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Pulse Polio Campaign

"Do **Blood** Zindagi Ki"

"Stop polio at the doorstep – immunize every child."



Department of Information & Public Relations, J&K



Polio Day

21 December 2025
Sunday

In all districts

Ensure every child under 5 years of age gets polio drops everytime

Dated: 15-12-2025
DIPK-9021/25

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Lok Sabha approves supplementary demands for grants for 2025-26

- Rs 2504 crore for Ladakh for reorganisation liabilities
- Hill Councils to get additional Rs 148 crore
- J&K gets Rs 340 crore additional for 624-MW Kiru, JTFRP projects

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Dec 15: The Lok Sabha on Monday approved the supplementary demands for grants for the financial year 2025-26, seeking an additional Rs 41455 crore, of which Rs 2504 crore has been earmarked for the Union Territory of Ladakh to be transferred to the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on account of the apportionment of liabilities between the two Union Territories.



As per the supplementary demands for grants, a copy of which is in possession of news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Rs 2504.46 crore has been allocated to Ladakh to meet additional expenditure for transfer to the UT of Jammu & Kashmir on account of apportionment of liabilities between the two UTs. According to the

apportionment of liabilities worked out between J&K and Ladakh UTs, two percent of the total liabilities of the erstwhile state of J&K-Rs 2504.46 crore—were transferred to the Union Territory of Ladakh. Post the abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, a three-member committee headed by former J

PAHALGAM **ATTACK** CASE

In 1,597-page chargesheet, NIA names 3 dead terrorists, Pak handler as accused



Ahmad Taimur

Srinagar, Dec 15: The National Investigation Agency on Monday filed the chargesheet in the Pahalgam terror attack that had left 26 civilians, mostly tourists, dead on April 22 this year, naming six persons, including three dead terrorists and a Pakistan-based handler as accused in the case.

The anti-terror agency filed the chargesheet in the terror attack case after 7-and-a-half months in a special designated court in Jammu.

According to details available with news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the NIA has named the banned terror outfit



Lashkar-e-Toiba and its proxy offshoot - The Resistance Front (TRF) in the chargesheet. It has also named three Pakistani terrorists, who were involved in the attack and later killed in operation

Mahadev in Srinagar, in the chargesheet. The terrorists include, Sulaiman Shah, Hamza Afghani and Jibril.

Two over ground workers (OGWs), who had provided logistics support, shelter and

food day before the attack to the terrorists, have also been named in the chargesheet. They include Bashir Ahmad Jothar and Parvez Ahmad. The NIA also produced blood samples and hair strands of the deceased as evidence in the special court while submitting the chargesheet.

At least 26 civilians were killed and many others were injured after terrorists attacked a group of tourists in the Baisaran Valley of Pahalgam on April 22 this year. This was one of the deadliest terror attacks in the country in recent history.

To avenge the attack, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 and 8 to destroy terror

Fraud recruitment: Axe falls on 103 firemen

Probe reveals tampered exams, inflated marks, fabricated digital records

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 15: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Monday terminated 103 firemen from the Fire and Emergency Services Department after a probe found the 2020 recruitment process to be fraudulent.

According to an order, a copy of which lies with news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the appointments were illegal from the outset, as they were secured through tampering of examination records and manipulation of results.

The decision followed findings of a government-appointed inquiry committee and an investigation by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Jammu and Kashmir.

The inquiry committee, set up by the government in December 2022 to examine

allegations of irregularities in the recruitment of firemen and fireman drivers, submitted its report in February 2024.

Based on its recommendations, the ACB registered a criminal case in January 2025 and carried out a detailed investigation.

As per the order, the ACB found evidence of tampering with OMR answer sheets, fabrication of scanned examination records, manipulation of merit lists and digital data, and deliberate awarding of marks far beyond what candidates had actually scored.

The investigation also recorded instances of criminal conspiracy and admissions by some beneficiaries. The probe concluded that 106 candidates had benefited from the manipulated recruitment process.

However, the appointments of three

TERMINATED

Political interference in institutions unacceptable: CM Omar, says MLAs deserve respect in decisions

Clarifies 'vote chori' issue Congress agenda, INDIA bloc not involved

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Dec 15: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday reiterated that political interference in the functioning of institutions is unacceptable and must be addressed firmly. He said elected representatives deserve due respect and should be properly consulted in administrative decisions.

Omar further added that the INDIA alliance has no involvement in the "vote chori" issue, which is being raised solely by the Congress party.

Speaking to reporters

CM e-inaugurates, lays foundation of projects in Sgr
Distributes sanction letters to Mission YUVA, HADP beneficiaries



after e-inaugurating and laying foundation stones for developmental projects worth Rs 37.92 crore at Srinagar's SKICC, CM Omar described recent

reports of political meddling in corporations and departments as "unfortunate and worrying". "Political | More on P6

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Dec 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday e-inaugurated and in virtual mode laid foundation stone of several key developmental projects worth 37.92 crore in Srinagar

district, aimed at strengthening urban infrastructure, improving civic amenities and enhancing the quality of life of the people.

The e-inauguration and e-laid foundation ceremony was held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference | More on P6

Achan land-fill site, traffic congestion grave challenges: CM

Promises long-term solution

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Dec 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday chaired a high-level review meeting at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) to assess the overall developmental scenario of Srinagar district and obtain first-hand feedback on public issues from elected representatives.

The meeting undertook a detailed review of sector-wise and Assembly Constituency-wise implementation of government flagship schemes and key development projects being executed under various budgetary components.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder | More on P6

'34% power deficit' looms in J&K, Ladakh amid cold wave

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Dec 15: Amid persistent cold temperatures, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh is likely to witness a power deficit of more than 34 percent in the month of December.

The officials according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said that in the anticipated power supply position in the northern region for December-2025, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh is likely to have a power shortage of 34.2 percent.

The official figures reveal that there is an availability of just 2460 Megawatts (MWs) against a requirement of 3737 MWs in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. It also reveals that there is a shortage of 1277 MWs.

Another official document accessed by KNO read, "With the increase in winter, demand of J&K control area is on a higher side and it is hovering around 3200MW."

It also said that the heating load is also | More on P6

Environmentalists express concern as water sources turned into garbage dumps

Illegal dumping, plastic waste disrupt natural water systems, risk disease outbreaks

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Dec 15: Indiscriminate dumping of garbage, polythene and other solid waste along and inside water bodies across Kashmir has emerged as a serious environmental and public health concern.

From small nallahs and natural springs to rivers and streams, vital water resources are increasingly being used as



dumping grounds, resulting in alarming levels of pollution.

Ironically, many of these polluted water bodies serve as primary sources for hundreds of drinking water supply schemes

operated by the Public Health Engineering (PHE) department.

Experts told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that continued contamination poses a | More on P6

Night temps witness marginal rise in J&K, fog persists

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 15: Minimum temperatures across several parts of Jammu and Kashmir recorded a marginal rise on Monday compared to the previous day, though cold conditions continued in many areas, particularly in the Kashmir and Ladakh region, officials said.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) in the Kashmir region, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of 1.9 degrees Celsius, slightly lower than Sunday's 2.0 degrees Celsius.

Qazigund saw a notable rise,

with temperature settling at 2.2 degrees Celsius compared to 0.8 degrees Celsius a day earlier, while Pahalgam recorded 2.2 degrees Celsius against 2.4 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

Kupwara also witnessed a slight increase, with the mercury at 1.6 degrees Celsius compared to 1.2 degrees Celsius previously.

Kokernag recorded a minimum of 2.4 degrees Celsius up from 0.8 degrees Celsius while Gulmarg registered 1.0 degree Celsius, marginally lower than Sunday's 1.4 degrees Celsius.

Pampore cooled slightly to 0.5 degrees Celsius from 1.0 degrees Celsius. | More on P6

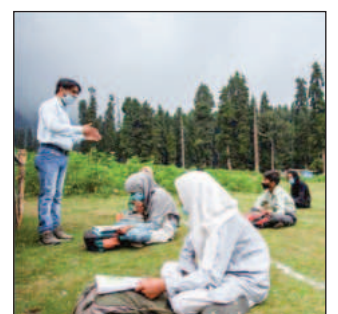
Literacy rate in J&K at 82% as per PLFS 2023-24: Govt

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Dec 15: The literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir has been recorded at 82 per cent, according to official data tabled in the Lok Sabha.

The information was shared by the Union Ministry of Education in response to an unstarred question. Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary said the figures are based on the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Annual Report 2023-24 conducted by the National Sample Survey Office.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO),



the Minister informed that the Government of India is implementing the New India Literacy Programme (NILP), also known as ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram, from 2022 to | More on P6

CS reviews implementation of District Business Reforms Action Plan

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 15: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Monday held a review to access the implementation of the newly rolled-out District Business Reforms Action Plan (D-BRAP) under the Ease of Doing Business initiative of the Government of India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The review meeting, as per an official statement, coordinated by the Industries & Commerce Department, was attended by Administrative Secretaries and Heads of Departments, along with Deputy Commissioners of all districts through either in person or through video conferencing.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary took a comprehensive appraisal of department-wise services and reform parameters mandated under D-BRAP. He emphasized the need for the Industries & Commerce Department, as the nodal agency, to develop a common real-time dashboard providing a consolidated view of the status of all services across departments and districts. He further directed that all such services be mandatorily integrated with the Single Window System to ensure ease of access and transparency for users.

The Chief Secretary called upon all concerned departments to notify pending services under the Public Services Guarantee Act



(PSGA) with clearly defined timelines and ensure that these services are delivered through online mandates, as envisaged under the D-BRAP framework. He advised departments to draw upon the successful model of Mission YUVA for the integration of digital Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), noting that an effective digital system is already operational under the mission.

Stressing the importance of grassroots-level implementation, the Chief Secretary directed the strengthening and capacity building of District Industries Centres (DICs) to enable effective, timely, and outcome-oriented implementation of the reforms. He also called for the preparation of a roadmap for the establishment of industrial parks as a key objective under D-BRAP to promote district-level industrial growth. Additionally, he asked the departments to address issues related to

the Jan Sugam portal to enhance its accessibility, visibility, and operational efficiency.

Addressing the meeting, Additional Chief Secretary, (Financial Commissioner Revenue), Shaleen Kabra, apprised the participants of the implementation status of land-related reforms under the action plan. He elaborated on the functioning of online services such as demarcation of land, change of land use (CLU), and property registration, stating that these services have been operational for some time, with the remaining components expected to be completed shortly.

Additional Chief Secretary, Power Development Department, Shailendra Kumar, underscored the importance of onboarding all districts onto a single standardized dashboard to ensure uniformity in service delivery parameters. He emphasized the need for a mission-mode approach, particularly

in view of the DPIIT assessment scheduled for April 2026.

Principal Secretary, Home Department, Chandraker Bharti, highlighted the pivotal role of District Industries Centres as nodal agencies for the implementation of D-BRAP at the district level. He called for re-energizing and strengthening DICs to achieve the objectives of the reform plan in letter and spirit.

Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department, Vikramjit Singh, presented the overall framework of the D-BRAP and informed that 46 services have been identified by DPIIT for digitization. These services are to be notified under the PSGA, delivered through online mandates, and monitored via a real-time dashboard by the respective government authorities.

The Director, Industries, Jammu, Arun Manhas, briefed the meeting on the department-wise

categorization of services, detailing the responsibilities of departments and districts in ensuring their smooth implementation. He also presented the current online status of each service along with their PSGA notification status. He informed that a real-time monitoring dashboard, as per DPIIT guidelines, is to be developed showcasing the significant components for both e-services and inspection dashboards.

Regarding the bucket of services coming under the ambit of D-BRAP it was revealed that the same encompasses a wide range of citizen-centric and business-related services, including land demarcation and boundary verification, change in land use, property registration, mutation of property records, digitization of land records, approvals and registrations for setting up play schools and private educational institutions.

It also mandates online issuance of Mandi licenses (APMC), establishment of health clinics, diagnostic testing licenses, permits for goods and passenger transport vehicles, new electricity connections, building plan approvals, permissions for demolition and reconstruction, certificates of vending for street vendors, parking licenses, NoCs for hotels, restaurants and entertainment establishments, water supply connections, shop and establishment registrations, among others.

Sarmad Hafeez inaugurates Exhibition-cum-Sale at Kala Kendra



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 15: Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare, Sarmad Hafeez, Monday inaugurated Exhibition-cum-Sale organized by J&K Women's Development Corporation and sponsored by National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC), Ministry for Minorities Affairs, at Kala Kendra, here.

Around 80 beneficiaries/SHGs are participating in the event.

The Commissioner Secretary, as per an official statement, inspected stalls and interacted with the exhibitors. He appreciated the efforts of the management for bringing out the

exhibitors from almost all districts of the UT. This will provide them a market platform to exhibit and sale their products besides enthrusting a healthy competition among the women to develop products for better market.

Various handicraft products handmade cushions, Suits, Kashmiri Shawls, Bed Sheets, Paper Machine, Crewel Embroidery Items, Sozni Embroidery Items, Jute Accessories, and Dry Fruits are being displayed in the exhibition stalls.

Managing Director, Women's Development Corporation, Managing Director, SC/ST/OBC Development Corporation and other officers of the department were present in the occasion.

'Yuva Vani 2.0' youth sensitisation workshop held in Ganderbal

DC presides over event, releases booklet on 'Kisan Sampark Abhiyan- JKCIIP'

KT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 15: Agriculture department Ganderbal Monday organised a district-level sensitization workshop 'Yuva Vani 2.0', a large-scale Youth Club campaign under the JKCIIP (Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project).

The workshop was organized for identified Youth Clubs from designated blocks of the district to equip the youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle pressing environmental challenges. The training sessions, as per an official statement, focused on three critical areas viz. rejuvenation of water bodies, solid waste management and weather awareness.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore presided over the event, and released a booklet on 'Kisan Sampark Abhiyan- JKCIIP'.

Addressing the gathering, DC highlighted the pivotal role of youth in nation-building and environmental stewardship. He encouraged the club members to act as ambassadors of change in their respective blocks, taking the lessons learned from the workshop back to their communities. He said this workshop holds immense significance to train Youth Club members to engage with the community for environmental conservation.

JKPDA meets Controller Legal Metrology J&K



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 15: The Jammu and Kashmir Petroleum Dealers Association (JKPDA) Monday called on the Controller, Legal Metrology, Jammu and Kashmir, Shiv Kumar Gupta, to discuss key issues and operational challenges being faced by petroleum dealers across the Union Territory.

The delegation, as per an official statement, led by JKPDA President, Rahul Gupta, highlighted the importance of close coordination between the Legal Metrology Department and petroleum dealers to ensure smooth operations and effective compliance with prescribed regulatory standards.

During the interaction, the Controller, Legal Metrology, assured the delegation of full cooperation from the department. He emphasised strict adherence to legal provisions, transparency in day-to-day operations, and prompt redressal of consumer grievances, reiterating that consumer trust and satisfaction

remain the cornerstone of the petroleum retail sector.

The Controller further advised the dealers to ensure timely submission of applications for reverification of dispensing units strictly in accordance with the prescribed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). He stressed the need to ensure accurate quantity and quality delivery of petroleum products at all times.

Dealers were also advised to maintain duly verified capacity measures of appropriate capacity, such as 5 litres or 10 litres, and to periodically check the accuracy of fuel dispensers so that consumers are neither short-delivered nor misled in any manner.

Responding to the issues raised, the JKPDA delegation assured the Controller that the association and its members would strictly adhere to all the guidelines and directions issued by the Legal Metrology Department and would extend full cooperation in ensuring compliance with all statutory requirements.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION ANANTNAG

NIT NO 119 OF R&B/Anantnag/2025-26/E-TENDERING/10010-19 DATED 13-12-2025

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory of J&K e-tenders are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc.(in Rs)	Earnest Money(In Rs)	Time of Completion	Major Head of Account	Class of Contractor
1.	Construction of Zonal Scada Center at Sarnal Anantnag – Civil Works (Construction of Building)	220.46 Lacs Contract Price exclusive of GST: 186.83 + (18% GST Amount 33.63)	5500	440920/-	02 Years	M.H 4801	AAY Class Only

Project Authority: Superintending Engineer O&M Circle Bijbehara.

Position of AAA: Accorded Vide Order No. SEB/O&M/Cir/TS-Bij/61 of 2025, Dated 11.07.2025.

Position of TS: Accorded Vide Order No. CE/R&B/SK/TS/258 of 2025-26, Dated 12.12.2025.

1. The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms-and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental websitewww.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

S. No.	Particulars	Dated
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	13-12-2025 From 13-12-2025 To 20-12-2025 (04:00PM)
2	Period of Downloading of bidder documents	20-12-2025 (04:00PM)
3	Bid submission Start Date	13-12-2025 (04:00PM)
4	Bid Submission End Date	20-12-2025 (04:00PM)
5	Date and time of opening of bid(online)	22-12-2025 (11:00AM) In the office of Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Anantnag

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / receipt (Under MH- 0059 PWD) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Anantnag [Tender Inviting Authority] (NIT No. Name of Work/Item No. to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt)(Refer Govt. order No. O.M No. A/24 (2017)-651 Dt 07-06-2018 (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and EMD (2% of advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Anantnag (Tender receiving Authority). (The Date of EMD (CDR/FDR/BG) should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date and validity of EMD at the time of opening of Bids shall be a period of 45 Days beyond Bid Validity of 120 Days). The same EMD should not be used in more than one Tender/Bid.

2. All the Bidders have to submit Earnest Money/Bid Security (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG. Non submission of Earnest Money/Bid Security shall render the bidder as No-responsive.

3. The 1st lowest responsive (Successful) Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Anantnag (Tender receiving authority) within 07 Days before fixation of Contract and shall be released 60 days after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work. The date of Performance Security (CDR/FDR/BG) should be after the date of issuance of letter/LOI to deposit the performance security. Failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non-responsive and case for debarring of the Contractor be forwarded to Higher Authorities for a period of 01 Year.

4. The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG of the successful Bidder shall be released after receiving Performance security @5% of the allotted cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and same shall be released 60 Days after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work.

5. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Anantnag

6. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical Bid

7. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

a. Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in to acquaint bid submission process.

b. To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendors.

c. The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No Financial bid will be accepted in physical form.

d. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.

e. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with bid.

f. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents including tender document fee in terms of soft copies with technical bid.

Note:- Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.

8. The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.

9. Scanned copy of cost of tender document in the shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt in favour of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Anantnag (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date)and EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Anantnag must be uploaded with the documents of the bid. The Original Treasury Challan (Cost of Tender Document), EMD and other relevant bid documents shall be obtained from the lowest bidder before the fixation of the Contract.

10. Bidders are advised not to make any change in BOQ (Bill of Quantities) contents. In no case they should attempt to create similar BOQ manually.

11. Price escalation and taxes: The %age quoted by the bidder entirely in Indian Rupees, shall be deemed to include price escalation upon completion of the work. Deduction on account of taxes shall be made from the bills of the contractor on gross amount of the bill as per the rates prevailing at the time of recovery.

12. Bidders are advised to use "My Documents" area in their user on R&B e-Tendering portal to store such documents as are required.

13. All other terms and conditions are as same as laid in PWD Form 25.

(Er. Syed Ishfaq Ahmad)
Executive Engineer,
R&B Division Anantnag

DIPK-8998/25
DATED: 15-12-2025

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STALLS

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

(Tele-fax No: 019-2496089)

Subject:- Refilling of various fire extinguishers
at Govt. LD Hospital, Srinagar

Ref :This office NIT No: M&HDS/TS
/2025-26/98/e-tendering Dated: 12.11.2025.

CANCELLATION

In view of minimum number of bidders not qualifying for the opening of price bid , the above referred e-NIT issued by this office is here by cancelled.

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

No: M&HDS/TS/6981-84
DIPK-9017/25
DATED: 15-12-2025 Dated:15.12.2025

Kashmir's hotel bookings hinge on snowfall forecast

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 15: With the Valley yet to witness its first major snowfall, Kashmir's winter tourism is off to a slow start as hotel bookings across popular destinations remain below expectations.

Stakeholders, however, remain hopeful that the moment snow blankets the mountains and plains, the sector will see an immediate revival.

Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Hoteliers Club, Mushtaq Chaya said that hotel occupancy across major resorts is currently low.

"Whether it's Gulmarg, Pahalgam or Sonmarg, the bookings are minimal. Once it snows, we are sure the numbers will rise sharply," he said, adding that winter tourism in Kashmir is directly linked to



snowfall. Chaya said they are hopeful of a good winter season, but only for snowfall. "Snow

is the biggest attraction in Kashmir's winter calendar. One good spell of snowfall changes everything," he added. Echoing

“ EVERY SECOND CALL WE RECEIVE IS ABOUT SNOWFALL. Tourists are keen but waiting for snow before they finalise their plans

similar views, Rouf Tramboo, President of the Travel Agents Association of Kashmir (TAAK), told KNO that while travel agents are getting queries, most tourists are holding back on confirmations. "Every second call we receive is about snowfall. Tourists are keen but waiting for snow before they finalise their plans," he said. Tramboo said the number will be known after snowfall, adding that this winter's expectations are good.

Sajad, a hotelier from Gulmarg, said

that inquiries for Christmas and New Year are increasing, but confirmed bookings are still moderate. "Visitors are hopeful about snowfall, and so are we. Once snow arrives, Gulmarg will witness a rush," he said.

Tourism players said the coming days will be decisive for the season's outlook.

Weather experts have predicted the possibility of light to moderate snowfall in the higher reaches in the coming week, raising hopes among the tourism fraternity—(KNO)

CM Omar unveils Jammu Marathon logo

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Dec 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday expressed hope that the maiden edition of the Jammu Marathon, scheduled to be held on March 29, 2026, will emerge as one of the iconic events on the Indian running calendar. He was speaking at the official launch of the Jammu Marathon at a ceremony held at Hari Niwas Palace here.

The launch event was attended by Minister for Youth Services and Sports Satish Sharma, MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi, former minister Ajjatshatru Singh, Additional Chief Secretary Tourism Ashish Chandra Verma, international fitness icon, model and actor Milind Soman, Director Tourism Jammu Vikas Gupta, and other senior officers and stakeholders.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister unveiled the official logo, medal and merchandise of the Jammu Marathon. He also launched the marathon's official website, opened registrations, and released the teaser video for the event.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said he firmly believes that the Jammu Marathon will carve out a distinct place for itself among major running events



in the country, owing to its unique route that showcases the city's rich cultural and heritage landmarks. He noted that the marathon route will pass through several iconic locations, including the Raghunath Temple, historic places and Mubarak Mandi, offering participants a rare blend of fitness, heritage and scenic beauty. Sharing his personal journey into long-distance running, the Chief Minister recounted how he began running almost accidentally and gradually developed a deep passion for marathons. He said that from modest runs of five to eight kilometres, he unexpectedly found himself completing much longer distances, which eventually inspired him to participate in major

marathons across the country.

The Chief Minister said that he plans to participate in the Jammu Half Marathon on March 29 and encouraged citizens to begin their preparation well in advance. "From today itself, those who intend to run in Jammu must start preparing, because this is an iconic event," he remarked.

He also announced that, keeping in view feedback received from local runners after previous marathon events, the prize structure has been suitably modified to ensure greater participation and recognition of runners from Jammu and Kashmir. Besides the half marathon, 10K and 5K categories have also been included to encourage participation from people of all ages

and fitness levels. "Now there is no excuse. One doesn't have to run 21 kilometres—there are 10K and 5K options as well, and everyone can earn a medal," he said.

Calling upon citizens to embrace fitness as a way of life, the Chief Minister urged people to "take out their running shoes, remove the rust, clean them and get ready," adding that events like the Jammu Marathon promote healthier lifestyles and community participation. Speaking on the occasion, Milind Soman described the Jammu Marathon as an amazing initiative, stating that Jammu and Kashmir will not be left behind in the fitness movement. Praising the Chief Minister's commitment to fitness, Milind Soman, who is also promotional ambassador for Jammu Marathon, said that the region does not need any other inspiration when it has a leader like Omar Abdullah who leads from the front. He urged people of all age groups to participate in the marathon and begin their fitness journey through running, assuring that he would be present with the runners on March 29, 2026.

The Jammu Marathon is being positioned as a major sporting and tourism event, aimed at promoting fitness, showcasing Jammu's heritage, and placing the city firmly on the national marathon map.

BJP deploys Sunil Sharma for Assam polls

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 15: After his stellar performance in the 2024 Jammu & Kashmir Assembly polls and pulling off a stunning victory for the party in the recent Rajya Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has entrusted its seasoned tactician from Jammu & Kashmir, Sunil Kumar Sharma, with a key role in Assam's political battlefield.

The BJP national president JP Nadda has approved the appointment of Sharma, Leader of Opposition in the J&K Assembly, as election co-in-charge for Assam, where the party is aiming for a hat-trick victory in the Assembly elections likely to take place in March–April 2026. Sharma has been deployed in the Northeastern state of Assam, where the demography and electoral equations are to some extent similar to those of Jammu & Kashmir.

The BJP high command was impressed by Sharma's maneuvering in the recent Rajya Sabha elections, when eight MLAs cross-voted and handed a humiliating defeat to the National Conference (NC) on the fourth seat. While the BJP polled 32 votes-four more than its assembly strength-three MLAs supporting the ruling alliance deliberately cancelled their ballots, while another MLA, either intentionally or unintentionally, cast an extra vote in favor of NC's Gurwinder Singh Oberoi despite being asked to vote for Imran Nabi Dar.

It is widely believed that Sharma managed to secure the support of these eight MLAs, six of whom are reportedly from the



Kashmir Valley.

In the 2024 Assembly polls, Sharma spearheaded the BJP's campaign in the Chenab Valley, delivering the party victory on four out of eight seats.

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has welcomed the appointment of Baijayant Panda, BJP national vice-president, as election in-charge for Assam, along with Sunil Sharma and Darshana Ben Jardosh as election co-incharges.

"Pleased to welcome Hon'ble @BJP4India Vice President, Shri @Pandajay Ji as the Election In-Charge for the upcoming Assam Legislative Assembly elections 2026," he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

He added that they are confident, under Panda Ji's guidance, the NDA will secure a historic third consecutive mandate to serve the people of Assam. "I also welcome Hon'ble Union Minister Smt. @Darshanajardosh Ji & MLA Shri Sunil Kumar Sharma Ji as Election Co-Incharges," he said—(KNO)

Arrange suitable premises for CAT Jammu in a month: SC

KNO

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir administration to arrange suitable premises within a month for the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in Jammu, expressing concern over continued delays in addressing the tribunal's infrastructure needs.

A bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant said the absence of proper facilities was affecting the functioning of the CAT and warned that further inaction could prolong the issue indefinitely.

The Apex Court directed both authorities to ensure that the tribunal is provided operational space within the stipulated timeframe.

During the hearing, the Centre informed the bench that a building under the Jammu Development Authority had been identified after an earlier proposal to shift the tribunal to a private premises could not be implemented due to ownership-related issues.



The court asked the authorities to take immediate steps to make the identified building functional.

The bench also emphasised the need for a permanent CAT complex in Jammu.

It also directed the Centre and the Union Territory administration to identify land for a dedicated building and begin the process within three months.

A status report on the progress has been sought by the end of February next year.

Raising concerns over staffing arrangements, the court reiterated that judicial and quasi-judicial

bodies should not depend on outsourced personnel, citing issues related to confidentiality, record-keeping and institutional continuity.

The bench noted that such arrangements were not an appropriate long-term solution.

The matter arises from a petition filed in 2020 pointing to inadequate infrastructure and manpower at the CAT Jammu bench. The court observed that these deficiencies had been impacting day-to-day functioning and required urgent corrective measures—(KNO)

Srinagar weaver wins national award

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 15: For Manzoor Ahmad Khan, a 68-year-old carpet weaver from Kathi Darwaza, Rainawari Srinagar, the National Award he received from the President of India is more than just recognition, as it is a tribute to a lifetime of quiet perseverance and passion for Kashmir's world-renowned carpet craft.

"I have been working on carpets for over 50 years," Khan said, his voice calm but proud. "This art has been my life. Even when the work slowed down and the world moved on, I stayed with my loom. I never thought of quitting."

Khan said none of his family members or relatives continued this tradition. "My son is into his own business, and no one from my family chose this line. But I never gave up. Someone had to keep this art



breathing," he said. He also recalled his early days as a teenage apprentice. "I started when I was just a boy. My teacher taught me how each knot carries a story. I never imagined that one day, the President of India would honour me for it," he said, smiling softly.

Khan said his intricately woven carpets are celebrated for their precision and traditional Kashmiri motifs. "This award gives me strength, not just for myself, but for every artisan

who works in silence. It means our art still matters," he added. Notably, Manzoor Ahmad Khan, is among the few remaining traditional weavers in Srinagar who continue to work on hand-knotted carpets entirely by hand, a process that can take months to complete a single piece. He received the National Award from President Droupadi Murmu and earned a Certificate of Excellence for preserving Jammu and Kashmir's craft heritage—(KNO)

Chadoora brick kiln demolition sparks row

NAVEED UL HAQ

Budgam, Dec 15: Demolition of illegal brick kilns in Chadoora triggered a row on Monday, with National Conference (NC) workers staging a protest alleging misbehavior by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Chadoora with the area's MLA during the drive.

The protest was held at the MLA Office Chadoora.

Protesters demanded action against the SDM, terming his conduct "arrogant" and "undemocratic".

The protest followed a complaint lodged a day earlier by MLA Chadoora, Ali Mohammad Dar, at Police Station Chadoora, in which he alleged humiliation during the demolition drive.

Talking to reporters, Dar said the matter was serious and insisted that "no officer is above the law". He also alleged that the demolition drive was selective.

As per the MLA, the dispute stemmed from a verbal exchange at the demolition site after he arrived to review the operation. He alleged that the SDM addressed him in an inappropriate manner, which he said amounted to public humiliation during an official drive.

However, after the demolition drive, the district administration Budgam on its social media platform facebook said that the drive was part of an ongoing crackdown on illegal brick kilns operating without mandatory registration and environmental clearances.

The three unauthorized brick kiln units were demolished in Behrampora and Kultreh villages of tehsil Chadoora under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat (IAS). The administration reiterated a policy of zero tolerance towards environmental violations.

Officials said similar action had earlier been taken in Beerwah and other parts of the district as part of the same enforcement campaign—(KNO)

Ladakh pass rates fall post CBSE transition: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Union Government Monday acknowledged that the pass percentages for Class-10 and Class-12 students in Ladakh's government schools have declined. This drop follows the region's transition from the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary informed Lok Sabha that CBSE's competency-based examination pattern differs significantly from the JKBOSE—



leading to initial difficulties for both students and teachers in Ladakh. He added

that the region's short academic year and prolonged harsh winters further

disrupt learning continuity. The Minister informed the house that the UT administration of Ladakh has initiated several measures to improve academic outcomes including winter coaching camps with residential facilities in Leh and Kargil, establishment of well-equipped libraries, laboratories and ICT labs in secondary and higher secondary schools, and introduction of vocational courses across schools. He further said that 37 PM SHRI schools, including 21 in Kargil, have been approved with enhanced infrastructure and smart classrooms and 130 subject-specific contractual lecturers have

been appointed in Kargil district.

In addition, the minister further informed that around 1,200 teachers have undergone CBSE-oriented training to familiarise them with new assessment patterns, and pre-board exams under the CBSE format are being conducted twice a year. According to the government, these interventions have started yielding results, with the Class 10 pass percentage improving from 53 per cent to 73 per cent and Class 12 results rising from 44 per cent to 48 per cent between the academic years 2023–24 and 2024–25 in Ladakh—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

J&K’s Lok Adalat Success Must Be Institutionalised

The recent settlement of over 91,750 cases in a single day across Jammu & Kashmir during the 4th National Lok Adalat is a monumental achievement that speaks volumes about the power of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). This initiative, steered by the judiciary and the J&K Legal Services Authority, is a profound affirmation of justice that is accessible, affordable, and amicable. For a region rebuilding its social fabric, the Lok Adalat model offers not just

legal closure, but also a vital pathway to communal harmony and public trust. The benefits of this system are transformative. By resolving disputes through conciliation and consensus rather than adversarial contest, Lok Adalats alleviate the immense psychological and financial burden of protracted litigation. They provide a dignified forum where parties - be they families in matrimonial disputes, accident victims seeking compensation, or traders in commercial disagreements - can

find mutually acceptable solutions. The staggering settlement amount of over Rs 76 crores in J&K alone underscores the tangible economic relief provided, money that flows directly to citizens instead of being exhausted in legal fees and prolonged procedures. For J&K, with its unique challenges and aspirations, the success of the Lok Adalat holds special significance. The high number of resolved cases, spanning motor accident claims, land issues, and utility disputes,

directly addresses everyday grievances that, if left festering, can erode faith in governance. By bringing justice to the doorstep, through physical benches in districts and innovative virtual outreach, the initiative strengthens the bond between the citizen and the state. It demonstrates that the system is responsive and empathetic, particularly towards the marginalised. The pre-litigation counselling and extensive awareness campaigns conducted beforehand are the

unsung heroes of this success. They reflect a system that proactively prevents conflict escalation, promoting a culture of dialogue over discord. This is essential for lasting peace. The J&K Legal Services Authority’s commitment to strengthening this mechanism must be hailed and sustained. The Lok Adalat has proven its worth; it is now imperative to institutionalise its spirit, ensuring that for every citizen of J&K, justice is not a distant promise, but a delivered reality.

Lok Adalats: Justice That Speaks For The People

Accessible, compassionate and timely resolution for every citizen

Press Information Bureau

Where Justice Meets People, Hope Finds Its Voice

On a quiet Saturday morning in a small district town, the usually silent court complex hums with a different kind of energy. Outside, you see farmers with land disputes, shopkeepers resolving payment issues, families settling long-pending claims, and bank officials sifting through files, all gathered with a shared hope that today, years of waiting may finally end. There is no tense courtroom drama, no intimidating legal jargon. Instead, there is conversation, negotiation, and an unusual sense of relief that justice might actually be simple.

This is the spirit of the Lok Adalat, India's people-centric forum where disputes are settled not by contest, but by consensus. Lok Adalats have become one of India's most trusted alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Whether held in court premises, community halls, or virtually through E-Lok Adalats, they bring justice closer to citizens, saving time, reducing costs, and cutting the burden on courts. Unlike formal courts, Lok Adalats are informal, friendly platforms where parties sit together and work out on solutions they can both accept. There are no court fees, no complex procedures, and no winners or losers. The effort is not to decide who is right, but to help people find a practical, fair, and quick resolution so they can move on with their lives.

Statutory Foundation: The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987

By embedding Lok Adalats within the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, India ensures a legally robust & deeply humane model of justice.

Lok Adalats did not emerge in isolation, they evolved from a broader national commitment to ensure that every person, regardless of income or background, can access justice with dignity. This commitment took a concrete legal form through the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. This is a landmark legislation that transformed free legal aid and alternative dispute resolution from scattered initiatives into a structured, nationwide system.

The Act lays down the structure, powers, and functions of

Lok Adalats, ensuring that settlements reached through conciliation carry the same legal force as a court decree.

The statutory backing enhances credibility and also reinforces confidence among citizens and institutions to resolve disputes amicably outside traditional courtrooms.

No court fee is payable when a matter is filed in a Lok Adalat.

Key Legal Provisions of Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987

Establishment of Lok Adalats at various levels (State, District, Taluk, High Court, Supreme Court) ensures a nationwide, institutional structure for accessible dispute resolution.

Referral of cases, pending in court or pre-litigation matters, to Lok Adalats to ensure early resolution option without lengthy litigation.

Lok Adalats function on a conciliation model, with a co-operative and non-adversarial approach.

Already paid court fees is refunded when the case is settled, encouraging settlement and relief for litigants.

Award of Lok Adalat is final & binding, deemed as a civil court decree and no appeal is permitted for quick finality and enforceability.

Establishment & jurisdiction of Permanent Lok Adalats for public utility services leads to faster resolutions.

Institutional Architecture: National to Taluk-Level Structure

The 4- tiered institutional design ensures that Lok Adalats are not just symbolic events in major cities but a functioning, accessible mechanism across urban centres, small towns, and rural belts.

The strength of the Lok Adalat system lies in its 4-tiered structure that reaches citizens across every level of governance, from the Supreme Court down to Taluk courts. This institutional framework ensures that no individual is too far from a forum for quick, affordable and conciliatory justice. The structure operates through a coordinated chain of Legal Services Authorities, enabling nationwide uniformity while responding to local needs.

The 4-Tiered Organisational Structure Level & Leadership

Key Functions

National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) under Chief Justice of India

Policy direction, regulations, National Lok Adalat calendar, monitoring and coordination.

State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) under Chief Justice of HC & Executive Chairman Implement NALSA policy, organise Lok Adalats (including High Court matters), legal aid delivery, preventive legal services.

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) under District & Sessions Judge

Coordinate with Taluk Legal Services Committee (TLSCs), organise district-level Lok Adalats, manage legal aid and local implementation.

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) under Seniormost Judicial Officer

Conduct Lok Adalats in taluka/mandal, grassroots legal aid, first-point citizen access.

Through this architecture, the promise of easy, timely, people-centric justice becomes a practical reality for millions.

National Lok Adalats (NLAs): A Mission-Mode Delivery Mechanism

DID YOU KNOW?

Every year, NALSA releases a National Lok Adalat calendar. It announces dates in advance for simultaneous sittings across all courts.

These pre-set dates give courts, lawyers, litigants, and government departments the breathing space to identify cases, prepare files, and encourage settlements ahead of time.

While Lok Adalats operate throughout the year in different jurisdictions, National Lok Adalats extend this framework by conducting simultaneous, nationwide sittings on a single day at all levels of the judiciary and aims at clearing a large volume of cases in a time bound manner. The general procedure of National Lok Adalat ensures that involved parties are given a reasonable opportunity of being heard before referral. Cases (both pre-litigation and pending) are referred to Lok Adalats either by a court or by the Legal Services Authority (be it SLSA or DLSA). A court may refer a pending case when both parties consent, one party applies and the

A Simple, Real Gift: How Books Shape Children’s Minds

Terri D. McFadden

During the holidays, we tend to think big—our minds drifting to bright toys, large boxes, and elaborate gadgets. However, as a pediatrician, I know that some of the most transformative gifts for young children don't require batteries, assembly, or an instruction manual. They weigh just a few ounces, slide neatly into a stocking, and carry inside them something far more powerful than any blinking light: the promise of connection, imagination, and lifelong learning.

I'm talking about books.

For children, especially kids under 5, a book is far more than something to read someday. It's a tool for brain-building, a gateway to connection, and an invitation to slow down together in a season that often encourages the opposite. When we give books during the holidays, we're offering something that lasts long after new toys fade from memory.

This is something I'm reminded of every day in my work with Reach Out and Read, where I talk with parents and caregivers about how early reading supports development. Long before a child can speak or even sit independently, their brain is absorbing and learning from every interaction. A book becomes a perfect holiday gift because it naturally creates these rich developmental moments. It's more than something to open; it's something to share.

Understanding why books are so powerful requires looking at what's happening in the developing brain. In the first five years, a child forms millions of neural connections

every second. This rapid growth that lays the groundwork for language, attention, and emotional regulation, and shared reading can strengthen this process in remarkable ways.

When a caregiver names pictures or describes what's happening on a page, a child isn't just listening — they're actively wiring language pathways. Even babies who don't understand the story benefit from the rhythms of speech, the sound of a familiar voice, and the back-and-forth interaction between themselves and a caregiver while reading. A baby staring at a picture of another baby begins to understand the world around them. A toddler laughing at a silly character learns cause and effect. A preschooler predicting what happens next builds memory and problem-solving skills. In every case, books offer endless opportunities for the brain to grow.

Just as importantly, books support another essential part of early childhood: connection. After all, cognitive growth doesn't happen in isolation. One of the greatest gifts a book provides is the chance for closeness. The holidays can be hectic for families, yet reading with a young child creates a natural pause and a moment to sit close and share an experience. The warmth of a caregiver's voice and the comfort of a familiar story help children feel safe, seen, and loved. These simple routines build emotional security and resilience, giving children gentle ways to explore feelings, routines, and everyday experiences. And what an opportunity for visiting grandparents or other relatives to have a special time and create special memories with the little ones that may not live nearby!



Of course, choosing the right book is part of the fun. Parents and caregivers often wonder which books are best, and the answer is simpler than many expect: Choose books that invite interaction or delight your child. The youngest babies need black-and-white or high-definition books to literally be able to see the pictures. Older infants enjoy sturdy board books with bold, simple images, particularly other babies. Toddlers love repetition and rhymes. Preschoolers lean toward richer storytelling, humor, and books that reflect their everyday lives.

When books celebrate the traditions of the family, be it Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza or

Diwali, families have an opportunity to share their special customs with young readers. While they may not understand every word, they begin to understand that this is a special time for their loved ones. Though I'll always advocate for a literacy-rich home, a large collection isn't required. A handful of well-loved favorites and regular trips to the library can make a meaningful difference, and there is a special joy that comes from unpacking the favorite holiday books for the season!

Even during a busy holiday season, weaving books into daily life does not require perfection. Parents often wish for more time, but shared reading doesn't demand long

stretches of quiet. The interaction matters more than the setting. A page or two before bed, talking about pictures while waiting in a line, or letting a child “read” by babbling all support development. The goal is connection, not choreography.

This is why clinicians and community organizations often highlight books at this time of year. The holidays provide a natural opportunity to remind families that reading isn't simply entertainment, but a part of a child's developmental health. When doctors talk about books during well-child visits or when communities organize holiday book drives, we reinforce the idea that stories support both learning and emotional well-being. But just because reading helps to develop young brains doesn't mean that it can't be loads of fun! This should be a joyous time for children and their special parents and caregivers alike.

And ultimately, this is what makes books such memorable gifts. While toys and technology may dazzle in the moment, books offer something quieter and deeper: the chance to build a child's mind, nurture their emotional world, and strengthen family relationships. Holiday books often become part of family traditions. Children rarely forget the person who curled up beside them and read aloud.

And that may be the greatest holiday gift of all: a moment of connection that becomes part of who a child is becoming.

Terri D. McFadden, MD, FAAP, is a General Pediatrician and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the Emory University School of Medicine.

Psychology Today

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

CS releases books on climate change, floriculture in J&K

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 15: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo Monday released three books authored by Prof. Manoj Nazir and Ms. Ridhima Koul.

Congratulating the authors, the Chief Secretary, as per an official statement, called these publications much-needed to draw attention towards biodiversity, floriculture and climate-related challenges in an ecologically fragile region like J&K where such issues have often remained underrepresented in mainstream discourse.

He remarked that the authors deserve appreciation for documenting and highlighting these important yet neglected aspects through scientific and literary engagement.

The books released include Alchemy of the Red Rose by Prof. Manoj Nazir and Ridhima Koul, The Impact of Climate Change



on Flowering by Prof. Manoj Nazir and Ridhima Koul, and Manoj Nazir: The Man Behind the Gladiolus Revolution in India authored by Ridhima Koul and Dr.Jyotsana Maurya.

Prof. Manoj Nazir is a distinguished scientist in the field of floriculture, widely recognised for spearheading the Gladiolus Revolution in India.

His contributions to plant biotechnology and horticultural research have had a lasting impact on scientific advancement and flower cultivation practices in the country.

Ms. Ridhima Koul is a biotechnology researcher and author with significant research experience in floriculture and plant sciences. Her academic

work and writings focus on strengthening the interface between scientific research and public understanding.

Dr. Jyotsana Maurya is a biotechnology scholar and author, known for her research on medicinal plants and floriculture, and has contributed extensively through scientific publications and books.

Centre details hydropower, solar energy push in J&K

KT News Desk

New Delhi, December 15: The Government of India is implementing major hydropower and renewable energy initiatives in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to strengthen power infrastructure and promote clean energy, the Union Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Shri Shripad Naik, informed the Rajya Sabha Monday in a written reply.

The Minister, as per PIB statement, stated that NHPC Limited, a Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power, is implementing four major hydropower projects in Jammu and Kashmir with a total installed capacity of 3,014 MW through joint venture companies with Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation (JKSPDC). These projects include Ratle (850 MW), Pakal Dul (1000 MW), Kiru (624



MW) and Kwar (540 MW), all located in Kishtwar district. The projects are at various stages of implementation and are scheduled for completion between December 2026 and November 2028.

The Minister further informed that NHPC has three hydropower projects under the planning stage in Jammu and Kashmir, namely Uri-I Stage-II (240 MW) in Baramulla,

Dulhasti Stage-II (260 MW) in Kishtwar, and Sawalkot (1,856 MW) in Ramban and Udhampur districts, with a combined planned capacity of 2,356 MW.

Highlighting the Government's focus on renewable energy, the Minister said that under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, a total of 16,212 rooftop solar systems have been installed in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir as on 11 December 2025. Under the PM-KUSUM scheme, the UT has been allocated 5,000 solar pumps, of which 3,601 pumps have been installed as on 30 November 2025.

The Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with JKSPDC for the development of a 10 MW Solar Photovoltaic project in the UT, which is scheduled to be completed within 12 months of award of work, the minister added.

DC Kulgam flags off farmers for Himachal exposure visit



KT News Desk

KULGAM, DECEMBER 15: Under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam Athar Aamir Khan, Monday flagged off 46 farmers of the district for a five-day exposure visit to Chaudhary Sarwan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishwavidyalaya (CSKHPKV), Palampur (HP) under the Promotion of Oilseeds programme, 2025-26.

The exposure visit aims to familiarize farmers with advanced agricultural technologies, improved oilseed cultivation practices, and innovative farming techniques to enhance productivity and

farmer's income in the district.

On the occasion, the DC, as per an official statement, highlighted the significance of such exposure visits in capacity building of farmers and promoting the adoption of scientific and sustainable agricultural practices under HADP.

Chief Agriculture Officer Kulgam, Farooq Ahmad Reshi, along with other officers of the Agriculture Department, were present on the occasion and assured continued technical support to the farming community.

The initiative is expected to contribute significantly towards strengthening oilseed production and overall agricultural development in Kulgam district.

CS reviews district readiness for 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 15:In a run-up to the nationwide 'Sushasan Saptah – Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign to be observed from December 19 to 25, 2025, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo Monday reviewed the preparedness of districts in a meeting attended by Administrative Secretaries and all Deputy Commissioners.

The meeting, as per an official statement focused on ensuring coordinated planning, effective public outreach and successful implementation of the campaign across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary stressed the importance of sustained public engagement, effective grievance redressal with greater transparency and accountability, and called upon all departments and district administrations to work in close coordination to ensure that the 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign delivers tangible benefits to the people and reinforces the



commitment to citizen-centric governance here.

The Administrative Secretaries also offered their suggestions and strategic inputs to strengthen the coordination, improve monitoring mechanisms and ensure that the objectives of the programme are achieved across all districts.

The Commissioner Secretary, GAD, M.Raju while throwing light on the programme highlighted that 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign is being organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India to promote good governance by resolving public grievances and

improving service delivery at the grassroots level.

As part of the initiative, he added, that the District Collectors will organise special camps at tehsil headquarters, panchayats and other local-level institutions for on-the-spot redressal of public grievances and disposal of service delivery applications. The campaign also focuses on increasing the number of services delivered through online platforms and ensuring timely resolution of grievances registered through special camps, CPGRAMS and State portals.

It was revealed that the initial preparatory phase is to be followed by the implementation phase from December

19 to 25, 2025, during which daily progress will be uploaded on the dedicated portal, capturing data on grievances resolved through special camps, CPGRAMS and State portals, services added for online delivery, disposal of service delivery applications, documentation and dissemination of good governance practices, success stories of grievance resolution and details of outreach and dissemination activities.

During the review, the Deputy Commissioners shared detailed inputs regarding the special camps, grievance redressal drives, service delivery initiatives and awareness programmes proposed to be organised in their districts during the campaign period.

As part of the campaign, district-level dissemination workshops will be organised on December 23, 2025, focusing on good governance practices and initiatives undertaken during the last five years in key sectors such as public service delivery, health, education, grievance redressal and public works.

KVK Bandipora showcases scientific aquatic crop cultivation

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 15: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Bandipora-1, under Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Kashmir (SKUAST-K), organised a technology demonstration on scientific cultivation of aquatic crops at its demonstration farm to promote aquatic plant development and livelihood opportunities through wetland-based agriculture in Kashmir.

The demonstration, as per an official statement, focused on high-potential aquatic crops including Gorgon Nut (Makhana/ Fox Nut), Water Chestnut, and Lotus, which offer strong potential for agricultural diversification, income enhancement, and sustainable utilization of



water-rich ecosystems around Wular Lake.

The initiative was conducted under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, who emphasized promoting aquatic crops as a strategic intervention for diversification of farming systems and enhancement of farmers' income.

The Director Extension,

SKUAST-K, Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth, supported the initiative and emphasized effective technology dissemination, farmer capacity building, and integration of aquatic crops for sustainable livelihoods. She also envisaged developing KVK Bandipora-1 as a Centre of Excellence for aquatic plant development.

The programme gained

added significance following the MoU signed in October between SKUAST Kashmir and ICAR-National Research Centre for Makhana (ICAR-NRCM), Darbhanga, aimed at strengthening collaborative research and development in aquatic crops.

Principal Scientist, ICAR-NRCM, Darbhanga, Prof. Indu Shekhar Singh, conducted live field-based demonstrations on scientific cultivation practices of makhana and water chestnut under local agro-ecological conditions, highlighting their economic viability in Kashmir's wetlands.

Chief Scientist, AICRP, Prof. Syed Zameer Hussain, highlighted the importance of post-harvest management and value addition to enhance profitability from aquatic crops.

DC Shopian reviews preparations for Good Governance Week

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Monday chaired a comprehensive meeting to review preparations for the effective implementation of the Good Governance Week campaign 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore', scheduled to be held from December 19 to 25, 2025.

During the meeting, The DC, as per an official statement, emphasised on the coordinated efforts of all line departments to ensure smooth implementation of the village outreach campaign with focus on citizen-centric delivery of services at the grassroots level.

Tehsildars were designated as Nodal Officers at



Tehsil-level camps, while Block Development Officers (BDOs) were nominated as Nodal Officers at Panchayat-level camps for the campaign period.

The DC directed all line departments to depute their representatives to the designated village level camps and

submit deputation schedules in advance.

Establishment of Registration Desks, Service Delivery Desks and the availability of a dedicated Samadhan Portal at all camps shall be ensured to facilitate prompt redressal of public grievances and delivery of public services.

Reiterating the objective of Good Governance Week, the DC stressed that the campaign aims to take governance to the doorsteps of citizens and ensure transparency, accountability and efficient public service delivery across the district.

The meeting was attended by ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone; ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; ACD, district and sectoral officers,tehsildars and BDOs.

Kishtwar administration drafts action plan to curb child labour

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pankaj Kumar Sharma Monday chaired a meeting of the District Level Task Force Committee (DLTFC) to review and strengthen measures for the regulation and prohibition of child labour in the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, focused on the effective enforcement of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, which prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years and regulates the working conditions of adolescents. The meeting decided to initiate formulation of



a comprehensive action plan to prevent child labour.

The DC emphasized the need for a well-defined strategy and directed the concerned departments to chart out a detailed calendar for district-wide awareness drives aimed at sensitising the public about the

legal and social consequences of child labour.

The DC stressed inter-departmental coordination and directed the concerned departments to ensure a child-labour-free district with special focus on education, rehabilitation and community participation.

Agriculture Deptt holds youth awareness workshop in Kishtwar

KT NEWS DESK

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 15: The Department of Agriculture Kishtwar Monday organised a one-day Youth Club Campaign-cum-Awareness workshop with the aim of sensitising young minds to sustainable agricultural practices, environmental conservation and community development.

The programme, as per an official statement, was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma, who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

Addressing the participants, the Deputy Commissioner underscored the pivotal role of youth in fostering cleanliness, environmental protection and the adoption of



climate-resilient agricultural practices at the grassroots level. He emphasized that empowered and informed youth can act as catalysts for positive change in rural communities.

A total of 10 Youth Clubs, with two clubs from each block—Kishtwar, Palmar, Thakrie, Nagseni and Mughal Maidan—participated in the workshop.

During the programme,

detailed deliberations were held on the role and responsibilities of youth clubs, highlighting their involvement in key community-centric activities such as conducting cleanliness drives, organizing plantation campaigns, supporting rejuvenation of local water bodies and dissemination of weather advisories among farming communities.

Officers from the Agriculture

Department apprised the participants of various government schemes and stressed the importance of youth engagement in environmental protection and sustainable agricultural development.

The workshop concluded with an interactive session encouraging youth club members to actively participate in community-based initiatives and serve as ambassadors of change in their respective areas.

The program was attended by CAO Kushal Chandel; Head KVK, Amitesh Sharma; District Agriculture Officer (DAO), Rajeshwer Singh; Subject Matter Specialist (SMS), Vikas Koushal; Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer (SDAO) Dheeraj Singh along with other officials and stakeholders.

MY Bharat hosts vibrant sports meet in Imamsahib block

Youth showcase sporting excellence

Jahangeer Ganaie

Shopian, Dec 15: The Imamsahib block of south Kashmir's Shopian district came alive with youthful energy and sporting spirit as MY Bharat Youth organised a vibrant block-level sports meet on Monday drawing enthusiastic participation from young athletes across several villages.

The local playground at Jamia Siraj ul Uloom typically used for routine matches, was transformed into a lively sports arena resonating with cheers and applause as boys and girls competed in a range of events including volleyball, badminton, sprint races and other athletic



contests.

The event provided a much-needed platform for rural youth to demonstrate their talent, fitness and competitive zeal.

Adding weight to the programme, representatives from social organisations and MY Bharat functionaries interacted

with participants and applauded the initiative for encouraging a culture of sports and healthy living among youngsters.

Speaking on the occasion, MY Bharat officials said such activities play a crucial role in shaping well-rounded personalities. "Sports instil discipline,

teamwork and self-belief among youth," an official said. "Through MY Bharat, our effort is to ensure that young people in every block get opportunities to engage in structured sporting activities and channel their energy positively."

Principal Siraj ul Uloom Asif



Ahmad present at the event also underlined the social importance of sports. They noted that regular engagement in games and physical activities helps keep youth away from drug abuse and other negative influences, while strengthening bonds within the community.

"Sports fields are spaces of hope and positive engagement," an officer remarked. "When youngsters are busy training and competing, they are less vulnerable to harmful habits. Initiatives like these contribute to a healthier and safer society," said President of Noorkash foundation Jahangeer Ahmad who was also present on the occasion.

Participants expressed excitement and gratitude for the event, terming it a refreshing and motivating experience. "We hardly get such chances to compete at an organised level," said Yasir Ahmad, a volleyball player from a nearby village. "This event motivates us to practice more seriously and aim higher."

Another participant, a young sprinter who won a medal, said the competition boosted his

confidence. "It helped me assess my performance and learn from others. We want such sports meets to be held regularly," he added.

The programme concluded with the distribution of medals, trophies and certificates to winners amid loud cheers from fellow athletes and spectators. Organisers encouraged the youth to continue pursuing sports alongside education and make physical fitness a regular part of their lives.

Residents of Imamsahib welcomed the initiative, saying such events not only energise local youth but also help identify hidden sporting talent in the area. Many hoped that MY Bharat would continue organising inter-block and district-level tournaments in the future, further strengthening the sports ecosystem in south Kashmir.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Lok Sabha approves

Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra and comprising retired IAS officer Arun Goyal and retired Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) officer Giriraj Prasad Gupta, was constituted by the Government of India to work out the distribution of assets and liabilities between the two UTs.

The committee apportioned the assets and liabilities as per Section 84 and Section 85 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

The Union Finance Ministry also allocated Rs 148.64 crore to enhance budget allocation for two Hill Councils in the UT and Rs 20.14 crore as additional expenditure also for it transfer to the UT of Jammu and Kashmir towards the construction of the High Court complex at Jammu.

The Ministry has further kept a budgetary provision of Rs 12.04 crore for Ladakh UT to meet additional expenditure for disaster management and Rs 3 crore for power purchase and procurement of diesel for power generation in far-flung areas.

For Jammu and Kashmir, the Ministry has allocated additional Rs 340.15 crore for meeting additional expenditure towards equity contribution for the 624 MW Kiru project and the Jehlum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP).

Of this, Rs 154.81 crore is earmarked as equity contribution for the Kiru project and Rs 185.34 crore for JTFRP-an externally aided project—(KNO)

In 1,597-page

campus deep inside Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, killing dozens of terrorists.

Meanwhile, in a statement, the NIA said that the chargesheet details Pakistan's conspiracy, roles of the accused, and supporting evidence in the case.

The NIA has charged the banned LeT/TRF as a legal entity for its role in planning, facilitating, and executing the attack. "The attack involved religion-based targeted killings by the Pak-sponsored terrorists".

Pakistani handler terrorist Sajid Jatt is also named as an accused in the 1,597-page chargesheet. "LeT/TRF, as well as the four terrorists, have been charged under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, the Arms Act, 1959, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967," reads the statement.

In its chargesheet, the NIA has also invoked the penal section against the accused for waging war against India. "The NIA, through a meticulous scientific probe spanning the past almost 8 months, had traced the conspiracy in the case to Pakistan, which has been unabatedly sponsoring terrorism against India," it said.

The two accused persons - Parvaiz Ahmad and Bashir Ahmad Jothar - chargesheeted in the case were arrested by the NIA on June 22 this year for harbouring terrorists. "During interrogation, the two men had disclosed the identities of the three armed terrorists involved in the attack, and had also confirmed that they were Pakistani nationals affiliated to proscribed LeT terror outfit. Further investigation in the case is continuing," it said. (KNO)

'34% power

picking up during early morning and night hours. "The demand may further increase in the coming days."

"It has been observed that the 400kV as well as 220kV Bus voltages at various stations in Kashmir valley are remaining critically low also reaching 347kV and 178kV—well below the Indian Electricity Grid Code (IEGC) band i.e. 380kV and 198kV respectively due to low hydro generation and heavy MVAR drawl from the ISTS nodes," it reads.

Pertinently, KNO in November reported that authorities have projected that Jammu and Kashmir will likely have an extra power demand by 49.42 percent by the year 2034-35.

The official had clarified that the peak demand will be more than the average growth saying that the region may likely witness an increase in power demand by 6 percent each year from 2025-26 to 2034-2035.

Stating the year wise growth rate in power demand, authorities have said that in the year Jammu and Kashmir will likely have a five percent extra demand in the year 2025-26 followed by four percent in the year 2026-27, four percent in 2027-28, three percent in 2028-29. (KNO)

Political interference

interference should not take place. These matters must be taken seriously. Earlier,

institutions were accountable to an elected government, but now decisions are being taken without that democratic framework," Omar said, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

He added that the departments, such as the Power Development Corporation, must function independently, free from "external pressure or political motivation".

The Chief Minister further addressed concerns over alleged interference in major national projects. "If my ministers were involved in the interference of a national project like the 850-megawatt Ratle Hydroelectric Project, they would have been raided by the anti-corruption bureau by now. These projects are not only for Jammu and Kashmir but for the entire country and are of national importance. There should be no interference. The agencies should look into it," Omar said.

He also commented on a controversy surrounding the Rs 3,700 crore Chenab power project in Kishtwar, where Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (MEIL), a Hyderabad-based company, alleged political pressure from a local MLA to hire unskilled workers, warning it might pull out of the project.

Without naming anyone, the CM said, "Allegations concern one MLA, while other politicians, including two MLAs from the opposition, are also accused of intervening in local projects."

On local governance, Abdullah stressed that elected MLAs should be treated with dignity and their concerns heard in administrative processes. "With coordination between the MLA and the administration, issues can be resolved amicably," he said, referring to the Chadoora demolition issue.

On development, the Chief Minister e-inaugurated and laid foundation stones for projects aimed at improving civic infrastructure, including the remodelling of Wool Mandi Nowshera, new facilities at GMC Srinagar and the construction of bridges at Gandtal and Sarabagh. He also distributed sanction letters to beneficiaries under 'Mission YUVA' and the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

During a review of ongoing projects under CSS, Capex, SASCI and CDF, Omar stressed timely completion, optimal utilisation of funds and addressing urban challenges such as air pollution, traffic congestion and the Achan landfill site.

On tourism, he said efforts are underway to revive the sector ahead of Christmas and New Year, noting that the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India's annual convention in Srinagar is a positive development.

"While there have been cancellations due to recent tensions, efforts are on to revive the sector ahead of Christmas and New Year," he said. "The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India will soon hold its annual convention in Srinagar, which is a positive step. We must focus on reviving tourism promotion and infrastructure."

CM Omar further said that while the tourism narrative is important, the government must equally prioritise restoring people's confidence in governance and administration.

Clarifying the "vote chori" issue, Omar said it is being raised by the Congress party.

"Every political party has the freedom to set its agenda as it wishes. Congress has made vote theft, or the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), its main political issue. Who are we to tell them not to do it? We will choose our issues, let them choose theirs," he said.

Regarding the NIA filing a charge sheet in the Pahalgam terror attack case, Abdullah said, "The NIA's job was to investigate. Now the charge sheet will be presented, and the court will take its course."

"An investigation has been conducted, and the chargesheet is being filed; the decision will now be taken by the court. There is a law to determine guilt or innocence, and that responsibility lies with the judiciary," he said.

The Chief Minister reiterated that once an investigation is complete, the matter should be left to the courts. "As I have always maintained, whenever any action is taken, or any employee is terminated, it should be left to the court. In the Pahalgam case, the NIA's role was to investigate, and that investigation has now been completed. The chargesheet will be presented before the court," Omar said. (KNO)

Achan land-fill site,

Kumar Chowdhury, Ministers Javid Ahmad Rana, Javid Dar and Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chairperson District Development Council Srinagar Malik Aftab, and Members of the

Legislative Assembly from Srinagar district attended the meeting.

MLAs including Ali Mohammad Sagar, Mubarak Gul, Shameem Firdous, Salman Sagar, Tanvir Sadiq, Ahsan Ahmad Pardesi and Mushtaq Ahmad Guru raised issues related to development and civic amenities in their respective constituencies.

Among senior officials present were Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation Faz Lul Haseeb, Director FCS&CA Dr Owais Ahmad, along with Heads of Departments and senior sectoral and district officers.

The Chief Minister assured that concerns raised by the elected representatives would be addressed on priority to ensure responsive and people-centric governance.

The Chief Minister laid special emphasis on the need for a permanent and sustainable solution to the environmental and public health issues arising from the Achan dumping site. He directed the concerned departments to adopt scientific and environmentally sound waste management practices and stressed that the issue must be resolved in a time-bound manner.

Reviewing the traffic situation in Srinagar, the Chief Minister called for long-term and integrated measures to ease congestion. He directed officers to identify and remove critical bottlenecks at major roads and junctions, improve road alignment where land has already been acquired under widening projects, and strengthen coordination among executing agencies to ensure smooth vehicular movement.

Expressing concern over the growing issue of stray dogs, the Chief Minister stressed the adoption of a humane, scientific and legally compliant approach to address the dog menace, emphasising enhanced coordination between municipal authorities and other concerned stakeholders.

The Chief Minister also underscored the importance of active involvement of elected representatives in the planning and execution of development initiatives, stating that their participation is vital for ensuring grassroots feedback, transparency and effective implementation of public welfare programmes.

He directed all departments to maintain close inter-departmental coordination, adhere to prescribed timelines, and ensure that development works translate into tangible benefits for the people of Srinagar.

During the review, the Chief Minister assessed departmental performance in implementing flagship schemes and executing key development projects under District CAPEX and CDF allocations. He emphasised the need to accelerate project execution and ensure timely utilisation of funds, while maintaining close coordination with MLAs to ensure visible outcomes on the ground.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo briefed the Chief Minister through a detailed presentation on the district's developmental scenario, ongoing initiatives and implementation of public-centric government schemes. The Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, also presented an overview of key civic initiatives.

The Chief Minister was further apprised of winter preparedness measures put in place by the district administration and Srinagar Municipal Corporation to ensure uninterrupted essential services and public convenience during snowfall and other weather-related challenges.

CM e-inaugurates,

Centre (SKICC). Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Ministers Javed Rana, Javid Dar and Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chairperson District Development Council Srinagar Malik Aftab, and Members of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, including Ali Mohammad Sagar, Mubarak Gul, Shameem Firdous, Salman Sagar, Tanvir Sadiq, Ahsan Ahmad and Mushtaq Ahmad Guru, were present on the occasion.

Among senior officials present were Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo, along with Heads of Departments and other concerned officers.

The Chief Minister e-inaugurated the re-modelling and repair work of the Wool Mandi at Nowshera in Srinagar, completed at a cost of 1 crore.

He laid the e-foundation stone for the construction of a new building for the upgradation of the Surgery, Medicine and Radiology Departments at Government Medical College Srinagar, at an estimated cost of 18.70 crore.

He also laid foundation stones for the upgradation of Abhedananda Home at Solina at a cost of 9.90 crore, and for the construction of a Fleece Testing Laboratory at Zakura costing 2.13 crore.

Similarly, the Chief Minister laid the e-foundation stone for construction of a 1×15-metre span plate girder RCC decked bridge over Maloori Nallah on the Gandtal–Ganimohar road at a cost of 1.53 crore. He also laid the foundation stone for a 4.66 crore project involving construction of a 1×20-metre span plate girder RCC decked bridge over Maloori Nallah at Sarabagh, along with the road stretch from Sarabagh to Dara Health Centre.

During the event, the Chief Minister handed over sanction letters to beneficiaries under Mission YUVA and the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) from Srinagar district, reaffirming the government's commitment to employment generation and livelihood enhancement.

Chief Minister took review of development projects under execution in Srinagar district under CSS, capex, SASCI and CDF. He insisted on optimal utilisation of funds and meeting the timelines.

CM listened to various issues posed by MLAs of Srinagar district and expressed concern over environmental issues due to Achan landfill site and stressed on decongestion of traffic in the city. He directed the concerned departments, divisional and district administration to find a long-term solution to these pressing issues. CM also underlined the need to address the issue of deteriorating air quality in Srinagar and to take measures to control air pollution apart from the dry climate aggravating the issue.

Literacy rate

2027 to promote literacy among non-literate persons aged 15 years and above who missed formal schooling.

The programme is aligned with the National Education Policy 2020 and is being implemented across all States and Union Territories, including Jammu and Kashmir.

Under the ULLAS framework, literacy is defined not only as the ability to read and write but also to compute with comprehension, along with acquiring essential life skills such as digital and financial literacy. The government has set a benchmark of 95 per cent literacy for declaring a State or Union Territory as fully literate.

The reply further noted that while several States and Union Territories have achieved the fully literate status, Jammu and Kashmir continues its efforts under the ULLAS programme to improve literacy outcomes. (KNO)

Night temps

Srinagar Airport recorded a minimum of 1.4 degrees Celsius, up from 0.6 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

Awantipora remained below freezing at minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 0.2 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Shopian also dipped below freezing at minus 0.1 degrees Celsius.

Bandipora recorded a sharp rise to 2.7 degrees Celsius from 1.3 degrees Celsius, and Ganderbal settled at 2.3 degrees Celsius compared to 1.0 degree on Sunday.

In the Jammu region, temperatures largely remained stable. Jammu city recorded an unchanged minimum of 11.4 degrees Celsius, while Jammu Airport registered a slight rise to 11.6 degrees Celsius from 11.3 degrees Celsius.

Banihal recorded 3.1 degrees Celsius, whereas Batote recorded a marginal increase to 8.3 degrees Celsius from 7.9 degrees Celsius. Katra saw a slight dip to 10.7 degrees Celsius from 11.2 degrees.

In Ladakh, temperatures rose significantly compared to Sunday. Leh recorded a minimum of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius, up from minus 5.0 degrees, while Kargil improved to minus 1.2 degrees Celsius from minus 4.6 degrees.

Nubra Valley recorded minus 0.1 degrees Celsius compared to minus 1.8 degrees Celsius a day earlier.

The Meteorological Department said there is nothing significant expected till December 20.

Light rain or snowfall is possible at scattered places in the Kashmir region and isolated areas of Jammu division on December 21.

From December 22 to 25, weather is likely to remain partly cloudy, turning generally cloudy on December 26. Shallow to moderate fog is

expected to continue at many places, officials added. (KNO)

Fraud recruitment

candidates had already been cancelled earlier by the Director, Fire and Emergency Services for failing to complete mandatory service formalities.

The present order, therefore, applies to the remaining 103 appointees. The government said constitutional safeguards available to civil servants, including protection under Article 311(2), do not apply in cases where appointments themselves are illegal and obtained through fraud.

The order cited rulings of the Supreme Court and High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, which have held that such appointments are void and do not require a departmental inquiry before termination.

It stated that the continuation of the illegally appointed personnel would undermine public trust and the integrity of recruitment processes. (KNO)

Environmentalists express

grave risk not only to aquatic ecosystems but also to the health and survival of people dependent on these sources.

Residents in several areas said household waste, plastic bags, construction debris and even animal carcasses are routinely dumped on riverbanks and even into flowing water. During the rains, this waste is washed further downstream, spreading pollution and clogging natural water channels.

Environmental experts said the dumping of solid waste disrupts the natural self-cleaning ability of water bodies. They said polythene and non-biodegradable waste choke water flow, reduce oxygen levels, harm aquatic life and lead to the accumulation of toxic substances. Over time, springs dry up or become unfit for human consumption, while rivers turn into carriers of disease-causing pathogens.

"The damage is not just visible pollution; it is a slow poisoning of our water systems," said Dr Umar, an environmentalist. "Once ground-water and surface water are contaminated, restoration becomes extremely difficult and expensive."

He warned that consuming water from polluted sources can lead to outbreaks of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, hepatitis A and E, cholera and skin infections. Children, the elderly and those with weak immunity are particularly vulnerable, Dr Umar said.

With plastic waste breaking down into microplastics, there is also growing concern about long-term health impacts, including hormonal disorders and chronic diseases.

"We often see now the breakdowns of jaundice and hepatitis. It is because of polluting water bodies as these are sources of water supply schemes," said Dr Ghulam Nabi Dar, a public health expert.

An Executive Engineer-level officer from the Public Health Engineering Department expressed deep concern over the situation.

"It is really unfortunate how badly we are treating our water resources and assets. This process of polluting our resources, if not stopped, will have disastrous consequences on our lives and existence. There will be water scarcity leading to starvation, diseases and even wars," he said.

Dr Dar called for mass campaigns to save and protect water resources, especially nallahs, springs and rivers. "Treating polluted water increases the burden on filtration plants and raises the cost of providing safe drinking water, a burden that ultimately falls on the public exchequer," he added.

Experts and officials stressed the urgent need for a multi-pronged approach: the strict enforcement of laws banning dumping of waste in and around water bodies, regular cleaning drives involving local bodies, volunteers and NGOs, awareness campaigns at the community level to educate people about the importance of protecting water sources, proper waste management systems, including segregation, door-to-door collection and scientific disposal along with community participation. The residents must act as guardians of nearby water bodies, they stressed.

Environmentalists said saving Kashmir's water bodies is a matter of survival. If we fail to protect our rivers, springs and streams today, we will be denying future generations their right to clean water, they warned. (KNO)

Rijiju seeks apology from Rahul, Kharge in Parl for Congress workers' 'threat' to PM Modi

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 15: Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday sought an apology from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for their party workers' alleged threat to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's life. At a hurriedly called press conference here, Rijiju alleged that at Sunday's Congress rally in the national capital, some party workers had threatened to dig the grave of the Prime Minister, which was the "most unfortunate and tragic" thing to happen in Indian democracy.

"Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi should tender an apology for the Congress workers' threat to the life of the Prime Minister. They should tender the



apology on the floor of both Houses of Parliament. It is most unfortunate and tragic that Congress workers openly declared to dig the grave of Prime Minister Modi," he said.

The parliamentary affairs minister said the workers and leaders of the Congress and the BJP are political rivals, not enemies. "We propagate different ideologies but work together for a

developed India," he said.

Rijiju said the political leaders wish each other in public despite political fights, which are separate issues, and leaders criticise each other in different ways. "We oppose each other differently. We never think of killing each other, nor do we talk about that. What kind of mentality is this? What kind of practice is this where some people are threatening to

kill political rivals openly?" he said.

Rijiju said Modi is the prime minister of 140 crore people, the prime minister of the largest democracy in the world.

"The whole world respects PM Modi, the whole of India respects PM Modi. But if some people in the opposition threaten to kill the prime minister, it is most unfortunate and tragic. It will not end by just condemning the incident. "In Parliament, the Congress president (Kharge) and the Leader of Opposition (Rahul Gandhi) should tender an apology. They should tender an apology to the country on the floor of Parliament," he said.

Rijiju said if there is any humanity left in the Congress and if they respect the people of the country, they should immediately tender an apology in both houses of Parliament.

Air pollution crisis

Delhi HC advises lawyers to avail hybrid mode for appearing in court

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 15: Amid severe pollution levels in the city, the Delhi High Court on Monday advised lawyers and parties-in-person to avail hybrid mode of appearance through video conferencing in their matters listed before it.

Delhi choked under a thick blanket of smog on Monday, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) settling at 498, which falls in the higher spectrum of 'severe' category.

A circular issued by the registrar general of the high court said, "in view of the prevailing weather conditions, I have been directed to convey that if convenient, members of the bar/ parties-in-person may avail hybrid mode of appearance through video conferencing facility in their matters listed before the hon'ble courts".

On Sunday, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant also advised members of the Bar and parties-in-person to avail hybrid mode of appearance through video conferencing in



matters listed before the Supreme Court in view of the prevailing weather conditions.

Presently, the high court functions through a hybrid mode where proceedings are conducted through both physical and virtual modes.

On Monday, the air quality was 'severe' at 38 stations while it was 'very poor' at two stations in Delhi. Jahangirpuri, which recorded an AQI of 498, recorded the worst air quality amongst all 40 stations.

According to the Central

Pollution Control Board (CPCB), an AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 to 100 'satisfactory', 101 to 200 'moderate', 201 to 300 'poor', 301 to 400 'very poor', and 401 to 500 'severe'.

The air quality index (AQI) in Delhi had climbed to 461 on Sunday and marked the city's most polluted day this winter and the second-worst December air quality day on record, as weak winds and low temperatures trapped pollutants close to the surface.

India's GDP to grow 7% in FY26, Crisil raises growth forecast

ANI

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Indian economy is poised to grow at 7.0 per cent in the current fiscal 2025-26, Crisil said as it raised projections by 50 basis points soon after the country registered robust growth in the first half.

Crisil has revised its GDP forecast for this fiscal with the first-half growth printing at a street-beating 8 per cent.

"We expect GDP to grow at 7 per cent in fiscal 2026, compared with 6.5 per cent in fiscal 2025," Crisil, a global, insights-driven analytics company, said in its report. Domestic consumption is likely to drive growth, supported by benign inflation, GST rationalisation, and income tax relief.

However, US tariffs pose a risk to India's exports and investments, though the US-India trade deal remains monitorable, it cautioned.

GDP growth rose to a six-quarter high of 8.2 per cent year-on-year in the second quarter of fiscal 2026, from 7.8 per cent in the previous quarter, fuelled by robust consumption and aided by the GST rate rationalisation exercise of



September 2025. Nominal GDP growth slowed to 8.7 per cent from 8.8 per cent.

Taking all factors into account, the RBI raised its GDP growth projection at 7.3 per cent for the full year, up by half a percentage point.

On the inflation front, Crisil expects CPI-based inflation to soften to 2.5 per cent in fiscal 2026 from 4.6 per cent in fiscal 2025.

"Sharper-than-expected fall in food inflation, healthy agriculture growth, benign global crude prices and GST rate cut

benefits are expected to keep food inflation in check this fiscal," Crisil noted.

CPI or retail inflation eased to 0.3 per cent in October from 1.4 per cent in September, reaching the lowest point in the current CPI series. In November, however, it marginally inched up to 0.71 per cent (provisional).

The RBI revised its CPI inflation forecast for 2025-26 to just 2.0 per cent, down from previous estimates of 2.6 per cent.

In this backdrop, RBI's monetary policy would remain open for a rate cut amid benign

inflation, but the RBI will likely stick to a data-dependent approach given the uncertain global environment, Crisil noted.

In line with expectations, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) cut policy rates by 25 basis points (bps) in its December meeting. It maintained its neutral policy stance. The RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra characterised India's current macroeconomic moment as a "rare goldilocks period", that currently marks high economic growth and exceptionally low inflation. The remarks came as the Reserve Bank announced its latest monetary policy decision, cutting the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25 per cent, after the three-day review meeting earlier this month.

Further, on crude oil, another key indicator of any economy, Crisil said they expect crude oil prices to average USD 60-65 per barrel in calendar year 2026, compared with an estimated USD 65-70 per barrel in 2025.

Brent crude oil prices fell to USD 63.6 per barrel average in November, 1.6 per cent lower month-on-month and 14.5 per cent lower year-on-year.

Dense fog disrupts ops at Delhi airport over 60 flights cancelled



PTI

New Delhi, Dec 15: Over 60 flights were cancelled and 5 diverted at Delhi airport on Monday due to poor visibility conditions, according to an official.

Delhi airport operator DIAL said in a post on X shortly after 10 am that flight operations are still impacted due to dense fog.

"Our on-ground officials are working closely with all stakeholders to assist passengers and provide necessary support across Terminals," DIAL said. The official said as of now, 61 cancellations and 5 diversions have been reported at the airport.

Over 250 flights were delayed, he added. "Low visibility (below minima),

due to dense fog, has severely impacted operations at Delhi and other airports across northern India, which is unfortunately beyond our control," IndiGo said in a statement.

As operations are adjusted to prevailing weather conditions, some flights may experience delays, while a few others may be proactively cancelled during the day to prioritise safety and minimise extended waiting at the airport, the airline said in a statement. IndiGo, however, did not say how many of its flights were cancelled and how many were delayed.

The airline said its teams are "closely monitoring" the situation and coordinating with Delhi airport.

India's sugar output jumps 28 pc so far in 2025-26 season

Mills urge to raise minimum selling price



PTI

New Delhi, Dec 15: India's sugar production has surged 28.33 per cent so far this season to 77.90 lakh tonnes, but the co-operative mills federation is urging the government to raise the minimum selling price, warning that falling market rates and rising costs are threatening farmers' payments.

The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSF), which represents farmer-owned mills, said ex-mill sugar prices have dropped by nearly Rs 2,300 per tonne since the season began, now hovering around Rs 37,700 per tonne, despite the strong output.

As of December 15, the country's 479 operating sugar mills have produced 77.90 lakh tonnes compared with 60.70 lakh tonnes by 473 mills a year earlier, according to NFCSF data.

Cane crushing jumped 25.6 per cent to 900.75 lakh tonnes, the federation said in a statement.

Sugar output in Maharashtra, the country's top producing state, more than doubled to 31.30 lakh tonnes from 16.80 lakh tonnes, while Uttar Pradesh production rose to 25.05 lakh tonnes from 22.95 lakh tonnes.

Karnataka's output increased to 15.50 lakh tonnes till December 15 of the 2025-26 season (October-September) from 13.50 lakh tonnes in the year-ago.

The federation has called for the government to raise the minimum selling price to Rs 41 per kg and permit an additional 5 lakh tonnes of sugar to be diverted for ethanol production, which it estimates would generate nearly Rs 20 billion.

The federation welcomed the government's decision to permit exports of 15 lakh tonnes for the current season but said this alone would not address the liquidity crisis facing mills.

Mills face cane payment obligations of over Rs 1.30 lakh crore this season, while surplus stocks could block nearly Rs 28,000 crore in working capital, the federation said.

"Cooperative sugar mills are owned by millions of farmers, and sustaining the present momentum requires decisive government support," NFCSF President Harshvardhan Patil said.

The federation has submitted detailed proposals to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the food minister seeking urgent policy measures.

Messi event stadium rampage

Cal HC to hear petitions seeking transfer of probe to central agencies

PTI

Kolkata, Dec 15: Ripples of Saturday's Salt Lake stadium spectator rampage during Argentine football legend Lionel Messi showcasing event reached the corridors of the Calcutta High Court on Monday after Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Pal allowed the filing of three separate PILs related to the fiasco.

The petitions sought the court's intervention to transfer the probe into the stadium violence to central agencies such as the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO).

The petitions, separately moved by the state's Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari and advocates Sabyasachi Chattopadhyay and Mainak Ghoshal, are likely to be heard together by the court later this week.

Appearing for Adhikari, advocate Bilwadal Bhat-tacharya sought permission to file a petition seeking the court's intervention into unearthing the factors that led to the crowd unrest on Saturday.

He also challenged the authority of the three-member inquiry committee constituted by

the state government and headed by retired justice Ashim Kumar Ray.

The turn of events led to a loss of face for West Bengal before the entire world, the petitioner alleged.

The other two petitions claimed that the state-appointed committee was constituted in haste and prayed that possible financial irregularities in the sale of tickets and suspicious monetary transactions linked to the event should also be probed.

Bidhannagar Police, which is currently investigating the case, has ordered the freezing of bank accounts of the organisation responsible for the sale and distribution of tickets and has directed the stoppage of monetary transactions between the organisation and Shatadru Dutta, the prime organiser of the event, who has since been arrested, officials said.

The state-appointed retired justice Ashim Kumar Ray led high-level committee, which also comprises the chief secretary and home secretary

as members, visited the ransacked stadium on Sunday to take stock of the damages and informed reporters that it would submit its report within the next fortnight.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, while announcing the formation of the committee within hours of the incident, said its mandate included fixing accountability and suggesting measures to prevent such



incidents in future.

An estimated damage of over Rs 2 crore to the stadium was caused on account of spectator outrage who resorted to unprecedented rampage after Messi's brief and tightly ring-fenced appearance, his first at the venue since 2011, left large sections of the crowd frustrated, as they failed to catch a glimpse of their superstar despite having travelled from far and wide, paying hefty sums for tickets.

Colon cancer in youngsters: 5 warning signs you should not ignore, US doc alerts

TOI HEALTH

New Delhi, Dec 15: Colon cancer is increasingly affecting younger generations. People born in 1990 have double the risk compared to those born in 1950. A gastroenterologist highlights five key warning signs to watch for, including changes in bowel habits, rectal bleeding, persistent fatigue, unexplained abdominal pain, and unintentional weight loss. Early detection is crucial for better outcomes.

Colon cancer, which was once thought to affect only older adults, is now becoming increasingly common among young people. The alarming trend of a rise in colon cancer is being observed among millennials and younger generations. In fact, a recent study published in the journal BJS found that, compared with people born in 1950, those born in 1990 have twice the risk of developing colon cancer.

In a video shared on Instagram, Dr Joseph Salhab, a board-certified gastroenterologist trained at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, shared five warning signs one should not ignore. "With colon cancer being found in people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, you really need to be your own healthcare advocate, and you need to try to recognise the warning signs of colon cancer," the doctor said.

Early detection is crucial for better treatment options and outcomes; however, most people catch the disease at advanced stages. People tend to dismiss these warning signs as a less



serious concern, but it is pivotal that you address them.

What is colon cancer?

Colon cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the colon, which is the longest part of the large intestine. Most colon cancers start as a growth on the inner lining of the colon. These growths are called polyps.

The American Cancer Society estimates that about 107,320 new cases of colon cancer will be diagnosed in the United States in 2025. Among these, 54,510 are men and 52,810 are women.

Symptoms of colon cancer Do not ignore the signs Changes in bowel habits

Your bowel habits can tell you a lot about your gut health, so you must not dismiss anything that feels off. "This means new-onset diarrhoea and new-onset constipation, especially if you're straining more than usual now. The reason for this is that sometimes a large polyp or pre-cancer in the colon, or even a colon cancer, can block your intestines," the gastroenterologist explained. If you notice your stool is becoming narrow and thinner than normal, it needs to be investigated.

Rectal bleeding

One of the most alarming signs of colon cancer is rectal bleeding. This sign, unfortunately, often

goes unnoticed or gets dismissed as a change in diet. If you notice blood in your stool or on the toilet paper, consult a doctor. Your stool could look bright red or dark if there is rectal bleeding. This is a red flag for colon cancer. While some conditions, such as haemorrhoids, may lead to rectal bleeding, persistent or recurrent bleeding requires a detailed examination.

Weakness or fatigue

This might come as a surprise, but feeling unusually tired, even after proper rest, is a red flag. Young adults, who often lead busy lives, may attribute this to stress or lack of sleep; however, if this fatigue lingers, you must consult a doctor.

Cramping or abdominal pain

Abdominal pain is another warning sign of colon cancer, but it is one of the symptoms that is easily dismissed. If the abdominal pain appears without a known cause and is persistent, it is a cause for concern.

Weight loss

Losing weight without even trying is a red flag. This is one of the most common signs of all types of cancer, including colon cancer. If you are losing weight without any changes to your diet or exercise, you must talk to your GP.

Note: The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. Always consult a qualified healthcare professional before starting any new medication or treatment, or before changing your diet or supplement regimen.

Australian PM proposes tougher national gun laws after mass shooting in Sydney

AP

Sydney, Dec 15: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Monday proposed tougher national gun laws after a mass shooting targeted a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach, leaving at least 15 people dead.

Albanese said he would propose new restrictions, including limiting the number of guns a licensed owner can obtain. His proposals were announced after the authorities revealed that the older of the two gunmen — who were a father and son — had amassed his six guns legally.

"The government is prepared to take whatever action is necessary. Included in that is the need for tougher gun laws," Albanese told reporters.

"People's circumstances can change. People can be radicalized over a period of time. Licenses should not be in perpetuity," he added.

At least 38 people were being treated in hospitals after the massacre on Sunday, when the two shooters fired indiscriminately on the beachfront festivities. Those killed included a 10-year-old girl, a rabbi and a Holocaust survivor.

The horror at Australia's most popular beach was the deadliest shooting in almost three decades



in a country with strict gun control laws primarily aimed at removing rapid-fire rifles from circulation. Albanese called the massacre an act of antisemitic terrorism that struck at the heart of the nation.

He pledged swift change, planning on Monday afternoon to present his gun law proposals to a national cabinet meeting that includes state leaders. Some of the measures would also require state legislation.

"Some laws are commonwealth and some laws are implemented by the states," the Australian leader said. "What we want to do is to make sure that we're all completely on the same page." Australia's gun laws were

revised after a 1996 massacre in the Tasmanian town of Port Arthur, where a lone gunman killed 35 people.

Meanwhile, the massacre provoked questions about whether Albanese and his government had done enough to curb rising antisemitism. Jewish leaders and the massacre's survivors expressed fear and fury as they questioned why the men hadn't been detected before they opened fire.

"There's been a heap of inaction," said Lawrence Stand, a Sydney man who raced to a Bar Mitzvah celebration in Bondi when the violence erupted to find his 12-year-old daughter. "But the people were warned

about this. ... And still not enough has been done by our government."

"I think the federal government has made a number of missteps on antisemitism," Alex Ryvchin, spokesperson for the Australian Council of Executive Jewry, told reporters gathered on Monday near the site of the massacre. "I think when an attack such as what we saw yesterday takes place the paramount and fundamental duty of government is the protection of its citizens, so there's been an immense failure."

An investigation was needed, Ryvchin said, into "how that was allowed to take place." Those investigations were beginning

to unfold Monday.

More details about the shooters emerge

Little was publicly confirmed about the men. Police said they were a father and son but wouldn't supply their names.

The father, 50, who was shot dead, had a gun license that allowed him to legally acquire the six firearms recovered from his property and also held a gun club membership, said Mal Lanyon, Police Commissioner for New South Wales state, where Sydney is located.

The particular gun license he held entitled an adult with a "genuine reason" to own a rifle or shotgun. Accepted reasons include target shooting, recreational hunting and vermin control, but self-defense is not an accepted reason.

The man arrived in Australia in 1998 on a student visa, authorities said, and was an Australian resident when he died. Officials wouldn't confirm what country he had migrated from.

His 24-year-old Australian-born son, who was shot and wounded, is being treated at a hospital. Lanyon said the man "may well" face criminal charges and police wouldn't divulge what they knew about him to avoid marring a prosecution case against him.

PM Modi arrives in Jordan on first leg of three-nation tour



ANI

Amman (Jordan), Dec 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Amman on Monday for a two-day visit to Jordan, marking the beginning of his three-nation tour. He was welcomed on arrival by Jordan's Prime Minister Jafar Hassan.

The visit to Jordan is taking place at the invitation of King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein and is focused on advancing bilateral relations between India and Jordan. Prime Minister Modi departed from New Delhi earlier on Monday to commence the multi-country engagement.

During his stay from December 15 to 16, the Prime Minister is scheduled to hold discussions with King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein to review the entire range of India-Jordan ties and to exchange views on key regional developments.

The visit gains added importance as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Jordan, a landmark expected to further energise bilateral cooperation. Prime Minister Modi will also interact with members of the Indian community in Jordan during the visit.

In his departure statement, the Prime Minister said, "I am embarking on a three-nation visit to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Sultanate of Oman, three nations with which India shares both age-old civilizational ties, as well as extensive contemporary bilateral relations."

After concluding the Jordan leg, Prime Minister Modi will travel to Ethiopia from December 16 to 17, marking his first-ever visit to the African country.

In Addis Ababa, he is expected to hold detailed talks with Ethiopian Prime

Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali on various dimensions of bilateral cooperation. Addis Ababa also hosts the headquarters of the African Union.

Referring to the Ethiopia visit, Prime Minister Modi said, "I will pay my first visit to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa is also the headquarters of the African Union. In 2023, during India's G20 Presidency, the African Union was admitted as a permanent member of the G20. In Addis Ababa, I will hold detailed discussions with H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali and also have the opportunity to meet the Indian diaspora living there."

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to address a Joint Session of the Ethiopian Parliament.

"I eagerly look forward to sharing my thoughts on India's journey as the 'Mother of Democracy' and the value that the India-Ethiopia partnership can bring to the Global South," he said.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ethiopia visit will reaffirm the shared commitment of both countries, as partners in the Global South, to further strengthen friendship and bilateral engagement.

The final leg of the tour will see Prime Minister Modi visit Oman from December 17 to 18 at the invitation of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, marking his second visit to the country.

"In Muscat, I look forward to my discussions with His Majesty the Sultan of Oman, and towards strengthening our Strategic Partnership as well as our strong commercial and economic relationship. I will also address a gathering of the Indian diaspora in Oman, which has contributed immensely to the country's development and in enhancing our partnership," the Prime Minister said.

Jaishankar to visit Israel today to discuss bilateral, regional issues



PTI

Jerusalem, Dec 15: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will arrive in Israel on Tuesday to meet the country's top leadership and discuss bilateral and regional issues, according to sources here.

Jaishankar will meet President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and hold bilateral consultations with his counterpart Gideon Sa'ar during his short visit, they said. "The discussions will revolve around bilateral and regional issues to continue to deepen the strategic

partnership between the two countries," a source told PTI.

His visit comes days after Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke to his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and the two leaders "agreed to meet very soon".

Minister of Tourism Haim Katz, Minister of Economy and Industry Nir Barkat, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Avi Dichter, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich had visited India earlier this year as the strategic partners build up momentum to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Lionel Messi winds up G.O.A.T. India Tour with Delhi leg; fans in frenzy

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Lionel Messi G.O.A.T. India Tour that began in shambolic fashion ended in a blaze of glory as devotional fans joyously gathered to catch a glimpse of a man that does things on the field that are often beyond human comprehension.

Most importantly, the much-publicised and anticipated event had the ending it wanted, after a chaotic beginning in Kolkata on the tour's first stop on Saturday.

The thousands of heads totting the stands at Kotla, as well as the few Indian celebrities and dignitaries inside the ground, basked in the euphoria of hosting one of the world's most recognisable and bankable athletes at an extravagant event.

They were perhaps



swept away by the otherworldly talent, the humility, and the impact that this man has had on the game he has played with all his might over the last two decades.

Speaking briefly in Spanish, a language not spoken by most in the city, Messi said, "Gracias Delhi! Hasta pronto", creating a sense of yearning among the crowds rarely seen before.

Upon arrival, Messi took a lap of the ground smiling, and watched the 7x7 celebrity match coming to an end, even

as the spectators, many of whom were dressed in the famous blue and white Argentine jersey bearing No. 10, chanted his name continuously.

He was then standing there waving to the stands smiling, something he tried to do in Kolkata too but could not as, unlike the Arun Jaitley Stadium, he was crowded by too many people, including politicians and their aides, at the Salt Lake Stadium on Saturday.

He was seen kicking the ball at the stands

along with his Inter Miami teammates Luis Suarez and Rodrigo De Paul while taking a round of the venue that registered an attendance of around 25000.

Messi also felicitated the Minerva Academy football team.

The script was specifically written for Messi, and, as is his wont, he played the role to perfection.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, ICC Chairman Jay Shah, DDCA President Rohan Jaitley and former Indian football team captain Bhaichung Bhutia had the privilege to be with Messi towards the end of the 30-minute event.

Earlier in the day, Messi arrived here for the final leg of his G.O.A.T India Tour after his flight from Mumbai was delayed considerably due to inclement weather.

BCCI not recognised as NSF: Sports Minister Mandaviya in Lok Sabha



PTI

New Delhi, Dec 15: The BCCI is not a recognised National Sports Federation (NSF), Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya stated in the Lok Sabha on Monday, reiterating a long-held status that is expected to change once the new National Sports Governance Act comes into effect next year.

Mandaviya was responding to a query from Trinamool Congress' Kolkata Dakshin representative Mala Roy. Roy asked whether the Government intends to take

control of big sports bodies such as the BCCI and the cash-strapped All India Football Federation (AIFF) for their "proper and smooth functioning".

Mandaviya reiterated that National Sports Federations (NSFs) are voluntary bodies, which are expected to follow "healthy management practices".

"Further, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is not recognised as a National Sports Federation (NSF)," Mandaviya said.

The National Sports Governance Act was passed in August this year

and its rules are set to be notified soon. Mandaviya has promised full-scale implementation of the act early next year. It has the provision for a National Sports Board (NSB) to create a stringent system of accountability and all NSFs will have to attain NSF's recognition for access to central government funding. The BCCI has not been a recognised NSF so far as it is not reliant on government funding.

However, it will have to register itself as an NSF once the new Act comes into effect given that cricket has become an Olympic sport, which is set for a debut in the 2028 Games in the T20 format.

The Ministry has already provided some relief to the Board when it comes to provisions related to the Right to Information Act that will be applicable on NSFs under the new act.

It has amended the RTI-related provision in the act, placing only those bodies under its ambit which rely on government grants and assistance.

The RTI has been a thorny issue for the BCCI, which has steadfastly opposed coming under it as the Board is not dependent on government funds unlike a majority of other NSFs. In the Lok Sabha on Monday, the Minister also said that accounts of the NSFs receiving annual grant of more than Rs. 1 crore are subject to audit by the Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) of India.



SHOLAY: THE FINAL CUT (U)
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HINDI ATMOS - 10:30 AM, 04:25 PM
HINDI - 12:55 PM, 05:05 PM



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