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DIPK-8841/25 Dated: 8.12.2025

PM Modi's sustained attention driving Jammu's transformation: LG Sinha

» Lays foundation stone of 350 houses at Rs 35 crore » Thanks HRDS-India for noble initiative » Praises people's resilience

Yogesh

Jammu, Dec 08: Asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has paid specific and sustained attention to the development of Jammu region, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that the city of temples has transformed into an inclusive and modern urban centre.

After laying the foundation stone for construction of new houses for families affected due to recent natural calamities and unprovoked Pakistani shelling during Operation Sindoor, in Jammu district, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Jammu has witnessed a remarkable change over the past few years, with common citizens extending full cooperation to the government's developmental initiatives."

He said that Jammu's



transformation into a vibrant urban hub is the outcome of strengthened infrastructure, improved public services, and enhanced community participation.

LG Sinha highlighted that PM Modi has ensured focused developmental push in the region by prioritising connectivity, health infrastructure, tourism,

and urban renewal projects.

The Lieutenant Governor said that Union Home Minister, Amit Shah personally visited Jammu areas and took stock of the situation. "The Home Minister met families of victims, reviewed the damage caused, and assured all possible help from the Centre."

LG Sinha said that the

government has stood firmly with the people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially those living in vulnerable border belts and is committed to providing them with all the facilities.

Expressing gratitude to HRDS-India for the noble initiative in supporting affected families in Jammu and Kashmir, LG Sinha said, | [More on P6](#)

Time to restore greatness of Vande Mataram: PM Modi in Lok Sabha

Says national song stood solid as rock despite British oppression



PTI

New Delhi, Dec 08: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday lamented that the Constitution was "throttled" and the nation chained by the Emergency when national song Vande Mataram completed 100 years.

Initiating a day-long discussion on 150 years of Vande Mataram in the Lok Sabha, Modi noted that Vande Mataram stood like a rock and inspired unity despite British oppression.

"When Vande Mataram completed 100 years, the nation was chained by the

Emergency. At that time, the Constitution was throttled and those who lived and died for patriotism were pushed behind bars," he said.

"The Emergency was a dark chapter in our history. Now we have the opportunity to restore the greatness of Vande Mataram. And I believe this opportunity should not be allowed to pass," Modi said.

The prime minister noted that the mantra of Vande Mataram gave power and inspiration to the entire country during freedom struggle.

"The mantra energised and inspired India's freedom movement | [More on P6](#)

Sub-zero nights grip Kashmir, dry spell likely to continue

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 08: With the Meteorological Department forecasting dry weather over the next ten days, minimum temperatures continued to dip across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh on Monday, with several places in the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh recording sub-zero readings, officials said.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the Kashmir region, Shopian recorded the coldest night at minus 4.2°C, followed by Srinagar Airport at minus 3.2°C, Budgam, Baramulla, and Pulwama at minus 3.1°C each.

Srinagar city registered a low of minus 2.4°C, while Bandipora recorded minus 2.2°C and Ganderbal minus 2.3°C. Other areas saw Kokernag at 0.1°C, Kulgam at 0.8°C, and Pahalgam at minus 0.4°C.

In the Jammu division, Katra experienced the coldest night at 9.6°C, followed by Jammu Airport at 9.0°C and Jammu city at 7.9°C.

Kathua recorded 7.8°C, Reasi 6.5°C, Batote 5.8°C, Ramban 5.6°C, Kishtwar and Doda 5.0°C each, Banihal 4.5°C, Samba 2.7°C, | [More on P6](#)

MoEFCC panel to decide on 260-MW Dulhasti stage-II hydropower project in Dec

NHPC to execute project on BOOT mode

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Dec 08: The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)'s Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) is set to decide on the environmental clearance of the 260-MW Dulhasti Stage-II hydroelectric project later this month.

The run-of-the-river project will be reviewed by the panel during its meeting scheduled for December 19, 2025, in New Delhi.

As per the agenda of the 45th EAC meeting accessed by news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the project will be taken up as agenda item 45.2 between 12:00 PM and 01:30 PM for appraisal by the panel.

During the meeting, the panel will scrutinize

the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), public hearing proceedings, queries subsequently raised by the ministry, and any court matters or orders related to the project.

The project, coming up in Kishtwar district of the Valley, is being executed by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) on a Build, Own, Operate & Transfer (BOOT) basis.

On January 03, 2021, NHPC Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for execution of the project on BOOT mode for a period of 40 years.

The Dulhasti hydroelectric project, Stage-II, is an extension of the Dulhasti | [More on P6](#)

Kashmiri Pandit Premier League

Resilience of KPs commendable: LG Sinha

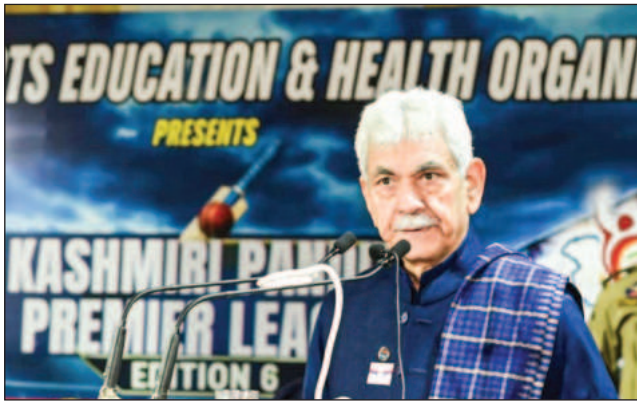
Says sports gives birth to new dreams, playgrounds help shape lives

Yogesh

Jammu, Dec 08: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that sports, especially cricket, has the unique power to bring people together and strengthen the bonds of unity across the nation.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of 6th edition of Kashmiri Pandit Premier League (KPPL) here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "In Jammu and Kashmir, cricket and football are not just games—they are a junoon."

He said the participation of Kashmiri Pandit players who have travelled from different parts of the country to take part in the league is a significant contribution to the spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha



Bharat."

Their performance, he added, should not be viewed merely in terms of defeat or victory but as a reflection of the unifying power of sports.

"Sports gives birth to new dreams, and I can clearly see those dreams in the eyes of our youngsters," LG Sinha

said, adding that playgrounds help shape lives by providing confidence, purpose, and inspiration.

He urged the players participating in the KPL to remain focused on their goals and utilise the platform to showcase their abilities. Commending the resilience of | [More on P6](#)

Centre sanctions major tourism projects for J&K, Ladakh

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Dec 08: The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned several major projects exclusively for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh under national tourism development schemes, the Lok Sabha was informed.

According to official documents accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), multiple projects have been approved under the Swadesh Darshan, Swadesh Darshan 2.0, PRASHAD and Challenge-Based Destination Development schemes that are aimed at boosting sustainable, | [More on P6](#)

Nation remains indebted to soldiers' sacrifices: LG Sinha

Interacts with armed forces veterans



KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 08: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday interacted with veterans of Armed Forces at Lok Bhavan Jammu. He expressed gratitude to the Armed Forces

and paid tributes to the martyrs. He stated that the nation will always remain indebted to the sacrifices made by the soldiers.

The Lieutenant Governor made generous contributions towards the Armed Forces Flag

Day Fund. He said the Armed Forces Flag Day, which was observed on 07th December 2025, reminds the citizens of the nation that the well-being of the Armed Forces Personnel is the collective responsibility of the | [More on P6](#)

Historic Nand Singh Bridge in LoC village reopened after two decades

Locals term it 'life changing'

Waris Fayaz

Uri, Dec 08: Nearly two decades after being damaged, the historic Nand Singh (NS) Bridge in Uri has been restored and reopened, rekindling hopes for dozens of border villages along the Line of Control (LoC).

Vital bridge, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) over the Hajipier Nallah on the Srinagar–Muzaffarabad road, was

virtually inaugurated on Sunday by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The reopening of the bridge has restored crucial connectivity between several remote villages and the Uri tehsil headquarters.

Local residents described the development as "life-changing", saying the bridge serves as their only reliable access route to essential services, including healthcare, education and markets.

Originally constructed decades ago, | [More on P6](#)

'J&K trained over 4.29 lakh youth under PMKVY' Ladakh crosses 4,000 mark

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Dec 08: Jammu & Kashmir has trained 4,29,954 youth under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) since its inception, the Ministry of Labour & Employment has informed Parliament.

The ministry further informed that the Union Territory of Ladakh has trained 4,076 candidates.

The data according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) was shared in response to | [More on P6](#)

Div Com Kashmir reviews handing over of Hotel Centaur

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 08: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Monday reviewed the Action Taken Report (ATR) on resolving pending issues related to utility shifting from Hotel Centaur and the sharing of services between the hotel and SKICC.

The meeting, as per an official statement was attended by the MD JKTD, CE KPD-CL, SE Jal Shakti, and officers from LCMA, SKICC, district administration, SMC, along with representatives of the concessionaire.

During the meeting, the Div Com assessed the progress on tendering of movable assets, issuance of building permissions to the concessionaire, payment of pending bills, segregation of services, vacation of rooms occupied by the DRI, and other related matters.

He directed the concessionaire to submit drawings for the proposed constructions to LCMA for approval. The district administration was instructed to ensure the vacation of occupied rooms at Hotel Centaur.

Regarding the sharing of



immovable utility services, the Div Com urged the concerned agencies to resolve the matter through mutual coordination. The MD JKTD was tasked with facilitating the smooth

handover of the hotel to the concessionaire by addressing all pending issues. The concessionaire was also asked to clear outstanding power and water bills to avail fresh

Armed Forces Flag Day celebrated in Kupwara



KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 08: Armed Forces Flag Day was observed with patriotic fervour in Kupwara with Deputy Commissioner (DC), Shrikant Suse presiding over a well-organised function at the Zila Sainik Welfare Office (ZSWO) on Monday.

On the occasion, the DC, as per an official statement inaugurated a renovation work funded by the District Administration which was completed recently at ZSWO office.

The event was attended by Zila Sainik Welfare Officer Kupwara, Col Shaiq Shafi

Raja (Retd.), Sub Judge ADR Kupwara, Javid Ahmad Parray, officials from various departments, ex-servicemen, and war widows. Addressing the gathering, the DC highlighted the significance of Armed Forces Flag Day. He said that the day serves as a tribute to the supreme sacrifices of the nation's brave soldiers. He reiterated the district administration's commitment to extending all possible support for the welfare of ex-servicemen, their families, and dependents.

He also stressed the importance of creating awareness about various government

schemes aimed at the upliftment and well-being of retired army personnel. Lt. Col. (Retd.) S. S. Raja, in his remarks, expressed gratitude to the district administration for its continued and unconditional support, particularly for the recently completed renovation of the Sainik Welfare Office building.

On the occasion, a two-minute silence was also observed in honour of the martyrs who have laid down their lives for the sake of nation.

The event concluded with the distribution of certificates of appreciation among distinguished ex-servicemen of the district.

DC Kulgam chairs meeting on Pulse Polio immunization

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, DECEMBER 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan Monday chaired a meeting of the District Task Force (DTF) on Pulse Polio Immunization 2025.

The meeting, as per an official statement focused on planning and implementing activities for the Pulse Polio Immunization programme scheduled to be held on 21 December 2025.

The DC reviewed key parameters such as human resource deployment, vaccine and cold chain management, logistics and transport arrangements, transit points, hard-to-reach areas, and the social mobilization plan.

It was informed that 508 booths, including 12 transit booths, have been established across the district to ensure maximum coverage.

It was shared that the district has approximately near about 87000 children below 5 years who are to be administered the pulse polio drops.

The DC instructed Health Department to take advance measures to ensure complete coverage, particularly in remote and difficult areas.

He stressed upon all stakeholders to work in close coordination and ensure that no child below 5 years of age is left without pulse polio immunization.

The meeting was attended by ADC Viqar Ahmad Giri; JDP Malik Suhail; CMO, Dr. Showkat Ahmad; MS, Dr. Syed Masood; DNO Ayush, Dr. Abdul Rehman; Dy. CMO, BMOs, and other concerned officers.

GDC Bandipora holds seminar on 'Importance of the Indian Constitution in Nation Building'

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 08: The NSS Units of HKM Degree College Bandipora, in collaboration with the Department of Political Science, successfully organized a seminar on the theme "Importance of the Indian Constitution in Nation Building" on Monday.

The programme, as per an official statement was held to strengthen constitutional awareness among students and highlight the foundational role of the Constitution in guiding national progress.

The event commenced with introductory remarks by the Officiating Principal, Dr. Mubashir Hamid Mir, who emphasized the relevance of constitutional literacy for youth and the importance of understanding democratic values for responsible citizenship.

A faculty member from the Department of Political Science delivered the keynote lecture, who deliberated on the significance, core values, and transformative role of the Indian Constitution in shaping the nation's political, social, and legal framework.

The seminar was marked by thoughtful discussions and meaningful student involvement, reflecting the college's commitment to promoting constitutional values and informed citizenship.

DLSA Srinagar holds meeting of District Monitoring Committee



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 08: District Legal Services Authority Srinagar convened the first meeting of the District Monitoring Committee under the guidance of Haq Nawaz

Zargar, Principal District and Sessions Judge, (Chairman DLSA) Srinagar.

The meeting, as per an official statement issued on Monday was convened by the Secretary DLSA Srinagar at the ADR Centre, District Court Complex,

Mominabad Srinagar in compliance with the directions of Supreme Court of India issued in WP (Cr) No. 295/2012 titled Rajaseekaran vs Union of India & Ors.

The meeting was attended by DySP Headquarters, Syed Sleet Shah as member of the committee and Naib Tehsildar, Aijaz Ahmad Bhat.

The Committee reviewed the framework laid down by the Supreme Court, discussed the district-level mechanism for processing claims, and examined the preliminary status of cases requiring action.

Deliberations focused on establishing coordinated procedures among concerned departments, ensuring timely verification and documentation, and strengthening facilitation for victims to streamline claim submission and processing.

The meeting concluded with key decisions aimed at creating an efficient monitoring structure, reducing procedural delays, and ensuring strict compliance with the mandate issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Health Department Shopian conducts Hepatitis Screening Camp

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 08: As per the directions of the Mission Director, NHM J&K, a comprehensive community-based screening camp on Hepatitis A, B, C, and E was organised at Herman, District Shopian, under the supervision of the Chief Medical Officer Shopian, Dr. Arshid Hussain Tak and BMO Shopian on Monday.

A total of 200 samples, as per an official statement were collected and dispatched to DPHL for triple serology testing. On-spot counselling was provided by the Medical Officer, PHC Herman. A special vaccination drive was also carried out to vaccinate staff members and contacts of Hepatitis B-positive cases.

IEC material was distributed among the community, encouraging people



to undergo regular sampling every year for early detection and prevention of hepatitis-related infections.

A detailed awareness session was conducted by the CHO and the Microbiologist, focusing on the causes, transmission routes, symptoms, prevention, and importance of early diagnosis of Hepatitis.

The session emphasized the key message: "Know Hepatitis-No Hepatitis."

ASHA workers and field staff played an important role in close coordination with IDSP staff by ensuring door-to-door mobilisation, awareness, and facilitation of community participation.

DC Kishtwar reviews Pulse Polio immunization preparedness

KT NEWS DESK

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar Pankaj Kumar Sharma Monday chaired a District Level Task Force meeting to review and finalize preparedness for the Pulse Polio Immunization Drive, scheduled to be held from Dec 21 to Dec 23, 2025 across the district.

At the outset, the DC, as per an official statement, assessment the arrangements and issued a series of directions to the HODs of the line departments to ensure well-coordinated execution of the campaign.

The DC directed the CDPOs to work in close coordination with BMOs and deploy Anganwadi Workers in municipal areas where ASHA workers are not available, ensuring that no booth remains unmanned.

The ARTO was asked to establish polio booths at



major locations including Bus Stand Kishtwar, Gulabgarh (Paddar) & Chattro and initiate awareness activities among transporters and drivers.

The ACD and CEO were directed to ensure timely arrangement of logistics

in all parts of the district. The DC further emphasized that any shortage of manpower should be addressed with support from the Education Department.

The ALC was directed to intensify awareness among drivers and labourers at

all power project sites to ensure universal immunization coverage.

The Municipal Council was directed to mobilize vehicle-mounted public announcements to raise community awareness about the Pulse Polio

Campaign.

Additionally, the DC directed the District Information Officer (DIO) to implement effective communication strategies through electronic, print and social media platforms.

He also directed to train the staff engaged in the campaign and mobilize ASHAs, Anganwadi Workers, school teachers, NGOs, religious leaders and community influencers for last-mile coverage.

The meeting was attended by CPO, Akhil Thakur; ACD, Manoj Kumar; CDPO, Dr. Kuldeep Kumar; ALC, Mamta Sudarshan; ARTO, Tasleem Wani; CDPO, Nagseni Najeab Latief; Chief Education Officer, Sanjay Dogra, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Yudhvir Singh; Block Medical Officer, Dr. Anil Sharma, BMO Dachan, Dr. Sajad Hussain, BMO Paddar, Dr. Krishan Singh Katoch, besides other officers and concerned staff.

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CS pushes fast-track establishment of JNVs, KVs



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, Dec 08: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Monday chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress and preparedness for establishment of Central educational institutions—Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) and Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs)—aimed at ensuring access to quality education for students across various districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary, School Education Department; Commissioners of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan; Director School Education, Jammu/Kashmir; Regional Officer, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Jammu; along

with other senior officers of the department.

Deputy Commissioners from all districts participated in the meeting through video conferencing. During the meeting, the Chief Secretary undertook a comprehensive appraisal of the JNVs and KVs already operational across J&K and those yet to become functional due to infrastructural constraints. He emphasized the pivotal role of the district administrations in facilitating the early establishment of these institutions and directed the Deputy Commissioners to extend full administrative support in their early establishment.

The Chief Secretary specifically instructed the Deputy Commissioners to identify suitable rented accommodations

for the temporary functioning of the schools until permanent land is transferred and requisite infrastructure is developed. He stressed that delays in infrastructure availability should not impede the commencement of academic activities in these premier institutions.

A district-wise review was conducted covering schools that are currently operational, those under various stages of establishment, and newly proposed institutions across the districts of J&K. On this occasion Secretary, School Education Department, Ram Niwas Sharma, presented a detailed overview of the status of Central educational institutions in the UT. He provided a location-wise breakdown of JNVs

and KVs operating from their own buildings and those functioning from rented premises. He also apprised the meeting of the status of land identification and infrastructure planning for non-functional and proposed institutions.

The Commissioners of JNV and KVs informed the meeting about the land requirements for these institutions, stating that a Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya requires approximately 30 acres of land, while a Kendriya Vidyalaya requires about 2.5 acres in hilly areas and up to 5 acres in plain regions. They further elaborated on the infrastructural components necessary for academic facilities, student hostels, staff residences and extracurricular activities. Deputy Commissioners shared district-specific updates on the efforts made to accommodate the proposed institutions and assured the Chief Secretary of their full cooperation in expediting land transfer, temporary accommodation and infrastructure development.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the administration's commitment to strengthening the educational ecosystem by ensuring timely establishment and operationalization of Central schools, particularly in underserved and remote areas.

IndiGo disruptions ease but cancellations persist

16 flights cancelled, 2 delayed; no other airline affected



OFFICIALS SAID THAT OF 64 SCHEDULED FLIGHTS, including 32 arrivals and 32 departures, IndiGo operated 36 flights, of which 16 flights: eight arrivals and eight departures were cancelled, while two others faced delays. "No other airline reported cancellations today and overall flight operations remained comparatively smoother," an airport official said.

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 08: Flight operations at Srinagar Airport witnessed partial improvement on Monday after several days of severe disruptions, though IndiGo's ongoing network issues continued to affect schedules, leading to multiple cancellations and delays.

Officials said that of 64 scheduled flights, including 32 arrivals and 32

departures, IndiGo operated 36 flights, of which 16 flights: eight arrivals and eight departures were cancelled, while two others faced delays. "No other airline reported cancellations today and overall flight operations remained comparatively smoother," an airport official said.

The cancellations stem from crew shortages and revised DGCA safety duty-time directives, which have

led to nationwide rescheduling by airlines, particularly IndiGo.

"Passengers are advised to confirm their flight status before travel to avoid inconvenience," the airport official said. The day's relatively stable operations come as a relief after widespread disruptions late last week, when more than 60 flight were affected across Jammu and Kashmir, mostly involving IndiGo services—(KNO)

'Forest fires claim 438 Sq Km from Nov-23 to Jun-24'



RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 08: The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change has said Jammu and Kashmir is one of the major hotspots of forest fires with the region losing over 438 square Kilometers of land to blazes between November 2023 and June 2024.

The data placed before the Lok Sabha by the Ministry said that satellite-based monitoring by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) indicates significant forest fire impact in several Indian states, including J&K.

The burnt area assessment for November 2023 to June 2024 shows that it has damaged over 438 Sq Km in J&K—thus placing it among the affected hill regions where dry conditions and rising temperatures continue to fuel vulnerability to wildfires.

The Ministry further said that the forest protection is primarily the responsibility of State and UT administrations, but the FSI provides pre-fire alerts, real-time

alerts and large fire alerts to help local authorities respond swiftly.

It added that a nationwide real-time remote-sensing and alert system is operational for all States and UTs, including in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The system issues continuous satellite-based updates to forest departments for monitoring, mitigation and post-fire assessment.

The ministry further stated that financial support under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme Forest Fire Prevention and Management (CSS-FFPM) is being provided continuously to the States and UTs.

For the past five years, financial assistance under CSS-FFPM has ranged between Rs 28 crore to Rs 39 crore annually, the Ministry informed Parliament.

The ministry also informed that the UT of Ladakh has not recorded any burnt forest area during the assessed season, officials say the region remains under continuous monitoring due to its fragile ecosystem and changing climate patterns—(KNO)

GoI approved 3 major sustainable tourism projects approved for Ladakh



RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 08: The Ministry of Tourism has said that it has approved three major projects under a central government scheme that focuses on sustainable and inclusive tourism in UT of Ladakh.

The ministry said that the projects were approved under its revamped scheme Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme and the Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD).

The official data placed before the Lok Sabha, the Centre has sanctioned two projects for Ladakh under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 and one additional project under CBDD, collectively focusing on biodiversity, border tourism, eco-tourism and community-based

livelihood development.

The official figures reveal that under Swadesh Darshan 2.0, Ladakh has received Rs 23.17 crore for 'Juley Leh Biodiversity Park' that is aimed to enhance eco-tourism experiences. Besides, the Rs 11.91 crore has been received under 'Exploring LoC and Hundarman Village Experience, Kargil'.

Additionally, under the CBDD sub-scheme, the Ministry has sanctioned 'Advancing Mushkoh as a Sustainable Tourism Hub' with Rs 9.82 crore.

The Ministry noted that Swadesh Darshan 2.0 focuses on developing sustainable and responsible tourism destinations, including lesser-known regions and eco-tourism circuits, with an emphasis on enhancing

local amenities, capacity building, and digital infrastructure.

The projects are to be implemented by the Ladakh UT Administration, while the Ministry of Tourism will regularly monitor progress. The Centre further informed that the initiatives are designed to create local livelihood opportunities, particularly for youth, artisans and communities dependent on tourism.

The Union Government also said that it has allocated Rs 1,900 crore for the Swadesh Darshan scheme for 2025–26 and Rs 25 crore for the Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP) programme, which also covers service providers from J&K and Ladakh—(KNO)

Chinese national detained in Sgr

Hotels, homestays booked for skipping Form-C

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Dec 08: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Monday detained a Chinese national and booked several hotels, homestays and houseboats in Srinagar for violating mandatory Form-C reporting norms under the Immigration and Foreigners Act.

An official said that five First Information Reports have been registered across different police stations following routine checking of accommodation facilities in Rajbagh, Khanyar, Lal Bazar, Nishat and Ram Munshi Bagh areas.

In Rajbagh, Hotel Blossoms, Hotel Grand MS and Hotel Golden Forest were found to have accommodated foreign nationals without submitting Form-C to the Foreigners Registration Office, leading to the registration of FIR No. 65/2025 under Sections 8 and 23-B of the Act at Police Station Rajbagh, the official said.

Hotel Khyber in the Khanyar area also faced action for non-submission of Form-C despite repeated reminders, resulting in FIR No. 57/2025 at Police Station Khanyar. In Lal Bazar, a homestay identified as IMY Home Stay in Nowabagh Bagwanpora was booked for concealing the stay of a foreign national from Israel and failing to file mandatory online Form-C information. FIR No. 60/2025 under the same Act was registered in Police Station Lal Bazar. Police said an FIR was also filed in Nishat (FIR No. 101/2025) against a house owner from Vakeel Colony, Brein, for non-compliance with reporting obligations.

In Ram Munshi Bagh, four

houseboats Floating Castle, Best View, Crystal Palace and Lake Palace were booked for similar violations relating to guests from Taiwan, Russia, Romania and Spain. FIR No. 94/2025 under Sections 7, 14 and 16 of the Immigration and Foreigners Act was registered at Police Station Ram Munshi Bagh.

The spokesperson said investigations are underway to determine whether there are forward or backward linkages to the violations. Operators of hotels, homestays, guest houses and houseboats were advised to strictly comply with foreign guest reporting norms, with police warning that non-compliance constitutes a serious offence under law. Meanwhile, probe agencies have sent the mobile phone of Chinese national Hu Congtai for forensic examination after he was detained in Srinagar over alleged visa violations, officials said.

Hu, 29, had arrived in India on a tourist visa that permitted travel to select Buddhist pilgrimage sites but had toured Ladakh and parts of Kashmir, including locations of strategic interest, they said.

His browsing data indicated searches related to security deployments and Article 370, prompting investigators to examine the device to ensure no data was erased prior to detention, according to officials.

Hu arrived in Delhi on November 19 and travelled to Leh the next day without registering at the Foreigners Regional Registration Office counter at the airport. He later arrived in Srinagar and stayed at an unregistered guest house, officials said—(KNO)

Winter fires decline in Srinagar, but risk stays high: F&ES

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 08: Despite a decline in fire incidents across Srinagar this year, the Fire and Emergency Services (F&ES) Department has cautioned residents to remain vigilant during the winter months, when the use of heating and cooking gadgets significantly raises fire risks.

Aqib Hussain Mir, Assistant Director F&ES, Kashmir, said that while awareness campaigns have helped reduce the overall number of incidents, winter remains a "critical period" for fire hazards.

"Last year, Srinagar recorded around 720 fire incidents, whereas this year the number stands at 468 so far. On average, monthly cases have dropped from 60 to 42, which is a positive trend," Dr Mir said. "This reduction is mainly due

to awareness campaigns launched under the direction of our Director."

He said that despite the decline, winter still witnesses a spike in fires compared to summer due to the excessive use of electrical and LPG-based heating gadgets.

"People should ensure that all gadgets, whether electrical heaters, LPG bukharis, or geysers, are ISI-marked and tested before use. Equipment stored for months must be checked and serviced before operating," he said, adding that substandard or overloaded devices often lead to short circuits and fires.

According to Mir, two major causes dominate Kashmir's fire incidents: electrical short circuits and LPG leaks. "We have seen that most cases stem from these two sources. Faulty wiring, overloading of sockets, or the use of non-standard circuit breakers are common triggers. On

the LPG front, leaks inside confined rooms can turn fatal," he said. The Assistant Director advised residents using LPG-based heating systems to always maintain proper ventilation, as the combustion process consumes oxygen and can lead to suffocation or explosions if gas accumulates indoors.

Mir also stressed the importance of fire preparedness at the household level. "People should keep a dry chemical powder-type fire extinguisher at home, ideally 5 or 6 kg, with proper BIS certification. A small extinguisher, costing between 3,000 and 10,000 rupees, can prevent a minor spark from turning into a major blaze," he said.

He said the concept of the "golden hour" in firefighting—the crucial initial moments when timely action can save both life and property. "Our response time depends on how quickly the call is made and whether access routes are

clear. Wrong parking often delays our movement. Cooperation from the public can drastically improve outcomes," he added. Addressing allegations of delayed response by the department, Dr Mir clarified that "there is no intentional delay from Fire and Emergency Services". "Our teams are highly trained and respond promptly. Delays mostly happen due to access blockages or congestion on roads," he said.

He urged citizens to adopt fire-safe practices such as keeping combustible materials away from living areas, turning off heating gadgets before sleeping or leaving home, and ensuring periodic electrical audits of homes. "If people follow these simple safety guidelines and cooperate with fire services, the number of incidents and the loss of life and property can be significantly minimised," Mir said—(KNO)

NC-PC war of words heats up

Tanvir Sadiq calls Sajad Lone a blogger, dares him to speak against Delhi

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 08: The National Conference (NC) on Friday ridiculed People's Conference chairman Sajad Lone for his anti government stance over the JKAS age relaxation issue, dismissing him as a "blogger."

Talking to reporters, NC spokesman Tanvir Sadiq said that Sajad Lone should have courage to tell New Delhi about wrongs committed in Kashmir.



would also occupy your space. We are making a humble request to him to leave this issue to us or have the courage to tell Delhi how they are committing wrongs in Kashmir. Nobody is blaming Raj Bhavan or Delhi because

they are getting dictations against the National Conference," Sadiq said.

Tanvir referred to Lone as a "blogger" apparently for his frequent Facebook Live appearances, which have become an instant hit on social media.

"The problem is that there is an understanding between the BJP and Sajad Lone. What they (BJP) speak from Jammu, Sajad Lone speaks the opposite of it here. This is being done intentionally," he added—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

BRO's Strategic Milestone Represents Holistic Vision

The dedication of 125 Border Roads Organisation (BRO) projects, including 22 in Jammu & Kashmir, by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is a landmark achievement that transcends mere infrastructure development. It represents a strategic and holistic vision where national security, regional development, and community faith in governance are seamlessly interwoven. This single-day inauguration of projects worth 5,000 crore is a powerful statement of intent and

capability. For frontier regions like Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, these roads and bridges are far more than tarmac and concrete. As the Defence Minister rightly termed them, they are the "lifelines of national security". Enhanced all-weather connectivity, exemplified by the engineering marvel of the Shyok Tunnel, directly translates to superior operational readiness for our armed forces. It ensures rapid deployment, sustained logistics, and an agile response capability in some

of the world's most challenging terrains. This infrastructure is a force multiplier and a fitting tribute to the soldiers who guard these icy heights. However, the vision correctly extends beyond the immediate military domain. The government's policy acknowledges that enduring security is rooted in the prosperity and trust of border communities. Improved connectivity dismantles decades of isolation, stabilises local economies, boosts tourism, and generates employment. It

enables efficient disaster response, as seen during recent cloudbursts, thereby saving lives and reinforcing the state's commitment to its citizens. When a remote village gains reliable road access, it gains access to markets, healthcare, and education - fundamentally altering its developmental trajectory. The BRO's achievement, completed ahead of schedule using indigenously developed expertise, is also a triumph of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' mission. It demonstrates a newfound

institutional confidence to execute complex projects in extreme conditions. Therefore, this infrastructural push must be hailed as a dual-purpose strategy: it sharpens the nation's defensive edge while actively weaving border populations into the national mainstream. It is a decisive step towards a future where security is underpinned by solidarity, and where geographical frontiers are also vibrant zones of opportunity. This is how a nation builds not just roads, but resilience.

India Hosts UNESCO's 20th ICH Session

A landmark moment in safeguarding living heritage

Press Information Bureau

The Government of India will host the 20th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage from 8 to 13 December 2025 in New Delhi. The historic Red Fort complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been chosen as the venue, symbolising the convergence of India's tangible and intangible heritage under one roof.

This will be the first time that India hosts the ICH Committee session, and the meeting will be chaired by H.E. Vishal V. Sharma, India's permanent delegate to UNESCO. The event coincides with the twentieth anniversary of India's ratification of the 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2005, underscoring India's sustained commitment to preserving living cultural traditions.

Intangible cultural heritage, as UNESCO defines it, include the practices, knowledge, expressions, objects, and spaces that communities see as part of their cultural identity. Passed down over generations, this heritage evolves, strengthening cultural identity and appreciation of diversity.

Historical Background

For the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO adopted the 2003 Convention on 17th October 2003 during its 32nd General Conference in Paris. The Convention responded to global concerns that living cultural traditions, oral practices, performing arts, social customs, rituals, knowledge systems, and craftsmanship were increasingly threatened by globalisation, social change, and limited resources.

The Convention placed communities, especially indigenous communities, groups, and individual practitioners, at the heart of safeguarding efforts, acknowledging their vital role in creating, maintaining and transmitting cultural heritage. It underscored the interdependence between tangible and intangible heritage, the need for global cooperation, and the importance of raising awareness among younger generations. With a shared global commitment to protecting humanity's living heritage, the Convention formally established mechanisms for international cooperation, support, and recognition, laying the foundation for UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage lists and the subsequent work of the Intergovernmental Committee.

The purposes of this Convention are

To safeguard the intangible cultural heritage; To ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;

To raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and ensuring mutual appreciation thereof;

To provide for global cooperation and assistance.

Functions of the Intergovernmental Committee

The Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage advances the objectives of the 2003 Convention and ensures their effective implementation across Member States. In fulfilling this mandate, the committee:

Promotes and monitors the objectives and implementation of the 2003 Convention.

Provides guidance on best practices and recommends measures for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Prepares and submits to the General Assembly the draft plan for the use of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.

Mobilises additional resources for the Fund in accordance with the Convention's provisions.

Drafts and proposes operational directives for the implementation of the Convention.

Examines periodic reports submitted by States Parties and compiles summaries for the General Assembly.

Evaluates requests from States Parties and makes decisions regarding:

Inscription of elements on UNESCO's ICH Lists (as per Articles 16, 17 and 18).

Granting of international assistance.

20th Session of Intergovernmental Committee

The Ministry of Culture (MoC), Government of India and its autonomous body, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) are the nodal agencies to host the 20th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee at the Red Fort (Lal Qila) in New Delhi. This magnificent 17th-century fort in Delhi, known for its stunning red sandstone walls and grand architecture, palaces, gardens, and museums is itself on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Key Agendas

By hosting the 20th session of the ICH Committee, India aims to:

Present and share its national ICH

safeguarding model – combining institutional support, community participation, documentation and national inventory efforts – as a global good practice.

Encourage increased international cooperation via collaborative nominations, joint safeguarding initiatives, capacity building, sharing of resources, technical exchange.

Bring greater global visibility to India's intangible heritage – including lesser-known traditions, local crafts, regional festivals – thereby attracting global support, interest, research, tourism and resource mobilisation.

Use the session's global spotlight to motivate further domestic efforts such as documentation, inventorying, nomination dossiers, community engagement, especially among youth and future generations.

Provide a platform for cultural diplomacy: project India's soft-power, cultural richness, diversity and heritage leadership on a global stage.

Strengthen the link between heritage conservation and sustainable development: intangible heritage as a resource for livelihoods, community identity, social cohesion, and cultural tourism.

India's Intangible Cultural Heritage: A National & Global Asset

India's intangible cultural heritage is not just a matter of tradition or nostalgia, it is a living asset with deep social, economic, educational, and diplomatic value.

Social & Cultural Identity: ICH preserves linguistic, ethnic, regional, tribal, religious and community identities – fostering social cohesion and pluralism in a diverse nation like India.

Livelihoods & Crafts Economy: Traditional crafts, performing arts, craftsmanship, and cultural tourism provide livelihoods to artisans, performers, craftspeople – often in rural or marginalised communities. Institutional support under the ICH Scheme can help sustain these livelihoods, prevent skill loss, and promote inclusive development.

Education & Transmission of Knowledge: Many intangible heritage forms embed traditional knowledge – ecological practices, oral histories, craftsmanship techniques, folklore, rituals, indigenous wisdom. When documented and transmitted, these strengthen education, deepen cultural literacy and ensure inter-generational continuity.

Cultural Diplomacy & Soft Power: Dances,

festivals, crafts, oral traditions – reflects India's diversity, unity, values, and cultural depth. Promoting them globally enhances India's soft power, cultural diplomacy and international image. Hosting the session further amplifies this impact.

Global Heritage Governance & Leadership Role: With its vast heritage landscape, India's active participation and role as host strengthen global heritage governance under UNESCO. It positions the nation as a key voice among developing countries, advocating for balanced, inclusive, and community-sensitive approaches to heritage preservation globally.

India's Contributions to ICH

India's vast and diverse intangible cultural heritage – encompassing living traditions, oral expressions, performing arts, rituals, crafts, and community practices – requires systematic institutional support for its preservation and transmission. To address this need, the Ministry of Culture launched the "Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India" as a centralised mechanism to strengthen ongoing but scattered preservation efforts. Meanwhile, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) organizes capacity-building workshops to train individuals and increase awareness about the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).

The Scheme aims to revitalise institutions, practitioners, communities, scholars, and organizations engaged in safeguarding ICH, while enhancing national and international recognition of India's cultural traditions, including through UNESCO nominations. It supports a wide range of stakeholders – universities, state governments, NGOs, cultural bodies, researchers, and individual practitioners.

Key activities under the Scheme include documentation and creation of ICH inventories; preservation and promotion of cultural expressions; preparation of UNESCO nomination dossiers; training and capacity building for artists; workshops and performances; dissemination initiatives; education-culture integration; and support for skill development through Sector Skill Councils under the National Vocational Educational Qualifications Framework (NVEQF).

India's Intangible Cultural Heritage Inscribed by UNESCO

India, as a State Party to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, has actively advanced the

preservation of its living cultural traditions through national institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and the Sangeet Natak Akademi. To date, 15 Indian elements have been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, reflecting the country's extraordinary civilisational depth and cultural continuity.

Did You Know?

This year, India has nominated Chhath Mahaparva and Diwali for UNESCO's ICH List.

These inscriptions also reflect India's commitment to safeguarding diverse cultural expression through community participation, documentation, training, and transmission, principles central to the 2003 convention. These inscriptions range from ancient performing arts like Kutiyattam and Chhau, to sacred traditions such as Vedic chanting, Buddhist chanting in Ladakh, and community-based practices like Ramlila, Ramman, and Sankirtana. Everyday cultural knowledge systems are equally represented through the metalcraft of the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, the Kalbelia community's dynamic music and dance, and large-scale social-spiritual gatherings like the Kumbh Mela. Elements such as Yoga, Durga Puja, and Garba showcase India's vibrant contemporary cultural identity, while Novruz, celebrated across several countries including India, highlights regional cultural interconnectedness.

Conclusion

India's hosting of the 20th UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee session marks a milestone, blending symbolic significance with a real chance to lead. With a strong heritage infrastructure and history of cultural diversity, India is ready to showcase and share its safeguarding model. This event offers India an opportunity to highlight its living heritage, foster global cooperation, and shape a renewed approach to preserving intangible cultural heritage for current and future generations.

The success of the 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee in New Delhi will reflect positively on UNESCO, the Government of India, and the vitality of India's cultural traditions. India's heritage lives through its people, expressed in its languages, arts, rituals, festivals, and belief systems. Hosting this year's session shows India's enduring commitment to safeguarding its cultural legacy for future generations.

India And The Gulf States Could Reshape Global Trade

In an increasingly multipolar world, India and the Gulf states are no longer merely trading partners but strategic actors in their own right. Together, they are advancing a model of cooperation that values autonomy, transparency, and mutual gain over coercion and dependence on great powers.

Vivek Agarwal and Alexander George

The recent Middle East Investment Forum in Sharjah underscored the deepening economic relationship between India and the Gulf states. As US President Donald Trump's tariffs erode the competitiveness of Indian exports, Indian firms are increasingly turning to the United Arab Emirates as a bridge to American markets, strengthening cross-regional ties.

As a result, what was once a relationship based on the exchange of oil for labor has evolved into a partnership spanning technology, finance, and security. The Gulf and India are no longer merely trading partners; together, they are spearheading a geo-economic realignment and redrawing the map of global trade.

The relationship between India and the Gulf has deep historical roots. For centuries, caravans and merchant ships, carrying spices and textiles, established enduring cultural and commercial ties between the two regions. Moreover, under the British Raj, much of the Gulf was administered from New Delhi.

In the decades following India's independence, ties became largely transactional: oil flowed one way, labor the

other, and wealth moved in both directions. Only recently have India and the Gulf states rediscovered the strategic value of their historic partnership and begun to reimagine it for the 21st century.

By the mid-2010s, the two sides' strategic priorities began to align. In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the UAE – the first such visit in 34 years – as Gulf leaders like UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched ambitious plans to diversify their economies beyond hydrocarbons.

This convergence was driven by domestic shifts. The Gulf states recognized the risks of fossil-fuel dependence and began channeling resources into renewables, tech, and tourism. Meanwhile, India – racing to industrialize and digitize – found eager partners in the Gulf with the necessary capital and ambition. India sought investment and expertise, and the Gulf sought scale and new avenues for growth.

What followed was a period of intense economic and diplomatic engagement, from the establishment of the I2U2 partnership – which includes India, Israel, the UAE, and the United States – to Gulf leaders honored at India's national

celebrations. The numbers speak for themselves: India-UAE trade has risen to \$100 billion this year, while India-Saudi trade reached \$43 billion in 2023-24.

Equally important is where that capital is flowing. Sovereign wealth funds like Abu Dhabi's Mubadala and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund have invested heavily in Indian startups, infrastructure, and green-energy projects. These are not one-off transactions but long-term bets on the future of the geopolitical alliance.

Building on this momentum, the revitalized India-Gulf axis is now looking outward. The proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor promises to reshape global trade routes, linking Indian ports to the Mediterranean through Gulf rail networks and establishing modern, resilient supply chains alongside the Suez Canal.

In this sense, the partnership represents a modern-day equivalent to the old spice routes. But the spices have been replaced by advanced technologies, and the caravans have given way to container ships, fiber-optic cables, and digital payments. India's Unified Payments Interface is crossing borders, while undersea power cables and green-hydrogen projects are laying the groundwork for a shared

energy and digital ecosystem.

The fledgling partnership is now expanding into Africa. The UAE has pledged over \$100 billion in investments across the continent, while Saudi Arabia has announced \$41 billion in development initiatives. India, for its part, brings decades' worth of goodwill – built through peace-keeping missions, development projects, and a vibrant diaspora network – that complements Gulf capital and amplifies the bloc's influence.

Emerging trilateral ventures, with Emirati capital financing infrastructure built by Indian firms in Africa, represent a compelling alternative to the great powers' projects on the continent, which often lead to debt traps and come with political strings attached. For medium-sized economies wary of being caught in the middle of the US-China rivalry, the India-Gulf alliance offers infrastructure without unsustainable debt, technology partnerships without hidden agendas, and security cooperation without foreign interference.

The India-Gulf partnership also shows how digital tools can drive development. By combining India's affordable, open-source digital architecture with Gulf capital, the partnership is delivering modern

infrastructure, inclusive digital IDs, and climate-conscious ventures that generate well-paid local jobs.

But this is not non-alignment 2.0. Instead, the India-Gulf story is one of multi-alignment – a pragmatic geopolitical strategy rooted in shared interests, mutual benefit, and autonomy.

To be sure, the alliance faces powerful headwinds: regional rivalries, domestic frictions, and global volatility. Yet the confidence is unmistakable: no longer bound by others' strategies, India and the Gulf states are charting their own course.

If their partnership endures, it will be more than a bilateral success. The India-Gulf nexus could become a new center of gravity in an increasingly multipolar world – and a template for other emerging economies seeking open-source technology, resilient trade, and broad-based prosperity without subordination.

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Source: Project Syndicate

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

CS reviews implementation of RERA Act across J&K

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 08: Chief Secretary Monday reviewed the implementation status of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 in Jammu & Kashmir during a detailed meeting of Jammu & Kashmir Real Estate Regulatory Authority (JKRERA).

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Chairperson, J&K RERA, Satish Chandra; Secretary, Rural Development Department; Commissioners of JMC/SMC; Inspector General of Registrations; Vice Chairpersons of Jammu Development Authority and Srinagar Development Authority; besides other senior officers of the concerned departments.

Emphasising the need for a coordinated and integrated approach, the Chief Secretary underscored the importance of strengthening enforcement mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability and protection of homebuyers' interests in the real estate sector across the UT.

He called upon the concerned Divisional and District Administrations to extend all necessary assistance to JKRERA for effective implementation of the Act in both municipal as well as rural areas. He observed



that non-compliance with the provisions of the Act leads to haphazard development, often without the basic facilities and statutory safeguards mandated under law.

Earlier, Chairperson, J&K RERA, Satish Chandra, briefed the meeting on the mandate and functioning of the Authority, which was established under an Act of Parliament in 2016. He informed that JKRERA exercises jurisdiction over all residential and commercial real estate projects in the Union Territory, including plotted developments exceeding 500 square metres or eight apartments, as envisaged under Section 3 of the Act.

He further stated that registration of eligible real estate projects and real estate agents with JKRERA is mandatory, and no promoter is permitted to advertise, market or sell any project without such registration.

The Act, he added, ensures protection of buyers' rights and mandates developers to provide requisite infrastructure and facilities, thereby preventing unplanned and sub-standard developments.

The Authority also briefed the meeting on the mechanisms in place for registration of projects and agents, complaint filing and disposal, and enforcement of statutory provisions. It was informed that any aggrieved person, including allottees, promoters and real estate agents, can file complaints under Section 31 of the Act through both online and offline modes. JKRERA is empowered to conduct inquiries and recover penalties as arrears of land revenue in cases of non-compliance.

The meeting was apprised of the stringent penalty provisions under the Act, which include penalties extending up to 10

per cent of the project cost and imprisonment for promoters in cases of violations such as non-registration of projects and failure to comply with the orders of the Authority or the Appellate Tribunal.

The Authority also highlighted the awareness programmes being conducted to sensitise stakeholders about the provisions of the Act, buyer safeguards and regulatory obligations. A summary of enforcement actions undertaken and complaints disposed of was also presented during the meeting.

The key issues discussed in the meeting includes lack of clarity regarding layout approvals for colonies in rural areas, delays due to multiple departmental approvals, and the need for enhanced inter-departmental coordination.

To address these challenges, JKRERA proposed clearer delineation of approval authorities in rural areas, establishment of a Single Window System for integrated approvals and registrations, and constitution of district-level enforcement cells under the Deputy Commissioners to strengthen monitoring, reporting and enforcement of RERA violations. These measures, it was emphasised, would ensure transparent, regulated and planned development of the real estate sector across J&K.

Trainee Products' Sale: Over 12 lakh revenue generated in 2 days



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 08: In a heartwarming celebration of skill and rehabilitation, the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, organised an impressive Two-Day Trainee Products' Sale at the famous Numaish Gah, here.

The event, as per an official statement, turned into a resounding success with visitors thronging the venue in large numbers, generating an impressive revenue of ₹12.13 lakh in just 12 hours, over only two days.

In a press statement issued here on Monday, a spokesman of the department stated that as many as 11 stalls showcasing exquisite hand-crafted products made by trainee artisans from across 432 training centres under the department and the Massive Carpet Scheme

(MSC) were the highlight of the event, which was organized in the backdrop of the earlier successful event organized in August last. "From Kashmiri crewel embroidery, hand-knotted woollen carpets, papier-mâché, willow wicker basketry, copperware Kandakari to Sozni and Kani shawls, along with vintage craft products like Namda and Gabba rugs were on display," he added.

Giving details, the spokesman said while District Srinagar led with sale proceeds of ₹4.27 lakh, woollen carpets under MSC recorded revenue of ₹3.00 lakh. "The other districts also recorded satisfactory sales with Bandipora at ₹46,000, Ganderbal, ₹1.20 lakh, Baramulla ₹35,000, Anantnag ₹55,000, Budgam ₹1.10 lakh, Shopian ₹36,600, Pulwama

₹55,000, Kupwara ₹7,350 & Kulgam ₹21,000," he added.

The spokesman further added that the revenue generated reflects a perfect example of how funds released by the Government are recycled back into the system and utilized for development activities related to promotion of the craft sector.

The spokesman further stated that the sale expo was not just about revenue, but also giving much-needed impetus and confidence to the trainees who hold key to the sustenance of Kashmir Handicrafts in future. "The overwhelming response from visitors exudes confidence that Kashmiri craftsmanship is in safe hands," he said, adding the huge footfall reflected strong public support for skill development and rehabilitation initiatives.

ACS Shantmanu inaugurates workshop on Disaster Management



KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 8: Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Higher Education, Shantmanu, Monday inaugurated a two day division level workshop on Disaster Management Capacity Building for the faculty members of colleges across the Jammu division.

The workshop, as per an official statement, was organised by the Government College for Women (GCW), Parade in which 100 faculty members participated.

In his inaugural address, the ACS highlighted the urgent need for preparedness, coordinated response systems and robust community engagement to effectively tackle disasters in a region as sensitive and disaster-prone as Jammu & Kashmir.

Director Colleges, Dr. Sheikh Aijaz Bashir, underscored the importance of capacity building in higher education. He emphasized the key role of NSS volunteers and DRR Clubs in spreading disaster awareness at the grassroots level.

Director Finance Higher Education Department, Abdul Majid Bhat, was also present.

Nodal Principal, Dr. Ravender Kumar Tickoo, emphasized the crucial role of educators in shaping a responsive academic

community capable of supporting early warning dissemination, basic rescue assistance and community-level awareness. He reiterated that trained DRR Club volunteers and students can serve as vital first responders, especially in remote areas where timely intervention is critical.

The two day programme included technical sessions, live demonstrations and interactive discussions aimed at equipping the colleges with practical skills and enhance institutional disaster response mechanisms.

The workshop focused on disaster mitigation, preparedness and institutional readiness, covering earthquakes, floods, landslides and other region-specific hazards, as Jammu & Kashmir falls in a high-risk disaster-prone zone.

The resource persons from SDRF, NDRF, Fire & Emergency Services and the Regional Institute of Health & Family Welfare, Jammu conducted hands-on sessions on evacuation protocols, first aid, fire safety, risk reduction strategies and psychological preparedness.

The event concluded with a collective commitment to build safer campuses, nurture a culture of preparedness and empower students as ambassadors of disaster resilience within their communities.

Health Minister reviews facilities, patient care at SMHS Hospital

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 08: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday carried out an extensive inspection of SMHS Hospital Srinagar, during which the Minister took comprehensive review of patient care services, infrastructure, availability of essential medicines and other facilities at the hospital.

During the visit, the Minister, as per an official statement, interacted with Principal, faculty members and medical staff to assess on-ground requirements and address concerns related to service delivery. She visited the emergency wing, OPD sections, diagnostic units, and in-patient wards, directing hospital authorities to ensure timely treatment, cleanliness, and streamlined patient flow.

The Minister also interacted with patients and their attendants and took feedback from them about the quality of medical care services being



provided at the hospital.

While reviewing medicine stocks and pharmacy operations, the Minister emphasized the need for uninterrupted availability of essential drugs, diagnostics, and life-saving equipment. She instructed officials to strengthen supply chain monitoring and ensure that no patient faces any inconvenience.

The Minister further stressed on the importance of modernized facilities, proper equipment maintenance, and enhanced support services like sanitation and patient facilitation desks in

view of winter months.

Reiterating the government's commitment to improving public health services, the Minister said that periodic inspections would continue to ensure accountability and efficient functioning of hospitals. She appreciated the dedication of frontline medical staff and encouraged them to maintain high standards of care.

Principal GMC Srinagar, Dr. Iffat Hassan Shah; HoDs of various specialities, faculty members and other officers were also present during the visit of the Minister.

Sakeena Itoo meets legislators, public delegations in Srinagar

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 08: As per the official roster for Ministers at Civil Secretariat Srinagar, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday interacted with scores of public delegations and individuals, including MLAs of various Assembly Constituencies here to assess genuine issues and developmental concerns of their respective areas.

During the interaction, as per an official statement, public

delegations from Anantnag, Baramulla, Kupwara, Kulgam and other areas, while interacting with the Minister, raised several issues of public importance. They flagged issues related to health, school education, roads, drinking water, availability of ration and other concerns in view of the winter season.

The Minister assured the delegations that their genuine issues will be redressed on priority. She highlighted that this initiative underscores the government's commitment to accessible and responsive administration.

She added that the Omar Abdullah led Government remains steadfast in its commitment to public welfare and responsive governance for addressing the concerns of the people in a timely and effective manner.

Meanwhile, MLA Pampore, Justice (Retd.) Hasnain Masoodi; MLA Chadoora, Ali Mohammad Dar and MLA Zainapora, Showkat Ahmad Ganie also interacted with the Minister and raised several issues and developmental concerns of their respective Assembly Constituencies.

J&K Pavilion shines at PITEX 2025 in Amritsar



KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 8: The Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO) participated in the 19th edition of the Punjab International Trade Expo (PITEX), held at Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar, from December 4 to 8, 2025.

The JKTPO sponsored 36 artisans, exporters, FPOs and women entrepreneurs from both Jammu and Kashmir divisions, as per an official statement issued on Monday, who showcased region's rich artistry and cultural heritage. The display included Pashmina shawls, Sozni and Crewel embroidery, leather and woollen products, stoles, Tilla work, Basohli Pashmina and world-renowned GI-tagged Kashmiri saffron, dry fruits, dried vegetables, honey and Rajmash from the Jammu region. The pavilion received overwhelming participation from over five lakh visitors from India and abroad.

The five day event generated sales worth over 1.36 crore and secured 391 business leads with prominent business houses, promising substantial economic benefits for the artisans and entrepreneurs of J&K.

The PITEX 2025 was inaugurated by former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind and Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Cheema.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony organized by the

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), the former President highlighted Punjab's rapid progress, noting that the state, once known primarily as the "bread basket of India", is now emerging as a hub for MSMEs, technology, manufacturing and ease of doing business.

The expo hosted exhibitors from across India and abroad, featuring the participants from 17 Indian states along with several international representatives who showcased a diverse range of products.

The success of the Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion at PITEX 2025 underscores JKTPO's commitment towards enhancing market access for the local artisans and entrepreneurs, fostering both B2B and B2C engagements. The initiative continues to bridge cultures, support livelihoods and drive economic growth across the Union Territory.

As part of its activities for the current financial year, the JKTPO has organized several events, including a Buyer-Seller Meet at SKICC, GI Fair at Budgam, Gandhi Shilp Bazaar at Kashmir Haat and Pashmina Festival at Katra.

Additionally, the JKTPO participated in major national events such as the Handwoven Expo in New Delhi, World Food India and IITF at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, to showcase the economic potential of Jammu & Kashmir.

India Skills 2025-26: JKSDM launches UT level competitions

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 8: The Jammu & Kashmir Skill Development Mission (JKSDM) has launched the UT level competitions under India Skills Competitions 2025-26, marking a major step towards promoting a strong skill development ecosystem across the Union Territory.

The first competition, as per an official statement, commenced Monday at the Institute of Technology, University of Kashmir for Kashmir division

and Industrial Training Institute, Jammu for Jammu division. This year, the Mission received an overwhelming response with 1500 registrations from the enthusiastic youth from across J&K. After a rigorous screening process, 265 skilled candidates have been shortlisted to compete at the UT level in 28 diverse skill categories.

The winners of these events will advance to the regional level competitions, where they will represent the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The competitions are



being conducted at premier institutions across J&K including IIT Jammu, NIFT Srinagar, IHM Srinagar, Central University of Jammu, Government Medical College, Srinagar, NIT Srinagar and Government Polytechnic College, Jammu.

Speaking on the occasion, JKSDM officials highlighted that the initiative aims to empower the skilled youth of J&K, remove the stigma associated with blue-collar professions and glamourize skill-based careers in line with national objectives.

J&K has shown remarkable performance in recent years, securing 13 medals at the National Level India Skills Competitions 2023-24, including 3 Gold Medals. These Gold Medalists went on to represent India at the prestigious World Skills Competition 2024 in Lyon, France, bringing pride to the Union Territory.

The India Skills Competitions serve as a platform to showcase talent, build confidence and connect youth with national and global opportunities in the skill sector.

Woman dies after C-section in Anantnag, family alleges medical negligence

Inquiry committee constituted, to submit report withing 14 days

Jahangeer Ganaie

Anantnag, Dec 08: A 25-year-old woman from Anantnag died under mysterious circumstances last night, with her family accusing doctors at the Maternity and Child Care Hospital (MCCH) Anantnag of medical negligence.

The family has sought a high-level investigation and stringent action against those responsible.

Family members said that the woman, Khusboo, a resident of Pushwara area of Anantnag, underwent a C-section surgery on Saturday evening. However, soon after the procedure, her condition started deteriorating rapidly.

"We were told the delivery went fine, but within a short time, we saw her health collapsing," said a relative of the deceased. "Doctors later told us she needed another surgery to remove her uterus. We believe they only said this because they had failed to control her bleeding."

The family claims that the decision to remove her uterus was taken hastily and without

proper explanation. They allege that despite the procedure, her condition continued to worsen. "She was completely fine before going into labour. What happened inside that labour room only the doctors know," said another relative "After the second surgery, they shifted her to GMC Anantnag's main hospital at Janglat Mandi, where doctors told us she was already '90 per cent dead' on arrival. How can a patient deteriorate so fast unless something seriously went wrong?"

Doctors at GMC Anantnag made efforts to revive her, but she was declared dead soon after. "We don't only want an investigation. We want this case to reach its logical conclusion. Whoever is responsible must face the music so that no other family suffers like us," the family demanded.

The relatives vowed that they will not rest until the truth is revealed.

"This is not just about Khusboo," said another relative. "This is about every woman who goes to a hospital, trusting the system. We want answers, not empty assurances."

Reacting to the allegations, an official of GMC Anantnag said the hospital has already constituted a five-member inquiry committee to look into the incident.

"A fair and transparent investigation is underway," he said. "If any negligence is found at any level, action will be taken strictly as per the law."

Prof (Dr) Iffat Hassan Shah, Principal GMC Srinagar, has been appointed as inquiry officer to conduct a detailed investigation into the incident, according to a government order. She will be assisted by Dr Mushtaq Ahmad, Medical Officer, GMC Anantnag.

"The Inquiry Officer shall submit a detailed report, along with her recommendations withing 14 days positively," the order states.

Meanwhile, MLA West, Advocate Abdul Majeed Larmi, visited the bereaved family and expressed solidarity with them.

"This is heartbreaking," Larmi said. "I assure the family that the matter will be followed to its end. Justice will be delivered, and if anyone is found guilty, they will be held accountable."

Forest Minister encourages students to embrace innovation, overcome challenges

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 08: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today attended the annual prize distribution ceremony of MIER College of Education.

The event was organized to celebrate the remarkable talent, dedication and accomplishments of the students across multiple domains.

The Minister extended heartfelt congratulations to all the awardees who excelled in academics, research, co-curricular activities, sports and community services.

He applauded their perseverance, passion and commitment, noting that their achievements serve as a powerful inspiration



for other students.

Rana encouraged the students to continue pushing boundaries while being curious learners. He urged them to bring forth innovative ideas, work through challenges with resilience and strive for excellence in every sphere of life.

Emphasising the transformative power of education, the Minister encouraged the

students to become agents of positive change in society. He highlighted the role of young people in nation-building and underscored the importance of channeling their knowledge and skills toward societal development.

Reiterating the significance of youth empowerment, Rana stressed the need to provide students with the right

opportunities, mentorship and exposure. Such support, he noted, is essential for enabling them to compete confidently at national and international platforms.

The Minister lauded MIER College for cultivating a nurturing and forward-looking educational atmosphere. He acknowledged the dedication of the faculty and staff towards ensuring holistic development of students academically, personally and ethically.

Rana appreciated the institution's focus on shaping future-ready leaders. He also commended the college's modern infrastructure and effective integration of educational technology. He highlighted how faculty and students are leveraging digital tools to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

MY Tarigami chairs Environment Committee meeting

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 08: A meeting of the Committee on Environment, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, was held on Monday to discuss malignant Brain Tumors linked with the Pesticides exposure among the Orchard workers and farmers in Kashmir Valley.

The meeting presided over by the Chairman of Environment Committee, MLA Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami and attended

by members Dr. Sajjad Shafi; Peerzada Feroze Ahmad; Zafar Ali Khatana; Mushtaq Guroo and Darshan Kumar.

The meeting had detailed discussion on the alarming rise of primary malignant brain tumors among the orchard workers and farmers in Kashmir Valley, reportedly linked to pesticide exposure. The SKIMS data (2005-2008) highlighted the issue, sparking concerns about the health and well-being of those living and working in the

region's orchards. Key questions were raised about annual screening programs for neurological illnesses and cholinesterase levels, and the proposed steps for initiating mass health surveillance.

Other issues discussed included issuance of departmental advisory to the public regarding safe pesticide use and health hazards, steps being taken to introduce safe pesticide alternatives and biological agents, conduct of awareness

programs for the farmers, existing rehabilitation or medical assistance schemes for the pesticide-affected families and orchard workers besides status of mechanism for periodic reassessment of pesticide safety on neurological health.

Secretary, Health & Medical Education, Dr Abid Rasheed Shah, Director SKIMS, Srinagar and other senior health authorities briefed the Committee about the issues highlighted in the meeting.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

PM Modi's sustained

"As many as 350 houses in Jammu district will be constructed at a cost of Rs 35 crore. The construction cost of these new three-bedroom pre-fabricated Smart Houses will be borne by the High-range Rural Development Society (HRDS India)."

"On behalf of J&K people I thank HRDS for coming forward and extending a helping hand," the Lieutenant Governor said.

LG Sinha stated that the houses for the affected families are being built without spending a single penny from the government treasury.

"Construction of these three-bedroom pre-fabricated Smart Houses is slated for completion within six months from the start of the foundation work. The houses are designed to be efficient, modern, resilient, and technologically advanced and will include specific facilities like cowsheds," he added.

"In addition to building the homes, HRDS India is providing a substantial welfare package to the beneficiary families. HRDS India will provide free life insurance coverage for all family members for the next 15 years, free annual health checkups for all family members and coverage for maintenance of the houses for the next 5 years," LG Sinha said.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated his commitment to bring a monumental change in the lives of the poor.

"In the past 5 years, lakhs of poor have been benefitted and infrastructure in backward and poor regions were upgraded. The rapid development of Jammu is unprecedented and we have achieved a strong growth trajectory despite numerous challenges," he said.

"It is our constant effort to develop Jammu, the sacred city of temples, into an inclusive urban centre. Concrete steps taken for all-round development have led to the realization of the dream of poverty alleviation, social justice, and equal opportunities for all," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He stated that a new era of accelerated economic development, and social transformation has ushered in the region. "We have achieved a massive scale of project completion in a short span. These projects have significantly strengthened Jammu's urban infrastructure and citizen-centric services, enhancing mobility through modern amenities and streamlined civic facilities, and improved urban aesthetics," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor lauded the exceptional coordination and dedication displayed by district administration and various agencies in the immediate relocation of affected population to safe places and ensuring their continued care in the wake of natural calamity.

He praised the swift and effective response from the Divisional and district administration, police, army, CAPFs, Disaster Response forces, emergency responders, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, civil society members, and volunteers during the rescue and relief operations.

LG Sinha said, "A total of 4,309 beneficiaries in Jammu district received assistance, and compensation amounting to Rs. 8.22 crore was distributed among victims."

"Ex-gratia and Government job was provided to the next of kin of a civilian who tragically lost his life during the unprovoked firing by Pakistan during Operation Sindoor," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also interacted with the beneficiaries and reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of India and UT administration for the complete rehabilitation of affected families.

The beneficiaries in Jammu also include 23 families affected by landslides in Rah Salyote village. District administration has been providing food and temporary accommodation to these families for the past three months.

Swami Atma Nambi, President, HRDS India; Bharat Bhushan, Chairman, District Development Council, Jammu; Members of Legislative Assembly; Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, DGP; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu; Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG Jammu-Samba-Kathua Range; Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu, members of HRDS India, senior officials of police and civil administration, prominent citizens and people from all walks of life attended the foundation stone laying ceremony. (KNO)

Time to restore

and showed the path of courage and determination. Remembering that sacred Vande Mataram today is a great privilege for all of us in this House.

"It is a matter of pride for us that we are witnessing the historic occasion of Vande Mataram completing 150 years," he said.

The prime minister recalled that the British were forced to ban Vande Mataram even though they brought in laws to prevent printing and propagation of the poem.

"Vande Mataram was written at a time when, after the uprising of 1857, the British government was alarmed and unleashing various forms of oppression. A campaign was underway to push the British national anthem 'God Save the Queen' into every household.

"Through Vande Mataram, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay responded to this challenge with great strength and resolve. British divided Bengal in 1905, but Vande Mataram stood like a rock and inspired unity," he said.

Sub-zero nights

Bhaderwah 2.6°C, and Rajouri 1.8°C. Udhampur recorded a minimum of 2.0°C.

In Ladakh, Leh registered minus 6.2°C, Kargil minus 5.0°C, and Nubra Valley minus 3.7°C.

Officials said sub-zero temperatures are likely to continue over higher reaches of the region in the coming days and advised residents to take precautions, especially in vulnerable areas.

The Meteorological Department has forecast that dry weather is likely to persist in the region over the next ten days.

However, light snowfall is expected in the higher reaches, providing only limited relief to areas already facing water shortages.

Meanwhile, the valley is also grappling with a severe water crisis as rivers, tributaries, and springs shrink due to consistently low rainfall and reduced snowfall.

The region has, as per reports, recorded an 83 per cent rainfall deficit, placing all 10 districts in the "very low" category. (KNO)

MoEFCC panel

hydroelectric project, Stage-I (390 MW). The Stage-I was commissioned way back in 2007 and has been operating successfully since then.

The Stage-II project will use the existing structure of the Dulhasti Dam for offtake of water required for hydropower generation, by constructing an additional Head Race Tunnel (the tunnel that carries water from the intake to the powerhouse), a powerhouse, and a Tail Race Tunnel (the tunnel that carries water away from the powerhouse back into the river). (KNO)

Resilience of KPs

the Kashmiri Pandit community, the Lieutenant Governor said they have shown exemplary courage through the years and continue to shine as symbols of determination and hope. "Your talent in the sporting arena is your strength. It is your power," he told the players.

He said that the Kashmiri Pandit Premier League has been steadily expanding its reach

and influence, offering greater opportunities for youth engagement and fostering stronger bonds within the community.

The LG said the government remains committed to supporting sports infrastructure and talent development across Jammu and Kashmir to ensure that young athletes receive the platforms they deserve.

"Sports will continue to play a crucial role in driving social cohesion, nurturing aspirations, and building a brighter future for the youth of the Union Territory," he added.

LG Sinha called upon the players and youth to dream big and define clear goals in life and make them reality with hard work, dedication and perseverance. "The power of sports can transform individuals, society and the nation. We must believe in ourselves, promote shared values, embrace the challenges and stay focussed to foster national identity and unity," he said.

He extended his felicitations and best wishes to all the participating players and everyone associated with the Kashmiri Pandit Premier League.

The Lieutenant Governor reaffirmed that under the leadership of PM Modi, Government of India and UT Administration is committed to the welfare of Kashmiri Pandit Community.

The Lieutenant Governor also commended the Lalitaditya Sports Education and Health Organization, for its dedicated efforts towards promotion of sports.

He asked the members of the Organization to partner with schools and government departments in other states/UTs to connect with youth.

He further emphasised on developing a long-term empowerment roadmap and integrating skill training and career preparation for the youth from Kashmiri Pandit Community, building on the success of initiatives like the LG Special Camp.

Ashish Kachroo, Vice President, Lalitaditya Sports Education and Health Organization; Vinay Koul, General Secretary; Ankur Bagati, Coordinator; P N Tickoo, Deepak Raina, Raman Raina and other members of the organisation, prominent citizens and sportspersons were present.

The inaugural ceremony was also attended by Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG Jammu-Samba-Kathua Range; Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu; Dr. Arvind Karwani, Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants) J&K; Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council and senior officials of Civil and Police Administration. (KNO)

India, US condemn

discussed ways to strengthen information sharing and operational coordination.

He added that India had issued a comprehensive readout of the meeting and stressed the continuity of the dialogue mechanism, which has been taking place for several years.

Responding to separate questions, the spokesperson addressed multiple geopolitical issues raised during the weekly briefing. On concerns related to Indian travellers transiting through China, Jaiswal said India expected Chinese authorities to ensure that Indian citizens passing through Chinese airports were not "selectively targeted, arbitrarily detained or harassed" and that international air travel regulations were respected.

He advised Indian nationals to exercise discretion while travelling to or transiting through China.

On Pakistan, the spokesperson said India continued to monitor developments in the neighbouring country but declined to elaborate further, remarking that "the less we talk, the better it is" when asked about the state of democracy there.

Jaiswal welcomed the steps taken by the United Kingdom to sanction anti-India extremist entities, saying such actions strengthen global efforts against terrorism, extremism, illicit financial flows and transnational crime networks.

He noted that individuals and organisations involved in anti-India activities posed risks not only to India or the UK but to global security, and said New Delhi looks forward to working closely with London to reinforce ongoing security and counter-terrorism cooperation.

Commenting on Afghanistan, the spokesperson said India had seen reports of border clashes that resulted in the deaths of Afghan civilians. He said India condemned attacks on civilians and reiterated that New Delhi supported the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Afghanistan.

On India-Russia relations, Jaiswal stated that economic cooperation was a key agenda item during the recent annual summit between the two countries.

He said both sides were focused on diversifying trade, increasing investments and implementing memoranda of understanding adopted during the summit.

These steps, he added, would contribute to shaping the India-Russia economic partnership roadmap for 2030.

Responding to a query on the airline carrier IndiGo, Jaiswal said the matter was under the jurisdiction of the designated ministry and that updates would be provided by the relevant authorities. (KNO)

Centre sanctions

pilgrimage and greenfield tourism in the region.

Jammu and Kashmir Projects under the Swadesh Darshan scheme has received multiple sanctions for the 'Himalayan areas' covering Jammu, Srinagar, Pahalgam, Bhagwati Nagar, Anantnag, Saramabad, Uri, Kargil and Leh with an approved cost of Rs 77.33 crore followed by Jammu, Rajouri, Shopian and Pulwama districts with Rs 81.60 crore and restoration of assets damaged in the 2014 floods under PMDP Rs 90.43 crore. (KNO)

Nation remains

nation and every individual must contribute to support the Armed Forces who safeguard the integrity of the Nation.

The Lieutenant Governor appealed to the people to contribute towards the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund. He said that the fund will be used in the welfare of service personnel, their families, and ex-servicemen and their families.

Brig. Pankaj Chib (Retd), Director Sainik Welfare Department; Shri Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary, Home; veterans and officials of Sainik Welfare Department including Col BS Sambyal, (Retd.), Col Manjit Singh Bhau (Retd.), Wg Cdr Tirath Singh (Retd.), Capt (IN) Kapil Sharma (Retd.), Shri Tanvir Singh, Shri Pawan Anand, Shri Jagbir Singh, Shri Subash Chander and Ms Anshu Dogra were present.

Historic Nand Singh

the NS Bridge suffered heavy damage during the earthquake of 2005, cutting off multiple habitations near the LoC and forcing residents to rely on longer and less secure routes.

The new structure, redesigned and rebuilt by the BRO, is now equipped to sustain heavy vehicular movement and also strengthen logistical access for defence forces operating in the region.

Officials said the bridge not only reconnects isolated communities but also enhances strategic mobility in a sector of immense military importance. The Defence Ministry called it a significant milestone in India's ongoing efforts to fortify border infrastructure.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned parties and the general public that I Mohammad Amin Bhat, S/o late Mohammad Maqbool Bhat, R/o Summer Bugh Lasjan Srinagar bearing Consumer ID: 0201040001558 is applying for name change of the electricity bill from Mohammad Maqbool Bhat to Mohammad Amin Bhat.

Any objections regarding this transfer should be submitted before the electricity department/circle office within 10 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objections are received within the stipulated period, the transfer will be processed as stated.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned parties and the general public that I Manzoor Ahmad Teli, S/o Habib Ullah Teli, R/o Teli mohallah Pahroo bearing Consumer ID: 0206020013655 is applying for name change of the electricity bill from Habib wani to Manzoor Ahmad Teli. Any objections regarding this transfer should be submitted before the electricity department/circle office within 10 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objections are received within the stipulated period, the transfer will be processed as stated.

PM Modi slams Congress for overruling Mahatma Gandhi's wishes on Vande Matram

Cites appeasement politics

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 08: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday accused the Congress of breaking into pieces national song Vande Mataram under the guise of social harmony, and said it was still following the politics of appeasement.

He also targeted former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru for agreeing with the suggestion that Vande Mataram could antagonise Muslims.

Speaking in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on Vande Mataram, Modi cited a letter written by Nehru to Subhash Chandra Bose claiming that the background of Vande Mataram could antagonise Muslims. He said the letter was written following a protest by Mohammad Ali Jinnah in Lucknow.

Quoting the letter, Modi said, Nehru had written that he had read the background of the song and it could spark anger amongst Muslims. Modi said later Congress convened a session in "Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Bengal" to review the use of Vande Mataram.

"But, on October 26, Congress compromised on Vande Mataram. They broke it into pieces under the mask of social harmony, but history is witness..This was Congress' attempt at politics of appeasement. Under pressure of politics of appeasement, Congress agreed to divide Vande Mataram.. this is the



reason Congress also bowed to the demand for partition..," Modi alleged. The prime minister said history is a testament to the fact that Congress knelt before the Muslim League and did this under pressure.

"This is an instance of the politics of appeasement of the Congress. Because it bowed to the division of Vande Mataram, it bowed to the division of India later on.

"Congress has maintained the same politics of appeasement even today," he asserted amid thumping of desks by treasury benches.

The prime minister recalled that Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1905 that Vande Mataram has become so popular that it has emerged as national anthem and wondered that why was injustice meted out to it. "If Vande Mataram was so popular, why was injustice meted out to it, why was it betrayed in the last century. What were those forces that were so powerful to overrule the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi on Vande Mataram," he said.

Modi lamented that the Constitution was "throttled" and the

nation chained by the Emergency when national song Vande Mataram completed 100 years.

The prime minister also noted that Vande Mataram stood like a rock and inspired unity despite British oppression.

"When Vande Mataram completed 100 years, the nation was chained by the Emergency. At that time, the Constitution was throttled and those who lived and died for patriotism were pushed behind bars," he said. "The Emergency was a dark chapter in our history. Now

we have the opportunity to restore the greatness of Vande Mataram. And I believe this opportunity should not be allowed to pass," Modi said.

Modi noted that the mantra of Vande Mataram gave power and inspiration to the entire country during freedom struggle.

"The mantra energised and inspired India's freedom movement and showed the path of courage and determination. Remembering that sacred Vande Mataram today is a great privilege for all of us in this House.

"It is a matter of pride for us that we are witnessing the historic occasion of Vande Mataram completing 150 years," he said.

The prime minister recalled that the British were forced to ban Vande Mataram even though they brought in laws to prevent printing and propagation of the poem.

"Vande Mataram was written at a time when, after the uprising of 1857, the British government was alarmed and unleashing various forms of oppression. A campaign was underway to push the British national anthem 'God Save the Queen' into every household.

"Through Vande Mataram, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay responded to this challenge with great strength and resolve. British divided Bengal in 1905, but Vande Mataram stood like a rock and inspired unity," he said.

Fire tragedy: Goa govt steps up action against club chain; 2 properties sealed



PTI

Panaji, Dec 08: The Goa government has intensified its crackdown on the controversial Romeo Lane club chain after a deadly fire at one of its outlets claimed 25 lives, officials said on Monday.

Two other properties of the hospitality company in Goa have been sealed, they said.

A state police team also left for Delhi on Sunday to search for the property promoters -- Saurabh Luthra and Gaurav Luthra -- against whom a First Information Report (FIR) has been registered, they said.

Birch by Romeo Lane, a nightclub at Arpora in North Goa, caught fire late Saturday night, killing 25 persons, the majority of whom were their staffers, they said.

The Anjuna police in Goa have arrested the club's chief general manager, Rajiv Modak, general manager Vivek Singh, bar manager Rajiv Singhania, and gate manager Riyanshu Thakur.

The North Goa district administration has sealed a beach shack and another club, both part of the Romeo Lane chain, located at Vagator and Assagao, respectively, an official said.

Action has been initiated against both properties as they were involved in disputes, the official said.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Sunday said that a team of state police had left for Delhi in search of the Luthras.

Both the promoters would be arrested as an FIR has been registered against them in connection with the blaze, he added.

Fireworks emerged as the likely cause of the blaze at 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub at Arpora, located 25 km from Panaji, officials said on Sunday, adding that the facility allegedly did not possess even a fire department NOC.

The deceased included 20 employees of the nightclub and five tourists, including four from Delhi.

Most of the deaths were caused by suffocation, as the victims got trapped on the ground floor and in the kitchen, said a fire brigade official.

As per initial information, the nightclub had not adhered to fire safety norms, CM Sawant said on Sunday.

A preliminary inquiry indicated that "electric firecrackers" were set off inside, which started the blaze at 11.45 pm on Saturday, Sawant said.

The CM has directed Chief Secretary V Candavelou and DGP Alok Kumar to identify and act against the government officials who allowed the club to operate even though it violated safety rules.

SC refuses urgent hearing of plea on flight cancellations by IndiGo

Says govt has taken steps

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 08: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to accord urgent hearing to a plea seeking judicial intervention into cancellation of hundreds of flights by IndiGo, saying the Centre has taken note of the situation and has taken steps to address it.

The top court said it was cognizant of the fact that lakhs of people are stranded at various airports. "It is a serious matter. Lakhs of people are stranded at the airports. We know that the government of India has taken timely action and cognizance of the issue. We know people may have health issues and other important issues etc.," Chief Justice Surya Kant, who was heading a bench comprising Justice

Joymalya Bagchi, said.

A lawyer mentioned the issue and said there have been a lot of flight cancellations by IndiGo over the last few days and passengers are suffering.

"The cancellations are not informed to the flyers," he said, adding that around 2,500 flights are delayed and customers are suffering at 95 airports across the country.

Over 250 IndiGo flights from Delhi and Bengaluru airports were cancelled on Monday as the disruptions of the airline's flight operations entered the seventh day, sources told PTI.

At the Delhi airport, 134 flights were cancelled -- 75 departures and 59 arrivals -- while at the Bengaluru airport, the carrier cancelled 117 services -- 65 arrivals and 62 departures.

Par Panel calls for close coordination between states, developers to push renewables schemes

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 08: A parliamentary panel has called for a close coordination between states and project developers for identifying and resolving issues related to slow progress of solar-related schemes under Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

The committee also noted that in respect of bids issued by the four Renewable Energy Implementing Agencies (SECI, NHPC, SJVN and NTPC Ltd/NGEL), power purchase agreement has not been signed for around 44 GW (as on June 30, 2025).

According to a report of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy tabled in Parliament on Monday, there has been slow progress under most of the schemes / programmes viz. Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSG:MBY), PM-KUSUM and the scheme related to the development of solar parks.

The Muft Bijli Yojana aims to establish rooftop solar



for one crore households by 2026-27. However, the committee noted that as per information furnished by the ministry, till June 2025, around 16 lakh installations have been made.

This means that around 84 lakh installations i.e. 84 per cent of the installations are yet to be made in just two years of 2025-2027. The panel has identified lack of awareness as the major cause for slow adoption of the scheme.

Though the Ministry has been undertaking awareness

and outreach programmes through print, radio, television as well as social media, the committee said they are of the view that unless states and their discoms come fully onboard, the widespread progress would be difficult to come by.

The committee therefore, desires that the ministry engage closely with states/ discoms to design awareness campaigns that suit the distinctive features of the state concerned, the report said.

This may build trust among states and their

consumers, thereby paving way for capital investment and providing space for installation of solar panels at the anticipated scale, it suggested.

The committee noted that PM-KUSUM, which is aimed at solarization of the agriculture sector through its three components, has seen extensive delays.

In particular, under Component-A and Component-C, the progress has been 6.4 per cent and 16.9 per cent respectively, (as on June 30, 2025). Under Component-B, the progress has been comparatively better at 60 per cent. The panel noted that the scheme is set to expire in March 2026.

"Till then, the committee expects the Ministry to closely monitor its implementation in states and make timely interventions, where needed, to ensure that at least the projects which can be completed within the given timeline is not unnecessarily delayed," the report said.

Heart health: Why women's heart attacks are harder to spot, explains cardiologist

TOI HEALTH

New Delhi, Dec 08: In women, heart attacks may not present with the obvious chest pain commonly associated with men. Instead, cardiologists highlight that symptoms such as unusual fatigue, shortness of breath, or digestive discomfort are often dismissed.

When we think of a heart attack, most of us picture someone clutching their chest in severe pain. But here's the truth that often gets overlooked: for many women, heart attacks don't look anything like that. Instead of the classic crushing chest pain, women may feel something as simple as unexplained fatigue, indigestion, breathlessness, or discomfort in the jaw or back. These signs can be so subtle and confusing that they're easy to brush off as stress, acidity, or just "not sleeping well."

Because women's symptoms are different and less obvious, heart attacks in women are more likely to go unnoticed or misdiagnosed, sometimes with tragic consequences. And to make things tougher, women often put their own health last while managing work, home, and family, ignoring warning signals

until it's too late.

Silent Heart Attack Symptoms Women Often Miss | Spot the Warning Before It's Too Late | Dr Rajeev Agrawal

That's why it's crucial for women to understand what silent heart attack symptoms look like and learn to speak up when something feels "off," says Dr Ravindranath Reddy D R, HOD & Sr Consultant- Interventional Cardiology, Gleneagles BGS Hospital, Kengeri, Bengaluru.

Knowing the signs, trusting your instincts, and getting regular preventive screenings can genuinely save lives, he shares in an exclusive interview with TOI.

Why are women more likely to experience silent or less obvious heart attack symptoms than men?

Dr Ravindranath Reddy: In women, heart attacks often present differently than the "classic" chest pain we associate with men. This difference is partly biological and partly due to how women's heart disease has historically been under-recognized. In women, heart disease often involves the smaller blood vessels rather than the larger arteries, a condition referred to as microvascular disease. Because of this, the symptoms

tend to be more subtle and widespread, making them harder to recognize. Hormones also play a role—estrogen offers some protection before menopause, but as its levels drop afterward, a woman's risk of developing heart disease rises. Additionally, many women juggle multiple roles and tend to attribute symptoms like fatigue, indigestion, or breathlessness to stress or routine exhaustion rather than a possible cardiac issue. Unfortunately, because their symptoms are less dramatic, women are more likely to delay seeking help, which leads to worse outcomes compared to men.

Heart health: Why women's heart attacks are harder to spot, explains cardiologist

What are the most common "silent" symptoms women should watch for—but often ignore?

Dr Ravindranath Reddy: The warning signs of heart attacks in women can be surprisingly subtle. Most women don't get the kind of severe chest pain we often see in movies. What they experience instead may be more subtle, such as:

Ongoing tiredness that doesn't ease up, or suddenly becomes worse.



Shortness of breath, even with mild activity or at rest.

Discomfort in the upper body—such as the neck, jaw, shoulders, or upper back.

Indigestion, nausea, or abdominal discomfort that can be mistaken for acidity or a stomach upset.

Lightheadedness or dizziness without obvious cause.

Because these symptoms don't scream "heart attack," women may dismiss them as stress, gastritis, or even aging. But if these issues appear suddenly, are severe, or feel different from a woman's usual state of health, they should not be ignored.

How can women advocate for themselves if they suspect something is wrong, even without classic symptoms?

Dr Ravindranath Reddy: The most important step is to trust your instincts. If a woman feels that something is not right—whether it's breathlessness, fatigue, or unusual discomfort—she should not downplay it. When seeking medical help, it helps to clearly describe what feels "different" rather than using vague words. For example, saying, "I feel breathless after walking just a few steps, which is new for me," gives doctors a clearer picture. Women should also be firm about requesting appropriate tests like an ECG or troponin levels if there's a suspicion of heart trouble, rather than accepting a generic explanation of stress or acidity. Mentioning a family history of heart disease, or risk factors like diabetes, high blood pressure, or smoking, is just as important. Above all, self-advocacy means asking questions without hesitation, seeking a second opinion if necessary, and making sure one's concerns are heard and taken seriously.

What screenings or lifestyle steps

can women take to reduce their risk of a silent heart attack?

Dr Ravindranath Reddy: Prevention is the strongest defense. Women should undergo regular health checks—blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and body weight monitoring—especially after the age of 35 or earlier if there's a family history of heart disease. Tests like ECG, echocardiogram, or treadmill studies are usually suggested for women who carry a higher risk. Just as important are everyday choices—eating more fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins while cutting back on processed foods lays a strong base for heart health. Adding at least half an hour of moderate exercise on most days, keeping weight under control, avoiding tobacco, and limiting alcohol intake all support heart health. Managing stress is equally essential, as long-term stress quietly increases cardiac strain. Women after menopause should be especially cautious, since their heart risk rises considerably. Together, regular screening and healthy daily habits can go a long way in lowering the chances of a silent or late-detected heart attack.

US defence policy bill stresses broadening engagement with India, including via Quad

PTI

New York/Washington, Dec 08: The annual defence policy bill of the US has highlighted broadening America's engagement with India, including through the Quad, to advance the shared objective of a free and open Indo-Pacific region and address the challenge posed by China.

The National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026, released by Congressional leaders Sunday, outlines the 'sense of Congress on Defence Alliances and Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region'.

It states that the Secretary of Defence should continue efforts that strengthen US defence alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region to further the "comparative advantage of the US in strategic competition" with China.

Among other things, these efforts comprise "broadening US engagement with India, including through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, to advance the shared objective of a free and open Indo-Pacific region through bilateral and multilateral engagements and participation in military exercises, expanded defence trade, and collaboration on humanitarian aid and disaster response".It also



includes enabling greater cooperation on maritime security with New Delhi.

The Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia, was set up in 2017 to counter China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region.

The defence policy bill also states that the Secretary of Defence, in coordination with the Secretary of State, shall establish and maintain a security initiative to strengthen cooperation among the defence industrial bases of the US and allied and partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

This, it said, would strengthen the collective defence industrial base by expanding capability, capacity, and

workforce, including enhanced supply chain security, interoperability, and resilience among participating countries.

The two Secretaries shall establish a process to determine which allies and partners of the US (including Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, the Philippines, and New Zealand) shall be invited to participate as member countries of the security initiative, it said.

In a section titled 'Joint Assessment Between The United States And India On Nuclear Liability Rules', the draft calls on the Secretary of State to establish and maintain within the US-India Strategic Security Dialogue a joint consultative mechanism with the Indian government.

This mechanism would convene regularly to "assess the implementation of the Agreement for Cooperation between the US Government and Government of India Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, signed in Washington in 2008," it said.

The focus of this mechanism is to discuss opportunities for India "to align domestic nuclear liability rules with international norms; and to develop a strategy for the United States and the Republic of India to pursue bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagements related to analysing and implementing those opportunities."

The bill states that the Secretary of State shall submit a report describing the joint assessment about this not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Act, and annually thereafter for five years. In another section, the bill states that an "ally or partner nation" means the government of any country that is a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development; "the Government of the Republic of India", and the Government of any country designated as an ally or partner nation by the Secretary of State for purposes of this section.

Mamdani tells immigrant New Yorkers about their right not to comply with ICE

AP

New York, Dec 08: New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani posted a video to social media on Sunday explaining immigrants' right to refuse to speak to or comply with agents from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, days after federal agents carried out a raid in Manhattan.

In the video, Mamdani vowed to protect the city's 3 million immigrants, saying, "We can all stand up to ICE if you know your rights."

He explained that people in the US can choose not to speak to federal immigration agents, film them without interfering and refuse their requests to enter private spaces.ICE agents cannot enter spaces like a home, school or private area of a workplace without a judicial warrant signed by a judge, Mamdani said. "ICE is legally allowed to lie to you, but you have the right to remain silent. If you're



being detained, you may always ask, 'Am I free to go?' repeatedly until they answer you," said Mamdani, who will be sworn in as mayor on Jan 1.

His comments came a week after demonstrators gathered as ICE attempted to detain people on Canal Street near New York's Chinatown. A similar immigration sweep in the same neighborhood last October was also met with protests.

"New York will always

welcome immigrants, and I will fight each and every day to protect, support, and celebrate our immigrant brothers and sisters," Mamdani said in Sunday's video.

Weeks earlier, Mamdani had a surprisingly cordial Oval Office meeting with President Donald Trump, whose administration is carrying out federal immigration enforcement operations in several US cities, most recently in New Orleans.

Ukraine president to meet European allies after Trump criticism

AFP

London, Dec 08: Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky was due to meet with European allies in London on Monday, after President Donald Trump accused him of not reading the US proposal to end the war with Russia.

It comes after days of talks between Ukrainian and US officials in Miami ended on Saturday with no apparent breakthrough, with Zelensky committing to further negotiations.

The Ukrainian president will be received in London by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, along with the German chancellor and French president to discuss the negotiations.

British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper is meanwhile expected in Washington on Monday, where she will meet her American counterpart Marco Rubio.

"The UK and US will reaffirm their commitment to reaching a peace deal in Ukraine," the Foreign Office in London said, announcing Cooper's visit. Moscow has

meanwhile continued to strike its neighbor, wounding at least nine people overnight Sunday to Monday, according to Ukrainian officials.

'Disappointed' Zelensky said he joined his negotiators for a "very substantive and constructive" call with US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner during the Miami negotiations.

"Ukraine is committed to continuing to work honestly with the American side to bring about real peace," Zelensky said on Telegram, adding that the parties agreed "on the next steps and the format of the talks with America."

But Trump criticized his Ukrainian counterpart on Sunday, telling reporters "I have to say that I'm a little bit disappointed that President Zelensky hasn't yet read the proposal, that was as of a few hours ago."

Witkoff and Kushner had met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin last week, with Moscow rejecting parts of the US proposal.

Sri Lankan leader thanks India for cyclone relief under Operation Sagar Bandhu

IANS

Colombo, Dec 08: As India continued humanitarian support to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah, Sri Lankan MP Namal Rajapaksa met Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha to express gratitude for the ongoing relief and rescue operations.

"Hon. MP Namal Rajapaksa met High Commissioner Santosh Jha and thanked India for the ongoing relief and rescue efforts under Operation Sagar Bandhu. HC reiterated that India will continue to support the people of Sri Lanka in their efforts to rebuild and recover," Indian High Commission in Colombo posted on X on Monday.

Following the meeting, Rajapaksa took to X and posted, "Called on the Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha to express our heartfelt thanks for India's swift support during the Sri Lanka floods. India has consistently been our first responder in difficult times. Grateful to the Government and people of India."

Earlier on Sunday, India sent about 1000 tonnes of additional aid comprising essential food items and clothes to Cyclone Ditwah-hit Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu, contributed by the people of Tamil Nadu.

Tennis Premier League

Eight teams to compete for title from Dec 9-14

ANI

Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Dec 08: With just a day to go for the much-awaited Tennis Premier League (TPL) Season 7, powered by Clear Premium Water, which will be held from December 9-14 at the Gujarat University Tennis Stadium in Ahmedabad, the eight teams are gearing up to go hammer and tongs to lift the coveted title.

The upcoming edition, supported by tennis legends including Leander Paes, Sania Mirza, and Mahesh Bhupathi, promises a high-voltage week of tennis as the franchises compete in TPL's fast-paced, revolutionary format, according to a release from TPL.

Each team will play five league matches from December 9-13, and the top four teams will advance to the



semi-finals and final on the closing day on December 14. TPL's unique format features four rounds in every match - Women's Singles, Mixed Doubles, Men's Singles and Men's Doubles - each carrying 25 points, making every match worth 100 points in total.

Season 7 brings together an exceptional mix of international stars ranked inside the world's top 50 along with India's finest talent, with every franchise featuring a marquee player poised to define their campaign. SG Pipers will be

spearheaded by India's tennis icon and two-time Grand Slam champion Rohan Bopanna. Joining him will be India's No.2 women's singles player Shrivalli Bhamidipaty and Ramkumar Ramnathan.

Rajasthan Rangers will rely on the explosive World No. 26, Luciano Darderi from Italy alongside Russia's Anastasia Gasanova and Dhakshineswar Suresh. Gurgaon Grand Slammers will bank on the experience of Britain's Daniel Evans who has had a career-high rank of No. 21 in the world in 2023. He will share the court with India's top-ranked female singles player Sahaja Yamal-apalli and Sriram Balaji. Gujarat Panthers will be led by France's World No. 42 Alexandre Muller with Italy's Nuria Brancaccio and India's Anirudh Chandrasekhar.

Gill, Hardik return as India begin official T20I WC build-up vs South Africa

PTI

Cuttack, Dec 08: The return of Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya will lend fresh sheen and much-needed completeness to reigning world champions India when they begin their official march towards the home T20 World Cup with the opening match of a five-game series against South Africa, here on Tuesday.

This series marks the start of India's formal build-up to the February showpiece, where they will play 10 T20Is—five against South Africa followed by another five against New Zealand—before opening their title defence against the USA at the Wankhede on February 7.

The defending champions will look to enter this phase with clarity of intent as they refine roles, streamline combinations and settle the XI that will carry the weight of expectations in front of home crowds.

India have been a formidable T20I unit post their World Cup triumph in the format last year, where they won eight matches in a row to lift the title.

Since then, they have extended their tally to 26 wins with only four losses, including a seven-match streak during their Asia Cup victory in Dubai.

They have not lost a T20I series in this period, and with only minor tweaks needed, they will be hoping to sharpen the edges against the side they defeated in the T20 World Cup final. Gill's



return comes after he missed almost a month of cricket owing to a neck spasm suffered while attempting a slog sweep during the opening Test against the Proteas. Having played non-stop cricket since the last IPL and with India facing a packed season ahead, his workload management will be closely monitored.

But for Gill, who has 837 runs from 33 T20Is at an average of 29.89, this series also doubles up as vital preparation heading into the ICC event.

His reunion with Abhishek Sharma brings back a high-impact opening pair that marries brute force with clean, classical strokeplay.

Abhishek, fresh from a standout tour of Australia where he topped India's scoring charts with 163 runs in the 2-1 victory, has been in

monstrous domestic touch.

In the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s, the Punjab left-hander hammered 304 runs at an average of 50.66 and a staggering strike rate of 249-plus, including a breathtaking 52-ball 148 against Bengal as Punjab posted 310/5.

Pandya comeback Hardik Pandya's comeback is equally significant.

Out for more than two months after a quadricep injury during the Asia Cup, the all-rounder marked his return in style with a 42-ball 77 not out for Baroda in the SMAT before bowling four overs at full tilt for 1/52.

He arrived here a day ahead of the squad, trained solo at the Barabati Stadium, bowled for 20 minutes and went through an extended physical routine.

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