



DIPK-8962/25 Dated: 12.12.2025

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Nowgam **Accidental** Blast

LG Sinha meets martyrs' families, hands over appointment letters

Praises J&K Police for stopping terror in its tracks; unearthing terror network

KNO News Desk

Srinagar, Dec 12: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday met the families of the martyrs who lost their lives in the accidental blast in Nowgam here last month and handed over appointment letters to their next of kin on compassionate grounds.

The gesture, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, reflects the UT administration's unwavering commitment to ensuring that the families of the fallen live with dignity and support.

Expressing solidarity with the bereaved families, the LG said the entire nation stands united with them in their moment of grief. "The entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with the families of martyrs to ensure they live a life of comfort and dignity," LG Sinha said.

The Lieutenant Governor also praised the Jammu and Kashmir Police for unearthing and



dismantling a major terror network linked to the Delhi blast. He said the force's swift action and professionalism have once again proven their critical role in safeguarding the region.

"The whole country is proud of J&K Police for stopping terror in its tracks by unearthing and dismantling the terror network last

month," he said, applauding the officers and personnel involved.

LG Sinha commended the police for their meticulous investigation and multi-layered approach that ensured the detection, disruption and prevention of further terrorist activity. "J&K Police's meticulous investigation and multi-faceted effort

to detect, disrupt and prevent terrorist acts deserve the highest appreciation," he noted.

The LG stressed the need to intensify efforts to dismantle the infrastructure that sustains terrorism, particularly its financial channels. He called for a strong and coordinated response to counter radicalisation attempts being pushed by separatist elements.

"We must disrupt the terrorist financing pipeline and effectively counter the radicalisation attempts by certain separatist elements," he said, urging agencies to maintain strict vigilance and robust coordination.

He renewed assurances of support to the families of the martyrs and a firm commitment from the administration to continue its zero-tolerance policy against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Special DG Coordination PHQ, S.J.M. Gillani; Principal Secretary Home, Chandraker Bharti; ADGP CID, Nitish Kumar; Principal Secretary | [More on P6](#)

Cabinet nod for Census 2027

■ Rs 11,718 crore sanctioned ■ 30 lakh enumerators to be involved

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Union Cabinet on Friday approved Rs 11,718 crore for conducting the Census of India, 2027, which would include the caste enumeration for the first time.

Addressing a briefing, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal to conduct the Census which will be the first digital exercise.

Around 30 lakh enumerators would be involved in the entire exercise.

The 16th edition of the Census since Independence will also provide an option of self enumeration to the citizens.

The decadal exercise which



was scheduled to take place in 2021 got postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the country.

The minister said the Census will be conducted in two phases -- house-listing and housing census from April to September, 2026; and population enumeration

(PE) in February 2027.

For Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the PE exercise shall be conducted in September, 2026, the minister said. | [More on P6](#)

Outcome of Census 2027 will serve as new compass for dev: HM Shah

PTI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the outcome of the Census 2027 will serve as the new compass for development, mirroring India's latest population data with more accuracy. Shah said the Union Cabinet approved the budget for | [More on P6](#)

Govt starts process for State Election Commissioner appointment

CM nominates Sakeena Ittoo as selection panel member

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Dec 12: With Lok Bhavan clearing the amendment passed by the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly to enhance the maximum age of the State Election Commissioner, the Jammu and Kashmir government has set the process in motion to appoint the head of the State Election Commission—the body mandated to conduct Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies polls in the Union Territory.

Authoritative sources told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has nominated senior cabinet minister Sakina Ittoo as one of the members of the selection panel headed by him.

The selection panel also

comprises the Minister In-charge of Panchayats, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition, and a senior minister to be nominated by the CM.

With the nomination of Sakeena Ittoo, the selection committee is now in place, and the government is expected to convene its meeting soon to recommend a name to the LG for the appointment of the State Election Commissioner. "The selection committee meeting will be convened soon," sources said.

The State Election Commissioner is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor on the recommendation of the CM-led selection panel.

The J&K Assembly had earlier passed a bill to enhance the maximum age limit for holding the office of the State Election Commissioner from 65 years to 70. The bill has received assent from Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. | [More on P6](#)

Nation must set collective target to make Bharat powerful: LG Sinha

'General Zorawar Singh was brave warrior, India's greatest commander'

Yogesh

Jammu, Dec 12: Describing General Zorawar Singh as brave warrior, India's greatest commander and military strategist, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said that the nation must set a collective target of making Bharat powerful.

Paying tributes to Singh, on his Martyrdom Day the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), highlighted his monumental military campaigns in Ladakh, Baltistan, Gilgit, and Skardu, and the role he played in expansion of the Dogra Empire.

He said, "We should work together to ensure that every individual receives equal



opportunities to advance."

LG Sinha urged citizens to dedicate themselves to building a stronger and more inclusive Bharat, drawing

inspiration from the legacy of General Zorawar Singh—one of the most celebrated military heroes of the region.

"We should | [More on P6](#)

Kashmir's shrinking farmland deepens dependence on external rice supplies

■ Region lost 34,000 hectares of agricultural land since 1996

■ Food deficit touches 0.89 million tonnes

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Dec 12: The rapid and continuous conversion of agricultural land into residential colonies, commercial structures, orchards and other non-farm uses has sharply impacted Kashmir's food security, pushing the region into growing dependence on rice and other food grains sourced from outside Jammu & Kashmir.

Official figures, accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), reveal

that the Valley has lost nearly 34,000 hectares of cultivable farmland between 1996 and 2023, a trend experts say is alarming and unsustainable. The shrinking land bank has drastically reduced local food production at a time when population growth and consumption demands are steadily rising.

As a result, Kashmir now faces an overall food grain deficit of around 0.89 million tonnes, forcing reliance on supplies from Punjab, Haryana, and other states.

The region produces only 0.45 million tonnes of food grains against a need of 1.34 million tonnes, leaving a deficit of 0.89 million tonnes. Official estimates warn the shortfall could hit 36 per cent by next year and cross 50 per cent by 2030.

Farmers across the Valley say they have watched their fertile paddy fields | [More on P6](#)

INTERVIEW

'Phones replacing playgrounds': Expert warns of rising screen dependency crisis among children

Terms it 'silent replacement of childhood'

Advises parents: 'Your child needs you, not a perfect environment'

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar Dec 12: An expert has warned of serious developmental and emotional implications of the rising dependence on screens among children in Kashmir. He described this growing trend as "a silent replacement of childhood itself,"



saying that excessive and unguided screen use is quietly reshaping children's behaviour,

emotional health, and developmental milestones.

In an exclusive interview

with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), noted psychiatrist Dr Abrar Guroo from the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) Srinagar, sounded a strong alarm over the rapidly growing screen dependency among children, calling it "a silent replacement of childhood itself."

Speaking about the daily cases he encounters, Dr Guroo said excessive and unguided screen time is quietly reshaping children's behaviour, emotional well-being and development. "The phone is not the real problem. The real | [More on P6](#)

Tribal Affairs to oversee Forest Rights Act in J&K

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 12: The Jammu and Kashmir government has designated the Tribal Affairs Department as the nodal agency for implementing the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, replacing the Forest Department," it said.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Office of the Chief Minister, J&K, stated this in a post on X. "Addressing a long-pending demand of the tribal population of J&K, the Government has designated the Tribal Affairs Department

as the Nodal Department for implementing the Scheduled Tribes & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, replacing the Forest Department," it said.

"This step will ensure more effective implementation of the Act while safeguarding the rights of our tribal communities," the CM office added.

Notably, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, or Forest Rights Act (FRA), aims to address concerns raised by forest-dwelling communities from time to time. It recognises individual | [More on P6](#)

Amid dry spell, cold wave deepens in Kashmir

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 12: Cold wave conditions continued across Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh on Friday, with most parts of the Valley recording sub-zero night temperatures, while J&K officials assured residents that adequate measures are in place to maintain water supply amid the on-going dry spell.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Pulwama remained the coldest at minus 5.5°C, followed by Shopian at minus 5.0°C and Baramulla at minus 4.7°C. Srinagar recorded minus 3.6°C, while Srinagar Airport registered minus 4.0°C. | [More on P6](#)

CS reviews PMUY rollout, stresses full e-KYC compliance

Calls for winter stocking upto optimum capacity



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Friday chaired a review meeting on the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and assessed the LPG stock availability in the Kashmir Valley for the forthcoming winter months.

The meeting, as per an official statement, besides Commissioner Secretary, FCS&CA and Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir was attended by Director, FCS&CA, Jammu/Kashmir; and senior officers from Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), who shared district-wise progress, implementation challenges and preparedness under the newly extended phase of PMUY.

The Chief Secretary reviewed the performance under the first phase of PMUY and directed Deputy Commissioners to intensify enrolment of eligible beneficiaries, increase the number of subscription vouchers and conduct vigorous Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns to raise awareness about e-KYC and Aadhaar seeding.

He stressed that completion of e-KYC is vital in view of the latest instructions from the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoP&NG), under which targeted subsidies will be processed only after e-KYC is completed. He emphasised that OMCs and district administrations must ensure 100% e-KYC compliance so that beneficiaries do not face delays in receiving their entitled subsidies. The meeting

was informed that under the newly approved extension of PMUY, 25 lakh new LPG connections will be provided nationally during FY 2025-26. The eligibility criteria have been simplified into a single unified category of "adult women from poor households submitting a Deprivation Declaration", replacing the earlier 14-point declaration.

It was added that OMCs have introduced a revamped Standard Operating Procedure to streamline enrolment, verification and connection release processes. Moreover the budgetary support per connection has been enhanced to 2,050, while LPG stoves and the first refill will continue to be provided by the OMCs. Aadhaar and ration card-based electronic de-duplication mechanisms have also been strengthened to ensure that households do not receive multiple connections, the meeting was apprised.

Commissioner Secretary, FCS&CA, Saurabh Bhagat informed that District Ujjwala Committees (DUCs) have been established in all districts and are actively monitoring application pendency, beneficiary identification, awareness generation, installation checks and cases of low or no refills.

He stressed the importance of expanding the LPG distribution network, especially in remote and underserved areas, and urged Deputy Commissioners to flag requirements for additional distributors so that gaps may be filled promptly through OMCs.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the LPG stock position in the Kashmir Valley and was informed that 3,660 MT of LPG is the storage capacity

along with an additional 200 MT of "on-wheel" stock from IOC and BPC, ensuring up to seventeen days of assured availability once storage tanks are fully replenished.

To further strengthen winter preparedness, HPCL's Pampore plant has deployed 212 dedicated tank trucks, while a multi-source supply plan has been activated with consignments dispatched from Bhatinda, Loni/Bahadurgarh, Jammu and Kandla. The projected stock buildup at Pampore is expected to reach 1,400 MT by December 15, 2,500 MT by December 20 and the optimum capacity of 3,000 MT by December 22.

To strengthen last-mile service delivery, the Chief Secretary also called for expansion of the Common Service Centre (CSC) network, particularly in far-flung areas lacking LPG distributors. He was briefed that their MoU with CSCs has been extended till November 2027 and mobile app access for all three OMCs has been enabled for CSC Village Level Entrepreneurs, allowing them to support PMUY enrolments, refill bookings, delivery authentication and grievance redressal. Reiterating the government's commitment to ensuring household energy security and timely rollout of the new phase of PMUY, the Chief Secretary urged all departments and OMCs to work in mission mode to achieve 100% e-KYC compliance, improve last-mile service delivery and ensure uninterrupted LPG supply throughout the winter season.

DC Kulgam calls for accelerated PM-SYM enrolment



KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, DECEMBER 12: Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan Friday convened a meeting to review the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PM-SYM) scheme.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner emphasised the importance of expanding coverage under PM-SYM to ensure that unorganised workers are enrolled for social security benefits.

The DC, as per an official statement, issued directions to all line departments to intensify mobilisation efforts at the grassroots level and ensure maximum outreach.

Each department was instructed to identify eligible beneficiaries within their respective domains and carry out field-level awareness activities.

To streamline the enrollment process, the DC also assigned department-wise targets and directed officers to submit weekly progress reports. Departments were asked to coordinate closely with field staff, CSC centres, PRIs, and concerned agencies for effective mobilisation and on-spot registration drives. The Deputy Commissioner urged all officials to work with dedication so that the district achieves full saturation under the PM-SYM scheme in a time-bound manner.

2-week training for Ladakh Legal Assistants concludes

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: Under the patronage of Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (Patron-in-Chief, J&K Judicial Academy), Arun Palli and guidance of Chairperson and Members of Governing Committee for J&K Judicial Academy, the Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy Friday concluded the two week training programme for Legal Assistants of the Union Territory of Ladakh.

The programme, as per an official statement, was conducted from December 1 to 12 at the J&K Judicial Academy, Janipur, Jammu.

The valedictory session was graced by Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Chairperson, Governing Committee for the J&K Judicial Academy. His presence served as a source of encouragement for the participants and the Academy.

During the programme, the participants were trained on a wide range of legal, administrative and governance-related subjects. These included constitutional framework, administrative structure of UT governance, land laws, vigilance mechanisms, RTI, CCS Rules, provisions of BNSS/BNS applicable to public servants, drafting skills, tendering and e-procurement procedures, GFR rules, contract law and drafting of government notifications and orders. A field visit was also organised for the participants to provide them practical exposure to the institutional functioning.

The resource persons for the programme included eminent

jurists, senior advocates, academicians, former judges and domain experts. They enriched the sessions with their expertise, practical insights and interactive teaching methodology.

During the valedictory session, Justice Rajnesh Oswal interacted with the participants and enquired about their learning experience, key takeaways and suggestions for future programmes.

The participants expressed satisfaction with the structure and quality of the training and appreciated the Academy for organising a highly informative and engaging programme.

In his address, Justice Rajnesh Oswal underscored that honesty, dedication and punctuality must remain the key attributes of every public servant, emphasising that these values form the foundation of efficient and accountable public administration. He commended the initiative of the Judicial Academy in designing a comprehensive, practice-oriented training module. He encouraged the participants to apply their newly acquired skills to enhance institutional efficiency in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Later, he distributed certificates among all the participants.

Director, J&K Judicial Academy, Naseer Ahmad Dar expressed gratitude to all the resource persons and participants for their active engagement. He reaffirmed the Academy's commitment towards supporting the training needs of various institutions and departments of the UT of Ladakh.

Director School Education Kashmir reviews Srinagar's academic progress

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, December 12: Director School Education Kashmir, Naseer Ahmad Wani Friday chaired an important review meeting in Srinagar to assess the overall educational status of the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Personnel Officer Dr. Iqbal Hussain Mir, Joint Director, Muhammad Mushtaq, Chief

Education Officer Srinagar, Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Bhat and all Zonal Education Officers of the district.

During the meeting, CEO presented a detailed briefing on the ongoing activities, administrative functioning and the progress of various educational initiatives across the district.

While addressing the officers, Director laid special emphasis on strengthening foundational learning of students. He said that primary

education is the backbone of our entire academic system.

"If we build strong foundations in the early grades, the outcomes at higher levels will automatically improve", he remarked.

Wani further urged the officers to thoroughly review all preparations for the upcoming academic session and submit complete details to the Directorate through concerned Chief Education Officers.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

DISTRICT MINERAL
OFFICE ANANTNAG

DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY & MINING. UT OF J&K

1st Floor, Kochak Building, Anantnag – Email: dmo-anantnag@jk.gov.in

E-Auction Notice

On behalf of Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir, it is hereby notified for the information of general public that e-auction for grant of mining lease of Minor Mineral Block for the period of 05 years in respect of District Anantnag (Details given in table below) as per Jammu & Kashmir Minor Mineral Concession Storage, Transportation of Minerals and Prevention of Illegal Mining Rules, 2016, shall be conducted on 02-01-2026 by District Auction Committee constituted under Rule 53 of SRO-105. All the No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from the Stakeholding departments for the said block have already been secured.

The e-Auction documents, terms and conditions, details of earnest money in the shape of CDR pledged to District Mineral Officer Anantnag and other relevant details for Minor Mineral Blocks along with site Plan can be obtained from the official website of Geology & Mining Department i.e. <https://geologyminingkeaction.com/> by all the interested parties after creating an online user account with the help of DSC (Digital Signature Certificate Class-II), against online payment of Rs 1000/- for Minor Mineral Block.

The details of 08 Minor Mineral Blocks to be e-auctioned in District Anantnag and timeline for e-auction are given below:

Sr. No	Block No.	Description of the Block	Area in Hectares	Co-ordinates of the Block	Minimum Reserved Bid (in lacs)	Earnest money in the shape of CDR (in lacs)	Type of Mineral
01	25	MMB Nallah Sandran upstream Dooru Bridge	2.14	A=333345.15N, 751343.65E, B=333340.97E, 751349.04E, C=333336.34N, 751357.63E, D=333337.72E, 751358.59E, E=333342.51EN, 751351.61E, F=333346.71N, 751346.13E	8.42	6.42	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri
02	27	MMB Nallah Sandran U/S Gorinard Bridge	3.95	A=333145.84N, 751617.33E, B=333143.07N, 75.1623.49E, C=333141.40N, 751630.56E, D=333136.74N, 751628.20E, E=333138.72N, 751622.90E, F=333143.52N, 751616.46E	13.85	11.85	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri
03	28	MMB Nallah Sandran D/S Chowgund Bridge	3.20	A=333128.45N, 741646.13E, B=333133.05N, 751642.33E, C=333135.84N, 751637.59E, D=333138.23N, 751632.80E, E=333135.97N, 751631.37E, F=333132.93N, 751638.43E, G=333127.09N, 751645.20E	11.60	9.60	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri
04	33	MMB Nallah Brengi U/S Soafshali Bridge	4.56	A=333522.19N, 751748.30E, B=333618.09N, 751749.84E, C=333614.04N, 751755.10E, D=333617.06N, 751759.95E, E=333620.77N, 751754.47E, F=333625.04N, 751752.53E	15.68	13.68	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri
05	40	MMB "A" on River Lidder near Village Karshangam	4.79	A=334944.16N, 751428.31E, B= 334955.69N, 751435.13E, C= 334959.84N, 751436.10E, D=335000.58N, 751432.43E, E=334948.03N, 751426.70E	16.37	14.37	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri
06	39	MMB on River Lidder U/S Sakhdas-Fohar Bridge	5.00	A=334930.13N, 741416.95E, B=334936.15N, 751417.73E, C=334940.06N, 751420.36E, D=334942.75N, 751423.74E, E=334941.59N, 751426.56E, F=334933.87N, 751422.21E, G=334929.81N, 751420.72E	17.00	15.00	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri
07	23	Dehruna Bridge, Downstream Nallah Bringi	4.41	A=333752.42N, 751155.77E, B=333754.88N, 751144.58E, C=335801.51N, 751140.48E, D= 333805.969N, 751139.70E, E= 333810.75N, 751135.75E, F= 333813.43N, 751131.80E, G= 333814.77E, 751132.27E, H= 333811.70N, 751138.49E, I= 333807.00N, 751141.81E, J= 333801.35N, 751142.08E, K=333756.59N, 751144.88E, L= 333754.78N, 751152.63E	15.23	13.23	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri
08	24	Sadura Water Tanky. Upstream	2.83	A=334000.39N, 750919.01E, B=333956.54N, 750919.07E, C= 333956.04N, 750923.23E, D= 333953.84N, 750928.29E, E= 333950.55N, 750930.76E, F= 333952.68N, 750933.24E, G=333954.24N, 750930.01E, H=333957.64N, 750925.92E	10.49	8.49	Nallah Muck/Boulder/Bajri

Timeline details for e-Auction of Minor Mineral Block

Sr. No	Description	Date and time
01	Last date for online purchase of e-Auction document against online payment of Rs. 1000 (One Thousand Only) for each Minor Mineral Block	31 th of December - 2025 upto 04:00 PM
02	Last date for uploading the requisite documents, earnest money and details on auction portal.	1 st of January - 2026 upto 04:00 PM
03	a) First Round (Scrutiny of technical bids)	2 nd of January - 2026 to 06 th of January' 2026.
	b) Second Round (Price bidding)	07 th of January - 2026 (11:00 PM – 02:00 PM) extendable upto 01 hour as per terms and conditions

Faisal Masood Wani
District Mineral Officer, Anantnag
(Member Secretary, District Level e-Auction Committee)

No: DMO/ANG/DGM/e-Auction/2025-26/ DIPP-8958/25
DATED: 12-12-2025

Toxin scare triggers valley-wide egg check

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 12: After serious concerns were raised over reports of 'nitrofurans and nitroimidazole residues' in eggs, the Food Safety Department on Friday launched a valley-wide inspection drive, collecting samples from both organised and unorganised markets.

The concerns were first raised on Thursday by MLA Zadibal, Tanvir Sadiq, who took to social media, urging authorities to investigate immediately, trace sources and take strict action against violators.

In a series of tweets, Sadiq said, "Deeply concerned by reports of nitrofurans and nitroimidazole residues being detected in eggs, drugs that are strictly banned in food-producing animals because of their carcinogenic and toxic effects. This issue becomes even more serious because eggs are consumed heavily by children, senior citizens, and patients."

He added, "Doctors often prescribe eggs as a primary source of protein, making this a direct public-health risk. I urge the Hon Health Minister @sakinaibtoo Sahiba and Hon. Food and Supplies Minister @satishsharmajnk Ji and their Department



of Food & Supplies and Food Safety authorities to immediately investigate, conduct residue testing across markets, trace the source, and take strict action against violators. For the safety of our people, there can be no compromise. This must be treated with utmost urgency."

The tweet also referenced a nationwide report titled "Cancer-Causing Eggs by Eggos? The Lab Report That Sparked a Nationwide Food Safety Panic".

The Food Safety teams conducted market checks and

collected multiple samples for laboratory analysis.

Assistant Commissioner of Food Safety Srinagar, Yameen ul Nabi, told the media, "No physical inspection can confirm contamination. Reports are expected soon, and only then can the situation be clarified. Consumers are urged not to panic until results are officially released."

He said the department is continuing inspections across supermarkets and local markets, and any product found

will be immediately sampled in accordance with the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

In a related move, the Office of the Assistant Commissioner/DO Food Safety Anantnag prohibited the sale of Priyagold Butter Delite biscuits (Batch No. E25KPO2FB). "Laboratory tests conducted by the National Food Laboratory, Ghaziabad, confirmed that the biscuits contained sulphite levels above permissible limits, posing a health risk to consumers. The sale ban will remain in effect until further orders," the official order accessed by KNO reads.

Representing traders, Tariq Ahmad, who deals with eggs and is part of a larger traders' group, told the media at Srinagar Mandi: "We fully support the department's drive. We want complete transparency. Results should be made public. Our families consume these products too. Any issue must be clarified after sampling."

Meanwhile, officials from the Food Safety Department assured the public that monitoring and testing will continue, stressing that consumer safety remains the top priority—(KNO)

FDA issues advisory on disposal of seized food

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Dec 12: Food and Drugs Administration (FDA), has issued a detailed advisory to ensure scientific and responsible disposal of seized, rejected, and expired food items, following recent reports of such materials being improperly dumped into rivers and other natural water bodies.

Reiterating the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and guidelines issued by FSSAI, the advisory directs all Designated Officers, Food Safety Officers, and enforcement teams to strictly adhere to approved disposal procedures to prevent environmental harm, health risks, and misuse of unsafe food items.

The Department has emphasized that disposal of any seized, rejected, or expired food items including their packaging, into rivers, lakes, natural water bodies, or open land is strictly prohibited.

The advisory directs enforcement teams to adopt the approved disposal methods such as, authorized incinerators compliant with Central Pollution Control Board

(CPCB) norms. Disposal in designated sanitary landfills with leachate control, composting or anaerobic digestion of biodegradable waste through certified units, in coordination with local municipal bodies, panchayats, or other statutory authorities.

All disposal activities must be video recorded in the presence of two independent witnesses. After completion, the supervising FSO must submit a certificate of disposal to the Designated Officer, with copies to the Commissioner of Food Safety and the concerned Food Business Operator (FBO).

Designated Officers have been instructed to identify suitable incineration, composting, or alternative disposal facilities and share the list with the Commissioner of Food Safety. For high-volume disposals, coordination with the State Pollution Control Board has been advised.

Additionally, Designated Officers must submit monthly disposal compliance reports to the Commissioner of Food Safety by the 3rd of following month, highlighting any deviations from the prescribed guidelines.

Priya gold biscuit batch declared unsafe

Authorities impose ban in Anantnag

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Dec 12: The Food Safety Department in Anantnag has taken swift action after a laboratory report found a particular batch of Priyagold Butter Delite biscuits unsafe for public consumption.

The move came after officials detected excessive sulphite levels in the product during routine market surveillance.

Officials said that a Food Safety Officer had collected a sample of Priyagold Butter Delite biscuits (Batch No. E25KPO2FB) being sold in local markets. The sample was forwarded to the National Food Laboratory (NFL), Ghaziabad, for detailed testing.

The lab report — No. JK-665/DEC/25/786 dated December 5, 2025 — confirmed that the sulphite content in the biscuit sample was higher than the maximum permissible limit set under food safety regulations. Elevated sulphite levels, experts warn, can cause health complications, especially for



sensitive individuals.

Termining the product "unsafe," the report prompted immediate administrative action. Officials noted that the manufacturing or sale of such unsafe food items amounts to a violation of Section 3(1)(zz)(xi) of the Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSA), 2006.

Invoking powers under Section 36(3)(b) of the Act, Sheikh Zameer Ahmad, Designated Officer, Food Safety Anantnag, issued an order restricting the sale, storage, and distribution of the implicated batch across the district.

"All wholesalers, retailers, and shopkeepers have been

directed to promptly withdraw this batch from their shelves," the order states, adding that strict compliance is mandatory.

The department has also urged consumers to refrain from purchasing or consuming biscuits from the specific batch until further notice.

The sample belonged to products manufactured by M/S Surya Food & Agro Ltd. (Unit II) at Greater Noida and marketed by the same company from its Noida headquarters.

Officials reiterated that safeguarding public health is the department's top priority and further monitoring is underway—(KNO)

Police intensify drive on vehicle transfers

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Dec 12: Jammu and Kashmir Police and transport authorities have intensified enforcement drives across multiple districts to ensure compliance with mandatory vehicle transfer and re-registration rules, officials said on Friday.

Police teams were deployed in Awantipora, Anantnag, Ganderbal, Shopian, Pulwama, Kulgam, and Budgam to inspect vehicles for proper documentation, updated ownership records, and adherence to the Motor Vehicles Act.

They said that vehicles found violating transfer norms, bearing outside-state registration numbers without mandatory re-registration, or involved in rash driving were seized, and legal proceedings initiated.

In Shopian, 144 vehicles were targeted in a week-long drive, while in Budgam, authorities seized 11 vehicles lacking re-registration. In Ganderbal, a joint drive with the Motor Vehicles Department checked compliance of vehicles brought from outside the Union Territory.

Pulwama Police said the initiative aims to prevent misuse of non-transferred or non-local vehicles and enhance overall traffic safety.

The Police said such



lapses not only violate the law but also create administrative and enforcement difficulties and pose potential security risks.

The Police added that similar drives will continue in the coming days to ensure road safety, streamline vehicle records, and maintain discipline on roads across the Union Territory.

In Kupwara, the Office of the Assistant Regional Transport Officer issued a public notice directing all vehicle owners who purchased vehicles from outside the UT to complete mandatory re-registration within 15 days.

Officials said that while No Objection Certificates have been issued by the respective states, many owners have failed to carry out re-registration.

They warned that failure to comply would result in seizure or impounding of vehicles and initiation of penal action under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

Vehicle owners were urged to adhere to the statutory rules to avoid legal consequences and administrative complications, the officials said.

They also reminded citizens to maintain valid documents, avoid rash driving, and cooperate with enforcement teams.

The combined action by police and transport departments, they said, is aimed to ensure that vehicle ownership records are updated, unregistered vehicles are removed from roads, and statutory compliance is maintained throughout the valley—(KNO)

Water plants at full capacity, shortages possible if dry spell continues

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 12: With a prolonged dry spell tightening its grip over Kashmir, the Jal Shakti Department on Friday said normal water supply is being maintained across Srinagar city through its major treatment plants.

However, officials also warned that if the dry weather continues, it could soon trigger shortages in rural and tail-end areas where natural water sources are already showing signs of decline.

Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti Kashmir, Er Rakesh Kumar Gupta said that the department's Nishat, Rangeel, Sukhnag, and Ganderbal treatment plants are currently operating at a combined capacity of 92 million gallons per day (MGD), ensuring a stable supply across urban zones.

"Due to the dry spell, there has been a shortage in rural areas where our water sources are in higher reaches," Er Gupta said. "But our major treatment plants in Srinagar are running at a normal capacity

of 92 MGD."

He, however, cautioned that if the dry spell continues, the situation may tighten. "It is anticipated that there may be a shortage. In the tail-end areas, there may be a problem in water supply," he said, adding that water tankers have been arranged to meet demand in affected pockets.

Er Gupta further said the department is taking measures to conserve water at its sources, particularly in districts suffering from "a 40–59% rainfall deficit".

"We are trying to conserve water through earthen bunds and stone pitching to preserve available resources until rainfall occurs and our groundwater gets recharged," he said.

Moreover, appealing for public cooperation, the Chief Engineer urged residents to use water judiciously. "We will try our best to provide a normal water supply, but people should not waste water during the dry spell. Use treated water only for drinking and not for other purposes," he said—(KNO)

From The Parliament

NISR Leh grapples with over 50% staff shortage: GoI



RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 12: The National Institute of Sowa Rigpa (in Leh) is functioning with about half its sanctioned posts vacant, Union Ministry of Ayush informed the Lok Sabha on Friday.

The ministry informed the house that NISR has 56 sanctioned posts of which 27 are filled and 29 positions remain vacant—reflecting persistent gaps in faculty and administrative manpower at Ladakh's premier traditional

medicine institute. The ministry also said vacancy levels fluctuate due to ongoing recruitment processes, retirements and administrative factors. The information was shared in response to a question on vacant positions across all Ayush institutions in the country.

The reply also reveals that the number of contractual employees engaged by the Ministry varies from time to time depending on institutional requirements.

NISR Leh is the only AYUSH institution listed from Ladakh in the parliamentary response—(KNO)

‘523 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs functional in J&K’

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar Dec 12: The Union Ministry of AYUSH has said that Jammu & Kashmir has 523 functional Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.

It also said that no such centre has been approved or functional in the Union Territory of Ladakh under the National Ayush Mission (NAM). As per official details tabled in the Lok Sabha, J&K has a total of 523 approved Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, all of which are functional.

In contrast, Ladakh has zero approved and zero functional centres under the scheme.

Under the Integrated Ayush Hospitals (IAH) component, J&K has six approved units located in Kishtwar, Kupwara, Bilawar (Kathua), Kulgam, Samba and Gadi Garh, each with capacities ranging from 10 to 50 beds.

Among these, Kulgam is the only functional IAH, while construction is underway for the others. The Ministry further said that Ayush infrastructure development, medicine supply and coordination primarily fall under State and UT governments, though the Centre provides support through NAM based on proposals submitted in State Annual Action Plans (SAAPs).

The Government stated that 12,500 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and 203 Integrated Ayush Hospitals have been approved nationwide since the launch of the mission—(KNO)

J&K has 4 trauma care facility centres sanctioned: Centre

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 12: Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Friday informed Lok Sabha that Jammu and Kashmir has a total of four Trauma Care Facilities (TCFs) sanctioned under the National Programme for Prevention & Management of Trauma and Burn Injuries (NPMT&BI).

The ministry has stated that

the sanctioned trauma care centres in J&K include MMAM District Hospital, Anantnag (Level III), Trauma Hospital, Ramban (Doda) (Level III), Government District Hospital Udhampur (Level II) and District Hospital Kupwara (Level III). It also said that 196 trauma care facilities were sanctioned across the country during the 11th and 12th Five-Year Plans, including the four centres in J&K.

However, under the current scheme, there is no provision for establishing new trauma care facilities, and the focus has shifted to capacity building of doctors and paramedical staff in trauma management.

The government further stated that monitoring of trauma care centres, including patient data and quality of services, is carried out at the state level—(KNO)

Over 1,200 acres defence land encroached or in court: Centre

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar Dec 12: Union Ministry of Defence Friday informed Lok Sabha that more than 1,200 acres of defence land in Jammu and Kashmir is either under encroached or involved in litigation.

The official figures placed before Parliament reveal that "J&K has 877.98 acres of surplus

defence land, identified as not currently required for operational needs of the Armed Forces."

On the issue of encroachments, the Ministry reported that 311.86 acres of defence land in J&K and 29.58 acres in Ladakh are currently under encroachment. "Across the country, over 11,000 acres are encroached," the Ministry said.

Continued on
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EDITORIAL

Kashmir Can Build A Sustainable Tourism Model

The Director Tourism Kashmir has vowed to leave “no stone unturned” in boosting tourism, signalling a crucial and welcome evolution in policy. The emphasis announced on International Mountain Day, not merely on increasing footfall but on anchoring growth in sustainability, regulation, and responsibility, is the only viable path forward for an industry built upon the region’s fragile and breathtaking ecology. For too long, the debate has been trapped in a binary: between promoting tourism and preserving the envi-

ronment. Declaring that “tourism cannot grow if natural resources degrade”, and outlining measures like strict waste disposal guidelines for high-altitude treks, plantation drives, and a clear eco-tourism strategy reflects a mature understanding. The true “product” Kashmir offers is its pristine natural beauty and cultural integrity; degrading it for short-term gains is an economic and ecological dead end. The planned diversification is equally strategic. By bolstering winter adventure sports like heli-skiing and paragliding and

organising festive carnivals, the department aims to extend the tourism season beyond the traditional summer months. This can ensure more stable year-round livelihoods and reduce pressure on popular destinations during peak seasons. The upcoming toy convention and travel trade meet are also smart initiatives to rebuild professional networks and explore new circuits. However, the stark challenge of climate change, acknowledged by the Director, looms large. The delayed snowfall this season is a potent reminder that this vision depends

on environmental stability. While Kashmir cannot single-handedly reverse global trends, the proposed local actions, from conservation drives to regulating visitor impact, are essential forms of climate adaptation. They are investments in the industry’s resilience. The success of this promising blueprint will hinge entirely on rigorous implementation and consistent enforcement. Guidelines for operators must be mandatory, not suggestive. Awareness programmes for tourists and locals must be continuous. Most importantly, this

sustainable ethos must be woven into every level of planning, from approving new projects to managing cultural events. This holistic approach of balancing adventure with ecology, festivity with responsibility, and promotion with preservation offers a template for tourism in ecologically sensitive regions globally. If the administration matches its stated intent with steadfast action, Kashmir can build a tourism model that thrives not by exploiting its natural heritage, but by nurturing it for generations to come.

A New Era For Social Security In India

Labour Codes, 2020, offer a glimmer of hope for universal social security coverage, reducing poverty and promoting equitable development



G. Madhumita Das

Social security systems play a central role in reducing poverty, enhancing resilience, and promoting equitable development. Universal social security coverage allows every resident, regardless of income, employment status, or demographic characteristics, access to a minimum set of social protections such as pensions, healthcare, unemployment benefits, or disability support. India is closer than ever to building a universal social security system—something most nations even the most developed ones took decades of sustained investment to achieve.

With the Labour Codes, especially the Code on Social Security, 2020, the country has the legislative architecture to protect every worker, from gig drivers to factory employees to migrant construction labourers. The Code on Social Security consolidates nine major laws into a single framework. This helps in reducing the administrative complexity, improves portability of benefits,

simplifies compliance for employers and strengthens monitoring and enforcement—increasing the likelihood that workers—especially those in smaller enterprises in the informal sector where 90% of India’s workers are employed—can receive benefits without bureaucratic hurdles.

The code also allows the government to extend coverage of Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), Maternity benefits and Gratuity for enterprises in all sectors, for the benefit of hitherto uncovered workers and encourage voluntary enrolment in smaller establishments. It provides for a National Social Security Fund/State Social Security Funds where Government funding, CSR funding, contributions from Employer and workers can be collected which can support social security coverage.

But legislation is only one piece of the puzzle. What could truly set India apart from global counterparts is its emerging digital public infrastructure—from the e-Shram database and Aadhaar authentication to Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) platforms. Combined, these tools give India a unique opportunity to leapfrog traditional welfare models and build a portable, transparent, tech-enabled welfare system unlike any in the world.

Aadhaar: The Backbone Of Universalisation

Global leaders in social protection ensure universality by guaranteeing every resident a unique ID that is tied to benefits. India has this already in Aadhaar, which provides highly reliable, no-cost authentication.

Aadhaar solves the biggest barrier to universal social security: identifying and verifying beneficiaries across states, sectors, and employers. For migrant workers, Aadhaar-enabled portability can do what no previous generation of welfare reforms could achieve: ensure uninterrupted access to entitlements regardless of location. This mirrors the digital ID-based systems in Norway and Denmark, where citizens carry their welfare identity seamlessly across regions and services.

A Unified Code Riding On A Unified Database

While around the World, workers in the organized sector are typically covered under social security, it is far more difficult to cover unorganized sector workers where stable employer-employee relationship doesn’t exist. Many countries rely on integrated labour laws, but few have the benefit of a national worker registry as massive as India’s eShram database. The Social Security Code’s mandate for a unified registration mechanism aligns perfectly with eShram, which already captures demographic, skill, and occupation data for more than 310 million unorganised

sector workers, each of whom are uniquely identified through Aadhaar authentication and given a e-Shram Universal Account Number (UAN).

India’s ability to uniquely identify, directly register and track informal workers through a single digital platform could enable faster enrolment for social security benefits, better portability, and real-time updation of worker data. In future, if the eShram and EPFO UANs are made portable, it will be possible to track labour movement between the unorganized sector and organized sector. This will allow analysis of labour market dynamics and be a goldmine of data that can inform public policy.

UPI And DBT: The Missing Link That Most Countries Are Yet To Master

Countries with strong welfare focus rely heavily on banks and legacy payment systems. India, however, has pioneered UPI, one of the world’s fastest, lowest-cost, interoperable payment networks. Integrated with DBT, India has the proven ability to send social security payouts instantly and directly to workers—across the length and breadth of the country.

This is a capability even advanced economies struggle with. During the pandemic, even in the US, millions waited weeks for stimulus cheques. In contrast, India transferred emergency COVID-19 payments to hundreds of millions of beneficiaries with

unprecedented speed.

The Central and State Governments have a number of social security schemes spanning life insurance, accident insurance, health coverage, maternity benefits, old age protection etc. By enrolling eShram registrants in such schemes and leveraging UPI and DBT, universal social protection can be achieved, at scale, in a user friendly, transparent and efficient way.

India Can Leapfrog The World

For the first time in history, India holds all the cards, a legal framework (Labour Codes), a national worker registry (e-Shram), a universal ID system (Aadhaar), a real-time payments system (UPI) and a direct benefits pipeline (DBT). This combination is rare globally. If harnessed well, India could build a universal social protection model that is not only inclusive, but digitally native and future-proof—a model other nations may one day study.

The Social Security Code is more than legislation; it is a chance to redefine how a nation protects its workers in the 21st century. India must seize this opportunity and ensure the Labour Codes deliver on this unique opportunity for ensuring social security for all workers.

The author is the Additional Secretary & Finance Advisor, Ministry of Labour and Employment

Tradition In Transition: How Indian Handicrafts Are Shaping A Modern Design Identity



Pabitra Margherita

During a recent visit to an artisan cluster in rural Assam, a simple scene revealed a profound transformation underway in India’s handicraft ecosystem. Several craftspeople were weaving dry water hyacinth, not into the traditional baskets their community had made for centuries, but into sleek office folders designed for corporate boardrooms. Their hands moved with the same practiced rhythm, following the age-old technique. Yet, the product and its purpose had transformed entirely.

As we celebrate the National Handicrafts Week from 8th to 14th December 2025, this scene becomes emblematic of the quiet revolution sweeping through India’s handicraft landscape today. Our living handicraft traditions are undergoing a significant metamorphosis. They are extending into new spaces, new markets and new futures. The motifs remain authentic while the mediums and forms evolve in ways we could scarcely have imagined a decade ago.

Handicrafts As Living Knowledge Systems

To understand this evolution, it is important to recognise that India’s handicrafts have never been mere objects of beauty. They are living knowledge systems deeply embedded in cultural identity and community traditions. In Madhubani, paintings were traditionally created by women using rice paste on freshly plastered mud walls during festivals, weddings and rites of passage. The fish symbolises fertility, the peacock represents love, and the iconography is collective rather than individual in origin.



For the Gond community, the act of painting is tied to animistic beliefs, natural forces and protective spirits believed to inhabit forests. Their art is not merely aesthetic but a ritualistic cosmology rooted in oral tradition.

Function has always shaped form. In Assam, water hyacinth, an invasive aquatic weed, is dried and woven into utilitarian household baskets. In Karnataka, Channapatna’s lacquer-turned wooden toys served as simple children’s playthings, crafted on lathes passed down through generations. The medium, the form, and the motif were inseparable, locked into specific ceremonial and functional contexts.

Tradition Expanding Into Contemporary Expression

What is unfolding today is not a break from tradition but an expansion of it. The motifs, patterns, and techniques remain recognisable, yet their applications have become strikingly contemporary. This shift

is not singular but multi-dimensional. The Madhubani fish, once part of a larger fertility narrative, now appears on cushions, tote bags and phone cases, extracted and recoloured for contemporary use. Gond animals and plants with their bold colours and geometry are admired today even outside their mythological context.

The biggest transition, however, is in the medium. Water hyacinth today forms corporate folders and designer handbags. Madhubani has moved from mud walls to wooden furniture, garments and leather accessories. Channapatna craft, which once produced only toys, now appears in decorative maps, chandeliers, home décor and designer furniture. The traditional lacquer remains unchanged, but the forms have become thoroughly contemporary. This is adaptation, not dilution.

Indian craft-based fashion has also become a fixture on global runways, with traditional embroidery showcased at Paris Haute Couture Week. Museums such as the

National Gallery of Victoria’s “Transforming Worlds” now feature Gond, Madhubani and their modern adaptations within contemporary art dialogues rather than merely ethnographic contexts.

Leadership And Government Interventions Driving Transformation

This transformation has received crucial support from national leadership and strategic government interventions. The leadership of Hon’ble Prime Minister has given extraordinary momentum to this movement. His repeated call for ‘Vocal for Local’ and ‘Local to Global’ reflects his deep affection for our artisans. He always urges citizens to buy local, as he himself has observed that “when we do that, we don’t just buy goods; we bring home hope to a family, honor the hard work of an artisan, and give wings to the dreams of a young entrepreneur.” In his latest “Mann Ki Baat” address, he shared how he consciously presents handcrafted Indian products during meetings with world leaders, ensuring that India’s rich craft heritage travels with him wherever he goes. This, he noted, is not merely symbolic, it is his way of showcasing India’s artistic legacy and ensuring that the talent of our artisans is recognised on the world stage.

Various Government initiatives are driving this transformation. The Ministry of Textiles through the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) is providing direct support to the handicrafts artisans through skill development, cluster-based training programmes, marketing support, infrastructure and technology support, credit support, etc. under the National Handicraft Development Programme (NHDP). The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) through its 19 campuses across India have built bridges between artisans and contemporary designers, creating a smoother path for design innovation rooted in tradition. The Geographical

Indications Registry has protected over 366 handicrafts, safeguarding community knowledge and ensuring their rightful recognition.

In Assam, the state where I hail from, several traditional handicrafts have received long-overdue recognition through recent GI registrations, including the Sarthebari Metal Craft, Majuli Mask, Bihu Dhol, Jaapi, Pani Meteka, Asharikandi Terracotta and several handicrafts from the Bodo community. Each registration reflects how diverse corners of Assam and India are today finding a renewed place on the national platform after decades of being overlooked.

A Dynamic, Evolving Heritage For Viksit Bharat

The greatest lesson from India’s handicraft evolution is this: tradition is not static. It adapts, absorbs, and advances. The journey of water hyacinth from household baskets to global accessories symbolises the resilience and creativity of our artisan communities. As India moves toward realizing its vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the handicraft sector stands at a powerful intersection of heritage and innovation, rural livelihood and global aspiration, identity and modernity.

As this movement gathers strength, it becomes our shared duty to ensure that every artisan is empowered and every tradition continues to thrive. India’s handicraft heritage must not survive only as a memory, but flourish as a living expression of our identity. Each time a household chooses local, each time a designer partners with a handicraft cluster, we advance the spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. And it is these very hands, steadfast, creative and rooted in centuries of wisdom that will illuminate India’s path for generations to come.

The author is the Minister of State for Textiles and External Affairs

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

JKEDI launches 4th MDP batch, 270 entrepreneurs begin training

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 12: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) on Friday launched the fourth batch of Management Development Programmes (MDPs) across 13 districts of the Union Territory under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme.

The initiative, as per an official statement, is funded by the Union Ministry of MSME and implemented in J&K by the Industries & Commerce Department.

MDPs were simultaneously inaugurated in Anantnag, Bandipora, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kulgam, Pulwama, Shopian, Srinagar, Jammu, Kathua, Reasi, and Udhampur districts. A total of 270 participants, including 253 women,



have enrolled for the 30-hour training programme scheduled over six days.

The district-level programmes are witnessing active participation from local MSMEs, who will receive practical training on modern

business management. The initiative aims to upgrade managerial, financial, and operational capacities of entrepreneurs, enabling them to scale their enterprises, enhance competitiveness, and adopt sustainable business models.

The MDP curriculum features modules on business planning, marketing, digital tools, financial literacy, compliance, innovation, and leadership. It also includes case studies, mentorship, and experiential workshops to offer real-world exposure.

Over the next six days, entrepreneurs, aspiring business leaders, and MSME operators will engage with industry experts, JKEDI faculty, and certified trainers. The parallel rollout of MDPs in 13 districts ensures inclusive access to enterprise training, especially in remote areas.

Earlier MDPs conducted under the RAMP initiative in Kupwara, Kishtwar, and Ramban have successfully trained 58 participants, contributing to improved business practices and enhanced livelihood opportunities across the UT.

DLSA Budgam holds District Monitoring Committee meeting

KT NEWS DESK

Budgam, December 12: The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Budgam Friday convened the first meeting of the District Monitoring Committee under the guidance of Principal District & Sessions Judge and Chairman DLSA Budgam, O. P. Bhagat.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was convened by Secretary DLSA Budgam, Tabassum Qadir Parry at the ADR Centre, District Court Complex, in compliance with the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India issued in WP (Cri) No. 295/2012 titled S. Rajaseekaran vs Union of India & Ors.

The meeting was attended by Dy SP DAR Budgam Ghulam Mohi-ud-din, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Budgam Afroza Bano, as the Claim Enquiry Officer/Member of the Committee.



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

The deliberations focused on establishing coordinated procedures among concerned departments, ensuring timely verification and documentation,

and enhancing facilitation mechanisms for victims to streamline claim submission and processing.

The meeting concluded with key decisions aimed at strengthening the monitoring structure within the district, minimizing procedural delays, and ensuring strict adherence to the mandate issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

Director Agriculture Jammu reviews progress of departmental schemes



KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: A comprehensive review meeting was Friday held under the chairmanship of Director Agriculture Jammu, Anil Gupta to evaluate the physical and financial progress achieved under Centrally Sponsored Schemes, HADP, CAPEX Plan and NABARD.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Joint Director (SLUB/Farms), Aman Jyoti Sharma; Deputy Director Planning, Yaqoob Zargar; CAO, Manohar Lal Sharma; DAO Vinod Khajuria; Technical Officer HADP (DoAJ), Raj Kumar besides other officers and staff of the Directorate. The Chief Agriculture Officers (CAOs) also participated through video conference.

The Director Agriculture directed the concerned officers to submit the latest and updated Monthly Progress Reports (MPRs) to the Directorate at the

earliest. He instructed the CAOs to expedite ongoing works under Per Drop More Crop (PDMC), ensuring timely completion of the same. He also emphasized prompt submission of Utilization Certificates (UCs) and called for timely achievement of MIDH targets. "All scheme-related targets must be completed by December 31, 2025, without any lapses. The NABARD works shall be completed on priority with focus on coordination among all stakeholders," the Director emphasized.

Reviewing the implementation of Prime Minister's Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), the Director Agriculture instructed the CAOs to accelerate registration of farmers for Rabi season 2025-26. He highlighted the importance of coordinated efforts between field functionaries and insurance companies to achieve coverage of the maximum number of eligible farmers.

Bandipora hosts mega DEAF awareness, settlement camp

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 12: A Mega Camp under Phase-8 of the DEAF (Depositor Education and Awareness Fund) initiative of the DFS was conducted Friday in the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat Bandipora.

The programme, as per an official statement, witnessed a significant public turnout along with the presence of bank officials, including the LDO RBI, Cluster Head J&K Bank, Regional Head Grameen Bank, and officers from the district Administration.

During the event, the LDO RBI briefed the gathering about the DEAF scheme and the procedure for claiming unclaimed deposits.

The Cluster Head J&K Bank, in a technical session, highlighted the bank's role and the strategies adopted to trace and support eligible clients.

The LDO RBI also briefed the gathering about the UDGM Portal of the Reserve Bank of India, a unified platform designed to help citizens easily search and identify their unclaimed deposits across multiple banks. He urged all participants and the general public to check their status on the portal and promptly claim any unclaimed amounts. He further appealed to people to approach their nearest bank branch for assistance in case of difficulties, ensuring that no legitimate depositor or



legal heir is deprived of their rightful dues.

The LDM Bandipora also apprised participants about the objectives of the programme and encouraged the public to raise queries and seek clarifications.

The camp witnessed substantial progress with 17.48 lakh settled on the spot with 16.72 lakh through J&K Bank and 0.76 lakh through Grameen Bank.

A total of nine claims were processed, and the beneficiaries were handed cheques

by Chief Planning Officer Bandipora, Mohammad Maqbool Lone during the camp.

Beneficiaries also shared their experiences, expressing gratitude to the banks particularly J&K Bank for their proactive outreach and assistance in facilitating the claim process.

On the occasion, all participating banks were urged to intensify efforts and ensure maximum settlements under the ongoing DEAF initiative.

JKTPO conducts export awareness, E-commerce onboarding drive in Kishtwar

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 12: The Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO), under the aegis of the Industries & Commerce Department J&K on Friday organized an Export Awareness cum E-Commerce Onboarding Drive in District Kishtwar.

The event formed part of ongoing district-level export promotion series under the District as Export Hub (DEH) and One District One Product (ODOP) initiatives. The drive aims to strengthen the export ecosystem of the district and provide local producers with improved access to domestic and global markets.

Held under the guidance of Managing Director JKTPO Sudershan Kumar, as per an official statement, the workshop was coordinated by District Administration Kishtwar, Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO), Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) and the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).

Specialists from these institutions shared insights on export documentation, compliance requirements, market opportunities and digital trade interventions to support emerging exporters.

Kishtwar is well-positioned to contribute to exports through its unique offerings including saffron, Rajma, walnuts, artisanal crafts and medicinal herbs. Enhancing the capacity of

MSMEs, artisans, farmers, SHGs and FPOs with practical export knowledge will help them improve competitiveness and connect with broader market opportunities.

Officials from DGFT briefed the participants on IEC registration, digital export procedures, and available export facilitation schemes. The FIEO shared guidance on packaging standards, branding strategies, and global buyer expectations, while encouraging producers to participate in trade fairs and buyer-seller meets.

The ECGC representatives explained the importance of export credit insurance for managing financial risks and enhancing credibility with international buyers. The GeM team demonstrated onboarding and cataloguing processes, highlighting the platform's benefits for local entrepreneurs seeking access to government procurement channels.

The sessions also explained export financing, logistics planning, quality certification, pricing strategies, packaging solutions and role of e-commerce platforms in expanding visibility. Participants sought clarifications on market access, product certification, buyer outreach and shipping procedures.

The workshop recorded participation from around 80 artisans, women entrepreneurs, MSMEs, farmers, SHG members, FPOs and youth-led enterprises, reflecting growing interest within the district to explore export and e-commerce avenues.

Qul, J&K Bank hold awareness drive on high-density plantation in Pulwama

KT News Desk

Pulwama, Dec 12: In an important step toward accelerating Kashmir's horticultural modernization, Qul, in partnership with Jammu & Kashmir Bank, organised an extensive awareness programme at Eid Gah Drabgam, Pulwama, to educate farmers about the High-Density Plantation (HDP) Scheme and the financial support available for adopting modern orchard systems.

The programme, as per a statement, was designed to help growers clearly understand the provisions of the High-Density Apple Development Programme (HADP) and the wider High-Density Plantation Scheme. Farmers received a detailed walkthrough of the scheme benefits, eligibility requirements, documentation process, and the long-term economic advantages of transitioning from traditional orchards to high-density models.

Qul's Managing Director, Khuram Mir, attended the event and engaged directly with farmers. Participants raised concerns related to varietal choices, gaps from previous plantation years, and guidance on future-proof apple varieties. The MD responded to each query, explaining the scientific and commercial suitability of different

cultivars and the need for structured orchard planning.

Officials from J&K Bank elaborated on the farmer-friendly provisions of the HDP Scheme. They highlighted that the programme offers both technical and financial assistance to growers ready to shift to high-density systems.

They reiterated that, depending on the project, up to 75% of financing is available, with collateral-free loans up to 5 lakh for small and marginal farmers. The financing also includes a repayment period of up to eight years, with no instalments for the first three years.

Bank officials further clarified that the scheme covers a broad range of high-value crops—apple, pear, cherry, citrus fruits, kiwi, guava, mango, walnut, almond, olive, and dragon fruit.

Speaking at the event, Qul's Managing Director, Khuram Mir, said: "Qul is not merely a supplier—we are partners in a farmer's entire journey. From soil profiling and orchard architecture to canopy management and disease diagnostics, our intervention is continuous and science-driven. Collaborations like Friday's programme with J&K Bank strengthen the horticulture ecosystem we are building for sustainable, high-density farming across Kashmir." Farmers actively interacted

with both technical teams, seeking clarity on orchard design, documentation, implementation timelines, and scientific standards. Many participants shared that the session resolved long-pending doubts, particularly regarding financing and the practical steps required to establish high-density orchards.

Ghulam Nabi, a farmer from Raj Pora Pulwama, remarked: "This is the first time the entire process was explained in such a simple and practical way. With guidance from Qul and support from the Bank, adopting high-density farming now seems achievable for every farmer."

He added that HDP is increasingly becoming the future of horticulture in Kashmir.

Local growers also appreciated Khuram Mir's pioneering role in introducing the high-density concept in Kashmir and for consistently supporting farmers through scientific interventions and field visits. The programme concluded with renewed confidence among growers and reaffirmed the shared commitment of Qul and J&K Bank to drive horticultural growth through innovation, collaboration, and farmer-centric awareness. The event was attended by good number of farmers from across Pulwama district.

Ramban administration reviews winter preparedness measures

KT News Desk

RAMBAN, DECEMBER 12: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alys Khan Friday chaired a meeting to assess district's preparedness for the winter season. The meeting held in his office chamber reviewed in detail the arrangements put in place for smooth delivery of public services during harsh weather conditions.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Varunjeet Singh Charak; ACR Shokat Hayat Mattoo; ACD Sehzad Ahmed; CPO Dr Shakeeb Ahmed Rather; SDMs and senior officers from Revenue, Jal Shakti, JPDC, R&B, PMGSY, Transport, Health, Education, Municipalities, FCS&CA and other stakeholder departments attended the meeting.

MLA Banihal Sajjad Shaheen also joined the meeting virtually and highlighted key issues related to winter challenges while suggesting several practical measures for timely redressal.

The Deputy Commissioner took a detailed stock of the district's preparedness, reviewing critical aspects such as the power supply scenario, availability and stock of essential commodities including ration, LPG, fuel, functioning of healthcare institutions, availability of essential medicines, and status



of snow clearance machinery. He emphasized the need for seamless movement of vehicles, ambulances and essential service providers even during heavy snowfall.

Deliberations were held on the Winter Action Plan, focusing on minimizing risks associated with heavy snowfall, cold waves, icy roads, and snow avalanches. The meeting discussed snow clearance for roads, shelter management, resource deployment and activation of emergency response systems.

The DC directed the Executive Engineers of PWD and PMGSY to prepare and submit a comprehensive action plan for snow

clearance to ensure all major and link roads remain motorable throughout the winter. He instructed them to keep all machinery, manpower, and logistics in a state of readiness for immediate deployment.

The Executive Engineer JPDC was asked to ensure uninterrupted power supply across the district, maintain adequate buffer stock of transformers at vulnerable locations, and ensure full functionality of transformer workshops at Batote and Banihal for prompt replacement of damaged units. The Executive Engineer of STD Division was also directed to arrange additional power

support to mitigate overload issues in Banihal and Ramsoo subdivisions.

Reviewing the healthcare arrangements, the DC instructed the department to ensure round-the-clock medical services at all health institutions, maintain sufficient stock of life-saving drugs, and station ambulances at sensitive locations to tackle emergencies without delay.

He directed the AD FCS&CA to ensure advance distribution of three months' ration in snow-bound areas, besides maintaining a buffer stock of LPG to meet the increased winter demand.

The DC further instructed the SDMs and Tehsildars to keep tehsil-level control rooms functional 24x7 for prompt public response. The SDM Banihal, SDM Ramsoo, and Tehsildar Batote were directed to ensure heating, bedding, and other necessary arrangements at designated shelters for commuters during emergencies.

The Emergency and Fire Services Department was directed to ensure full readiness by augmenting machinery, equipment, and manpower for quick response to fire incidents during winter. Directives were also issued to ACD, ARTO, CAHO, CAO, DSHO, CEO MC and other officers to implement all winter-related instructions within their respective domains.

CS directs reducing grievance disposal time, strengthen citizen responsiveness

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 12: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Friday chaired a detailed review meeting of the JK Samadhan public grievance redressal system, taking an extensive assessment of grievance disposal performance across departments, districts, and their allied offices.

The review meeting attended by all the Administrative heads along with Secretary Grievances, Niraj Kumar and other concerned officers was based on the latest data updated till 11 December 2025.

The Chief Secretary took this occasion to note that JK Samadhan has emerged as the central platform for transparent citizen-services monitoring and emphasized the need to further streamline responsiveness, improve appeal mechanisms, and enhance integration with CPGRAMS for seamless grievance handling.

During the review, the Department of Public Grievances



(DoPG) informed that the platform has received 1,02,110 grievances to date, of which 88,091 have been redressed, reflecting an overall disposal rate of 86.27. The redressal patterns were also analysed separately for Samadhan-origin grievances (87.59% disposal) and CPGRAMS-linked grievances (76.35% disposal).

The Chief Secretary appreciated the progress in district-level citizen registration under JK Samadhan, noting that

several districts have achieved exemplary household coverage with Ganderbal leading with 115%, Shopian (105%), and Kishtwar (101%) leading the list. The overall registration coverage across the UT stands at 69% of target households, the Secretary apprised the meeting.

A comparative month-wise trend analysis showed consistent citizen engagement, with grievance inflow peaking at 7,087 cases in February 2025, and sustained levels in

subsequent months.

The meeting reviewed department-wise grievance loads and disposal efficiency. Key departments such as Revenue, PWD (R&B), Rural Development, Power Development, Housing & Urban Development, Home, and Jal Shakti reported the highest grievance traffic and were directed to ensure faster disposal and improvement in public satisfaction ratings. Several departments displayed strong performance, maintaining disposal

rates above 85%, while others were instructed to reduce pendency further.

Performance of other major organisations including J&K Bank, Universities, BSNL, EPFO, SMVDSB, and Central Government entities was also examined. The Chief Secretary stressed the need for all stakeholder agencies to adopt uniform standards of citizen responsiveness.

A separate assessment of average time taken for grievance

disposal revealed notable inter-departmental variations. While departments such as Tribal Affairs, Labour & Employment, Food & Civil Supplies, and Social Welfare demonstrated swift disposal times, others with higher workloads were advised to reduce delays and streamline follow-up processes. District-level analysis also highlighted Budgam, Ganderbal, and Anantnag among the faster-performing districts in grievance resolution.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the citizen feedback dashboard, which recorded feedback on 8,704 grievances. While many departments received favourable satisfaction ratings and high responsiveness scores, certain departments were advised to improve citizen communication, especially in cases where users reported not receiving follow-up calls or messages from officials.

The DoPG apprised that BISAG-N has deployed a new system build (Version 2.6.2 RM)

today morning, aimed at addressing existing technical issues. Initial observations, however, indicate areas that still require improvement, including the appeal mechanism, MIS synchronisation, feedback modules, and CPGRAMS integration.

The Chief Secretary directed the DoPG to continuously engage with BISAG-N to ensure full stabilization of the platform and resolution of the highlighted issues.

Reiterating government's commitment to accountable and citizen-centric governance, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo stressed that timely, transparent, and empathetic grievance redressal is a core responsibility of every department.

He urged all Administrative Secretaries, Heads of Departments, and District Administrations to bring down pendency levels, improve departmental communication with complainants, and ensure that every grievance stands resolved up to the satisfaction of the complainants.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

LG Sinha meets

to Lieutenant Governor, Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari; Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg; IGP Kashmir, VK Birdi; DIG CKR, Rajiv Pandey; SSP Srinagar, Dr GV Sundeeep Chakravarthy; Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Akshay Labroo and senior officials of Police and Civil Administration were present. (KNO)

Cabinet nod

"This will become the first-ever digital census," Vaishnav told reporters.

Around 30 lakh enumerators will visit each and every household and canvass a separate questionnaire for houselisting and housing census and population enumeration. It will generate 1.02 crore human days of employment, the minister said.

Vaishnav said the entire digital census system has been created as a very robust system and all personal data protection laws will be applicable. The census will collect the micro-level data of every individual and household and present a macro-level data, he added.

"Data of the micro-level will be collected from each household and a macro picture will be present. Individual data will be kept confidential while the macro-level data of the Census will be published," the minister said.

"All the Census functionaries will be paid a suitable honorarium for the work of the Census as they will be doing this work in addition to their regular duties," a government statement said.

The Census 2027 will also capture caste data electronically in the PE phase, Vaishnav said.

In the first-ever digital Census, data will be collected using mobile applications that will be available for both Android and iOS versions.

Use of a mobile app for data collection and the central portal for monitoring purposes will ensure better quality data, Vaishnav said.

Data dissemination will be much better and in a user-friendly way so that all queries on required parameters for policy-making will be available with a click of a button, he said.

"A dedicated portal, namely Census Management & Monitoring System (CMMS), has been developed for managing and monitoring the entire Census process on a real-time basis," a government statement said.

Census-as-a-Service (CaaS) will deliver data to ministries in a clean, machine-readable and actionable format, he said.

The largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world will be done using a mobile app for data collection and the central portal for monitoring purposes will ensure better quality data.

"The current endeavour would be to make available the coming Census data at the shortest possible time across the country. Efforts will also be made to disseminate Census results with more customised visualisation tools. Data sharing to all, up to the lowest administrative unit i.e. village/ward level," the statement said.

Houselisting block (HLB) creator web map application will be another innovation for Census 2027 which will be used by the charge officers.

The statement said around 18,600 technical manpower will be engaged for about 550 days at the local levels which would imply that around 1.02 crore man-days employment would be generated.

"Further, the provision of technical manpower at the charge/district/state-level will also result in capacity-building as the nature of the job will be related to digital data handling, monitoring and coordination. This will also help in the future employment prospects of these persons," it said.

The provision of technical manpower at various levels will also result in capacity-building as the nature of the job will be related to digital data handling, monitoring and coordination.

"This will also help in the future employment prospects of these persons," the statement said.

The mammoth exercise is the biggest source of primary data at the village, town and ward-level providing micro-level data on various parameters including housing condition, amenities and assets, demography, religion, SC and

ST, language, literacy and education, economic activity, migration and fertility.

The last comprehensive caste-based count was done by the Britishers between 1881 and 1931. Caste was excluded from all Census operations conducted since Independence.

The decision to include caste enumeration in the upcoming Census was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 30.

In 2010, then prime minister Manmohan Singh had assured the Lok Sabha that the matter of caste census would be considered in the cabinet.

However, the previous Congress-led government opted for a survey instead of a caste census, known as the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC).

The population of the country according to the Census 2011 was 1,210.19 million of which 623.72 million (51.54 per cent) were males and 586.46 million (48.46 per cent) were females.

Outcome of Census

Census 2027 by earmarking Rs 11,718.24 crore for the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world.

In a message posted on X, he said, "The precision in data will accelerate Modi Ji's vision of delivering the benefits of good governance and development to citizens of every demographic denomination, making the slogan of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' a grand reality of New India in the Amrit Kaal."

The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal to conduct the Census which will be the first digital exercise of its kind.

The 16th edition of the Census since Independence will do a caste enumeration besides giving an option of self-enumeration to the citizens.

The decadal exercise, which was scheduled to take place in 2021, got postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the country.

The Census will be conducted in two phases -- house-listing and housing census from April to September, 2026; and population enumeration (PE) in February 2027.

For Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the PE exercise shall be conducted in September, 2026, the minister said.

Around 30 lakh enumerators will visit each and every household and canvass a separate questionnaire for Houselisting & Housing Census and Population Enumeration.

The Census 2027 will also capture caste data electronically in the PE phase. PTI

Kashmir's shrinking

vanish year after year.

"We used to harvest enough rice for the whole family and even store some for the next season," said Abdul Rashid, a farmer from Pulwama. "Now half the land around our village has turned into housing colonies, orchards and other purposes. Young people prefer selling land rather than cultivating it."

Several growers believe that unregulated conversion of agricultural tracts, coupled with inadequate incentives for farming, has discouraged many from continuing traditional agriculture.

Agriculture experts argue that the decline in farmland will have serious long-term consequences if the trend continues unchecked.

"Food self-sufficiency is slipping away from Kashmir at a worrying pace," said an agricultural economist who has served at a senior level in the Agriculture department. "If 34,000 hectares vanish in less than three decades, imagine what the situation will look like in the next 20 years. The region's dependence on outside markets will only deepen."

Experts called for a strict implementation of land-use laws, promotion of high-yielding rice varieties, and increasing farmer incentives to protect what remains of the Valley's fertile land.

Officials in the Agriculture Department acknowledge that rapid urbanisation has

contributed significantly to the decline of farmland. An official said that although laws exist to prevent the conversion of cultivable land, violations continue due to population pressure and lax enforcement.

"We are focusing on modern farming techniques, land conservation, and awareness programmes," the official added. "But the challenge is huge and requires stronger coordination among all departments."

It is pertinent to mention here that in 2022, new government rules allowed landowners to convert farmland for commercial or industrial use with fewer restrictions. The 400 square metre cap on converting farmland for commercial or industrial use was lifted.

A district-level committee, led by the District Collector, reviews applications and must decide within 30 days. The owner pays 5 per cent of the land's market value as a fee. If the land isn't used as approved within two years, the permission is cancelled.

With local production unable to meet the region's needs, Kashmir imports massive quantities of rice every year. Residents say that while market shelves are full, the dependence on external supplies makes the Valley vulnerable to price fluctuations and transport disruptions.

"Every household depends on rations from outside states," said a resident from Pulwama. "If road connectivity is affected even for a few days, prices shoot up instantly. This shows how fragile our food system has become."

Experts, farmers, and civil society groups agree that safeguarding the remaining agricultural land is crucial. Many are urging the government to strengthen enforcement against illegal land conversion and create better economic prospects for farmers to prevent further loss of farmland.

"If we keep losing land at this pace, future generations will have nothing left to cultivate," said another farmer from north Kashmir. "Agriculture has always been Kashmir's backbone, but now it is weakening."—(KNO)

Govt starts process

It is worth mentioning that Jammu & Kashmir is currently without elected Panchayats and municipalities. While the term of urban local bodies ended in November 2023, the elected Panchayats ceased to exist on January 9, 2024. (KNO)

Nation must set

set a target of making Bharat powerful and fulfil the dreams of General Zorawar Singh," he said, adding that the administration and society must work together to ensure that every individual receives equal opportunities to advance.

Calling General Zorawar Singh a symbol of courage, conviction and national pride, LG Sinha noted that the entire country holds him in high esteem. "The entire nation is proud of General Zorawar Singh. His vision inspired generations by igniting passion, guiding people toward a shared vision, courage, purpose and commitment to bigger ideals," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the relevance of General Zorawar Singh's message in the contemporary world, stressing the need for moral clarity and determination in nation-building. "We must follow his message for moral clarity and unwavering conviction to shape a better future and empower the marginalised," he said.

LG Sinha called upon people to commit themselves to the service of society, especially the youth. He emphasized that empowering young people and guiding them toward constructive paths is essential for creating a peaceful and prosperous future. "Let us dedicate ourselves to changing lives, guiding and supporting youth, and building a more just and peaceful society," he said.

"General Zorawar Singh's vision inspired generations by igniting passion, guiding people toward a shared vision, courage, purpose and commitment to bigger ideals," he said.

He called upon the youth and all sections of society to follow the message of General Zorawar Singh for moral clarity, unwavering conviction to shape the better future and

empower the marginalised.

"Let us dedicate ourselves to changing lives, guiding and supporting youth and build a more just and peaceful society," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated that the Government of India, under the leadership of PM Modi, is committed to honour the contributions of General Zorawar Singh.

"To honour his legacy, the Government of India has named an advanced indigenous light tank after General Zorawar Singh Ji.

The General Zorawar Singh Chair has also been established at the University of Jammu. Dedicated efforts are also being made to encourage new generations to study his unparalleled military campaigns and vision for societal organization," he further said.

Vikram Randhawa, Member of Legislative Assembly from Bahu; Devinder Singh Kaluria, Chairman, General Zorawar Singh Memorial Education and Charitable Trust and Trustees- Riya Kaluria and Diksha Kaluria; Lt Gen RK Sharma (Retd.), President, J&K Ex-Services League; Shri Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary Culture, prominent citizens and people from different walks of life were present.

Major General Goverdhan Singh Jamwal (Retd.), Padma Dr SP Varma, President, Gandhi Global Family, J&K; Col. Karan Singh (Retd.), President Dogra Sadar Sabha; Ex-servicemen and senior officials of Army, Civil and Police Administration were also present. (KNO)

Amid dry spell,

Pahalgam recorded minus 4.6°C, Awantipora minus 4.2°C, Budgam minus 4.3°C, and Bandipora minus 3.6°C. Gulmarg settled at 0.0°C.

Anantnag recorded minus 4.6°C, Kulgam minus 0.6°C, and Kokernag minus 0.7°C. Ganderbal settled at minus 2.6°C, while Sonamarg recorded minus 1.3°C. Zethan Rafiabab reported minus 4.8°C.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded 8.5°C, Banihal and Ramban 4.2°C, Bhaderwah 1.9°C, Rajouri 1.6°C, Samba 3.2°C, and Udhampur 2.8°C. Katra, Kathua, and Reasi settled at 9.4°C, 7.6°C, and 6.6°C, respectively.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded minus 7.8°C, Kargil minus 7.0°C, and Nubra Valley minus 6.3°C. Cold and dry weather is likely to continue over the next few days.

Jal Shakti officials said the Union Territory currently faces no major water shortages despite the ongoing dry spell.

The department operates five major water treatment plants in Nishat, Sukhnag, and Ganderbal, supplying around 92 million gallons of treated water daily. Discharge from the plants is normal, and water supply remains uninterrupted.

Officials warned that extended dry conditions could affect water availability in tail-end areas. To mitigate this, around 80 departmental water tankers are operational, with an additional 30 hired and more to be arranged if required.

Measures to conserve water include temporary closures, installation of barriers, and monitoring to prevent wastage.

Preparations for the upcoming winter include mobile generator sets, fuel reserves, protection against pipe frosting, insulation of exposed pipelines, and spare pipelines for emergency replacement.

Officials also said rainwater harvesting and other conservation initiatives under national schemes are being implemented, with staff directed to ensure 24x7 availability in case of emergencies.

The officers urged residents to cooperate with conservation measures and assured that all steps have been taken to maintain normal water supply during the dry spell and harsh winter conditions. (KNO)

Tribal Affairs to

and community rights over forest land and resources for Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

The law became applicable to J&K only after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. (KNO)

Phones replacing

Rahul Gandhi adamant on proving himself 'jhooth ki dukan': BJP

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 12: The BJP on Friday called Congress MP Rahul Gandhi "jhooth ki dukan" and said he along with others in the opposition benches was looking away when the Congress was exposed by the treasury benches under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah during debates on Vande Mataram and election reforms in Parliament.

This came after Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, hailed his party members' performance during the debates on the two topics in both Houses of Parliament, and claimed that the government was taken to the cleaners by the opposition.

Hitting back, BJP national spokesperson Prem Shukla said, "Rahul Gandhi says the opposition ripped the BJP members apart (dhajjiyan uda di). On the contrary, Rahul Gandhi and others in the opposition were looking away when the Congress was exposed with proof by the members of the treasury benches under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah during the debates on Vande



Mataram and Election Reforms."

"The entire country saw it... Rahul Gandhi is adamant on proving himself to be a 'jhooth ki dukan' (shop of lies)," he told reporters at the BJP headquarters here.

The BJP spokesperson said the country also saw how the entire opposition "fled" from the Lok Sabha the moment Shah "reiterated" the Modi government's "resolve" to drive the 'ghus-paithiyas' (infiltrators) out of the country.

"The entire country saw how Rahul Gandhi and the members of the

other opposition parties were ripped apart on the issue of 'ghuspaithiyas,'" he added.

Shukla said that Shah told Parliament during debates on the two topics "with proof" as to how Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, "compromised" on the issue of Vande Mataram's stanzas in the original version of the national song.

Intervening in the discussion on Election reforms, the Union home minister also gave a "logical and evidence-based" rebuttal to the opposition's allegations

against the Special Intensive Review (SIR) of the electoral rolls by the Election Commission, the BJP spokesperson said.

"The Congress is not in a position to counter his (Shah's) response," he added.

The BJP spokesperson also slammed the leader of the opposition over his remarks that Shah got "scared" by the opposition attack, and said, "Rahul Gandhi, you feel scared and you have accepted it."

"When Sonia Gandhi was named the Congress president post, both the son and the daughter were scared of what would happen if she

was made president of the party," Shukla claimed in an apparent reference to Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who is now an MP from Kerala's Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency.

"Amit Shah was not scared even when the erstwhile UPA government remained busy day and night in conspiring to implicate him and Narendra Modi, then chief minister of Gujarat, in false cases," he added.

The BJP spokesperson also took a swipe at the Congress over the absence of its MP Shashi Tharoor in Gandhi's meeting with the party's Lok Sabha members in the Parliament House complex on Friday, saying, "All Congress leaders are preparing to leave the Congress' sinking ship."

Tharoor could not attend the meeting as he was travelling out of the station.

The BJP spokesperson alleged, "The Congress is a sinking ship with no visible possibility of its survival. All the Congress leaders keep talking about the party's fate," he said.

"But I don't know how Rahul Gandhi is living with such arrogance. He says, 'paksh ki dhajjiyan uda di' (his party members ripped the government apart)," he added.

Cabinet approves Bill to hike FDI in insurance sector to 100 pc

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Union Cabinet on Friday approved a Bill to raise foreign direct investment in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, according to sources.

The Bill may be introduced in the ongoing Winter session of Parliament, which is slated to conclude on December 19.

According to a Lok Sabha bulletin, the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill 2025, which seeks to deepen penetration, accelerate growth and development of the insurance sector and enhance ease of doing business, is part of the 13 legislations listed for the upcoming session of Parliament.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in this year's Budget speech, proposed to raise the foreign investment limit to 100 per cent from the existing 74 per cent in the insurance sector as part of new-generation financial sector reforms.

So far, the insurance sector has attracted Rs 82,000 crore through foreign direct investment (FDI).

The finance ministry has



proposed amending various provisions of the Insurance Act, 1938, including raising FDI in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, reducing paid-up capital, and introducing a composite licence.

As part of a comprehensive legislative exercise, the Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956 and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act 1999 will be amended, alongside the Insurance Act 1938.

The amendments to the LIC Act propose empowering its board to take operational decisions, such as branch expansion and recruitment.

The proposed amendment primarily focuses on promoting policyholders' interests, enhancing their financial security,

and facilitating the entry of additional players into the insurance market, thereby driving economic growth and employment generation.

Such changes will help enhance the efficiency of the insurance industry, enable ease of doing business, and enhance insurance penetration to achieve the goal of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

The Insurance Act of 1938 serves as the principal Act to provide the legislative framework for insurance in India. It provides the framework for the functioning of insurance businesses and regulates the relationships among insurers, their policyholders, shareholders, and the regulator, Irda.

Bill to set up single higher education regulator gets Cabinet nod

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 12: A Bill to set up a higher education regulator which will replace bodies such as the UGC and AICTE was approved by the Union Cabinet on Friday, officials said.

The proposed legislation which was earlier christened the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill has now been named Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill.

The single higher education regulator which was proposed in the new National Education Policy (NEP), looks to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

"The Bill to set up Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan has been approved by the Cabinet," an official said.

While the UGC oversees non-technical higher education, the AICTE oversees technical education and the NCTE is the regulatory body for teachers' education.

The Commission is proposed to be set up as a single higher education regulator, but medical and law colleges will not be brought under its ambit. It is proposed to have three major roles -- regulation, accreditation and setting professional standards.

Funding, which is seen as the fourth vertical, is not proposed to be under the regulator so far. The autonomy for funding is proposed to be with the administrative



ministry.

The concept of HECI has been discussed before in the form of a draft bill. A draft Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill, 2018, which sought to repeal the UGC Act and provided for the setting up of the Higher Education Commission of India, was put in the public domain in 2018 for feedback and consultation with stakeholders.

Renewed efforts to make the HECI a reality were then initiated under Dharmendra

Pradhan, who took over as the Union Education Minister in July 2021.

Underlining the relevance of a single higher education regulator, the NEP-2020 document says, "The regulatory system is in need of a complete overhaul in order to re-energise the higher education sector and enable it to thrive."

It adds that the new system should ensure the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding and academic standard setting are performed by distinct, independent and empowered bodies.

AI won't steal jobs: Microsoft's Puneet Chandok

'Ours is last generation to have stable, long-term careers'

PTI

Mumbai, Dec 12: Tech giant Microsoft's India and South Asia President Puneet Chandok on Friday said artificial intelligence will not steal jobs, asserting that the real pink slip is going to be refusal to learn.

However, he said the widespread adoption of new-age technology will "unbundle" tasks, adding that "ours is the last generation to enjoy stable, long-term careers."

"Will AI steal jobs? I don't think AI will steal jobs. It will dissect jobs. It will unbundle jobs," Chandok said during his address at the Microsoft AI Tour, which also saw an address by the company's chairman and chief executive Satya Nadella.

Amid the rapid adoption of AI across all spheres of life, Chandok said the "industrial age era" -- template to learn once and make money for the rest of their life using the knowledge -- is breaking.



"You and I are the last generation to have stable, long-term careers," he said, adding that "our kids will do a portfolio of things."

Stressing the need to learn continuously, Chandok said, "The real pink slip in this new AI era is not automation. That is what we are worried about. The real pink slip is refusal to learn." We are fighting guerrilla warfare against irrelevance every day and should continue to learn new things, he said, likening learning to an oxygen mask.

The key corporate leader seemed to be alluding to the air pollution problems in

the national capital when he added that no one can know the importance of the oxygen masks like a resident of Delhi.

In his speech, Nadella also wondered whether AI models are becoming a "commodity" and added that data is the most strategic asset for any company in the age of AI.

"In the experience layer, data is one of the most strategic assets, and it is one of those things that is super important in the age of AI. But you have to use that data contextually to the AI," Nadella, who is on a three-day visit to his home country, said.

He said Maharashtra has been using Microsoft's AI tools for cyber safety as part of a project in Nagpur, and added that the same has reduced the turnaround time on cybercrime investigations by 80 per cent. The company is also working with other clients, including Adani Cement, Yes Bank, Aditya Birla Group, LTIMindtree on the AI front, he said.

IndiGo crisis: DGCA suspends 4 flight operations inspectors



PTI

Mumbai, Dec 12: Aviation safety regulator DGCA has suspended four Flight Operations Inspectors (FOIs) over massive disruptions in IndiGo's operations, which resulted in the cancellation of thousands of flights and lakhs of people getting stranded across airports. The airline cancelled over 50 flights from Bengaluru Airport on Friday.

FOIs are senior officials within the DGCA, working as part of its regulatory and safety oversight functions, often deployed to monitor airline operations.

"Four FOIs at the DGCA have been suspended in connection with the recent large-scale disruptions in IndiGo's flights," a source said. These officials ensure aviation safety by inspecting, auditing, and certifying airlines and personnel, such as pilots, dispatchers, and cabin crew, to meet strict regulatory standards, verifying various regulations and overseeing training, flight standards, and accident prevention measures in India.

"IndiGo has cancelled 54 flights -- 31 arrivals and 23 departures -- from Bengaluru Airport on Friday," a source said.

Facing gut issues even on home-cooked food? Nutritionist reveals 8 common mistakes and how to fix them

TOI HEALTH

New Delhi, Dec 12: Leaving junk food and following a 'healthy-diet' should practically solve all your gut problems, right? But this is not always the case. While unhealthy eating significantly impacts the gut microbiome, sometimes, even 'healthy habits', when not done right, can leave you feeling bloated and uneasy.

Highlighting this issue, recently, Kolkata-based health and fitness coach, Nikita Bardia (@healthquofficial), shared an Instagram post. Nikita shared how some daily habits we think are 'healthy' can act as the real culprit behind gut issues. In her post she wrote that many people struggle with gut issues because of the mistakes they make while preparing or consuming certain foods. In her video, she shared eight 'silent gut disrupters'. Let's take a closer look:

Habits to Boost Longevity and Health

1. Eating loads of salad at night According to Nikita Bardia, consuming raw veggies at night causes bloating, gas, and morning



heaviness. She highlights how the gut is least active after sunset.

To solve this problem, she suggests switching to sautéed

veggies or cooked sabzi.

2. Eating dal, rajma or chhole without proper soaking

Health coach Nikita warns that

even homemade dal can wreck digestion if not prepared well.

She notes that eating dal, rajma or chhole without proper soaking can cause instant gas and acidity.

To fix this, soak dal, rajma or chhole for 8 to 12 hours, and then throw the first bowl of water. Add ajwain or hing while cooking.

3. Drinking water during meals Nutritionist Nikita notes that water dilutes digestive enzymes, which weakens the digestion process and ultimately leads to gas.

She says to fix this problem, consume water 20 minutes before meals or 35-40 minutes after.

4. Eating too much millets

Millets are no doubt healthy, but too much consumption can cause constipation and bloating. These grains expand in the gut and slow down digestion.

Nutritionist Nikita recommends consuming millets 2 to 3 times per week and not daily.

5. Overloading curd or chaas on an inflamed gut

Nutritionist Nikita says consuming probiotics on an inflamed gut can lead to more acidity and bloating.

She recommends consuming curd once the gut is calm.

6. Eating fruit/oats alone on an empty stomach

According to health coach Nikita Bardia, consuming fruits or oats alone on an empty stomach leads to blood sugar spikes. Sugar spike can lead to digestion crash and bloating.

She recommends pairing fruits with proteins like curd, seeds or nuts.

7. Drinking chai or coffee first thing in the morning

The gut lining is delicate in the morning. Consuming caffeine on an empty stomach can lead to acidity, loose motions and nausea.

Avoid consuming tea or coffee in the morning, and if you really want to consume them, Nutritionist Nikita recommends starting with a small snack first such as nuts, raisins, or warm water with a pinch of salt.

8. Consuming a low fat diet

Nutritionist Nikita says the gut needs fats to absorb nutrients. Low fat can slow down digestion and cause hormonal imbalance.

To fix this add one tbs of ghee or nuts or seeds daily.

Disclaimer: This article is for informational purposes only and should not be substituted for professional advice.

Russia, Turkiye, Iran presidents in Turkmenistan for rare summit

AFP

Ashgabat, Dec 12: The leaders of Russia, Turkiye and Iran meet Friday in Turkmenistan, an isolated Central Asian state which is marking 30 years of official neutrality with a rare international summit.

The principle of "permanent neutrality" is at the heart of the former Soviet republic's foreign policy — a doctrine that has contributed to making Turkmenistan one of the world's most isolated countries.

On the guest list are Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, along with other regional leaders.

Here's five things to know about the desert nation and its position on the world stage:

- Presidential dynasty - Turkmenistan, which borders Iran, Afghanistan, and the Caspian Sea, has only had three presidents since gaining independence when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

The first was Saparmurat Niyazov, who proclaimed himself both "president for life" and the "father of the Turkmen" (Turkmenbashi), and ruled for 15 years.

The Berdimukhamedov family took over in 2006, with father Gurbanguly becoming president before handing the job to his son Serdar in 2022.

In reality, the pair rule in tandem. Gurbanguly retains immense power and is the subject of an intense personality cult. Officially proclaimed "leader of the Turkmen nation" and Arkadag, which means hero-protector, he built



a vast city named after himself, Arkadag, at a cost of at least \$5 billion. He also erected gigantic golden statues of himself, while Serdar is regularly praised in the state-run media.

- Neutrality and isolation - Turkmenistan is one of the world's most secretive countries, often compared to North Korea for its inaccessibility.

Since the United Nations supported Turkmenistan's "permanent neutrality" status in 1995, it has become a foreign policy cornerstone. An almost 100-meter (300-feet) tall Neutrality Monument, resembling a rocket and featuring a golden statue of the first president, stands in the capital Ashgabat.

The status prohibits Turkmenistan from fully joining any union or military alliance, and is used by the

government to implement its isolationist policies.

Ahead of the summit, Serdar Berdimukhamedov published yet another book — presented as a "precious gift for the Turkmen people" — extolling the virtues of neutrality.

Turkmenistan's closest relations are with China, Russia, Iran, and Turkiye thanks to gas contracts. Cooperation with the West remains limited.

According to Amnesty International, Turkmenistan is "effectively closed to international human rights NGOs, UN special mechanisms and independent media."

Information on the country is fragmented, tightly controlled and generally unverifiable, "aimed solely at praising the regime," according to Reporters Without Borders. - Lots of gas, little water -

While Turkmenistan is estimated to

have the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves, water supplies are scarce — and the situation is expected to worsen due to climate change, scientists warn.

Three-quarters of the country is covered by the vast Karakum desert. Cotton is another important industry for the Turkmen economy, but the high use of water has contributed to water shortages across the region.

- Methane 'Gateway to Hell' -

A massive five-decade-old fire raging in a natural gas crater is the country's top tourist attraction. The fire has been burning in the Karakum desert since 1971, when Soviet scientists accidentally ignited it.

Turkmen authorities have repeatedly stated their intentions to close the Darvaza crater, dubbed the "Gateway to Hell," but so far without success.

Emissions are a huge problem. Turkmenistan is the world's top methane leaker, according to the International Energy Agency.

- Sacred animals -

Local breeds of horse and dog are sacred and have been elevated to the status of national symbols.

On the orders of Gurbanguly, numerous statues honoring the Alabai — or Central Asian shepherd-dog — and the Akhal-Teke horse have been erected and the animals are celebrated on public holidays.

Gurbanguly has even composed a song in honor of his favorite horse.

The father-and-son duo regularly give and receive dogs and horses as gifts, including to other world leaders. They are often filmed cuddling the animals in public.

Trump warns that continuation of Russia-Ukraine war can 'end up in third world war'



ANI

Washington, Dec 12: US President Donald Trump has issued a stark warning that the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict risks escalating into a global conflict, cautioning that "things like this end up in third world wars."

Speaking to reporters at the White House after signing an Executive Order aimed at preventing a "patchwork" of state-level artificial intelligence regulations, Trump revealed that 25,000 people, mostly soldiers, were killed in the war last month alone and expressed deep frustration over the continued bloodshed and reiterated his push for an immediate end to hostilities.

"I'd like to see the killing stop. 25,000 people died last month, mostly soldiers, but some people also where bombs were dropped but for the most part, 25,000 soldiers died last month. I would love to see it stop. And we're working very hard," the US President said.

"Things like this end up in third world wars. And I said that the other day. I said, everybody keeps playing games like this. We will end up in a

third world war and we don't want to see that happen," he added.

Earlier in the day, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stated that the US President is "extremely frustrated" with both Russia and Ukraine over the slow progress toward ending the ongoing war and is unwilling to engage in "meetings just for the sake of meeting".

During a press briefing, Leavitt stated the President was tired of meetings that achieve nothing and wanted results, not words, as the US acts as the primary mediator to end the four-year-long running war.

"The president is extremely frustrated with both sides of this war. He's sick of meetings just for the sake of meeting. He doesn't want any more talk. He wants action. He wants this war to come to an end," Leavitt said.

She further confirmed that the Trump administration remains actively involved in peace efforts, with President Trump holding talks with European leaders on Wednesday and Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and his team continuing direct discussions with both sides "literally as we speak".

U19 Asia Cup opener

Record-breaking Suryavanshi powers India to big 234-run win over UAE

PTI

Dubai, Dec 12: Vaibhav Suryavanshi was at his imperious best while smashing a 171 off 95 balls, powering India to a mammoth 234-run win over hosts UAE in the inaugural match of the U19 Asia Cup in Dubai on Friday.

The 14-year-old from Samastipur, Bihar, unleashed a stunning display of batting, hitting 14 sixes -- the most by any batter in a single innings in the U19 level -- en-route to his breathtaking innings. Half-centuries from Vihaan Malhotra (69) and Aaroon George (69) further bolstered India's charge as they piled up 433 for 6 in 50 overs.

The 400-plus total is India's highest-ever in U19 ODIs and



is the highest in the U-19 Asia Cup's history.

In reply, UAE were never in the contest despite fighting fifties from Prithvi Madhu (50) and Uddish Suri (78 not out), as they could only manage 199/7 in their allotted 50 overs.

Suryavanshi's blistering knock, studded with nine boundaries, is

now the second-highest score by an Indian in youth ODIs, behind Ambati Rayudu's unbeaten 177 against England in 2002 and the ninth-highest score by a batter in a men's U19 ODI.

Sent into bat, the young opener looked a class apart as he pummelled the UAE bowlers into submission, racing to his fifty off

just 30 balls and bringing up his hundred in only 56 deliveries.

He then shared a 212-run stand with George to completely flatten the hosts' attack. His fiery innings finally came to an end in the 33rd over when he was bowled by spinner Suri.

After his dismissal, the middle-order maintained the tempo, with Vedant Trivedi (38), Abhigyan Kundu (32 not out) and Kanishk Chouhan (28) keeping the runs flowing to take India past the coveted 400-run mark.

Faced with a daunting target, UAE lost two wickets inside the first four overs, before the quick dismissals of Muhammad Rayan, Ayaan Misbah and Ahmed Khudadad in the space of nine balls left them tottering at 48 for 5, effectively ending the chase.

Series of Israeli strikes hit Lebanon

AFP

Beirut, Dec 12: A series of Israeli strikes hit south and east Lebanon on Friday, state media reported, as Israel's army said it was targeting Hezbollah sites, the latest such raids despite a year-old ceasefire.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported strikes in around a dozen locations, including up to around 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the Israeli border, citing at times "heavy raids."

Israel has kept up strikes on Lebanon despite a November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end more than a year of hostilities with the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, and has also kept troops in five areas it deems strategic.

The Israeli military said in a



statement that its forces "struck a training and qualification compound" used by Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force where operatives "underwent shooting exercises and additional training on the use of various types of weapons."

The army also "struck additional Hezbollah military infrastructure in several areas in southern Lebanon," it said.

According to the ceasefire,

Hezbollah was required to pull its forces north of the Litani River, some 30 kilometers from the border with Israel, and have its military infrastructure there dismantled.

Under a government-approved plan, Lebanon's army is to dismantle Hezbollah's military infrastructure south of the Litani by the end of the year, before tackling the rest of the country.

India slip to sixth in WTC after NZ outclass West Indies in key Test



PTI

Dubai, Dec 12: India on Friday slipped a rung to sixth position on the World Test Championship standings after New Zealand's comprehensive nine-wicket victory against the West Indies in Wellington propelled them to the third place.

Runners-up in the first two WTC cycles, India were placed fifth after they were blanked 2-0 by South Africa at home last month with New Zealand occupying the sixth position. However, the table saw a major turnaround after the Kiwis' big

win in the second Test at Basin Reserve on Friday.

Former champions Australia continue to hold the top position with 100 percentage points (win-loss percentage) with South Africa in second place with 75 percentage points.

Sri Lanka (66.67) and Pakistan (50) occupy the fourth and fifth position respectively.

New Zealand have so far accumulated 66.67 percentage points, while India have a win-loss percentage of 48.15.

India can drop further down to seventh if England stage a comeback against Australia

in the Ashes. The Aussies lead the series 2-0 with three more matches to play.

India's next assignment is against Sri Lanka in August next year.

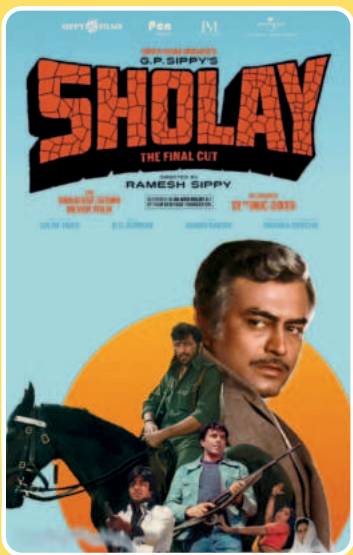
With the latest result, New Zealand have also boosted their prospects of a second appearance in the World Test Championship Final.

The Black Caps' bowlers did the damage on the third day at Basin Reserve, with Jacob Duffy's five-wicket haul helping the hosts dismiss the West Indies for just 128 in their second innings.

That left New Zealand requiring 56 for victory and a 1-0 series lead and Devon Conway (28 not out) and Kane Williamson (16 not out) guided them home after the early loss of skipper Tom Latham for nine.

The victory saw New Zealand earn 12 valuable WTC points and allowed the 2021 winners to jump in front of Pakistan and India and join Sri Lanka in third place on the standings.

The third Test between New Zealand and West Indies will commence in Mount Maunganui on December 18.



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