the District-Level Narco Coordination (NCORD) centre meeting here in the DC Office to review and enhance efforts against drug abuse in the district. During the meeting, ADDC emphasized the crucial role of multiple departments, including police, education, health, and others, in tackling the menace of drug abuse. He directed the stakeholders departments to launch a massive awareness drive in every village each week

until the entire district is covered.

The District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) was instructed to compile reports on these awareness programs from the concerned departments.

The ADDC also instructed the police department to adopt strict measures against those involved in drug peddling. Additionally, he stressed the need to identify and rehabilitate victims of drug abuse through institutional support.

The meeting was attended by ADC Rakesh Kumar, PO ICDS Mohd. Anwar Bandey, CMO, CEO, DSP (HQ) Neeraj Padyar and other concerned officers.