

## Electricity could become costlier in mornings, evenings in Kashmir Valley

### KPDCL proposes 20% surcharge on electricity consumption during peak hours, submits proposal to JERC

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Nov 20: Close on the heels of a massive controversy in Kashmir over the installation of smart meters, the Power Development Department (PDD) has proposed an extra 20 percent charge on electricity consumption during morning and evening hours in the Valley.

The Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (KPDCL) according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) has sought approval from Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) to impose a 20 percent surcharge on all categories of consumers except for the agriculture sector during peak hours, when demand is at its highest due to the bone-chilling cold in the Valley. According to a petition filed



before the JERC for J&K and Ladakh, KPDCL has proposed the surcharge for different consumer categories, including domestic households. The JERC, a quasi-judicial body, is empowered to approve or reject tariff proposals.

Confirming the development, Managing Director

KPDCL, Mahmood Ahmad Shah told KNO that “KPDCL has proposed a 20 percent surcharge on tariff for the peak hours of the day. As of now, no decision has been taken by the regulatory commission.”

The proposal is part of the Time of Day (ToD) tariff system, under which electricity costs

vary depending on the time of consumption.

However, the proposal has been vehemently opposed by the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) during the hearing on KPDCL petition on Thursday.

The KCCI, represented by Secretary General Faiz Ahmad Bakshi argued that it was misleading for KPDCL to claim it had not raised tariffs while simultaneously proposing a surcharge during peak hours.

“Since electricity consumption during these hours is a necessity and not a discretionary choice, treating it as an additional charge is fundamentally unfair,” the KCCI said.

Citing figures, the KCCI said Kashmir has the worst power reliability in India.

“As per Central Electricity Authority figures for 2022, the System Average | More on P6

## Significant boost in road, rail connectivity unlocked J&K’s immense potential: LG Sinha

- PM Modi accelerated reforms, revolutionized country’s digital integration

- Jammu emerging as logistics hub connecting Ladakh & Kashmir with trade corridors



KNO Correspondent

Jammu, Nov 20: Asserting that significant boost in road and rail connectivity in the last five years has unlocked Jammu and Kashmir’s immense potential, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for accelerating reforms and revolutionizing country’s digital integration.

Speaking at the Jammu Trade and Logistics Conclave-2025, organised by Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) here, LG Sinha,

according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, “National Logistics Policy, under the guidance of PM Modi, has accelerated reforms in the logistics ecosystem and revolutionized digital integration, skill development and infrastructure planning.”

Stating that Jammu is rapidly emerging as trade and logistics hub connecting Ladakh and Kashmir with country’s trade corridors the Lieutenant Governor said that enhanced road and rail connectivity has unlocked the immense

potential of the Union Territory.

He said that storage, multimodal connectivity, logistics capability, and last-mile connectivity have ensured that remote areas remain connected to the mainstream of development. “Penetration of e-commerce and the growing retail sector is also playing a significant role in expanding the footprint of the warehousing and logistics sector. Jammu Kashmir Union Territory is a living example of this extraordinary transformation,” the Lieutenant Governor added.

He called | More on P6

## J&K Police continue widespread security, compliance operations

### ‘Ops aimed at preventing misuse of chemicals, explosives for public safety’

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Nov 20: Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir have launched an extensive security and compliance drive across multiple districts, focusing on sensitive installations, commercial establishments, and public safety measures, officials said on Thursday.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the initiative, launched following the recent Delhi blast and the recovery of arms linked to the “white collar” terror module, seeks to enhance security, enforce regulatory compliance, and ensure proper use of public and

private infrastructure.

In Anantnag district, officials conducted a thorough inspection of lockers belonging to doctors and medical staff at the government medical college. “The exercise ensures accountability in hospital operations and verifies that critical areas are properly secured,” an official said.

The inspections, carried out in coordination with the hospital administration, also aim to check for misuse of any restricted items or access points.

A similar operation was conducted in Bandipora district in north Kashmir, where police and civil administration teams inspected | More on P6

### Delhi Blast Case

## 4 more prime accused arrested handed over to NIA

‘All played key role in Red Fort blast, 6 held so far’

Police dismiss ‘speculative’ reports as ‘efforts to mislead public’

Say high-level panel headed by Pr Secy Home formed to probe blast

Ahmad Taimur

New Delhi, Nov 20: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday arrested four more prime accused involved in the Delhi blast case. The blast that ripped through a car near the iconic Red Fort last Monday claimed 15 lives and injured many others last week.

A total of six accused have been arrested so far in the case, with four arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir police and two arrested by the Anti-Terror Agency. All the six accused persons are now under the NIA custody.

An official told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO)



that the four accused, who were arrested by J&K police, were handed over to the Anti-Terror Agency today for further investigation into the blast case.

He said that the four accused

were taken into custody by NIA in Srinagar on production orders from the District Sessions Judge, Patiala House Court.

The accused have been identified as | More on P6

## CM Omar calls on FM Sitharaman

Discusses key dev priorities of J&K



KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Nov 20: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday called on the Union Minister of Finance, Nirmala Sitharaman and held detailed discussion on key developmental priorities of the region.

According to a post on X, by

the Office of Chief Minister, J&K, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the meeting focused on strengthening infrastructure, boosting investment and ensuring continued financial support for welfare-driven initiatives in J&K.

“Chief Minister today called on the | More on P6

## 58 officials transferred in J&K

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Nov 20: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday ordered the transfer and posting of 58 officials in the interest of administration.

According to an order issued by the General Administration Department (GAD), a copy of which lies with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Rajinder Singh Tara has been transferred from Controller, Legal Metrology to Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment. Tariq Hussain Ganai will now serve as Managing Director, J&K Medical Supplies Corporation. Sajad Hussain Ganai has been posted as Mission Director, ICDS, J&K.

Bashir Ahmad Khan will hold additional charge as Executive Director, J&K

Rehabilitation Council, Social Welfare Department. Shiv Kumar Gupta is assigned as Controller, Legal Metrology, while Reyaz Ahmad Wani takes over as Special Secretary, Science & Technology Department.

Rajinder Kumar Sharma has been transferred to the Skill Development Department. Ashwani Khajuria will oversee Director, Estates, Jammu, and Kashmir. Abid Hussain is appointed Additional Inspector General of Registration, Kashmir. Ashish Kumar Gupta moves to Power Development Department, and Ashiq Hussain Lily will serve as Regional Director, Survey and Land Records, Srinagar.

Ghan Shyam Singh, JKAS, awaiting orders of adjustment in the General Administration Department, | More on P6

### Delhi Blast Aftermath

## J&K Police, Health Department inspect lockers in Srinagar, Anantnag hospitals

Rehan Qayoom Mir/ Jāhangeer Ganai

Srinagar, Nov 20: Jammu and Kashmir Police along with the officials of the Health Department on Thursday inspected lockers of the doctors and medical staff at hospitals in Srinagar and Anantnag districts.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the exercise was a part of the enhanced security measures after the recent Delhi terror blast and recovery of arms and ammunition from a terror module comprising of

doctors.

“Lockers used by doctors and other staff members were inspected in private hospitals, medical colleges, PHCs and health facilities across Srinagar,” said an official.

“The exercises were aimed at preventing misuse of lockers for unauthorised storage of illegal or hazardous materials and strengthening internal security within medical institutions,” he added.

The administrations of the various hospitals have been asked to maintain proper records and ensure that lockers are used strictly for official purposes. | More on P6

## Courts cannot fix timeline for Governor, Prez to give assent to bills: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that timelines cannot be fixed for the Governor and the President for giving assent to bills passed by state assemblies and the judiciary cannot also grant deemed assent to them.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice BR Gavai unanimously held that it would be against the interest of federalism if the Governor, without following due process under Article 200 (power of Governor to provide assent to bills passed by the assembly), is allowed to withhold bills.

The bench also comprising Justices Surya Kant, Vikram



Nath, P S Narasimha and A S Chandurkar said, “We don’t think governors have unfettered power to sit over bills passed by state assemblies”.

While answering the Presidential reference in which President Droupadi Murmu

has sought the opinion of apex court under Article 143 (1) of the Constitution, the bench said that governors have three options — either to grant assent or send bills for reconsideration or refer them to the President.

It said in a democratic country like India, fixing timelines for governors is against elasticity provided by the Constitution.

The top court also deprecated the grant of “deemed assent” granted by the apex court on April 8 in the case of Tamil Nadu to the bills held by the state governor, saying it amounts to virtually taking over functions of constitutional authority.

The top court also ruled that the discharge of Governor’s power under Article 200 is not justiciable.

## Kashmir hospitals see surge in COPD, asthma cases as temps drop

### Doctors say rising air pollution, smoking, environmental factors key contributors

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Nov 20: As Kashmir’s temperatures drop, hospitals across the valley begin to witness a sharp spike in admissions of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma patients.

Doctors said the majority of emergency and casualty cases during winters are linked to COPD—an irreversible and progressive lung condition—largely triggered by smoking and worsening air pollution. They

called for prevention, early diagnosis and enhanced respiratory care facilities in the region.

Dr Ghulam Hassan Khan, a chest disease expert, told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that COPD cases in J&K are increasing at an alarming rate.

“Most of the patients landing in casualty during the winter months are COPD and asthma patients. Smoking remains the leading cause. Quitting smoking is the single most effective step to prevent this lifelong



disease,” he said.

The doctor said a considerable number of people who

have never smoked also develop COPD due to exposure to poor air quality, which, he points out,

is deteriorating in Kashmir.

“Environmental pollution is rising due to combustion emissions, industrial activities, wood and kerosene burning in homes, biomass fuels, and even charcoal used in kangris. At times, Kashmir’s air quality has been reported to be worse than major metro cities,” he added.

According to Dr Khan, reducing smoking rates and improving overall air quality would significantly reduce respiratory disease cases. He urged the administration to take concrete

measures for cleaner air.

“Apart from smoking and pollution, genetic factors, socioeconomic conditions, repeated lung infections, exposure to toxic fumes, and vascular complications among IV drug users also contribute to COPD,” he said.

Dr Khan advised lifestyle modifications such as quitting smoking, avoiding allergens and respiratory irritants, staying hydrated, maintaining good nutrition, regular exercise, and avoiding extreme

temperatures can slow the progression of COPD.

COPD, once developed, is irreversible, he explained. Winter months bring frequent infections that push patients into hospitals, he added.

“Flu vaccination, pneumococcal and Haemophilus influenzae vaccines every five years are crucial. These vaccines can prevent infections that worsen COPD during winter,” Dr Khan said.

Dr Javid Ahmad, another chest specialist, said that COPD incidence in | More on P6



'Know Your Artisan'  
Div Com  
inaugurates 3-day  
Craft Carnival



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, November 20: Riding high on the resounding success of the first three 'Know Your Artisan' (KYA) events in October, which captivated crowds at iconic venues like Polo View Market, Jhelum Riverfront, and Ghanta Ghar with live demonstrations and direct artisan engagements; the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir (DOHHK) Thursday unveiled the 'Know Your Artisan' Craft Carnival.

The 3-day extravaganza commenced at the picturesque Sher-e-Kashmir Park on Residency Road, under the aggressive branding campaign 'Soulful Kashmir'.

The event was inaugurated by Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, who lauded the department's endeavors in spotlighting the Valley's timeless crafts.

Speaking on the occasion, the Div Com highlighted the transformative potential of such exhibitions. He commended the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir for organizing this carnival.

He said Initiatives like 'Know Your Artisan' are essential to bring our master artisans to the forefront, providing them a deserving platform to showcase Kashmir's rich craft and heritage to both locals and global audiences. "These programs not only revive our traditions but also empower our artisans economically, ensuring their skills endure for generations", he added.

He stated that exports of Handicrafts & Handlooms has doubled since the last four years which has increased the income of artisans.

This carnival arrives in the triumphant aftermath of Srinagar's dual global accolades including its designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art in 2021 and as

the 63rd World Craft City under the World Crafts Council (WCC) network in 2024.

These honors underscore the city's unparalleled heritage in handicrafts with intricate Pashmina weaving and hand-knotted carpets to papier-mache and walnut wood carvings, positioning Srinagar as a beacon for cultural preservation and innovation on the world stage.

The event witnessed a huge gathering of top-level officers, alongside key Department officials, all witnessing the unveiling of 36 meticulously curated stalls. These feature an exhaustive array of GI-registered crafts, such as authentic Pashmina, Kani shawls, and Kashmiri carpets, alongside products notified under the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme and the District Export Hub (DEH) initiative.

Complementing the displays are immersive live demonstration sections, where artisans unveil the labor-intensive secrets of their trades, and interactive 'Try Your Hand' zones inviting the public to engage hands-on with techniques like chain-stitch embroidery, Pashmina weaving and walnut wood carving.

Enthusiastic visitors, locals, tourists, families, and craft enthusiasts, flocked to the venue, infusing the autumnal canopy of Chinar trees with palpable energy.

The carnival aligns with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's visionary initiatives of Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat, fostering self-reliance by promoting indigenous crafts as engines of economic growth, sustainable tourism, and global exports. By bridging artisans directly with consumers through fair-priced stalls, it champions 'Vocal for Local,' creating viable market linkages and countering counterfeit threats while celebrating the human stories behind each creation.

CS reviews progress of  
major highways, tunnels



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review the status of major highway and road development projects being executed across Jammu & Kashmir by Project Beacon, Project Sampark, NHAI, NHIDCL, and the Public Works (R&B) Department.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Department; Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir; Secretary Transport; Engineer-in-Chief (Works); Regional Officer, NHAI; Chief Engineers of Project Beacon and Project Sampark and other senior officers. All Deputy Commissioners participated through video conferencing.

The Chief Secretary took a project-wise and package-wise assessment of progress on all major highways under execution across the UT. He sought detailed timelines for completion and enquired about bottlenecks faced by the executing agencies.

He directed that permissions for extraction of construction material must be strictly ensured and used only for the designated projects. Deputy Commissioners were instructed to expedite compensation cases and ensure timely disbursement to facilitate immediate handover of land to executing agencies for simultaneous work on all project packages. He also called for prompt grant of forest clearances wherever required.

Both Divisional Commissioners were asked to regularly engage with the implementing agencies to resolve

issues without delay and maintain the momentum of work. The Chief Secretary emphasised that while the administration would facilitate all necessary support, the agencies must adhere strictly to the prescribed timelines.

The Public Works Department was asked to finalise and follow the new DPRs under formulation so that these crucial projects can move swiftly to the tendering and execution stages.

A comprehensive review was held on several flagship road corridors, including Srinagar-Baramulla-Uri Road, Khanabal-Baltal Road, Alignment fixing for Peer ki Gali and Sadhna Tunnels, Akhnoor-Poonch Road (completion status), Dredging permissions for NH-144A, Mangam-Doodhpathri-Shopian-Poonch Road, Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, Kaluchak-Purmandal-Domel Road, Fourth Tawi Bridge, Jammu.

The Chief Secretary laid special emphasis on expediting works along NH-44, including Tunnel projects. He reviewed the progress of Nashri-Chenani road via Patnitop, Marog-Digdol Tunnel, Digdol to Khuni Nallah Tunnel, Makarkot to Sherbibi Tunnel, Black topping of Banihal to Ramban stretch before December end was specially being emphasis upon. The Divisional Commissioner Jammu was directed to monitor these works closely and furnish regular progress reports. The meeting noted the progress on both metropolitan ring roads including that of Jammu and Srinagar Ring Road projects. Review covered land issues, construction progress, and connectivity requirements. Detailed discussions were held on

the completion of the tunnel in Jammu and connectivity of Srinagar Ring Road to the Airport and from Sumbal to Wail, with directions for accelerating the pace of execution.

The Chief Secretary assessed multiple NHIDCL projects including Highway works on Jammu-Akhnoor Road, Improvement of riding surface from Bhagwati Chowk to Canal Head (Jammu), Chenani-Sudhmahadev Road, Goha-Khellani Road, Khellani-Khanabal stretch, Zojila Tunnel and revised DPRs under consideration.

The meeting also reviewed new DPRs under consideration in NHAI, including New Fourth Tawi Bridge, Phase-II of Jammu Ring Road, Six-laning of Chenani-Nashri Tunnel, Srinagar Ring Road Phase III, Sumbal-Bandipora-Gurez Road, Service road on Srinagar-Qazigund Highway, Kathua-Basholi-Bani-Bafliaz-Doda Road and many others in the length and breadth of J&K.

Progress of key R&B projects was also assessed, including Bypasses for Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian towns, Sanat Nagar Flyover, Service road at Tengpora, Bridges at Chanapora and Tengpora. New projects discussed included Parimpora-Shalteng Flyover, Old Padshahibagh Bridge, Lal Chowk-Parimpora Flyover and dozens of other connectivity projects.

The Chief Secretary reiterated that all these projects are vital for improving mobility, economic growth, and regional connectivity across Jammu & Kashmir. He directed all departments and agencies to work in close coordination to ensure timely completion of every package and removal of all impediments at the earliest.

KVIB holds awareness-cum-  
interaction programme in Sgr

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, November 20: Jammu & Kashmir Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB), District Office Srinagar, organized an awareness-cum-interaction programme Thursday at Chatterhama Hazratbal, Srinagar.

The event was attended by Director RSETI Srinagar, Ex-Municipal Councillor Chatterhama, HeadMaster Government Girls School Chatterhama, senior officials from J&K KVIB, representatives from Banks, and other officials from allied departments.

The programme aimed to inform and sensitize the rural unemployed educated youth, aspiring entrepreneurs, artisans, beekeepers and other stakeholders from Block Hazratbal and adjoining areas about self-employment opportunities and

schemes such as PMEGP and JKREGP. Participants received guidance on project formulation, loan procedures, and available government support. Addressing the gathering, the District Officer KVIB Srinagar, highlighted financial assistance schemes, employment generation programs, technical training and marketing support available to rural entrepreneurs from J&K KVIB. Further, Director RSETI highlighted the training programs offered by the agency for up-liftment/knowledge of the interested beneficiaries.

District Officer KVIB also shared performance highlights, noting that in 2024-25, 322 PMEGP cases were disbursed involving Rs 507.90 lakh in margin money, generating 1,932 jobs, while 12 JKREGP cases were disbursed with Rs 28 lakh in margin money, creating 96 rural employment opportunities.

'Leafy Greens'  
celebrated at CITH Sgr

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: ICAR-Central Institute of Temperate Horticulture (CITH), Srinagar, a renowned institute entrusted for research and development in temperate vegetables by Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi organized 'Leafy Greens Celebration'.

The event was presided over by Chairperson, JK Waqf Board, Dr. Darakshan Andrabi, as chief guest. The event, organized under the leadership of director CITH, Dr. M. K. Verma showcased the vast germlasm of leafy greens, most notably kale (Kashmiri haak) and highlighted the nutritional, health promoting and therapeutic properties of leafy greens like Kashmiri kale, exotic kales, Indian and exotic spinach, indigenous and exotic cabbages, cauliflower, broccolis, pakchoi, komatsuna and tatsoi.

KASHMIR  
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NOTICE

I want to change my name in my Adhaar Card bearing no. 526206815183 From Shaheen to Shahzada as per my Domicile Certificate, Now i want to correct the same. In this regard if anybody have any objection he/she may contact Concerned Authority within 7 days after that no objection shall be entertained  
Name: Shahzada  
W/o Gulzar Ahamd Karnai  
R/o Abi Karpora, Nehru Park Srinagar

PUBLIC NOTICE

I owned a vehicle-Maruti Wagonr bearing Registration No:- JK01R6938,Engine No:K10BN 1518014 Colour: Fire Brick Red.I sold the vehicle on 23th of December and 2014 and repeatedly requested the buyer to get this vehicle registered on his own name.Even after the repeated requests,the buyer has not got to this vehicle transferred to his own name till date .I have lost all the contracts with buyer of this vehicle.By the medium of this notice.I request the person who is driving this car to contact on the below given cell numbers without any further delay.  
In case of any mishap or misuse of this vehicle,the person who is driving this vehicle shall be responsible for the consequences.

7889702528  
Or 9622652137  
Ghulam Nabi Dar  
S/o : Ali Mohd Dar  
R/o Batyar Alikadal Srinagar.  
Present address:Moominabad Srinagar.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE  
ENGINEER IRRIGATION &  
FLOOD CONTROL DIVISION  
KUPWARA-193222

Contact no: 019551-3221002

No: IFCDK/DB/2641-42 Dated: 20/11/2025.

CORRIGENDUM

Subject: Cancellation notice.  
Reference: This office e-Nit No. IFCDK/ 08 of 2025-26 Dated: 14.11.2025  
issued vide endstt. No. IFCDK/CS/2583-94 Dated:14.11.2025.  
The Tender ID No. 2025 IFC 295201 1 of above referred e-NIT is hereby cancelled with immediate effect due to technical reasons. The fresh e-NIT for the same shall be retendered shortly.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
Irrigation and FC Division  
Kupwara

DIPK-8302/25 DATED:20-11-2025

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE  
ENGINEER MECHANICAL AND  
HOSPITALS DIVISION SRINAGAR

(Tele-fax No: 019-2496089,

Subject 1. Upgradation/Renovation of paid wards of SMHS Hospital, Srinagar by way of Upgradation of Central Heating system along with allied works.  
2. Supply, Installation, Testing Commissioning of minimum 147 CFM Capacity Vacuum Pump with allied Works at SMHS Hospital Srinagar.  
Ref : 1. This office NIT No: MHDS/TS /2025-26/91/e-tendering dt01.11.2025  
2. This office NIT No: MHD/TS /2025-26/100/e-tendering dt 14.11.2025

EXTENSION

In view of no/poor response the Critical dates of above subject work(s) tendered vide above referred e-NIT are extended as follows: -

S. No	Description	Date and Time
1.	Last Date of Bid Submission	24.11.2025 (13:00 hrs)
2.	Date of Bid Opening	24.11.2025 (15:00 hrs)

All other Terms and Conditions of the NIT shall remain the same.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Mechanical & Hospitals Division,  
Srinagar.

DIPK-8303/25 DATED:20-11-2025

ECONOMIC OFFENCES WING, SRINAGAR  
(CRIME BRANCH KASHMIR)

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor ERA Building, Exhibition Ground, Srinagar-190091

Email: sspeow-kmr@jkpolice.gov.in Phone/Fax No.: 0194-2479030.

HUE & CRY NOTICE

Case FIR No. 49/2018 U/S 420 RPC, 66 (D) IT Act is under investigation with Police Station Economic Offences Wing, Crime Branch Kashmir. The individual whose description is given below, is involved in the said case is evading his arrest to scuttle the due process of law.

Please have a sharp look out, if the accused is traced /found he be apprehended/detained and this agency be informed accordingly, on phone No. 0194-2471836.9596953000.

The description of the accused is as under:

Particulars of the person..	Sukdev Raj SM Shim Ray R/o House No. 66, land mark Duba mandir Tehsil Gopalpur District /City Deoghar, Jharkhand, Phone No. 7541908234	
Aadhar No.	7657-5456-7237	
Pan No.	MC	
Pin code	814146	
Date of Birth	01-01-1970	
height	5'. 5" (Approximately)	
Police Station	Deoghar, Jharkhand	
Identification mark	NK	

DIPK-8290/25 DATED:20-11-2025

Abdul Waheed Shah, Senior Superintendent of Police,  
Economic offences Wing, Crime Branch Kashmir



The Saffron Crisis

Production plummets to 5-10%, prices surge by 20%

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Nov 20: Kashmir's world-famous saffron sector is facing one of its toughest years in recent memory, with production dropping drastically to nearly 5-10% of the usual yield. As a result, saffron prices in the market have surged by around 20%, and traders fear the rates may climb even further in the coming weeks.

Growers and traders attributed the crisis to prolonged dry spells, erratic weather patterns, and shrinking traditional saffron fields—factors that have collectively dealt a heavy blow to this centuries-old industry.

Muhammad Ashraf, a saffron grower from Pampore, often called the 'Saffron Bowl of Kashmir', said this year's output has left farmers devastated. "We have never seen



production fall to this extent. Most of us harvested barely a few grams. If this continues,

many growers will have no option but to abandon saffron farming," he said.

Another grower, Haleema from Lethpora, said the low yield has pushed many families into financial distress. "Saffron is our main livelihood. With only 5-10% produce this year, we are unsure how to manage daily expenses. We request the government to intervene immediately before this crop disappears from Kashmir," she said.

Traders dealing with saffron say that the supply shortage has already led to a noticeable spike in prices. "Prices have jumped by nearly 20% in just a few weeks. If the market continues to receive low stocks, we may see another surge soon," said Bashir Ahmad, a trader in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

He added that buyers, especially from outside Kashmir, are already expressing concern about limited availability.

Another trader, Imran Rather, said

the demand is stable, but the supply is extremely low. "This imbalance is pushing the rates up. We are worried that saffron from other countries might capture the market if local production keeps declining," he said.

Saffron growers have appealed for urgent government assistance, including measures to ensure proper irrigation, protect land from conversion, and strengthen the Mission Saffron project.

"We need scientific support, better irrigation systems, and strict action against land encroachment. Without government help, the saffron industry of Kashmir is at serious risk," said Abdul Majid, a grower.

Stakeholders also urged authorities to compensate growers who suffered heavy losses this season—(KNO)

Oath ceremony

for Muntazir, Devyani today



KNO

Srinagar, Nov 20: Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather will administer the oath to two newly elected MLAs on Friday morning, sources disclosed.

Sources said that the Speaker will administer the oath to Peoples Democratic Party's Muntazir Mehdi and Bharatiya Janata Party's Devyani Rana at 11:00 am in the Assembly complex.

As per section 24 of Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019, every member of the Legislative Assembly shall, before taking his seat, make and subscribe before

the Lieutenant Governor of the said Union territory, or some person appointed in that behalf by him, an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Fourth Schedule of this Act. While Mehdi was elected from the Budgam Assembly segment, Devyani Rana won from Nagrota -a constituency earlier represented twice by her late father, Devinder Singh Rana.

Post abrogation of Article 370 and repeal of J&K Constitution, all MLAs have to be administered oath under the Constitution of India.

With the filling of these

two vacancies, the strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly has risen to 90 members.

In the House, the National Conference holds 41 MLAs, the BJP 29, Congress six, PDP four, while the Peoples Conference, CPI (M) and Aam Aadmi Party have one MLA each. Besides, there are seven independent MLAs.

The Lieutenant Governor is also empowered to nominate five members to the Assembly -two women, two representatives of migrants, and one member representing refugees from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)

Neighbouring country cannot halt our development on LoC: Minister Sharma



WARIS FAYAZ

Uri, Nov 20: Minister Satish Sharma on Thursday said the government will continue development in the Line of Control (LoC) villages despite repeated attempts by the neighbouring country to create hurdles. Sharma, while speaking at the inauguration of an indoor stadium in Uri said residents along the LoC protect the nation without uniforms, and their courage and commitment deserve recognition.

He said the government is giving more attention to rural and LoC belts than urban centres, adding that the administration aims to meet the expectations of families living in border villages.

"LoC villages will receive focused support in sports

infrastructure. The departments have been directed to assist Panchayats near the LoC with sports fields," the minister said, adding that the youth in the border belt show high physical and mental readiness for competitive sport.

Sharma praised MLA Sajjad Shafi for his efforts in securing the project. He said minor gaps will be addressed in the upgradation phase.

He added that the government will provide another transport facility to LoC villages to promote border and eco tourism, adding that the frontier villages hold strong potential for tourism growth.

The minister said directives from the Chief Minister place rural and border areas at the top of the development plan—(KNO)

Kashmir prepared for winter with adequate essentials: FCS&CA

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Nov 20: The Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Department Kashmir on Thursday said the valley is fully geared up for winter, with advance dumping of ration and LPG already completed across all districts. Deputy Director Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Kashmir, Arjumand Yaqoob said that as part of the department's winter preparedness plan, four months of ration stock have been dumped in advance across the valley.

"We had set November 31 as the deadline, but this year we are ahead of schedule. Four months of rations have already been dumped across all districts," she said. Arjumand said

LPG supplies are being stocked in border and far-flung areas in line with winter requirements. "In areas like Bandipora, Gurez, Kupwara, Tangdar and Machil, the dumping process is ongoing and progressing smoothly," she said.

The Deputy Director further informed that there are 893 designated dumping stations across Kashmir where winter stocks have been placed to ensure uninterrupted supply during snowfall and road closures.

"Our winter preparations are complete, and there is no need for the public to panic. District officers remain available 24x7, and people facing any issue regarding ration or LPG can directly contact them," she said—(KNO)

'Mutton Crisis' looming in Kashmir, dealers blame Punjab checkpoints

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Nov 20: The Kashmir Wholesale Mutton Dealers Association on Thursday sounded alarm again over the high costs and harassment imposed on livestock trucks at Punjab checkpoints, warning of a "mutton price hike" in the Valley if the issue is not resolved by November 27.

Mehraj-ud-Din Ganai, the Association's General Secretary said dealers face alleged excess charges of over Rs 10,000 per truck, a continuation of previously reported "extortion" practices. He added that truckers have been forced to pay between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 at the Shambhu and Madhopur checkpoints. Earlier this year, the Association even suspended the import of live animals from outside

states in protest, citing repeated harassment and bribes. As reported by KNO at the time, more than 50 sheep died during one such incident due to delays and heat stress.

Adding to concerns, Kashmir dealers have also accused "goons" in Punjab of physically assaulting drivers and conductors when they refuse to pay these illegal "taxes" under the guise of the Punjab Cattle Fair Act.

Mehraj warned that if the government fails to deliver on its promise to resolve the issue by the end of this month, the resulting losses may force dealers to hike mutton rates in Kashmir and they will not take responsibility for the fallout. Sources within the association also told KNO that if the issue is not resolved promptly, mutton prices could reach Rs 800 per kg and the situation could worsen further—(KNO)

Srinagar E-Rickshaw drivers decry 'unjust' No-Go Zones

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Nov 20: E-rickshaw operators in Srinagar have strongly opposed the RTO's recent decision declaring Mou-lana Azad Road (Jehangir Chowk to J&K Bank HQ) and Residency Road (Hari Singh High Street to J&K Bank HQ) as "No e-Rickshaw Zones," calling it "unjust" and a direct threat to their livelihoods.

Arshid Ahmad Bhat, President of the E-Rickshaw Union Kashmir said, the decision is unfair and would directly impact the daily earnings of thousands of drivers.

He said they are with the government over regulation of traffic congestion in Srinagar city, but condemn this move. "If a road is being closed, the authorities should at least allow e-rickshaws on alternate routes like Residency Road. Thousands of families depend on these vehicles for their daily income, this sudden



restriction is unjust and harsh," he said.

Earlier, the RTO announced the ban following its meeting on November 13, 2025, citing the need to ensure smoother traffic flow in high-density areas often slowed by frequent e-rickshaw stoppages. The official notification warned that any violation of the order would invite action under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and related rules.

While authorities said the measure will decon-gest key commercial stretches, e-rickshaw

drivers say it disproportionately affects small transport operators who provide essential last-mile connectivity in the city. "We support efforts to regulate traffic, but banning access without offering alternatives is unreasonable and harmful to us," Bhat added.

Moreover, the E-rickshaw operators have urged the administration to reconsider the order and work toward a balanced policy that safeguards both traffic management and the livelihoods of local drivers—(KNO)

College students badly hit

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Nov 20: Following the Regional Transport Authority's (RTA) recent decision, declaring M.A. Road and Residency Road as "No E-Rickshaw Zones," students from various colleges, located along these routes in Srinagar have expressed serious concern, saying the move has made their daily commute difficult.

Students from Women's College Srinagar, SP College, Kothi Bagh and the SP Higher Secondary School and others, who frequently travel along this route, said e-rickshaws had become a convenient and affordable means of transport, especially during morning hours when they head to college. "We used to rely on e-rickshaws as they were quick, safe and easily available in the mornings. Now, we are forced to depend on Smart City buses, which are already overcrowded and there is no other public transport operating on this stretch," said Sameer Hussain, a student of SP College Srinagar.

Another student, Mehvish Bashir from Women's College Srinagar, said the decision has caused unnecessary inconvenience, especially for

women commuters. "E-rickshaws provided comfort and accessibility, particularly for girls coming from different parts of the city. The authorities should have considered students before enforcing such a ban," she said.

Echoing similar concerns, Safoura Hilal, another student from Women's College Srinagar, said the authorities must revisit the decision. "The ban has limited our travel options and increased our daily struggle. We urge the administration to reconsider and allow e-rickshaws during peak hours at least," she added, suggesting that e-rickshaws be permitted to operate on either M.A. Road or Residency Road as an alternative.

Firdous Nazir, another student, said, "We understand that the government's intention is to ease traffic congestion and we support that, but the authorities must rethink their plan and consider the difficulties faced by students as well."

Meanwhile, the students have appealed to the administration to review the restriction and allow limited e-rickshaw movement to ensure smooth and safe travel for college-going girls.

Police, CRPF bust narco-terror module in Kupwara

WARIS FAYAZ

Kupwara, Nov 20: In a joint operation Jammu and Kashmir Police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) busted a narco-terror module by arresting father-son duo in North Kashmir's Kupwara District on Thursday.

An official said that two "hybrid terrorists"—Abdul Lateef, 53, and his son, Shahnawaz Khan, 23, of Puthwari in Nowgam area of Handwara, were

arrested during the joint operation by the J&K Police and CRPF. "The duo was actively involved in running a narco-terror network in the area," he added.

The official said that recoveries include a pistol with seven rounds, and heroin-like contraband weighing approximately 890 grams.

"A case has been registered under various sections of the NDPS Act, UA(P) Act, and Arms Act and further investigations are on," the officer added—(KNO)

Sopore Police organize cycling race

WARIS FAYAZ

Sopore, Nov 20: Sopore Police organised a cycling race under the Civic Action Programme to promote youth engagement, fitness and road safety. Police spokesperson said the students from several schools across Police District Sopore took part in the event, with ADC Sopore Shabir Raina flagged off the race in the presence of senior police officers. The competition ended with a felicitation ceremony chaired by SSP Sopore Iftikhar Talib. Students received mementoes. The top three performers in the male and female groups won cash prizes of 8000 rupees, 5000 rupees and 2500 rupees.

SSP Talib said cycling builds discipline, fitness and responsible road behaviour. He said such events help students grow in confidence and prepare them for larger sporting platforms. The SSP said the race was part of a wider youth outreach effort. He said sports activities help guide young people toward productive spaces. He added that the police will continue similar programmes in different fields.

He said a volleyball tournament will be held in the coming days. He urged residents to take part in the civic action activities—(KNO)



EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: Islam’s Uncompromising Sanctity Of Human Life

In a world scarred by senseless violence often falsely justified in religion’s name, Islam’s unequivocal position on the sanctity of human life stands as a powerful rebuke to those who distort its teachings. The Quran and Hadith establish every human life as inviolable, making the preservation of life second only to the preservation of faith itself. The Quran declares: “Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And

whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely” (5:32). This profound verse establishes the individual human life as representing all of humanity, making unlawful killing the ultimate transgression. Furthermore, the Quran emphasises that God has “dignified the children of Adam” (17:70), establishing human dignity as inherent and God-given, not earned or conditional. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reinforced this fundamental principle throughout his life. In his farewell sermon, he

declared: “Your lives, your properties, and your honour are sacred to one another like the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this town of yours.” He specifically condemned killing non-combatants, warning: “Whoever kills a mu’ahid (a non-Muslim citizen) will not smell the fragrance of Paradise” (Bukhari). The deliberate killing of innocent civilians, whether in marketplaces, places of worship, or public squares, constitutes “fasad fil-ard” (corruption on earth), which the Quran

repeatedly condemns as among the gravest sins. Those who commit such acts while invoking religious slogans commit a double crime: they destroy human life while blaspheming the very religion they claim to represent. True Islamic teachings prioritise compassion, justice, and the preservation of life. The Prophet (PBUH) said, “The merciful are shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth, and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you” (Tirmidhi). This universal

mercy extends to all humanity, regardless of faith or background. It is therefore the collective responsibility of Muslims and people of conscience worldwide to unequivocally reject terrorist ideologies that violate Islam’s core principles, while simultaneously educating others about the religion’s authentic, life-affirming teachings. The sanctity of human life is not merely a political or legal concept in Islam; it is a divine trust that we must honour and protect.

21st Instalment of PM-KISAN

Direct Benefit Transfer of ₹18,000 crore to 9 crore farmers with focus on calamity-affected states

Press Information Bureau

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will release the 21st instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme on November 19, 2025, from Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Under this instalment, nearly 9 crore farmers across the country will receive approximately 18,000 crore in direct financial assistance through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, ensuring transparency and eliminating any intermediary involvement.

About PM-KISAN

In order to provide income support to all landholding farmers’ families with cultivable land in the country, the Central Government launched the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), a Central Sector Scheme, on February 24, 2019. The scheme offers annual financial assistance of Rs. 6,000/- to each eligible farmer family, delivered in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000/-, into their Aadhaar seeded bank accounts of farmers through DBT mode.

So far, more than Rs. 3.70 lakh crores have been disbursed to over 11 crore farmer families in the country through 20 instalments. The benefits of the scheme are being provided to those farmers whose land details are seeded in PM KISAN portal, have bank accounts seeded with Aadhaar and eKYC is completed.

This scheme stands out as one of the largest Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) initiative globally, underscoring its monumental impact on facilitating financial support directly to the beneficiaries. With a commitment to inclusivity, it dedicates over 25% of its benefits to women beneficiaries.

A major factor behind the success of the scheme is India’s robust digital infrastructure. With the integration of Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar, and mobile phones, every component of the scheme operates seamlessly online. Farmers can self-register, land records are digitally verified, and payments are transferred directly to their bank accounts. State governments have also played a crucial role in ensuring smooth implementation, helping create a unified and farmer-friendly delivery system. The scheme has further inspired the development of digital innovations such as Kisan eMitra, a voice-based chatbot, and AgriStack, which aims to provide farmers with personalized and timely advisory services. Together, these advancements are helping to modernize Indian agriculture and prepare it for the future.

Achievements of PM-KISAN

Since its inception, the Government of India has disbursed over Rs 3.70 lakh crores through 20 instalments to over 11 crore farmer families.

A significant saturation drive, launched in November 2023 under the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, added over 1 crore eligible farmers to the scheme.

An additional 25 lakh farmers were included within the first 100 days of the subsequent government in June 2024. As a result, the number of beneficiaries receiving the 18th instalment increased to 9.59 crore.

A special drive was conducted from September 21, 2024 to clear the self-registration pending cases. Under the drive since inception, over 30 lakh pending self-registration cases have been approved by the State/UT.

The scheme has a wide reach across various states. For instance, during the 20th instalment (April 2025 – July 2025), Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of beneficiaries at 2.34 crore, followed by Maharashtra with 92.89 lakh beneficiaries.

For over 85 percent of Indian farmers who own less than two hectares of land, PM-KISAN has served as an essential support system. The financial assistance helps them manage critical periods such as sowing and harvesting, when cash flow is often limited. It reduces financial stress, lowers dependence on informal credit, and provides a safety cushion during difficult times. Beyond the monetary benefit, the scheme instills a



sense of dignity and reinforces that farmers are respected and valued contributors to the nation’s development.

Objectives of PM-KISAN

With a view to augment the income of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs), the PM-KISAN scheme aims to:

Supplement the financial needs of the SMFs in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with the anticipated farm income at the end of each crop cycle.

This would also protect them from falling into the clutches of moneylenders for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the farming activities.

Eligibility Criteria to Enroll under PM-KISAN

All landholding farmers’ families, who have cultivable land holdings in their names, are eligible to get benefits under the scheme. Mandatory information required to enroll in the scheme:

Farmer’s / Spouse’s name  
Farmer’s / Spouse’s date of birth  
Bank account number  
IFSC/ MICR Code  
Mobile (contact) Number  
Aadhaar Number  
Other customer information, available in the passbook, may be required for mandate registration.  
Implementation and Monitoring

Implementation Strategy

State governments are responsible for creating a comprehensive database of eligible farmer families, including details such as name, age, category, Aadhaar number, bank account details, and mobile number. They must also prevent duplication of payments and promptly resolve any issues related to bank details.

Beneficiaries are required to submit a self-declaration confirming that they are not excluded under the scheme’s eligibility criteria. This declaration must include the beneficiary’s consent for the government to use their Aadhaar and other information for verification purposes.

Identification of beneficiaries will be based on existing land-ownership records. States/UTs are required to keep these records updated, expedite the digitization process, and link them to Aadhaar and bank details.

Lists of eligible beneficiaries must be

displayed at the village level. Farmers who qualify but have been left out should be given an opportunity to appeal and be included.

States/UTs have been mandated to recover funds disbursed to ineligible farmers such as individuals belonging to higher-income groups, income tax payees, employees of PSUs, State/Central Govt., Constitutional post holders etc. As of 5 August 2025, a total of Rs. 416 crore has been recovered from ineligible recipients across the country.

Monitoring and Grievance Redressal

Monitoring is done at the National, State, and District levels.

The Cabinet Secretary heads the national-level review.

States are required to set up State and District Monitoring Committees.

States are also required to form Grievance Redressal Committees at both levels.

Complaints are to be resolved on merit within two weeks.

A Central Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) has been created under the ministry as a registered society.

It is led by a CEO and handles the overall monitoring and publicity campaign (IEC).

Each State/UT designates a Nodal Department for coordination with the Centre.

States/UTs are also free to set up their own State-level PMUs.

The Centre sometimes provides 0.125% of the instalment amount to cover State/UT PMU and administrative expenses. As on August 12, 2025, a total of Rs. 265.64 crore has been provided to States/UTs as administrative expenses.

Given the significance of the PM Kisan Scheme, a grievance redressal system has been provided on the PM Kisan portal and the Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS). Farmers can raise their concerns directly on the PM-KISAN portal for quick and timely information.

Technological Advancements

The scheme leverages technological & process advancements so that the maximum number of beneficiaries can benefit without any hassle. A farmer-centric digital infrastructure ensures widespread accessibility, enabling eligible farmers across the country to seamlessly avail themselves of the scheme’s benefits. The strategic incorporation of digital public goods has not only eliminated middlemen but also paved the way for a streamlined delivery system that

reaches the remotest corners.

Aadhar-Based Linkages

The scheme’s effectiveness is bolstered by the use of Aadhaar and the Aadhaar-based payment ecosystem, ensuring secure and efficient transactions. Aadhaar is a crucial pillar in PM-KISAN, enabling the establishment of beneficiary identity through e-KYC completion.

Now farmers can complete their e-KYC by using any following option:

OTP based e-KYC  
Biometric-based e-KYC  
Face authentication-based e-KYC

PM KISAN Web Portal

To provide an integrated platform in the country that facilitates benefit transfer, the PM-Kisan Portal has been launched for uploading farmers’ details through a single web portal in a uniform structure. The PM-Kisan Portal has been created with the following objectives:

To provide a verified and single source of truth on farmers’ details at the portal.

Timely assistance to the farmers in farm operations

A unified e-platform for transferring cash benefits into farmers’ bank accounts through Public Financial Management System (PFMS) integration.

Location-wise availability of the benefited farmers’ list.

Ease of monitoring fund transaction details across the country.

PM KISAN Mobile Application

The PM-KISAN mobile app was launched in February 2020. This has been developed with an emphasis on greater transparency and to reach more farmers. The PM-KISAN mobile app servers a simple and efficient extension to the PM-KISAN web portal. The mobile app offers services like self-registration, benefit status tracking, and facial authentication-based e-KYC. In 2023, the app was re-launched with an additional ‘Face Authentication Feature’. This enabled remote farmers to do e-KYC by scanning their face without OTP or fingerprint. Farmers can also assist 100 other farmers in their neighbourhood to complete e-KYC at their doorstep. In addition, the Government of India has also extended the facility for completing e-KYC of farmers to State Government officials, allowing each official to do e-KYC for 500 farmers.

Facilitation Centres: Common Services Centres and Post Offices

Over 5 lakh Common Service Centres (CSCs) have been onboarded to facilitate registrations and meet mandatory requirements. Additionally, the Department of Posts offers the facility of linking/updating mobile number with Aadhaar for farmers benefiting from PM KISAN scheme. This is to complete e-KYC, through India Post Payment Bank.

PM-KISAN AI Chatbot: Kisan-eMitra

In September 2023, an AI Chatbot was launched for the PM-KISAN scheme, named Kisan-eMitra, becoming the first AI chatbot integrated with a major flagship scheme of the Union government. The AI Chatbot provides farmers with prompt, clear, and accurate responses to their queries in local languages regarding payments, registration, and eligibility. It has been developed and improved with the support of the EKStep Foundation and BHASHINI. A Digital India initiative, BHASHINI aims to facilitate easy access to the internet and digital services in Indian languages, including voice-based access, and support the creation of content in these languages. The introduction of the AI chatbot in the PM-KISAN grievance management system aims to empower farmers with a user-friendly and accessible platform.

Some of the features of Kisan-eMitra are as follows:

24/7 access in preferred languages, overcoming technological and language barriers by supporting 11 major regional languages,

Key Takeaways

- 21st instalment delivers 18,000 crore to 9 crore farmers through seamless Direct Benefit Transfer.
- Over 3.70 lakh crore has been disbursed to over 11 crore farmer families since launch, making PM-KISAN one of the world’s largest DBT initiatives.
- Aadhaar-based e-KYC, digital land records, and the PM-KISAN portal ensure transparent, tamper-proof beneficiary verification.
- Kisan-eMitra AI chatbot and the PM-KISAN mobile app enhance accessibility, grievance redressal, and real-time information for farmers.

including Hindi, English, Tamil, Bengali, Odia, Malayalam, Gujarati, Punjabi, Telugu, Marathi, and Kannada.

Farmers can check the status of their application and get details about their payments.

The chatbot can automatically detect 11 major languages based on voice input. For other languages, users will initially need to select their preference, with future updates expanding full auto-language detection coverage.

Based on the user’s first query, the system will automatically identify the relevant scheme, simplifying the process for farmers.

The AI bot is powered by Large Language Models (LLMs), which enhance the chatbot’s ability to provide accurate, context-sensitive responses.

Kisan-eMitra has resolved over 95 lakh queries from 53 lakh farmers as on July 15, 2025.

Integration with Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)

The Government has integrated Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with the PM-KISAN scheme and several other Central schemes by providing a uniform Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform and enabling linkages such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhhi Kendra (PMKSK), Common Service Centres (CSC), Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJK), fuel retail outlets, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) distributorships, Operations and Maintenance (O&M) of rural water supply systems, and the formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). These measures diversify PACS activities and strengthen their financial sustainability through audit transparency, improved governance norms, and expanded economic functions permitted under Model Bye-laws.

**Creation of Farmer Registry**  
Under the PM Kisan scheme, ensuring last-mile coverage for farmers is of paramount importance. Digital and transparent delivery of benefits has always been a key objective. In line with this, the Ministry of Agriculture has launched a new initiative to create a Farmer Registry. This well-organized and meticulously scrutinized database will eliminate the need for farmers to go through cumbersome processes to access social welfare benefits. Prior to the establishment of the Farmer Registry, accessing social welfare schemes was a time-consuming process for farmers. Now, with the registry in place, farmers will be able to avail themselves of these benefits seamlessly and without hassle.

Conclusion

PM-KISAN has evolved into a cornerstone of rural support, providing prompt, transparent, and dignified assistance to millions of farmers. Its strong digital backbone and continuous upgrades, like e-KYC, Farmer Registry, and AI-based services, are shaping a more efficient and inclusive system.

As India moves toward a Viksit Bharat, the priority is to deepen coverage, strengthen last-mile delivery, and ensure that every eligible farmer benefits without hurdles. Going forward, PM-KISAN will continue to be a vital driver of rural resilience and a key instrument in building a more secure and prosperous future for India’s farming community.

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper



# Speaker receives Rasa Javedani Memorial Literary Award

Releases book on  
Rasa Javedani

KT News Desk

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (JKLA), Abdul Rahim Rather, Thursday received Rasa Javedani Memorial Literary Award 2025 at a function organised at Jammu University by Rasa Javedani Memorial Literary Society Jammu.

The Speaker also released a book titled "RASA FAHMI" which was authored by Dr Shahnaz Qadri, Assistant Professor GDC, Sidhra Jammu. The award consisted of a turban, a shawl, a momento and a citation.

The function was presided over by Professor Mohammad Zaman, former HoD Urdu,



University of Kashmir while the Speaker, JKLA was the chief guest and Canadian scholar, Dr Taqi Abidi was the guest of honour.

The Book release function was organized by the Department of Urdu, University of Jammu in collaboration with Rasa Javedani Memorial

Literary Society.

While speaking on the occasion, Rather critically analysed the personality and poetry of Rasa Javedani and described him as one of the towering Literary figures of India who is still being remembered even after 47 years of his death.

He extended his gratitude to the organisers for giving him a prestigious Literary Award 2025.

The Speaker congratulated the author for compiling the book on the life and works of legendary poet of J&K late Rasa Javedani. He described Rasa Javedani not only as a popular poet of Urdu but also among the top Kashmiri poets who projected the realities of life in his poetry.

Dr Taqi Abedi, Canadian Scholar, quoted various verses of Rasa Javedani's urdu poetry which depict his love for mutual understanding and communal harmony.

Professor, in his presidential address described Rasa Javedani as one of the most popular Urdu and Kashmiri poets of Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, Professor Shohab Inayat Malik, HOD Urdu

and President Rasa Javedani Memorial Literary Society, Jammu presented the welcome address while Wali Mohammad Aseer Kishtwari, General Secretary Rasa Javedani Memorial Literary Society Jammu read out the text of the Award citation.

Dr Mohd Asif Malik Alimee, Assistant Professor Baba Ghulam Shah Budshah University, Rajouri and Dr Shahnawaz, Cultural Officer, Culture Academy Jammu presented their papers and appreciated the Book of Dr Shahnaz Qadri released at the function.

The program was attended by a large number of poets, writers, artists, teachers, students and prominent citizens.

The program was conducted by Dr Chaman Lal, Assistant Professor Urdu Department, University of Jammu.

## MD JJM reviews water supply scenario in Udhampur

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, NOVEMBER 20: Mission Director (MD) Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) J&K Khurshid Ahmad Shah Thursday reviewed the progress of water supply schemes in district Udhampur while chairing a meeting of the stakeholder government functionaries, here today.

The meeting was attended by Superintending Engineer Udhampur circle, Executive Engineer, PHE Division Udhampur, officers of Mission Directorate, AEEs and JEs. The meeting was apprised of the status of the ongoing schemes in the district through a detailed PowerPoint presentation.

It was informed there are 161 JJM Water Supply schemes under execution in the district. The components involved in execution of these schemes include Dug wells, Bore wells, Rapid Sand Filtration Plants (RSFP), Over Head Tanks (OHT), Slow Sand Filtration Plants (SSFP) and Pipe Networks. "Of 430 allotted works pertaining to PHE Division Udhampur, 199 have been completed so far and work is in progress on remaining projects," the meeting was told.

The chair was informed that out of 99,928 households, 79,081 households have been provided with Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC).

The Mission Director enjoined upon officers to give a renewed push to the process to provide Functional Tap Connections (FHTCs) to remaining Households in the district. He stressed upon officers to certify the remaining Har Ghar Jal reported villages as per the protocol set by National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM).

The MD was also informed that out of 7987 KM pipeline laid, 6168 KM stand mapped on PM Gati Shakti portal. Similarly 304 Sources and 381 water supply assets stand Geo tagged.

The MD directed the concerned officers to complete the mapping and geotagging of remaining Sources and assets, so that information related to creation of infrastructure and schemes is put in public domain. "This will ensure works are being executed in a transparent manner with community participation in planning, execution and monitoring of water supply assets, which is the core motive of Jal Jeevan Mission," he said.

Later, a delegation of contractors involved in the implementation of JJM in the district met the Mission Director and apprised him about the mounting liabilities. The MD assured them full support in conveying their genuine demands to the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), GOI.

## WORLD HERITAGE WEEK

# J&K Archives Deptt organises Women's Bike Rally

KT News Desk

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: The Department of Archives, Archaeology & Museums, J&K, under the leadership of Director K.K. Sidha, continued its celebrations of World Heritage Week 2025 by organising an empowering All-Women's Bike Rally in Jammu on Day 2.

The event aimed at spreading awareness on heritage preservation while engaging young men and women as ambassadors of cultural conservation.

Themed "Women Riding to Preserve Heritage," the rally began from Kala Kendra, where participants were served tea before the ceremony. The event was flagged off at 10:00 AM by Principal Secretary Culture, Brij Mohan Sharma in the presence of officials, heritage enthusiasts and media representatives.

Director K.K. Sidha, in his address, called it "an empowering experience to witness women bikers leading the movement for heritage awareness." He briefed participants about the department's ongoing work in conservation,



preservation, and restoration of around 281 heritage sites and monuments across J&K—including Bhingarh Fort, Reasi and the Bamuchak Temple, Samba. He emphasized the importance of "going back to our roots" and expressed his willingness to collaborate further with individuals and organisations passionate about heritage.

Around 20 women bikers from Shakti Udgosh accompanied by a few male riders from Bikers Brotherhood rode from Kala Kendra to Bamuchak Temple, Samba. Midway, the riders were greeted and joined by ADDC, Samba Champa Devi, who extended her support to the cause.

The rally reached Bamuchak at around 11:30 AM, where

restoration work is currently underway. At the site, participants were addressed by Jyotika Rasial (XEN), followed by Senior Journalist and heritage enthusiast Sunny Dua, ADDC, Samba Champa Devi and Dr. Sangeeta Sharma, Assistant Director, Archives, Archaeology & Museums. Dr. Sharma also shared historical insights about the temple, tracing its roots back to the era of Maharaja Gulab Singh.

Participants were later served an authentic Dogri lunch featuring Dal, Ambal, Rajmah and Meethe Chawal.

The event concluded with a visit to the iconic Baba Chamliyal Shrine, located on the India-Pakistan border, commonly known as the Zero Line.

## GMC Sgr hosts awareness programme

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: The Department of Biochemistry, Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, and its associated SMHS Hospital, in collaboration with the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and the Quality Council of India (QCI), organised a day-long Awareness Programme on "NABL Accreditation for Medical Laboratories" Thursday.

This significant event marked a crucial step toward strengthening quality healthcare in Jammu & Kashmir.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by guests, including Principal/Dean, GMC Srinagar, Prof. Iffat Hassan; Deputy Director, Health Services Kashmir, Dr. Nighat; Administrator, GMC & Associated Hospitals Mohammad Ashraf Hakak and other officers.

Principal/Dean, GMC Srinagar, emphasized the importance of accreditation in ensuring quality healthcare. He stated, "Accreditation is a hallmark of excellence in healthcare, and I commend the Department of Biochemistry for taking the lead in pursuing NABL accreditation. This initiative will not only enhance the credibility of our laboratory services but also foster a culture of quality and excellence in our institution."

Director NABL, Mallika Gope, delivered the keynote address, outlining the national vision for strengthening laboratory quality systems. She stated,

"NABL accreditation is a mark of excellence that ensures laboratories adhere to international standards of quality and competence. I am confident that this initiative will have a ripple effect in promoting quality laboratory services across the region."

Joint Director NABL, led detailed technical sessions on ISO 15189:2022 requirements, documentation, M(EL)T Lab processes, and the online accreditation workflow. These sessions provided valuable insights to the participants on the accreditation process and the importance of adhering to international standards.

Head of the Department of Biochemistry, GMC Srinagar, emphasized the significance of NABL accreditation, stating, "NABL accreditation is not just a certificate; it is a commitment to excellence". She highlighted the need for continuous quality improvement, structured training, and professional accountability to motivate more laboratories across J&K to adopt accreditation standards. The event aimed to accelerate the adoption of accreditation practices across healthcare institutions, paving the way for more standardized, accurate, and patient-centric laboratory services in the years ahead.

By organizing this awareness programme, GMC Srinagar and its partners sought to promote a culture of quality and excellence in laboratory services, ultimately benefiting patients and the broader healthcare community in Jammu & Kashmir.

## 20 innovators present Final Pitches



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) on Thursday held the Final Pitch of the 20 ideators shortlisted under J&K Startup Idea Challenge-2025 for the Kashmir division at its Main campus, Sempora.

The event was chaired by Director JKEDI and Secretary in Industries and Commerce Department, Khalid Jahangir. Earlier this month, the JKEDI, in collaboration with T-Hub Hyderabad, conducted a comprehensive two-day mentorship programme for shortlisted ideators. Following these capacity-building sessions, 20 ideators were invited to present their refined startup concepts before an expert jury for the final selection of awards under the J&K Startup Policy 2024-27.

The jury panel included experts from leading innovation and academic institutions including Dr. Saad Parvez, Associate Professor, NIT Srinagar, Dr. Naveed Hamid, CEO, SKIIE, SKUAST-Kashmir, Prof. Sudhakar Dwivedi, SKUAST-J, Sh. Akash Sharma, Incubation Manager, I3C- IIT Jammu and Raghuveer Kovuru, Chief Innovation Officer, T-Hub Hyderabad were virtually connected during the event.

The ideators showcased

innovative solutions across diverse sectors, including agri-technology, sustainability, healthcare, AI-driven services, food processing, and grassroots enterprise development. The jury appreciated the originality, potential impact, and scalability of the proposed ideas.

Speaking on the occasion, Sh. Khalid Jahangir (JKAS), Secretary Industries and Commerce Department and Director JKEDI congratulated the participants and reiterated the institute's commitment to strengthen the startup ecosystem of Jammu & Kashmir. He emphasized that initiatives like the J&K Startup Idea Challenge supported by structured mentorship and expert evaluation - serve as robust platforms for aspiring entrepreneurs to transform their ideas into impactful ventures.

A similar Final Pitch event for the Jammu Division will soon be held at JKEDI's Regional Office, Bari Brahmana, ensuring equitable support and opportunities for innovators from both divisions of the Union Territory.

The J&K Startup Policy 2024-27 continues to mark a significant step in building an innovation-driven economy in the Union Territory by extending financial incentives, incubation support, mentorship, and market linkages to the budding entrepreneurs.

## DC Kupwara holds extensive tour of Zachaldara Inspects key infrastructure projects



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse Thursday held an extensive tour of Tehsil Zachaldara to review the ongoing developmental works and functioning of different departments.

During the tour, The DC was accompanied by ADC Handwara, Javid Naseem Masoodi and concerned officers.

The Deputy Commissioner visited Community Health Centre (CHC) Zachaldara and inspected different sections of the hospital including OPD, X-Ray, Laboratory, Pharmacy etc. He also took feedback from patients and attendants regarding services provided at CHC. He also interacted with the general public in a Medical Camp organised at the CHC.

During the tour, the DC inspected ongoing construction of Bakhaker bridge on Talri nallah. He was informed that the bridge is being constructed

at a cost of Rs.9.13 crore by R&B department and shall be completed by the end of next year. He also visited the Bakhaker Playground, the upgradation of which was recently approved by the Youth Services & Sports department. Besides, the DC also inspected ongoing construction of buildings of Tehsil Office Zachaldara and Rural Development Department.

On the occasion, the DC stressed upon the officers and executing agencies to ensure completion of all these infrastructural projects within the stipulated time frame with adherence to quality standards.

During the tour, the DC visited Government Middle School Zachaldara and took stock of the ongoing enrollment drive in the school.

At BHSS Zachaldara, the DC chaired a grievance redressal camp during which he met various public deputations from different areas of Tehsil Zachaldara and heard their grievances.

## KVK Shopian facilitates live screening

KT News Desk

Shopian, November 20: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Shopian, SKUAST-K, organized a live screening of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's release of the 21st instalment of the PM-Kissan Samman Nidhi Yojana.

The live webcast was attended by over 200 participants, including progressive farmers, agripreneurs, members of SHGs and FPOs, as well as officials of the KVK.

The event was graced by the presence of DDC member Shopian, Raja Abdul Waheed and KVK Senior Scientist and Head, Dr. Zaffar Afroz Badri, highlighting the government's commitment to supporting

farmers.

The DDC member praised the efforts of the KVK team in strengthening agriculture through scientific interventions and capacity building and farmer-centric programmes.

Earlier, KVK Shopian organized an interactive scientist-farmer session, during which subject matter experts highlighted innovative technological interventions, improved cultivation practices, and critical production strategies for rabi crops aimed at enhancing productivity and income.

Farmers actively participated and appreciated the initiatives aimed at enhancing productivity, sustainability, income generation and skill development.

## CBC organizes outreach program on Viksit Bharat

KT News Desk

Anantnag, November 20: The Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India on Thursday organized an Integrated Communication and Outreach Programme (ICOP) at the Army Goodwill School (AGS), Khanabal in Anantnag.

The day-long outreach programme was aimed at mass awareness about Viksit Bharat -2047 and related public welfare initiatives undertaken by the government.

Deliberations about key initiatives driving the journey of Viksit Bharat were held. Experts and resource persons from nodal departments and agencies delivered lectures on themes like Mission LIFE and Swachhata Hi Seva underscoring the importance of these programs in achieving a developed India.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Anantnag, Sandeep Singh Bali presided over the program as Chief Guest.

In a keynote address Sandeep highlighted the impact of various public welfare schemes in social upliftment and development. He urged the youth to register under Mission Yuva and avail opportunities in skill development and entrepreneurship.

Earlier in his inaugural address, Shahid Mohammad Lone, Field Publicity Officer (FPO), CBC, Field Office, Anantnag gave a detailed overview of the mandate and



functioning of the Central Bureau of Communication.

He briefed the participants about the purpose of the outreach programme and urged the young participants to be part of the development journey of India. He added that participation at the grassroots level is key for achieving the goals under Viksit Bharat.

Addressing a gathering of students, teachers and local community members, Naseer Ahmad Rather, FPO, Srinagar detailed out key themes of Viksit Bharat. He impressed upon the participants to ensure that their community reaps the benefits of a multitude of public welfare programmes.

Among those who addressed the gathering were Ishiyag Abass, Principal AGS, Khanabal, Zeeshan Beg, Panchayat Secretary, Naseer

Ahmad Bhat, Senior Swachhata Executive and Ghulam Nabi, Range Officer.

As part of an integrated communication strategy, multiple channels of communication were employed for the outreach during the program, which included expert lectures, informative standees, printed IEC material and use of folk and traditional media.

For engaging the students, special theme based Quiz, elocution and painting competitions were organized by CBC during the program. A local empanelled cultural troupe presented theme based skits promoting cleanliness, environment protection, communal harmony and national integration.

The programme concluded with participants taking the Swachhata Pledge.



## ICC commends Jammu Division's Sr Commercial Manager for work on freight initiatives

KT News Desk

Jammu, Nov 20: The Jammu Division of Northern Railway has entered a period of impressive commercial expansion, driven by a renewed focus on freight connectivity and industry-centric logistics.

This transformation, under the guidance of Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Uchit Singhal, has not only strengthened its operational profile but has also earned him praise from the Indian Chamber of Commerce for his significant contributions in establishing the Jammu Division as a strategic freight hub for Jammu and Kashmir.

ICC Jammu hosted Trade & Logistics Conclave 2025, on Thursday with the Hon'ble LG Shri Manoj Sinha as its Chief Guest and several industry experts and dignitaries as participants.

One of the most notable achievements under Shri Singhal's leadership was the introduction of the first industrial salt freight train in the Valley. The arrival of a 21-wagon rake carrying industrial salt from Kharaghoda in Gujarat to Anantnag marked a historic shift in the region's logistics landscape.

For industries like tanning, soap making, pulp processing, and brick making, this consignement was a reliable and affordable alternative to traditional road transport, which is often



vulnerable to inclement weather on national highways.

When road transport was affected by inclement weather, freight trains also played a vital role in transporting apples.

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager also led the successful launch of the first automobile freight rake in Kashmir, another milestone that attracted attention.

This rake, carrying 116 factory-condition Maruti Suzuki vehicles, arrived directly from the manufacturer's plant in Anantnag. This was a major departure from the long-standing method of transporting cars by road, a method that often involved significant transit damage, long lead times, and safety concerns.

Handling over 230 vehicles in Bari Brahmana and Anantnag in a single day set a new benchmark in operational coordination. This success demonstrates not only good planning and teamwork, but also the division's readiness to help increase cargo volumes for the automobile sector.

In addition to freight operations, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Mr. Uchit Singhal, has spearheaded reforms that create a healthy commercial environment for both small businesses and passengers.

Introducing multipurpose stalls at stations through transparent e-auctions has helped generate non-fare revenue and provided new

growth opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

His inspections and subsequent improvements at key stations, including Jammu Railway Station, demonstrate his commitment to freight development as well as improving passenger amenities.

The Indian Chamber stated that his efforts have helped boost industry confidence, reduce supply chain uncertainties, and strengthen commercial integration between the region and the rest of the country. Such recognition reflects the significant economic impact of their work, which extends beyond the railways to the business community and the regional economy.

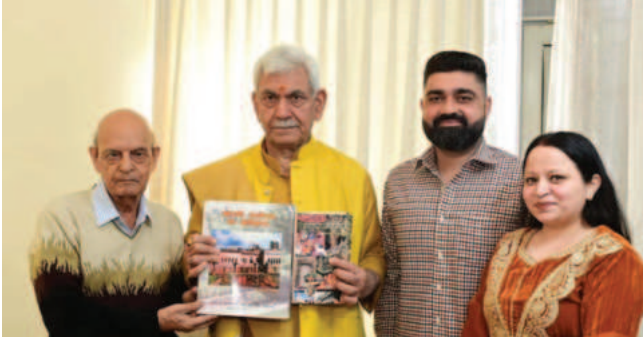
## LG Sinha presented with Dogri books by Padma Shri Dr Udhampuri

KT News Desk

Jammu, Nov 20: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha was on Thursday presented with books in Dogri authored by noted writer Padma Shri Dr. Jitendra Udhampuri. The titles of the books are "Dogri Sahitya Da Itihas" and "Duggar Sanskriti".

Dr Narinder Singh Raina, Member of Legislative Assembly from R.S Pura Jammu South also called on Lieutenant Governor.

A delegation of Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Jammu led by its



President K K Khosa called on LG Manoj Sinha.

Subsequently, the office-bearers of JP World School

Jammu and Varinder Mahajan, President, All India Young Blood Organization also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

## India to highlight important matters relevant from Global South perspectives at G20: MEA official

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20 Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's South Africa visit for the G20 Summit, an MEA top official Thursday said he would not like to prejudge what will figure in the leaders' declaration, but all important matters relevant from the perspective of India and the Global South will be "highlighted by our leadership".

This will be the fourth consecutive summit of the grouping that will be held in the Global South. Also, this was the first time the G20 Leaders' Summit was being held on the African continent.

During the G20 Summit in 2023 in New Delhi, the African

Union became a permanent member of the group of 20 largest economies of the world, with Prime Minister Modi announcing its entry into the grouping. South Africa currently holds the presidency of the influential bloc, and the summit is being held in Johannesburg.

Modi will visit Johannesburg from November 21 to 23 to attend the 20th G20 Leaders' Summit hosted by South Africa. On the margins of the summit, the prime minister is expected to hold bilateral meetings with some of the leaders present in Johannesburg.

"We are working out the details of these bilateral meetings," Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (Economic

Relations), MEA, told reporters at a media briefing here.

This will be PM Modi's fourth official visit to South Africa, following his bilateral visit in 2016 and later for the two BRICS summits in 2018 and 2023.

"This is the first G20 summit that will be happening on African soil and, in that context, will bring the spotlight on the development issues of Africa, as also of the Global South," Dalela said.

G20 members include the world's major economies, representing 85 per cent of global GDP, 75 per cent of international trade, and two-thirds of the world's population, according to the website of the G20 under the South African presidency.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Electricity could

Interruption Duration Index(SAIDI) for Kashmir stands at a shocking 889, while the System Average Interruption Frequency Index(SAIFI) stands at 723.95. These numbers are several times higher than the national averages of 116.12 and 171.64. Even Jammu, despite its own problems, performs significantly better with a SAIDI of 489 and SAIFI of 442," the business body said. (KNO)

### Significant boost

for fulfilling developmental needs of Jammu Kashmir through smart logistics infrastructure and improved logistics operations. "A robust storage, logistics and warehouse ecosystem is the need of the hour to propel our economy towards self-reliance, directly link the producers to consumers and to fulfil the aspiration of our traders, industrialists, farmers, artisans and MSMEs," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He also shared key initiatives aimed at making the J&K UT a more competitive and investment-ready destination.

"Jammu & Kashmir Logistics Policy 2025 will be unveiled soon. The new policy intervention will introduce a comprehensive framework focusing on multimodal connectivity, development of dry ports and warehousing zones, and promotion of private sector participation. It will also grant the Logistic sector the industry status, ensuring that it receives all the benefits of industrial policy," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He observed that, under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP), 49 major logistics and connectivity projects worth Rs 3,000 crore have already been mapped, supporting real-time coordination and faster execution. He said the integrated planning approach is helping J&K identify logistics gaps, improve last-mile connectivity to industrial estates, optimize freight movement, and significantly reduce logistics costs and transit times.

The Lieutenant Governor said that a Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) in Vijaypur, Jammu, will be developed through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, under a Build-Develop-Finance-Operate-Transfer (DBFOT) approach.

The park will offer modern facilities such as Inland Container Depot (ICD), Warehousing, Cold Storage, Truck Terminal and Container Freight Station aimed at boosting trade and logistic efficiency.

Vikramjit Singh, Commissioner Secretary Industries & Commerce Department; Rahul Sahai, Chairman, ICC Jammu Chapter; Debmalya Banerjee, Regional Director, Indian Chamber of Commerce; Vishesh Paul Mahajan, Transport Commissioner J&K; business leaders, members of Indian Chamber of Commerce, representatives of various trade and business organisations and senior officials were also present on the occasion. (KNO)

### CM Omar calls

Hon'ble Union Minister of Finance @nsitharman and held detailed discussion on key developmental priorities of Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting focused on strengthening infrastructure, boosting investment and ensuring continued financial support for welfare-driven initiatives in J&K," the post reads. (KNO)

### 4 more prime

Dr Muzammil Shakeel Ganai of Pulwama, Dr Adeel Ahmed Rather of Anantnag, Dr Shaheen Saeed of Lucknow and Mufti Irfan Ahmad Wagay of Shopian.

Earlier, the NIA had arrested two associates of the Delhi suicide bomber - Dr Umar - who investigators believe triggered the blast that

killed at least 15 people and injured many others on November 10 near Delhi's iconic Red Fort. The two accused were identified as Amir Ali and Jasir Bilal - arrested on November 16 and 17 respectively.

Per details available with KNO, Mufti Irfan Ahmad Wagay was arrested on 21 October, while Dr Muzammil Shakeel Ganai, Dr Adeel Ahmed Rather and Dr Shaheen Saeed were arrested on October 22 and 23 by the J&K police.

The NIA said that they all had played a key role in the terror attack. It also said that Amir Rashid Ali was arrested after probe revealed that the car used in the blast was registered in his name, Jasir Bilal Wani alias Danish had provided technical support to the suicide bomber. "Their interrogation is on as part of NIA's efforts to unravel the complete terror conspiracy in the case," it said

The investigation of case was handed over to the NIA by the Home Ministry, soon after the attack. It said that agency is working closely with various state police forces to track and arrest every member of the terrorist module involved in the carnage.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir police said that a high level committee has already been constituted to probe the "accidental" Nowgam police station blast while dismissing reports raising doubts and speculations.

The committer, it said? is being headed by Principal Secretary, Home Department, with IG Kashmir Zone, District Magistrate Srinagar and a senior scientist from the Central Forensic Sciences Laboratory its members.

At least 13 people, including a State Investigating Officer, a Naib Tehsildar, and a tailor were killed and 32 others were injured after a stockpile of explosives seized from Faridabad went off "accidentally" inside the Nowgam police station on November 14.

"Various reports and items have been appearing in the social media, regarding the unfortunate accidental explosion. It is clarified that these are conjectures and efforts to mislead the public," the police said.

It said that the accidental explosion occurred on November 14, while the process of sample collection, from the large cache of recovered explosive, for forensic examination, was being done by experts from Forensic Science Laboratory.

"It is informed that a high level committee has already been constituted on 16 Nov 2025, by the Govt, regarding this incident, under the Chairmanship of Principal Secretary, Home Department, comprising of IG Kashmir Zone, District Magistrate Srinagar and a senior Scientist from Central Forensic Sciences Laboratory, Govt of India," it said. (KNO)

### J&K Police continue

medical and administrative facilities to enforce transparency.

Meanwhile, security personnel were deployed at strategic locations along highways, including the Srinagar-Jammu route in Pulwama and the Qazigund gateway, to monitor vehicle movement and maintain public order.

In Shopian, police intensified inspections of shops and establishments dealing with chemicals, fertilisers, explosives, hardware, and automobile workshops.

Shop owners were instructed to maintain detailed records of customers, including identification details, quantities purchased, and intended use of materials.

The installation of functional CCTV cameras was advised to enhance traceability and monitoring.

A police official said that these measures are crucial to prevent any misuse of regulated substances and to maintain a safe environment for residents.

Kulgam district witnessed extensive verification drives across LPG agencies and commercial cylinder outlets.

Inspecting officers scrutinised stock registers, distribution records, and transport logs to ensure adherence to safety protocols. Dealers were directed to verify all consumers before sale and maintain proper documentation.

Police officials stated that any violation of regulatory norms would invite strict legal action.

Alongside these drives, Jammu and Kashmir police continued raids at various locations in the valley to curb crime and anti-national activities.

The officials said that these operations are part of a sustained effort to safeguard public safety, improve monitoring of sensitive commodities, and uphold regulatory compliance across the region. (KNO)

### 58 officials

has been posted as Special Secretary to the Government, Jal Shakti Department. Bilal Khurshid, JKAS, Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism Development Authority, Yusmarg, has been transferred and posted as Additional Registrar Cooperatives, Kashmir.

Riyaz Ahmad Beigh, JKAS, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Doodpathri, will additionally hold the charge of Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Yusmarg.

Natasha Kalsotra, JKAS, Registrar, District Jammu, is transferred and posted as Registrar, J&K Special Tribunal. Suresh Chander, JKAS, Additional Secretary to the Government, Power Development Department, has been transferred as Officer on Special Duty with the Deputy Chief Minister.

Rajesh Kumar Basotra, JKAS, Registrar, Sales Tax Tribunal, J&K, is posted as Registrar, District Kathua. Muzaffar Malik, JKAS, Additional Secretary to the Government, Revenue Department, is transferred as Additional Secretary in the office of Chief Electoral Officer, J&K. Khalid Hussain, JKAS, Programme Officer, ICDS Project, Poonch, has been transferred and posted as Registrar, District Jammu.

Anirudh Rai, JKAS, Joint Registrar, Induscos, Handicrafts Department, is posted as Registrar, Sales Taxes Tribunal, J&K. Fareed Ahmad Kohli, JKAS, Additional Secretary to the Government, Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment, is posted as Joint Director, Geology and Mining, Jammu.

Nasir Mahmood Khan, JKAS, Deputy Director, Tourism, Kashmir, is posted as Joint Director (Administration) in the Directorate of Rural Development, Kashmir.

Sanjeev Sharma, JKAS, Sub-Registrar, Kathua, is transferred as Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Bhaderwah.

Manzoor Ahmad, Additional Secretary with the Deputy Chief Minister, will await further orders of adjustment in the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Mukhtar Ahmad, under orders of transfer as Deputy District Election Officer, Pulwama, is posted as Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Jammu. Syed Nadeem Iqbal Andrabi, JKAS, Deputy Secretary to the Government, Finance Department, is transferred and posted as Deputy Director, Urban Local Bodies, Kashmir, against an available vacancy.

Salam Din, JKAS, awaiting orders of adjustment in the General Administration Department, is posted as Deputy Director Information in the office of Chief Electoral Officer, J&K, against an available vacancy.

Peer Zahid Ahmad, JKAS, Deputy Secretary to the Government, School Education Department, is transferred and posted as Deputy Director, Tourism, Kashmir.

Manoj Kumar, JKAS, Deputy Secretary to the Government, Information Department, is transferred and posted as Project Officer, Wage Employment (ACD), Kishtwar, against an available vacancy. Abdul Khabir, JKAS, Deputy Secretary to the Government, Mining Department, is transferred and posted as Deputy Director, Tribal Affairs, Jammu, and shall also hold the charge of Deputy Secretary to the Government, Science and Technology Department, in addition to his own duties, till further orders.

Shahzada Noor-ul-Ain, JKAS, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Jammu, is transferred and posted as Deputy District Election Officer, Kishtwar, against an available vacancy.

Javid Iqbal Bhat, JKAS, Technical Officer, Revenue Department, is transferred and posted as Deputy Director, Rural Sanitation, Kashmir, against an available vacancy.

Abdul Majeed Rather, JKAS, Project Officer, Wage Employment (ACD), Ganderbal, is transferred and shall await further orders of adjustment in the General Administration Department.

Altaf Hussain Bhat, JKAS, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Ganderbal, shall hold the charge of Project Officer, Wage Employment (ACD), Ganderbal, in addition to his own duties, till further orders.

Sourabh Sharma, JKAS, General Manager, TPO, Jammu, has been transferred and posted as Secretary, Jammu Development Authority. Meenakshi Jasrotia, JKAS, Deputy Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Jammu, is now Assistant Settlement Officer, Jammu, while Sugandhi Banotra, JKAS, moves from Assistant Settlement Officer, Jammu, to Deputy Director (Trainings), Handlooms, Jammu.

Ghulam Mohammad Khan, JKAS, shifts from Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Anantnag, to Deputy Director, Estates, Kashmir. Arshada Akhter, JKAS, now serves as Deputy Secretary to the Government in Planning, Development and Monitoring Department.

Farooq Ahmad Banday, JKAS, Private Secretary, Culture Department, is posted as Deputy Secretary to the Government, Culture Department.

Manoj Kumar, JKAS, moves from Deputy Secretary, J&K Board of Professional Entrance Examination, to Deputy Secretary, Finance Department.

Mohd. Yaseen Shah, JKAS, Administrative Officer, MD KPDCL, Kashmir, is appointed Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Budgam.

Sunil Dutt, JKAS, Deputy Director, Tribal Affairs, Jammu, is now Deputy Secretary in the J&K Board of Professional Entrance Examination.

Preeti Sharma, Jr. Scale JKAS, District Panchayat Officer, Udhampur, is placed at the disposal of the Social Welfare Department. Saniya Malik, Jr. Scale JKAS, along with Kanchan Bala, Jr. Scale JKAS, both from the Excise and Taxation Department, are placed at the disposal of Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants), J&K.

Rupali Vaid, Jr. Scale JKAS, moves from Excise and Taxation Department to serve as Under Secretary in the J&K Services Selection Board.

Mansoor Ahmad, Jr. Scale JKAS, Block Development Officer Sukhnaag, is transferred and posted as Under Secretary to the Government in the Tourism Department; Varun Bhasin, Jr. Scale JKAS, Block Development Officer Latti Marothi, Udhampur, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Transport Department for further posting.

Tajamul Yousuf, Jr. Scale JKAS, Assistant Director, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Shopian, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Handloom & Handicrafts Department; Sonam Verma, Jr. Scale JKAS,

Assistant Director, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (Mills), Jammu, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Finance Department; Kapil Deol, Jr. Scale JKAS, Block Development Officer in the Directorate of Rural Sanitation Jammu, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Transport Department; Muzaffar Ahmad Malik, Jr. Scale JKAS, awaiting adjustment in the General Administration Department, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs; Abrar Ahmed Kripak, Jr. Scale JKAS, ARTO Doda, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Tribal Affairs Department for posting as DTWO.

Sandeep Singh, Jr. Scale JKAS, awaiting adjustment in the General Administration Department, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Finance Department; Afiaq Ahmed, Jr. Scale JKAS, Under Secretary to the Government, Revenue Department, is transferred and placed again at the disposal of the Revenue Department for further posting; Akshay Sharma, Jr. Scale JKAS, awaiting adjustment in the General Administration Department, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Finance Department.

Mohit Sharma, Jr. Scale JKAS, awaiting adjustment in the General Administration Department, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Information Department; Sonali Arora, Jr. Scale JKAS, Block Development Officer Miran Sahib, is transferred and posted as Under Secretary to the Government, Planning, Development and Monitoring Department; and Jyoti Choudhary, Jr. Scale JKAS, Block Development Officer Moughla, is transferred and placed at the disposal of the Handloom & Handicrafts Department for further posting. (KNO)

### J&K Police, Health

"Such inspections will be conducted regularly as part of routine vigilance to maintain a safe and secure environment in hospitals," the official added.

Meanwhile, in South Kashmir's Anantnag district the lockers were inspected at the Government Medical College (GMC), from where an AK-47 rifle was recovered earlier this month from Dr Adeel Rather's locker, said an official.

Pertinently, the arrest of the doctor led to the busting of the terror module, involving several doctors, and the recovery of around 2900 kg of explosive material.

"Anantnag police, in coordination with the hospital administration, conducted a thorough inspection of the lockers at the GMC hospital. During the inspection, unclaimed lockers were identified, and the hospital authorities were instructed to update records to prevent any misuse," said an official. (KNO)

### Kashmir hospitals

Kashmir is higher than in other parts of the country. "COPD is a lifelong disease. Winter and pollution aggravate symptoms, leading to increased hospital footfall. Most COPD patients are long-term smokers," he said.

Dr Ahmad said that early awareness is crucial so that people quit smoking before irreversible lung damage occurs. "Most patients are diagnosed after the age of 45, by which time they've often smoked for two decades. The earlier they quit, the better their lungs can cope," he added.

Doctors advised patients to follow preventive measures to avoid winter complications, which include avoiding overcrowded, poorly ventilated rooms, ensuring adequate ventilation at home, increasing water intake, maintaining a balanced diet and staying away from smoke, dust and pollutants. (KNO)



# Nitish Kumar sworn in as Bihar CM for 10th time

## ■ 21 MLAs take oath as ministers



PTI

Patna, Nov 20: JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar on Thursday was sworn in as the chief minister of Bihar for a record 10th time at the Gandhi Maidan here. In all, 22 ministers, including Kumar, were sworn in at the event. Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office and secrecy to them. Kumar took the oath on the Constitution of India. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP national president J P Nadda and several other top leaders of the NDA. The event was also attended by chief ministers of several NDA ruled states. Kumar (71), who is a member of the legislative council (MLC), did not contest the assembly elections. He is among the 10 longest-serving CMs in the country and has been in power for 19 years. His frequent switching sides in his political career earned him the nickname 'Paltu Ram', whereas he is also called 'sushashan babu' for good governance. In the recently held polls, the NDA stormed back to power in the eastern state, winning 202 seats in the 243-member assembly, with BJP bagging 89, JD(U) 85, LJP(RV) 19, HAM 5 and RLM 4.

## Nitish Kumar: a resilient politician who keeps rising like a phoenix

PTI

Patna, Nov 20: In a political career spanning 50 years, Nitish Kumar has displayed an uncanny knack for rising like a Phoenix every time sceptics and detractors have sought to write him off. The most atypical of politicians owing their rise to post-Mandal politics, Nitish Kumar stood out for his ability to address the governance deficit, unlike a majority of the breed reared in the socialist stable, but was often accused of pursuing politics of opportunism. Call it political opportunism or sagacity, his moves, in effect, have not allowed the BJP to appoint its own chief minister to date, despite enjoying a near hegemonic status nationally and the best performance in recently held assembly polls where the saffron party bagged 89 seats, followed by the JD(U) with 85. Kumar is among the 10 longest-serving CMs in the country. He has been in power for 19 years. His frequent switching sides in his political career earned him the nickname 'Paltu Ram', whereas he is also called 'sushashan babu' for good governance. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, his JD(U) outperformed the BJP in terms of strike rate, winning as many seats despite contesting one less than the saffron party, which

now depends on the state ally for survival in power at the Centre, having fallen short of a majority. An engineer by training who had taken an active part in the JP movement, Kumar spurned a job offer from the state electricity department and decided to take the political gamble, an oddity among educated youth in Bihar for whom the lure of "sarkari naukri" remains undiminished. Unlike Lalu Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan, his co-travellers during the movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan, electoral success eluded Kumar for long. He got the first taste of victory, after three successive defeats, in the 1985 assembly polls when he won from Harnaut as a candidate of the Lok Dal. Four years later, he entered the Lok Sabha from Barh even as fellow MP from Saran Lalu Prasad shifted to Bihar, taking over as the CM and scripting a spectacular success story. The next decade and a half saw Prasad's rise as one of the most powerful but controversial figures of his time, who ruled the state by proxy, getting his demure homemaker wife Rabri Devi elected as his successor, when a charge sheet in the fodder scam caused him to step down as the CM. During the same period, Kumar burnt his bridges with Prasad, floated the



Samata Party, and built his own political edifice brick by brick. The Samata Party joined forces with the BJP, and Kumar made a mark for himself as an outstanding parliamentarian. After a rift between Sharad Yadav, the then Janata Dal president, and Lalu Prasad, the latter broke away and formed the RJD. The Samata Party merged with Sharad Yadav's Janata Dal while continuing its alliance with the BJP. After the NDA lost power in 2004, a victory in Bihar held out the promise of a degree of redemption for the BJP-led alliance. Attempts to wrest power from the RJD-Congress combine, then in power at the Centre as well, after the NDA fell short of a majority

in the assembly polls of February 2005, were stymied by Governor Buta Singh's controversial move to dissolve the assembly, without it having even been constituted, in the face of alleged horse trading. This proved a blessing in disguise for Kumar, who was projected as the chief ministerial candidate in the elections that took place nine months later, and the JD(U)-BJP combine got a comfortable majority, bringing the so-called "Lalu era" to an end. Kumar's first five years as CM are recalled with admiration even by critics, marked as these were by vast improvement in law and order. Realising fully well that, unlike Lalu, he did not have the advantage of belonging to a

populous caste group, Kumar created sub-quotas among OBCs and Dalits who were called "Ati Pichh-da" (EBC) and "Mahadalits". He also brought in measures like free bicycles and school uniforms for school-going girls, which won him much adulation, and saw him return to power in 2010, leading the JD(U)-BJP coalition to a landslide victory in the assembly polls. He ultimately snapped his party's 17-year-old ties with the BJP in 2013 when Modi was anointed BJP's campaign committee chief for the 2014 LS polls. After parting ways with the BJP, he won a trust vote with Congress' support, but stepped down in 2014, owning moral responsibility for the JD(U)'s drubbing in the LS elections. In less than a year, he was back as the CM, elbowing out his rebellious protegee Jitan Ram Manjhi with support from the RJD and Congress. The Grand Alliance that came into being with the JD(U), Congress and RJD coming together, won the 2017 assembly polls but came apart in just two years, after Kumar insisted that Lalu's son and deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav, whose name had cropped up in a money laundering case related to the time when RJD supremo was the railway minister, "come clear" on the issue.

## Over 80 pc of Indians with disabilities lack health insurance: NGO white paper

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: More than 80 per cent of Indians with disabilities remain uninsured, and over half of those who apply are often rejected without explanation despite legal safeguards meant to ensure equal access to health coverage, a new white paper released on Thursday has found.

The report, titled "Inclusive Health Coverage for All: Disability, Discrimination and Health Insurance in India", was launched by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) at a roundtable attended by policymakers, insurers, and disability rights advocates.

Drawing on a nationwide survey of over 5,000 persons with disabilities across 34 states and union territories, the study warns that "deep systemic inequities" continue to block nearly 16 crore disabled Indians from both public and private insurance schemes.

According to the findings, 80 per cent of respondents had no health insurance, while 53 per cent of those who applied said their applications were rejected. Many reported being turned away solely because of their disability or pre-existing conditions, with particularly



high denial rates among persons with autism, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, and blood disorders such as thalassemia. The report noted that these practices persist despite constitutional protections, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and repeated directives from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI). Researchers also flagged unaffordable premiums, inaccessible digital platforms, and a widespread lack of awareness about available schemes as major barriers to coverage. Speaking at the launch, Manmeet Nanda, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, said the government was working to strengthen assistive technology and improve coordination

across ministries. "IRDAI's role, along with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, needs to be very strongly converged and coordinated because this is not a single ministry's game," she said, adding that insurers could be mandated to meet annual disability coverage targets monitored through digital dashboards. She also offered to integrate the Unique Disability ID database with insurance processes to track rejections and streamline access. Calling the findings a "moral and constitutional challenge", NCPEDP Executive Director Arman Ali said the continued exclusion of persons with disabilities from affordable insurance "is more than a

systemic failure; it is a violation of rights". "Even as the government expands Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY) to cover all senior citizens aged 70 and above, persons with disabilities remain conspicuously excluded despite facing equal, if not greater, health vulnerabilities," Ali said. "There is no principled or policy justification for this gap... India cannot be burdened with the generational 'cost of exclusion' of people with disabilities," he added. The white paper recommended immediate inclusion of all persons with disabilities under Ayushman Bharat without age or income criteria, aligning with the government's 2024 expansion for senior citizens. Other key proposals include enhanced insurance coverage for mental health, rehabilitation and assistive technologies, the creation of a dedicated Disability Inclusion Committee within IRDAI, standardised and non-discriminatory premiums across private insurers, and mandatory accessibility in all insurance processes. It also urged expanded awareness programmes for insurers and healthcare staff to ensure disability-sensitive service delivery.

## We do not target any level of rupee: RBI Guv

### 'Depreciation due to demand for US dollar'

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Thursday said the central bank does not target any level of rupee, and the recent depreciation of the domestic currency against the US dollar is due to demand for the greenback.

The governor also said that the Reserve Bank has "very good" buffers of foreign exchange reserves, and there is no need for concern on the external sector.

Delivering the VKRV Rao Memorial Lecture at the Delhi School of Economics, Malhotra also said the foremost priority of the RBI is to ensure financial stability in the system, and the central bank is trying to simplify regulations, where possible, while maintaining necessary safeguards and guardrails.

Replying to a question on depreciation of the rupee against the dollar, he exuded confidence that India will have a "good trade deal" with the US, and that would relieve the pressure on the country's current account balance.

He said the recent depreciation of the Indian rupee is trade-related and due to US tariff issues. "We do not target any level.



Why is the rupee depreciating? (It) is because of the demand...It's a financial instrument, and there is a demand for dollars, and if the demand for dollars goes up, the rupee depreciates; if the demand for rupee goes up, dollar comes down, then it appreciates," Malhotra said. The rupee depreciated 23 paise to close at 88.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, on broad strength of the American currency and fading odds of a rate

cut by the US Federal Reserve. Forex traders said the dollar has staged a rally, moving above the 100 level, after the US Federal Reserve minutes indicated that most officials were opposed to a rate cut in December, following the October cut. Responding to another query on the banking sector, the governor said that the way Indian banks are performing, very soon a few of them will be among the top 100 global lenders.

## Remarks against Army SC extends stay on trial court proceedings against Rahul Gandhi

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: The Supreme Court on Thursday extended till December 4 its interim order staying proceedings against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a case related to his alleged derogatory remarks against the Indian Army during his 2022 Bharat Jodo Yatra.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Satish Chandra Sharma deferred the hearing in the matter, noting there was a letter circulated for



adjournment. The bench was hearing Gandhi's plea challenging a May 29 order of the Allahabad High Court dismissing his plea challenging the trial court's summoning order in the case. While hearing

Gandhi's plea on August 4, the top court stayed till the next date of hearing further proceedings in the case pending before a court in Lucknow. "How do you get to know that 2,000 sq km of Indian territory has been occupied by Chinese? Were you there? Do you have any credible material?" the bench had earlier asked Gandhi about his alleged remarks. "Why do you make these statements without having any material? If you are a true Indian, you won't say such a thing," it added.

## Ultra-processed foods in diets rise globally; need to cut production, marketing: Lancet

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: Ultra-processed foods are increasing in diets around the world and could be displacing fresh and minimally processed meals, worsening diet quality and driving the global burden of chronic diseases, according to papers published in The Lancet journal. Through the three studies, published as part of The Lancet 'Ultra-processed Foods and Human Health' series, researchers



argue that an immediate and decisive public health action is required to tackle ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and improve diets the world over. They

added that improving diets cannot rely on consumer behaviour alone and coordinated policies are required to cut down UPF production,

marketing, and consumption -- alongside targeting high salt and sugar and improving access to healthy food. "The growing consumption of ultra-processed foods is reshaping diets worldwide, displacing fresh and minimally processed foods and meals," lead author Carlos Monteiro from Brazil's University of Sao Paulo said. "This change in what people eat is fuelled by powerful global corporations who generate huge

profits by prioritising ultra-processed products, supported by extensive marketing and political lobbying to stop effective public health policies to support healthy eating," Monteiro said. The authors said policies have so far mainly focussed on reducing consumption of foods high on added fats, sugar, and sodium, and proposed that efforts be broadened to address driving factors influencing production, marketing, and consumption.



## Trump signs bill to release Epstein files after US Congress vote

IASN

Washington, Nov 20: US President Donald Trump signed the bill to release files related to the investigation into Jeffrey Epstein, the convicted sex offender who died in federal custody in 2019. In a Truth Social Post, Trump wrote, "I have just signed the bill to release the Epstein Files! As everyone knows, I asked Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and Senate Majority Leader John Thune to pass this Bill in the House and Senate, respectively. Because of this request, the votes were almost unanimous in favour of passage."

He also added that the Department of Justice has "already turned over close to fifty thousand pages of documents to Congress."

Earlier, the US House of Representatives voted 427-1 on Tuesday to pass the bill, and later the Senate approved it through unanimous consent.

Lawmakers from both parties engaged in sharp debate ahead of the vote, accusing one another of delaying public access to the documents.

Speaker Mike Johnson supported the measure but criticised Democrats for pushing it forward



now. "This is a show vote," he told lawmakers. "They're making a show of it."

He also defended US President Donald Trump, saying, "The president had nothing to do with this, and he had nothing to hide."

Representative Thomas Massie, a Republican sponsor of the bill, urged Trump to direct the Justice Department to release the records immediately rather than wait for the legislative process to conclude. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene raised concerns that even with a new law, the Justice Department could keep some material "tied up in the investigation," Trump,

speaking at the White House during a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday, again rejected any connection to Epstein. "I have nothing to do with Jeffrey Epstein," he told reporters. "I threw him out of my club several years ago because I thought he was a sick pervert." He added, "I never went to his island." After months of opposing the release of all the Epstein documents with the government, Trump retreated on Sunday and said his party's members of the House of Representatives can vote for legislation to open the trove of files. "It's a Democrats' problem.

Democrats were Epstein's friends, all of them," Trump asserted.

On Monday, former US Treasury Secretary and former Harvard president Larry Summers announced he would step back from public commitments after emails showed that he maintained friendly ties with Epstein long after the financier pleaded guilty to soliciting prostitution in 2008.

In a statement, he said he felt "deeply ashamed" and accepted "full responsibility" for what he called a "misguided decision to continue communicating with Mr Epstein."

Last week, the House Oversight Committee released thousands of pages of emails from the Epstein estate. Democrats on the committee published three messages, including a 2011 email in which Epstein wrote to Ghislaine Maxwell that Trump "spent hours" with one of the victims.

Republicans accused Democrats of selective disclosure and released more than 23,000 additional pages.

The White House dismissed their relevance, stating the emails "prove literally nothing."

Trump has repeatedly denied any involvement in Epstein's activities.

## US approves sale of Javelin missiles, Excalibur projectiles to India worth USD 47.1 million

UNI

New Delhi, Nov 20: The United States has approved the sale of FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank guided missile systems and M982A1 Excalibur precision-guided artillery projectiles, along with associated equipment, to India, with an estimated value of USD 47.1 million.

The U.S. State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to India for the Excalibur projectiles and related equipment. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency has delivered the required certification notifying Congress, the Defence Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement.

The Government of India has requested to purchase up to 216 M982A1 Excalibur tactical projectiles. Additional non-MDE items to be included are ancillary items, Portable Electronic Fire Control Systems (PEFCS) with Improved Platform Integration Kit (iPIK), primers, propellant charges, US Government technical assistance, technical data, repair and return services, and other related elements of logistics and



future threats by providing precision capability equipment, enhancing first-strike accuracy in its brigades. India is fully capable of absorbing these articles and services into its armed forces. The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be RTX Corporation, located in Arlington, VA. Currently, the U.S. Government is not aware of any offset agreement proposed in connection with this potential sale; any such agreement will be defined in negotiations between the purchaser and the contractor.

Implementation of the proposed sale will not require the assignment of additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to India. There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale. The description and dollar value reflect the highest estimated quantity and cost based on initial requirements. Actual value may be lower depending on final requirements, budget authority, and signed sales agreements, if and when concluded.

program support.

The total estimated cost is USD 47.1 million. The proposed sale will support US foreign policy and national security objectives by strengthening the US-Indian strategic relationship and enhancing the security of a major defense partner. India continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia regions.

The sale will improve India's ability to meet current and

## Nepal PM calls for calm after latest clashes

AFP

Katmandu, Nov 20: Nepal's prime minister has appealed for calm after clashes erupted between young activists and loyalists of the former ruling party that was overthrown in a deadly uprising in September.

Police said on Thursday calm had returned to Simara, a town in Nepal's southern Bara district some 100 kilometers (62 miles) south of Katmandu, a day after clashes between rival protesters.

At least 76 people were killed during demonstrations on September 8 and 9 that were triggered by anger over a brief government ban on social media and led by protesters under the loose "Gen Z" umbrella title. Gen Z members and supporters of ousted former prime minister KP Sharma Oli's Communist Party of Nepal — Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) both held rallies in Simara on Wednesday.

Scuffles broke out, some close to the airport, that prompted authorities to impose a curfew. "The situation is normal," Nepal police spokesman Abi Narayan Kafle told AFP on Thursday. "No one was severely injured." Sushila Karki, the former chief justice who was appointed interim prime minister after the September uprising, called on all parties to "refrain from unwanted political provocation," and to trust the democratic



process ahead of elections set for March 5, 2026. "I have directed the Home Administration and security agencies to work with utmost restraint and preparation to maintain peace and order," Karki said in a statement issued late on Wednesday.

She said she wanted to "ensure the safe movement of leaders of all political parties, and create a fair and fear-free environment for the elections."

Karki also held a meeting on Wednesday with representatives of more than 110 parties. "We want this country to be in the hands of a new generation and to be managed by people with vision," she told the meeting.

The September demonstrations were triggered by the former government's social media ban but anger ran much deeper after years of economic stagnation and entrenched corruption that primed the country of 30 million people for upheaval.

## Jadavpur University proposes Honorary DLitt for Women's WC winning skipper Harmanpreet Kaur

PTI/AGENCIES

New Delhi, Nov 20: Jadavpur University has proposed conferring an Honorary D Litt on ICC Women's Cricket World Cup-winning captain Harmanpreet Kaur at its annual convocation on December 24, a senior university official said on Thursday.

The recommendation was put forward at a recent special meeting of the university's deans, convened by newly appointed Vice-Chancellor Chiranjib Bhattacharya.

During a meeting with university Chancellor and Governor C V Ananda Bose at Raj Bhavan on Wednesday, Bhattacharya communicated to him about the proposal and Bose concurred verbally, the official told PTI.

The Chancellor also gave nod to the suggestion of the state-run university to invite Nobel laureate Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee as the special guest.

Names of Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) Chairman Sameer V Kamat and



Anusandhan National Research Foundation CEO Shivkumar Kalyanaram to the Chancellor were also referred to as one of the proposed special guests and that was also okayed by Raj Bhavan, the official said.

"There will be one special guest and either of these three prominent

personalities will be the special guest for the occasion as recommended by the Special Meeting," he explained.

He said the highest decision-making body of the JU, the Executive Committee, will soon meet to officially come up with the names of personalities to be

invited and the D Litt recipient for the convocation and give its seal of approval along with other preparatory matters.

Then the proposed D Litt recipient personality and the one special guest concerned will be contacted for their consent.

In past two years due to the absence of a full time VC, the governor had objected to the Convocation but the university went ahead with the customary formalities like awarding degrees to the students-researchers and the keynote address by the VC.

The row over convocation in past two years resulted in the exit of two interim VCs Buddhadeb Sau and Bhaskar Gupta as the Governor had described the 2023 and 2024 Convocations as unauthorised since the state varsity did not have any full-time vice-chancellors then.

With Bhattacharya at the helm in JU as full time VC since November 3, the university is going to have a full fledged Convocation with the consent of all stakeholders including Governor this year.

### Israel's cybersecurity firm Check Point looking at more investments in India

PTI

Tel Aviv, Nov 20: Israel-based cybersecurity solutions provider Check Point on Thursday said it is looking to expand its research and development (R&D) centre in Bengaluru by investing and hiring more engineers in the coming years.

Nadav Zafirir, CEO of Check Point said India is a "very" important market for the company.

"...in the next 10 years, we're talking about in the range of hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in India, which for us at Check Point, is a very strategic investment," he told reporters here after meeting Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

Goyal is leading a 60-member business delegation to Israel. He is meeting leaders and businesses to discuss ways to boost bilateral trade and investments.

"We have our biggest R&D centre outside of Israel, in India, in Bengaluru, because of the incredible talent that we find, especially as we think about deep tech and as the world is changing around network security, we have hundreds of engineers... we're going to hire more," he added. He said that huge opportunities are there for the company in areas like banking, trading, defence and electricity in India.

"We already have hundreds of engineers in Bengaluru, and we are constantly hiring at a quite quick pace, more and more people, because the threats are becoming so imminent and changing so fast that we really need to have the best talent in the globe," he said adding when "you think" about cyber security and network engineering, probably one of the best places to hire that talent is in Bengaluru.

## Spain remains top in FIFA men's world rankings



UNI

London, Nov 20: Spain maintained its top spot and the top four teams remained the same as the latest FIFA Men's World Ranking was released.

A total of 149 international matches, including 74 friendlies, have been contested during the period as Argentina, France,

and England kept their places from second to fourth in the rankings, respectively.

Brazil rose two spots up to the fifth place, while Portugal dropped to sixth and the Netherlands to seventh. Italy slipped out of the top 10 from ninth to 12th after a 4-1 loss to Norway. Belgium, Germany, and Croatia occupied the 8th to 10th places, respectively.

## Movies Schedule

Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> November

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ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES  
04:45 PM



WICKED: FOR GOOD (UA 16+)  
3D ENGLISH ATMOS WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES  
02:45 PM



120 BAHADUR (UA 13+)  
HINDI ATMOS - 05:45 PM  
HINDI - 03:15 PM



DE DE PYAAR DE 2 (U/A13+)  
HINDI - 06:15 PM