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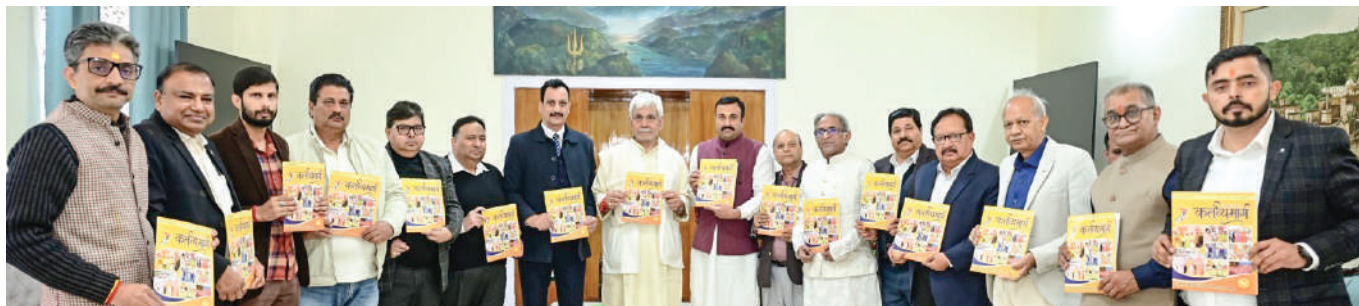
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DIPK-9142/25 Dated: 19-12-2025

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Indian knowledge system offers solutions to many modern-day problems: LG Sinha

Urges youth to embrace nation's civilisational values



KNO DESK

Jammu, Dec 19: Asserting that the Indian Knowledge System, rooted in the Vedas, offers a complete and holistic worldview that can provide solutions to many modern-day problems, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday called on the youth to embrace India's civilisational values.

Addressing a gathering after releasing the 4th Edition of "Kartavya Marg"—annual in-house magazine published by Shri Kailash Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust—here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) highlighted the enduring relevance of India's ancient knowledge systems in addressing contemporary global challenges.

"Indian Knowledge System, rooted in the Vedas, offers a complete and holistic worldview that can provide solutions to many modern-day problems," he said, adding, "Ancient texts such as the Vedas and Upanishads are a rich repository of knowledge across disciplines including mathematics, medicine, physics, botany, chemistry, arts and humanities."

The Lieutenant Governor noted that India's philosophical schools, along with its traditions in art and architecture, continue to be profoundly relevant in building a resilient and harmonious society. He said that Indian culture, ethics and values help in navigating complex challenges while cultivating virtues that promote harmony. | [More on P6](#)

Traditional medicine must win trust through science, expand reach: PM Modi

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said traditional medicine was yet to receive the place it truly deserved and asserted that it should win trust through science to expand its reach further.

Addressing the WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine here, Modi said strengthening research, use of digital technologies and developing a trusted regulatory framework will further bolster traditional medicine.

"There was once a perception that traditional medicine was limited only to wellness or lifestyle, but this perception is rapidly changing. Traditional medicine can play an effective role even in critical situations, and India is moving forward with this vision," Modi said.

The prime minister said a large section of the global population has long relied on traditional medicine, yet it has not received the place it truly deserves despite its immense



potential.

"Trust must be won through science and its reach must be expanded further," he said, listing out steps taken by India to for scientific validation of traditional medicine.

He said that for centuries, Ashwagandha has been used in India's traditional medical systems and its global demand rose sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"India, through its research and evidence-based validation,

is advancing Ashwagandha in a credible manner," the prime minister said, adding that international experts deeply deliberated on its safety, quality and usage.

The prime minister said that India was fully committed to making such time-tested herbs a part of global public health.

Modi said that the responsibility to expand the acceptability of traditional medicine was a shared duty of all countries.

He said | [More on P6](#)

Rain, snowfall likely to end dry spell in J&K

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 19: Minimum temperatures declined at several places across Jammu and Kashmir on Friday, with Pulwama recording the lowest in the Kashmir region. The Meteorological Department said the weather is likely to change from December 20 evening with rain in plains and snowfall in higher reaches.

According to details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the Kashmir valley, Pulwama recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.0 degrees Celsius, down from minus 3.2 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Srinagar recorded minus 2.1 degrees Celsius, compared to 0.2 degrees Celsius on Thursday, while Srinagar airport registered minus 3.4 degrees Celsius against 0.0 degrees Celsius the previous day.

Pampore and Shopian recorded minus 3.5 degrees Celsius each, compared to minus 1.8 degrees Celsius | [More on P6](#)

CS reviews progress on cyber security action plan

Directs departments to work in close coordination with IT Dept



KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 19: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress achieved under the Cyber Security Action Plan being implemented across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Administrative Secretaries of all departments, Inspector General of Police (Crime), Commissioners of Jammu and Srinagar Municipal Corporations, Deputy Director

General, NIC, Chief Executive Officer, JaKeGA, and other senior officers concerned.

At the outset, the Chief Secretary undertook a comprehensive review of the initiatives launched to strengthen the cyber security architecture of the UT. He assessed the status of de-commissioning of redundant government websites and sought updates on the security audit of departmental portals, installation of Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) and Unified Endpoint Management | [More on P6](#)

MHA clears promotions of IAS, IPS officers in J&K segment of AGMUT cadre

7 promoted to Super Time Scale, 13 Selection Grade, 3 Junior Administrative Grade

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Dec 19: The Ministry of Home Affairs has approved promotion of seven IAS officers of AGMUT cadre, posted in J&K segment, to Super Time Scale.

According to an order, a copy of which is in possession of news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Shahid Iqbal Choudhary has been promoted to Super Time Scale notionally w.e.f.01.01.2025 and actual from the date of assumption of charge.

As per the order, Prasanna Ramaswamy, Ram Niwas Sharma, Talat Parvez Rohella, Rukshana Gani, Rehana Batul and Mir Tariq Ali have been promoted to Super Time Scale w.e.f. 01.01. 2026 or the date of assumption of charge, whichever is later. | [More on P6](#)

3 IPS officers elevated as IGP, 8 DIGs 10 get selection grade, 6 JAG grade

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Dec 19: The Ministry of Home Affairs has approved the promotions of several IPS officers of J&K segment of the AGMUT cadre.

The MHA cleared the promotion of three IPS officers of J&K segment to the rank of Inspector General of Police (IGP).

According to an order, a copy of which is in possession of news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Tejinder Singh has been promoted to the IGP rank w.e.f. January 01, 2026.

Two officers—Abdul Jabbar and Udaybhaskar Billa— who are currently on central deputation, have also been granted promotion to IGP grade.

The MHA has also ordered the promotion of eight IPS officers to Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) grade with effect from January 01, 2026. Those promoted include Sargun Shukla, Sandeep Wazir, Anita Sharma, Jatinder Singh Johar, Swarn Singh Kotwal, Zahid Naseem Manhas, and Dr. Koushal Kumar Sharma.

Sandeep | [More on P6](#)

FOG GROUNDS FLIGHTS

12 cancelled, 18 delayed at Sgr, Jmu airports

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Dec 19: Widespread fog over North India disrupted air traffic on Friday, severely affecting operations at Srinagar and Jammu airports, with 12 flights getting cancelled and 18 delayed.

"At Srinagar International Airport, seven flights were cancelled and twelve were delayed due to poor visibility and adverse weather at departure points including Delhi, Amritsar and Kolkata. At Jammu Airport, five flights were cancelled and eight delayed, bringing the total to 12 cancellations and 18 delays across both airports," officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

At Srinagar, airlines most affected included IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet, while at Jammu, Air India, SpiceJet and AirAsia experienced significant disruptions.

Meanwhile, the Airport Authority of India (AAI) issued an advisory | [More on P6](#)

Saffron growers say porcupines inflicting 'large-scale' damage to corms

Production already hit by erratic weather; losses will deepen if issue not addressed, say farmers

Jahangeer Ganaie

Pulwama, Dec 19: Already battling the adverse impacts of climate change, saffron growers in Pampore and adjoining areas of south Kashmir's Pulwama district are facing a serious challenge - large-scale damage to saffron corms by porcupines.

Farmers fear that if urgent measures are not taken, saffron production, which has already witnessed a steep decline over the years, may fall even further.

Growers from Pampore, Konibal, Dusoo, Lethpora and nearby villages told the news agency—Kashmir News



Observer (KNO) that porcupines have been digging out saffron corms from fields almost every night, leaving behind damaged beds and shattered hopes. The situation has aggravated farmers' anxiety,

especially at a time when the availability of quality corms is already limited.

"Climate change has already disrupted our crop cycle. Irregular rainfall, warmer winters and prolonged dry spells

have badly affected saffron. Now porcupines are destroying whatever is left," said Abdul Rashid Shah, a saffron grower from Konibal. "When a corm is damaged, there is no flowering. That directly means zero production and a direct hit on our livelihood."

Farmers said that saffron, often called "red gold", is a highly sensitive crop and, unlike orchards, growers have minimal options to protect it from wildlife damage.

"For orchardists, there are methods like covering tree trunks or fencing, but for saffron we don't have such solutions," said Ishrat Ahmad, another grower from Pampore. "We try

to scare porcupines away using lights, horns and noise, but it is not possible to stay awake the entire night. The animals return again and again."

According to the cultivators, porcupines are particularly active between December and March, a period crucial for the survival and development of planted corms. During this time, they dig out and consume large quantities of corms, causing irreversible damage to future yields.

Farmers said that saffron production in Kashmir has already been declining due to multiple factors, including a shrinking cultivation area, changing | [More on P6](#)

Army Commander praises troops' professional excellence, adaptability

Visits LoC, asks soldiers to stay mission ready

Yogesh

Jammu, Dec 19: Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of Army's Northern Command on Friday commended the troops for their professional excellence and adaptability, forged through rigorous and innovative training.

An official told the news



agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the GOC-in-C visited forward areas in Shahsitar, Surankote, to assess the operational preparedness of units engaged in counter-terrorism operations.

While | [More on P6](#)

CS reviews Urban Challenge Fund, Lake Conservation works

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 19: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Friday reviewed the implementation and progress of housing and urban development initiatives, including the Urban Challenge Fund, the Auto Development Control Regulation (Auto DCR) system for building permissions, and ongoing conservation and development works of Dal and Nigeen lakes.

The review meeting, as per an official statement was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD); Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD); Vice Chairman, Jammu Development Authority (JDA); Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC); Vice Chairman, Lakes Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA), besides other senior officers.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary emphasized the need to optimally leverage the Urban Challenge Fund and directed the concerned departments to target at least 1 percent of the Rupees one lakh crore earmarked by the Government of India under the scheme. He further advised that the identified projects be supplemented with additional funding support from SASCI to ensure smooth, timely, and uninterrupted execution.

Stressing the strategic importance of the initiative, the Chief Secretary underscored the need for careful identification of projects that would contribute meaningfully towards making



urban centres sustainable, resilient, and future-ready, keeping in view population growth and evolving civic needs.

Reviewing the implementation of the Auto DCR system for construction permissions, the Chief Secretary directed the H&UDD to integrate the platform with the RERA portal to ensure statutory compliance under the Act. He also instructed the Rural Development Department to adopt a similar online building permission system for rural areas, with technical support from NIC, after finalization of the requisite building bye-laws.

Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur, highlighted the significance of the Urban Challenge Fund for Jammu and Kashmir and apprised the meeting of the projects identified under the scheme. She revealed that these include augmentation of parking infrastructure, residential housing projects, sanitation initiatives, wastewater management systems, and other urban utility services aimed at improving the quality of life in cities.

The Commissioner, JMC, Devansh Yadav, informed the meeting that the Auto DCR

system enables automatic scrutiny of CAD drawings of building plans, ensuring compliance with municipal and provincial bye-laws without manual intervention. He noted that the system significantly reduces processing time while enhancing transparency and efficiency in granting building permissions.

He further added that the platform facilitates online submission and tracking of proposals, defines a clear hierarchy with assigned roles and responsibilities, generates alerts and MIS reports, and features a user-friendly dashboard integrated with a payment gateway and digital signature facility. The system also enables seamless procurement of required No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from internal and external departments.

Secretary, RDD, Aijaz Asad, informed that the formulation of building bye-laws for rural areas is in the final stage and that the department is planning to introduce a similar single-window online system to grant building permissions in rural areas in an effective and time-bound manner. The

Vice Chairman, LCMA, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, briefed the Chief Secretary on the conservation and beautification measures being undertaken for the Dal and Nigeen lakes. He provided a status update on ongoing works and upcoming projects aimed at protecting and rejuvenating the lake ecosystem.

The projects include bioethanation of weeds and lake waste, installation of musical and high-jet fountains, development of a theme park along the lake banks, and preparation of an integrated management plan for long-term conservation of the lake ecosystem. He also informed about the eco-hamlets project, which envisages construction of sewerage networks and allied developmental works for households located within the lake areas being completed under PMDP and other schemes.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the importance of coordinated efforts, timely execution, and sustainable planning to ensure that urban development and environmental conservation go hand in hand across Jammu and Kashmir.

DC Kupwara reviews winter preparedness

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 19: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse Friday convened a review meeting with officers of various line departments to assess and strengthen the district's preparedness in light of weather advisory and snowfall prediction.

The meeting, as per an official statement was attended by ADC Kupwara, Gulzar Ahmad Khan; ADC Handwara, Javid Naseem Masoodi, ACR, SDM Lolab, OC Beacon, all Tehsildars as well as officers from R&B, PMGSY, KPD-CL, MED, Municipal Committees, Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs and health department.

Regarding Winter Stocking & Essential Supplies, the Food Supplies department informed that sufficient stock of rice, sugar, atta and Fuel/LPG has been ensured in the district especially in border areas to cater to the needs of the people during the harsh winter period.

Regarding Snow Clearance and Machinery Readiness, the Mechanical, R&B, BEACON, PMGSY briefed the Chair on the availability and deployment plans of snow clearance equipment and machinery at key locations to ensure road connectivity in the event of heavy snowfall. The departments were directed to ensure utmost coordination for snow clearance at the earliest.

The Electric Divisions informed about the buffer stock of transformers and other key spares, ensuring



rapid restoration of electricity in extreme weather conditions.

The Health officials presented measures taken to ensure availability of medical emergency response, essential medicines, and ambulance services in high-altitude and hard to reach areas.

The DC directed that district and tehsil-level control rooms be kept operational 24x7 during winter to monitor weather developments and coordinate swift responses to public grievances and exigencies.

Addressing the gathering, the DC underscored the imperative of inter-departmental coordination, timely execution of action plans, and proactive steps to mitigate winter-related

challenges. He urged all departments to maintain continuous readiness, particularly in sectors prone to snowfall and connectivity disruptions.

He further emphasized that every stakeholder must work with diligence to ensure that essential services including transport, power, food supply, healthcare, and snow clearance remain fully functional even under severe winter conditions. He also directed to ensure all staff of these departments to remain at their headquarters only.

ADC Handwara, SDM Lolab and concerned tehsildars were directed to monitor response from all line department in their respective jurisdiction.

IGNOU opens admissions for January 2026 session



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, December 19: The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has commenced the admission process for its January 2026 admission cycle for various undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, PG diploma and certificate programmes offered in distance learning and online modes. Interested applicants can apply through the University's national website or directly on the admission portal.

IGNOU, as per a PIB statement issued on Friday, offers a wide range of programmes, and in this cycle has also introduced around 60 new programmes, including Four-Year Undergraduate Programmes (FYUP) in disciplines such as Commerce, Economics, History, Political Science, Public Administration, Sociology, Anthropology, Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, Social Work, Philosophy, Biochemistry, and Facilities and Service Management. New postgraduate programmes include M.Sc. Geography, Geo Informatics, Applied Statistics and Renewable Energy, among others.

Candidates have been advised to carefully fill the application form and securely retain their login credentials for future use.

Regional Director, IGNOU Srinagar, Dr. A.H. Rizvi encouraged aspirants to apply well before the deadline and cautioned them against fraudulent calls or messages seeking admission fees through QR codes, WhatsApp or social media platforms, clarifying that IGNOU accepts payments only through its official online portals.

The last date for submission of online admission forms for the January 2026 cycle is 31 January 2026, while re-registration for continuing learners is open till 15 January 2026.

District-level sensitisation workshop held in Kulgam

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, DECEMBER 19: Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Department Kulgam organised a 2nd District-Level Sensitisation and Educational workshop at Townhall Block Devsar under the Project and Knowledge Management component of the annual work plan and budget (AWPB) 2025-26 of the Jammu and Kashmir competitiveness and Agriculture and Allied project (JKCIP).

MLA Devsar, Peerzada Feroz Ahmad Shah presided over the workshop as the Chief Guest and Addl. District Development Commissioner, Altaf Ahmad Khan participated as a Guest of Honour.

Addressing the participants including farmers, youth Club members and Agri-Entrepreneurs, as per an official statement highlighted the pivotal role of youth in nation-building and environmental stewardship. He encouraged the Youth Club members to act as ambassadors of change in their respective blocks, taking the lessons learned from the workshop back to their communities.

Addl. District Development Commissioner, while speaking on the occasion, stressed the need for crop diversification of High Value Crops, urging youth to move beyond traditional farming practice and adopt innovative

market-oriented agriculture. He also highlighted that JKCIP benefits are being extended in four blocks including Devsar, Behibagh, Manzgam and D. K. Marg, while farmers in other blocks can avail support under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

At the outset Chief Agriculture Officer Kulgam, Farooq Ahmad Reshi highlighted the background of the programme and the significance of youth engagement in shaping a progressive farming society and urged the participants to utilize the training to positively influence their communities, promote constructive activities and contribute to grassroots developmental initiatives especially with reference to environmental issues and climate change.

Resource persons from KVK Kulgam and MRCFC Khudwani delivered technical sessions on youth mobilization, community development, social awareness on environmental issues, climate change and disaster management. The trainees were also briefed about opportunities available under different government schemes aimed at youth empowerment.

Sub Divisional Agriculture Officers Kulgam & Qaimoh, Agriculture Extension Officers and other officials from agriculture department also participated in the training programme.

DC Bandipora reviews banks' performance at DCC, DLRC meet

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 19: The District Consultative Committee(DCC) and District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting for the 2nd quarter ending September 2025 was held under the chairpersonship of Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, to review the performance of banks and line departments in the district. During the meeting, as per an official statement issued on Friday, it was informed that the district achieved 47 percent of the Annual Credit Plan (ACP) (PS+NPS) for the first half of FY 2025-26 by disbursing 673 crore against a target of 1,411.22 crore.

The priority sector registered 37 percent achievement with 315 crore disbursed, while the non-priority sector achieved 62 percent with disbursement of 358 crore.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all banks to ensure 100 percent achievement under the priority sector

during the financial year and to formulate concrete strategies for the same. She expressed concern over the low level of credit flow to the education sector, observing that banks had recorded only about 4 percent investment during the last quarter.

The DC emphasized that strengthening education-related lending is a priority for the district administration and directed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) representative to take up the matter with concerned banks and work towards improving credit deployment in the sector. She underscored that enhanced financial support to education is essential for human capital development and inclusive growth in the district.

Expressing concern over poor Credit-Deposit ratios, the Deputy Commissioner directed banks to improve performance and also called for enhanced credit off-take under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP). She instructed banks

to achieve 100 percent coverage of active Kisan Credit Card holders with issuance of KCC smart cards, strictly adhere to prescribed Turn Around Time (TAT) in sanctioning cases, and ensure quality sponsorship.

The DC reviewed progress under Swavalamban/SSS, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana and Mission YUVA, directing banks to clear all pendencies. She also ordered completion of re-KYC of all Jan Dhan accounts, issuance of RuPay cards and ensured no account remains inactive.

Emphasizing accountability, the Deputy Commissioner warned against absenteeism and non-performance in DCC/DLRC meetings and stressed daily follow-up, timely data reporting and clearance of legacy issues. She reviewed priority sector achievements, social security enrolment, digital penetration, unclaimed deposits, Jan-suraksha Campaign, URCs under Tier-6 and banking touch points including branches, ATMs and BCs.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, BARAMULLA

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Notice Inviting e- Tender

E-NIT No. 01 of 2025-26

Dated: 16/12/2025

For and on behalf of the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, e-tenders are invited from registered, authorized, and reputed LPG suppliers/distributors for entering into an Annual Rate Contract (ARC) for the supply and delivery of 19 KG Commercial LPG Cylinders to CMO OFFICE BARAMULLA for the financial year 2025-26 and 2026-27, in view of winter preparedness. In this connection, e-tenders are invited through online mode (www.jktenders.gov.in) from the registered dealers.

Interested vendors may upload tender documents and quote rates on e-tender portal and will also submit its hard copy super-scribed as "e-tender supply of commercial LPG GAS Cylinder (19 Kg)" to CMO OFFICE BARAMULLA by or before 27-12-2025. The complete e-tender document along with terms and conditions is available for download on (www.jktenders.gov.in). The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all e-tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Complete details for submission and opening of e-tender offers are as detailed below:

Date of issue of e-tender	17/12/2025
Date of publication of e-tender notice	17/12/2025
Downloading of documents/offer submission start date	17/12/2025
Last date of submission of e-tender.	24/12/2025 (4:00PM)
Technical opening	26/12/2025 (2:00PM)
Financial opening	26/12/2025 (2:00PM)

DIPK-9143/25
DATED: 19-12-2025

Sd/
Chief Medical Officer
Baramulla

KASHMIR THUNDER



IS AVAILABLE
AT ALL LEADING
STALLS

Kashmir safe, normal: ATOAI Prez

■ Urges tourists to rediscover J&K

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 19: Appreciating security forces and locals for restoring confidence and normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir, President of Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Ajeet Bajaj on Friday urged tourists to rediscover the region.

Addressing a news conference here after ATOAI's 17th annual convention, Bajaj said the perception of insecurity about Kashmir must change. "Everything is normal here and we have seen it for ourselves," he added. "This is the jewel in the crown of India's tourism sector. We are proud of our men and



women in uniform who have ensured peace and security and we want to get more tourists back to Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest," Bajaj said.

He said that the sense of normalcy now visible across the Valley must translate into tourism revival. "Our members returned deeply impressed by the peace and positivity they witnessed," he added. Another senior ATOAI delegate, who has been visiting Kashmir for over three decades, said, "I have travelled here for 35 years and never felt safer anywhere else. The hospitality and warmth are unmatched," he said, adding that 2026 "will be a great year for Kashmir tourism."—(KNO)

ATOAI declares Kashmir 'India's Adventure Capital'

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 19: Declaring Jammu and Kashmir as the "Adventure Capital of India", President of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI), Ajeet Bajaj, on Friday said the association will partner with local stakeholders to transform the Valley into a world-class adventure tourism destination.

Bajaj said the 17th ATOAI annual convention

themed "Safe, Sustainable and Resilient Adventure Tourism", received an "overwhelming" response, with delegates touring Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonmarg. "Our members returned impressed, Jammu and Kashmir truly has everything that makes it a global adventure hotspot," Bajaj said.

He added that the ATOAI held B2B sessions with local tour operators to build direct business links and ensure that "local enterprises benefit directly from national and international traffic."

"The mountains are magnificent, the people are welcoming, and the spirit of adventure is unmatched. We want to steadily reopen all adventure zones and position Kashmir firmly on the global adventure map," Bajaj said.

He said the ATOAI is also coordinating with the Ministry of Tourism to accelerate the revival of tourism in the Union Territory, describing the region as "the crown jewel of India's adventure landscape"—(KNO)

Kupwara's Rashid Shafi strikes gold in Sweden



WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Dec 19: Kupwara Vilgam's Rashid Shafi has won a gold medal at a Wushu championship in Sweden. He says his victory is the result of never giving up and keeping faith.

Hailed as a rising star in martial arts, Rashid was accorded a warm and festive welcome by his family, neighbours and supporters upon his return home.

The entire locality celebrated his achievement with cheers, firecrackers and slogans praising his dedication and success.

Expressing gratitude after his triumph, Rashid said he dedicated his success to his coaches and supporters who guided him throughout his journey.

"I am thankful to Almighty Allah for blessing me with this grand success. My coach Aijaz Hasan stood by me through

all challenges and I am equally thankful to my chief coach, Kuldeep Handu, whose training made this possible," he said.

Rashid, who began his Wushu journey in 2016, said the championship in Sweden was a challenging experience. "I had to face tough opponents from Italy, Bangladesh, and the host country Sweden and winning gold against them feels incredible," he said.

Recalling his struggles, Rashid said he faced several hardships and even sustained injuries during his training, but motivation from his coach kept him focused.

"There were moments of doubt and demotivation, but my coach reminded me that perseverance brings results. Today, I have made it possible for my region to hold its first-ever gold medal in Wushu," he said.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Minister Sharma vows free ration, LPG within 6 months

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 19: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Satish Sharma on Friday said that no one will sleep hungry in J&K and government will fulfil its promise of free ration and LPG cylinders within the next six months.

Talking to reporters here, Minister Sharma said, "Promises of free ration and gas cylinders will be fulfilled within next six months. Welfare of the poor remains a top priority. All necessary steps are being taken to ensure that all commitments are met."

The Minister said: "We are peace-loving people. Our message is clear and we will respond to terrorism with tourism. The government will stand by every poor family. No one will sleep hungry and our promises will be fulfilled within the next six months."

"A comprehensive plan has been put in place to ensure uninterrupted food supplies during the harsh winter months, particularly in snow-bound and high-altitude districts," the Minister said, adding, "Essential commodities have been dumped across all winter zones. There will be no shortage even during extended highway closures."

He also shared that the department has initiated the 'procurement of 20 mobile testing laboratories' for district-level quality checks. "Each district will have a mobile



lab vehicle to monitor ration and food quality. Strict action will follow against adulteration," he said, referring to recent issues involving raw meat and eggs.

Admitting that resource limitations remain a challenge, the minister said: "We inherited several problems and expectations have multiplied a thousandfold in the past decade. Despite limited funds, we are working with honesty and fairness. Justice will be done."

On the issue of pending ration cards and split families, Sharma said discrepancies are being addressed. "We have requested the Centre to extend special concessions to J&K given its unique geography. Split families, widows and other deserving groups are genuine cases and we are committed to their inclusion," he said.

He said the department's

Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) are being streamlined to ensure that posts created are absorbed swiftly. "Many employees have worked hard for years. I will personally ensure justice is done to the first three districts by January," Sharma said, adding that it was a commitment of the Omar Abdullah government to deliver fairness and merit-based progress.

He also appreciated the Chief Minister's support and Delhi's assistance, saying: "Our Chief Minister is positive and determined. Without Delhi's support, it would have been difficult. We expect liberal funding ahead similar to the progressive aid seen during Dr. Manmohan Singh's tenure."

The minister said coordination with the Punjab government is ongoing to address inter-state food supply issues, which were delayed earlier due to administrative and logistical hurdles.

He said winter sports and tourism are being revived as part of J&K's broader development vision. "We are introducing downhill cycling, water sports and skiing in Sonmarg. The aim is to turn youth passion into profession and to fight drugs through sports," he said.

Highlighting the government's wider developmental approach, Sharma added that the administration is also working on the solarisation of 200 units including shrines, construction of new playgrounds and supporting tourism-based employment—(KNO)

Gulmarg prepared for fresh snow spell: SDM

WARIS FAYAZ

Gulmarg, Dec 19: As this famous ski resort in North Kashmir braces for a fresh spell of snowfall amid a weather advisory, authorities in Gulmarg on Friday said they are fully prepared to keep life moving.

Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Gulmarg, Jaliel Ahmed Mir said that all men and machinery have been put on alert, with two control rooms established at Gulmarg and Tangmarg to ensure swift response and minimal inconvenience to residents and tourists.

He said the administration is working in close coordination with Police and other line departments to ensure there is no inconvenience, adding that the electricity, road connectivity, water supply and other essential services are up to the mark



and that every concerned department is ready to face any eventuality arising from the snowfall.

SDM Jaliel said they have already issued a public advisory in view of the anticipated snowfall in the

area, and urged people not to park their vehicles along roadsides, as such parking hampers snow clearance operations and may delay restoration of traffic during heavy snow—(KNO)

DC Sgr establishes winter preparedness control room

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 19: Srinagar district administration has activated a dedicated Winter Preparedness Control Room for 2025-26. This initiative aims to ensure a co-ordinated and prompt response to weather-related emergencies across the district.

According to an order issued by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, the control room will function with immediate effect to coordinate with district authorities,

police, disaster management teams and other agencies for quick response during snow and weather-related exigencies. It says, the control room will be manned round-the-clock by seven officers from the Srinagar District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), including Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat, Adnan Rashid Bhat, Adil Mushtaq Dar, Momin Farooq, Riyaz Ahmad Dar, Mohd Ashraf Dar and Parvez Ahmad Sheikh.

Continued on
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From the Parliament

SCM projects nears completion: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 19: Jammu and Kashmir has made a substantial headway under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM), as data presented in the Parliament records the majority of approved projects in Jammu and Srinagar nearing completion.

In a written reply to Lok Sabha, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs said that Jammu and Kashmir has received Rs.941 crore as Central Financial Assistance under SCM, of which Rs.864.6 crore has already been utilised. A total of 288 projects amounting to Rs.6,603.5 crore were taken up in the Union Territory. Of these, 279 projects, amounting to Rs.6,364.7 crore, have been completed, while nine projects totalling to an amount of 238.8 crore are under execution,

indicating an overall completion rate of more than 96 per cent.

Under Smart City, Srinagar has witnessed significant progress as 156 out of 161 projects have been completed so far. The completed projects in Srinagar account for Rs. 3,523.6 crore, while five projects with a cost of Rs.110.8 crore are under execution. While in Jammu city, 127 projects with a total cost of Rs.2,969.1 crore were approved under the mission. Of these, 123 projects worth Rs.2,841.1 crore have been completed, while four projects are still undergoing, which cost Rs.128 crore.

While highlighting the objective of Smart Cities, the Union Government clarified that the Smart Cities Mission is not the development of entire cities, but focused area-based development through

retrofitting, redevelopment, greenfield projects and pan-city initiatives. These also include interventions in smart mobility, water supply, sanitation, governance, energy and environment sectors, it added.

The Ministry further informed that the projects are implemented through Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) and are audited as per provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, with audits conducted by State Audit authorities.

Aimed to improve urban infrastructure and quality of life through technology-driven and sustainable solutions, the Smart Cities Mission was launched in June 2015 and during the different rounds of the national challenge process, Jammu and Srinagar were selected—(KNO)

'Over 17,000 street vendors benefitted under PM SVANidhi'

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 19: Nearly 17,000 street vendors in Jammu and Kashmir have benefited from the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme and over 48 crore loan disbursed so far, as per the official data tabled in Parliament shows. In a written reply by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in response to a Lok Sabha question, a total of 17,315 street vendors in Jammu and Kashmir are registered as beneficiaries under this scheme. The data further reveals that

loans amounting to 50.83 crore have been approved in favour of these vendors. So far, 48.18 crore has already been disbursed, which depicts a high disbursement rate in the Union Territory.

The Ministry said, "Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) play a key role in identifying eligible street vendors through surveys conducted under the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, or through verification of applications submitted on the PM SVANidhi portal."

Continued on
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Rs 183 crore disbursed under AMRUT scheme: Centre

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 19: Jammu and Kashmir has received over Rs. 180 crore as Central assistance under several development missions focused on strengthening basic amenities for the urban poor, including water supply and sewerage, the Union Government informed Parliament today.

In a written reply to Lok Sabha, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs said Jammu and Kashmir was sanctioned Rs.158.6 crore in the year 2022-23, while Rs.25 crore in 2025-26 under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and AMRUT 2.0.

Continued on
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EDITORIAL

Kashmir’s Human-Wildlife Conflict Demands More Than Cages

The tragic death of five-year-old Sumiya in Anantnag, the second such fatal leopard attack in two months, is a devastating event that requires urgent systemic intervention. This is a symptom of a deepening and lethal crisis at the human-wildlife interface, where failing infrastructure and reactive policies are costing innocent lives. Our grief must translate into decisive action to prevent the next tragedy. The heartbreak is compounded by the fact that this was likely

preventable. The absence of basic safeguards, such as proper street lighting and boundary fencing in vulnerable fringe areas, leaves people defenceless. Financial losses can still be tolerated, but loss of life cannot be endured. It is a direct indictment of administrative failure. The area borders the Tral Wildlife Sanctuary underscores the predictable nature of this conflict. Announcements and temporary cages post-tragedy are a grossly inadequate response to a known, perennial threat. A sus-

tainable solution demands a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy that moves beyond reactive capture drives. First, immediate physical security must be provided. The government must prioritise and fund the installation of solar-powered street lights and predator-proof fencing in identified conflict-prone villages on forest fringes. Second, we need scientific landscape management. This involves creating buffer zones, restoring natural prey bases within forests to reduce predators’ need to

venture out, and using technology like early-warning sensor systems. Third, a robust compensation and insurance mechanism must be established for crop and livestock loss to foster community cooperation rather than resentment. The Wildlife Department must shift from a singular focus on conservation within park boundaries to active conflict mitigation management. This includes dedicated rapid response teams, constant monitoring of animal movement patterns, and genuine

community engagement programs that equip residents with knowledge and tools for coexistence. The life of a child is an irreplaceable loss. Honouring Sumiya’s memory requires transforming our approach from one of tragic recurrence to one of proactive protection. The government must act now to implement a concrete, funded action plan. We cannot wait for another headline, another grieving family. The time for comprehensive action is yesterday.

India’s Engagements With Jordan

The India-Jordan, ties demonstrate how sustained political engagement reinforces economic and other outcomes for strong bilateral relations

Press Information Bureau

As part of a three nation visit to Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman from 15-18 December, 2025 PM Narendra Modi was in Amman on December 15-16, where he held extensive discussions with His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan on the 15th of December 2025. This is his first full-fledged bilateral visit to Jordan. He earlier visited the country in February 2018, while on his way to Palestine.

India-Jordan relations are anchored in decades of diplomatic goodwill, structured political dialogue, and steadily expanding economic cooperation. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1950, the relationship has evolved into a mature partnership supported by regular leadership-level interactions, institutional mechanisms, and sectoral cooperation. Trade and economic engagement form a key pillar of this relationship. India is Jordan's third largest trading partner. While India exports cereals, frozen meat, petroleum products, animal fodder etc. to Jordan, fertilizers, especially phosphates and potash are imported. The commissioning of long-term joint ventures and the operation of Indian-owned manufacturing units in Jordan reflect deep commercial integration. High-level political engagement, including Foreign Office Consultations and top leadership level engagements provide momentum to bilateral ties.

India-Jordan bilateral relations over the years

India and Jordan enjoy warm relations based on mutual respect. Diplomatic ties were formalized in 1950 after the first agreement for cooperation and friendly relations was signed in 1947. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

1.High-Level Political Engagements

The foundations of this relationship were built through high-level exchanges. PM visited Jordan in February 2018, in transit, during his visit to State of Palestine. This was followed by King Abdullah-II's state visit to India from 27 February to 1 March 2018. During this visit there were delegation-level talks, a CEO's Roundtable, a joint address at the conference on 'Islamic Heritage: Promoting Understanding & Moderation', and the signing of 12 MoUs/Agreements. It also led to the announcements of establishing a C-DAC Centre of Excellence in Jordan for training IT professionals over five years and an in-kind assistance package of US\$5 million for pharmaceutical drugs and vaccines.

After that, both the leaders met on several occasions including on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy in June 2024; in COP-28 in Dubai in Dec 2023 and on the sidelines of Future Investment Initiative in Riyadh in October 2019 and also on the sidelines of 74th UNGA in New York in September 2019.

Apart from that both leaders also had telephonic conversation after Pahalgam Terror Attacks on April 24, 2025. The King of Jordan condemned the attack and reiterated his support for India's fight against terrorism. Both the leaders, also spoke over phone in October 2023 for discussing the developments in Gaza and shared their mutual concerns regarding terrorism, violence and loss of civilian lives.

In 2025, India-Jordan relations advanced through a series of structured diplomatic engagements. The 4th round of India-Jordan Foreign Office Consultations were held in Amman on 29 April 2025, co-chaired by the Indian Secretary (CPV & OIA) and the Secretary General of the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates. This was followed by the 2nd round of the Joint Working Group Meeting on Cooperation in Health on 02 September 2025, conducted virtually. During this meeting, detailed discussions were held on acceptance and recognition of Indian Pharmacopoeia, regulation of pharmaceuticals, vaccines and medical devices, the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, and Non-Communicable Diseases. Further momentum was added when the Indian Secretary (South) visited



Jordan from 13-15 October 2025 during which she met Amb. Daifallah Ali Al-Fayez, Secretary General, and held substantive discussions with Amb. Mohammad Abu Wendi, Director General (Asia & Oceania Affairs), on bilateral cooperation.

Additional exchanges included the visit of Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi to India in December 2017; the visit of India's National Security Adviser Shri Ajit Kumar Doval to Jordan in January 2020; and telephonic discussions between EAM and FM Safadi in January and October 2020 on bilateral issues and Covid-19 cooperation.

2. Trade and Economic Cooperation

Over the years, economic relations between India and Jordan have strengthened significantly, with bilateral trade showing robust growth. India is the fourth largest trading partner of Jordan. In the financial year 2023-24, total India-Jordan trade reached US\$ 2.875 billion, with India's exports to Jordan amounting to US\$ 1,465 billion. Institutional frameworks underpinning this trade include the Trade and Economic Joint Committee (TEJC), set up under the 1976 Trade Agreement, and other dialogue mechanisms such as maritime and sector-specific working groups.

Key Economic & Trade Initiatives / Highlights

A joint venture, Jordan India Fertiliser Company (JIFCO), between Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) and Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC), was commissioned to produce and export phosphoric acid to India. This venture originally valued at US\$ 860 million, is a major source of phosphoric acid for India. Jordan is also a leading supplier of fertilizers for India, particularly phosphates and potash.

In the past, a phosphoric acid plant operated by the joint Indo-Jordan Chemical Company (between JPMC and Southern Petrochemical Industries Corporation, (SPIC) was commissioned with an investment of US\$ 169.5 million; majority of its production is exported to India.

In May 2022 Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC), JPMC signed memoranda of understanding and agreements with several Indian phosphate/phosphate-fertilizer companies, with a total value of US\$ 1.5 billion. Arab Potash Company and Indian Potash Limited (IPL) signed a five-year MoU to supply the Indian market with amounts ranging between 275,000-325,000 tonnes annually.

Over 15 garment-manufacturing companies owned by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)

operate in Jordan's Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs), with a cumulative investment of about US\$ 500 million. These companies manufacture garments in Jordan and export the finished products outside Jordan under the Jordan-USA FTA framework.

In 2025, key India-Jordan economic initiatives included: a tourism-promotion event on 5 February 2025 (in collaboration with the Jordan Society of Tourism and Travel Agents) highlighting Madhya Pradesh as a destination, and announcing direct flights between Jordan and India; a trade-promotion seminar on 19 February 2025 with the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) and other stakeholders to boost investment and trade. Apart from these, the diplomatic mission also welcomed Indian companies' participation at the 3rd International Food and Food Technology Expo in Amman (12-14 August 2025).

3. Defence Relations

India and Jordan signed an MoU on Defence Cooperation in 2018. In 2024, a three-member Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force delegation attended the Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference (SOFEF) in Aqaba. A Jordanian Royal Navy delegation also visited India. They toured the Southern Naval Command Kochi and the Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala. This visit took place from April 29 to May 4, 2024.

4. Science and Tech

The Indian-Jordan Center of Excellence in Information Technology (IJCOEIT), a next-generation IT facility at Al-Hussein Technical University (HTU), was inaugurated on 02 October 2021. The Center is equipped with state-of-the-art IT infrastructure, including the Super Computer PARAM Shavak and advanced training facilities. Fully funded by the Government of India and set up pursuant to an MoU signed during the visit of HM King Abdullah-II to India in March 2018, its objective is to develop and strengthen software expertise in Jordan in premium fields. The Government of India conducts master trainer courses for Jordanian experts in emerging fields such as Cyber Security, Web Development, Machine Learning, Big Data Analytics, etc., who in turn train Jordanian youth at IJCOEIT. It is envisioned that 3000 Jordanian experts/professionals would be nurtured at the Center. On the sidelines of the 4th round of Foreign Office Consultation with Jordan held in Amman, Secretary (CPV & OIA) and JS(WANA) visited the India-Jordan Center of Excellence in IT (IJCoEIT) at the

Al-Hussein Technical University (HTU).

5. Education and People-to-People Ties

India and Jordan are strengthening ties in education and capacity building. India has one of the world's largest higher education systems with globally reputed institutions like IITs, IIMs and Indian Institute of Science. India is a popular study destination for Jordanian students. There are 50 slots for Jordan under the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme of Ministry of External Affairs. More than 2,500 Jordanians have graduated from Indian universities. In 2024-25, Jordan used 37 civilian ITEC slots, 4 special executive programmes, and 5 ICCR scholarships.

India and Jordan signed a Manpower Agreement and a visa-free travel for diplomatic and official passport holders during King Abdullah II's visit to India in March 2018. Around 17,500 Indian nationals[1] currently live in Jordan, mostly working in textiles, construction, manufacturing, healthcare, nursing, universities, IT, financial companies and UN agencies. Jordan provides Visa on Arrival to Indian tourists since 2009 and e-Visas since 2023.

There is a direct flight from Amman to Mumbai. Both countries cooperated during the evacuation of Indian nationals from Israel under Operation Sindhu.

6. Cultural Exchanges

India and Jordan enjoy warm cultural relations There is strong interest in Jordan for Indian culture, especially Bollywood films. Regular cultural exchanges involving dance and music, as also events on Yoga Day take place between the two countries on a regular basis. Most recently, in July 2024, an ICCR sponsored "Natraj Sanskritik Silpi Samaj" cultural troupe performed Assamese Folk Dance at the 38th Jerash festival of Culture and Arts, the signature cultural festival of Jordan.

Outcome of PM's Visit

On December 15, 2025, PM arrived in Amman, Jordan, where he was warmly received by Jordanian Prime Minister Dr. Jafar Hassan with a ceremonial welcome, highlighting the strong ties between the two nations. This marks the first leg of his three-country tour (Jordan, Ethiopia, Oman). This full-fledged bilateral visit to Jordan is taking place after a span of 37 years, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

During his visit to Jordan PM Modi met

Key Takeaways

- PM Narendra Modi visited Jordan on December 15-16, 2025, his first full-fledged visit to the country.
- Five MoUs were signed in the areas of renewable energy, water resource management, cultural exchange, digital solution and twinning between Petra and Ellora
- This year is the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- India is Jordan's third largest trading partner. The two countries aim to enhance bilateral trade to US\$ 5 billion over the next 5 years.
- Jordan is a leading supplier of phosphates and potash fertilizers for India.
- Around 17,500 Indian nationals currently live in Jordan, mostly working in textiles, construction, manufacturing, healthcare etc.

His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and other senior delegates. Both the leaders discussed ways to further deepen bilateral engagement in the fields of trade and investment; defense and security; renewable energy; fertilizer and agriculture; innovation, IT and digital technologies; critical minerals; infrastructure; health and pharma; education and capacity; tourism and heritage; and culture and people-to-people ties. Prime Minister proposed that the two countries should aim to enhance bilateral trade to US\$ 5 billion over the next 5 years. He also called for collaboration between Jordan's digital payment system and India's United Payments Interface (UPI). Jordan is an important supplier of fertilizer to India, and companies on both sides are in discussions for further substantive investment in Jordan to meet growing demand for phosphatic fertilizer in India.

The two leaders conveyed strong appreciation and support for each other's fight against terrorism and condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They shared perspectives on the developments in the region and on other global issues and reiterated the importance of restoring peace and stability in the region.

MoU's signed between India and Jordan

- MoU on Technical Cooperation in the Field of New and Renewable Energy
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Water resources Management & Development
- Twinning Agreement between Petra and Ellora
- Renewal of the Cultural Exchange Programme for the years 2025-2029
- Letter of Intent on Cooperation in the field of sharing successful digital solutions implemented at population scale for digital transformation

Conclusion

The India-Jordan, ties demonstrate how sustained political engagement reinforces economic and other outcomes for strong bilateral relations. Regular consultations, leadership-level meetings, and shared perspectives on regional stability and counter-terrorism have added strategic depth to the partnership. The engagements and outcomes of the recent high-level visit will further consolidate these gains. As India deepens its West Asia engagement, Jordan's role as a reliable economic and political partner remains significant, reflecting a balanced relationship built on trust, trade, and strategic alignment.

GOOD GOVERNANCE WEEK 2025

Campaign begins in Kulgam under Good Governance Week

KT News Desk

KULGAM, DECEMBER 19: As part of Good Governance Week 2025 and under the Sushasan Saptah initiative, the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign commenced across District Kulgam with the objective of taking governance to the doorsteps of the people. Grievance redressal camps, as per an official statement, were organised at block, tehsil and panchayat levels, where district and sectoral officers listened to public grievances and ensured their prompt redressal. The camps witnessed active participation from the public, who raised issues related to various departments.



The Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, also visited several areas of the district, interacted with the people and personally listened to their demands and concerns, directing the concerned officers for timely resolution. During the day, domicile, income and other essential certificates were distributed to eligible beneficiaries. Awareness and registration camps were also held to educate citizens about various government schemes and facilitate on-the-spot registrations. The initiative aims to strengthen transparency, accountability and citizen-centric governance by ensuring effective delivery of public services at the grassroots level.

Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore, campaign starts in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 19: The inaugural function of the 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore-2025' campaign was held Friday at the Conference Hall, Mini-Secretariat Shopian. The programme, as per an official statement was presided over by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone. The event was organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India and conducted in virtual mode. The campaign is being observed from December 19 to December 25, 2025 as part of Good Governance Week-2025. Senior officers of the district administration participated in the virtual inaugural session. During the day one, Camps at the Panchayat level across the district, in about 14 panchayat halqas were held which were attended by field functionaries

and local public. Ensuring responsive and people-centric governance, grievance redressal camps were organised at the panchayat and tehsil levels to directly address public issues at the grassroots. These camps witnessed active participation from the local populace, who presented their grievances and concerns before the concerned officers. During the camps, officers patiently heard the grievances on the spot and took immediate steps for their redressal wherever possible. Issues requiring further follow-up were duly noted. Departments engaged in providing public services to the public and interacted with people on various welfare and developmental issues. Representatives of the departments sensitized the gatherings on different government schemes and initiatives. The events were held under the supervision and presence of Tehsildars at Tehsil level and BDOs at the Panchayat level.

'Prashashan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign commences in Anantnag

KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 19: The Good Governance Week (Sushasan Saptah-2025), under the flagship campaign "Prashashan Gaon Ki Ore," being organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India, commenced Friday in Anantnag. As part of the week-long initiative, as per an official statement, special camps are being organised by the Administration at the district, sub-division, and tehsil/block levels across the district. On the directions of the Deputy Commissioner, senior officers of the district administration have been designated as Visiting Officers to interact with citizens and listen to their grievances for prompt redressal. The focus areas of the campaign include enrolment and registration of eligible beneficiaries, grievance redressal, and dissemination of best practices in good governance. Emphasis is also being laid on enhancing service delivery and quality



through online platforms and other innovative mechanisms. On the first day, a mega public outreach programme was held at Town Hall Achabal, which was presided over by ADDC, Sandeep Singh Bali and attended by ACD and Tehsildar Anantnag, BDO, SDAO, TSWO, officers and officials from line departments, besides civil society members and the general public. Similar community outreach

programmes were held in subdivisions, tehsils, and blocks of the district. The camps witnessed large participation from the general public, civil society members, and social organisations, who hailed the initiative of getting their concerns addressed. The District Administration reaffirmed its commitment to a community-driven and citizen-centric approach to governance through such initiatives.

Campaign begins in Kupwara



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 19: The district administration Kupwara Friday kick-started the "Sushasan Saptah- Prashashan Gaon Ki Ore 2025" campaign across all tehsils of the district with active participation of officers from various administrative and line departments. As part of the campaign, officers of the district administration, as per an official statement, reached out directly to the doorsteps of the people, engaging with residents at the grassroots level to listen to their day-to-day issues, developmental concerns, and service delivery-related grievances. The initiative witnessed encouraging public participation, reflecting strong community engagement in governance processes. The campaign is aimed at strengthening good governance, ensuring transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of the administration. Through this outreach programme, the administration seeks to bridge the gap between the government and citizens by facilitating on-the-spot grievance redressal, identification of development gaps, and timely intervention in service delivery mechanisms.

During the interactions, officers recorded public feedback related to key sectors such as infrastructure development, power supply, water availability, healthcare, education, social welfare schemes, roads, and other essential public services. Issues requiring immediate attention were flagged for prompt resolution, while others were forwarded to the concerned departments for necessary action. The Sushasan Saptah-Prashashan Gaon Ki Ore 2025 campaign aims to promote citizen-centric governance with the active involvement and support of Central and State Government departments, ensuring that government schemes and benefits reach the intended beneficiaries efficiently and effectively. Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner said that Special camps have been organized across tehsils and other designated venues to observe the Good Governance Week starting Friday. He said that the aim of the campaign is to saturate various schemes including centrally sponsored schemes and redressal of public grievances. He appealed for maximum participation of the people for getting their issues resolved at their doorsteps.

DC Srinagar reviews banks' performance in implementing Govt Schemes

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR DECEMBER 19: A meeting of District Level Review Committee/District Consultative Committee (DLRC/DCC) was held under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner(DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex, here to review the performance of the Banks and sponsoring Departments under various Government initiatives and flagship schemes for financial year 2025-26 on Friday. Besides, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; General Manager DIC, Hamida Akhtar; Lead District Manager(Banks), Nelofer Jan; LDO, RBI, DDM NABARD, Purnima Kakroo; Director RSETI, Bashir Ahmad; all District Officers, Cluster Heads of J&K Bank, representatives of Banks and financial institutions operating in Srinagar attended the meeting. At the outset, the Deputy



Commissioner, as per an official statement, who is also Chairman of DLRC/DCC conducted a detailed sector-wise review of the performance of banks in the implementation of various Government schemes. He also reviewed achievements under Priority and Non-Priority Sector lending as per the Annual Credit Plan. Speaking on the occasion, the DC urged banks and sponsoring agencies to focus on achieving targets under Priority Sector Lending and emphasized improving the ease of availing banking facilities for consumers.

The DC stressed upon all line departments and banks operating in the district to ensure effective implementation of self-employment schemes such as Mission YUVA, Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), JKICP, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, among others. He also emphasized strengthening financial inclusion schemes through proper handholding of beneficiaries to enhance credit outreach. While underscoring the need to further improve performance, particularly in priority sectors,

the DC stated that the meritorious performance at the bank branch level shall be duly recognized through special awards while below average performance would be closely monitored and taken up formally with the HR Divisions of the respective banks. The DC further directed banks to sensitize their staff to deal with customers in a compassionate manner and ensure timely redressal of public grievances. He emphasized close coordination between banks and sponsoring agencies for the effective implementation of self-employment schemes, enabling beneficiaries to establish income-generating units seamlessly. During the meeting, it was informed that banks operating in Srinagar have disbursed a total credit of Rs. 6,353.23 crore to 86,989 beneficiaries under various schemes, achieving 72% of the target till the quarter ending September 2025 of the financial year 2025-26.

DLSA Budgam reviews delivery of legal aid services

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 19: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Budgam, under the aegis of the J&K Legal Services Authority, convened a review meeting with Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and other functionaries of DLSA and Taluka Legal Services Committees (TLSCs) of District Budgam. The meeting, held in ADR Centre, was chaired by Secretary, DLSA Budgam, was aimed to review the effectiveness of ongoing legal services programmes, identify challenges in their implementation, strengthen coordination among PLVs, TLSCs, and other stakeholders, and streamline the delivery of legal aid services. It also provided a platform for sharing feedback and best practices to enhance public awareness and improve access to justice in the district. While addressing the



participants, the Secretary, DLSA Budgam, emphasized the need to strengthen coordination and cooperation among PLVs, officials, and other stakeholders to ensure institutional growth and the welfare of legal aid beneficiaries. She highlighted the crucial role of PLVs in reaching out to marginalized and vulnerable sections of society and encouraged them to conduct door-to-door campaigns, seminars, awareness programmes, and activities through Legal Aid Clinics

and Legal Aid Clubs. PLVs were also directed to get details of convicts if any in there areas so that their applications for Premature release, Parole or Furlough could be processed. She further stressed the importance of spreading awareness about legal rights and duties, various NALSA schemes, the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism, the significance of Lok Adalats, and the welfare schemes of the Government currently underway.

Director Agriculture Kashmir reviews activities at SM Farm in Baramulla

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 19: Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah Friday visited vegetable Seed Multiplication Farm Tapar Kreeri Baramulla and took stock of different agriculture activities there. He visited different sections of the Farm and reviewed the various interventions adopted there. Speaking to the concerned officers, Director Agriculture, as per an official statement, said that the departmental farms are the assets with the department and have an inevitable role to play amid the changing global agriculture scenario. He



said these farms act as model demonstration centres for the farmers. 'Our immediate goal is to achieve the maximum output in terms of seed production of different agricultural crop from our departmental seed multiplication farms,' he added.

The Director asked the concerned officers and technical experts to work on a mission mode so that all the set targets viz-a-via assured availability of quality seeds of different vegetable/ agriculture crops to the farming community could be reached successfully.

HED organises 1-day training camp for NMBA Nodal Officers

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 19: A One-Day Training Camp for Nasha Mukth Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) Nodal Officers was successfully organised in hybrid mode at the Mini Auditorium of Islamia College of Science & Commerce, Srinagar. The programme, as per an official statement, was organised by the Higher Education Department (HED) in collaboration with the Civil Society Forum Kashmir, with active participation from the Jammu & Kashmir Health Department, J&K Police and IMHANS Kashmir. The training programme aimed to sensitise and equip NMBA Nodal Officers with



practical knowledge and skills related to substance abuse prevention, early identification of substance users, mental health awareness, counselling mechanisms, rehabilitation strategies, and inter-departmental coordination. More than 70 NMBA Nodal Officers from the Kashmir

Division participated in the programme, while 71 Nodal Officers from the Jammu Division joined the programme virtually, reflecting wide institutional engagement across the Union Territory. Prof. (Dr.) Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, Director Colleges, Higher Education Department

(Member of the Task Force for Rehabilitation of Victims of Drug Abuse), in his inaugural address emphasised the need for coordinated and sustained efforts among academic institutions, health services, civil society organisations, and law enforcement agencies to effectively address substance abuse. He stated that the Mentor-Mentee model in colleges will be further strengthened and made outcome-oriented, with a focused mandate to identify at-risk students, facilitate early intervention, and shield youth from substance abuse through mentoring and support mechanisms, including closer monitoring of student attendance patterns and timely flagging of absenteeism.

BJP Spokesperson, JKHCBA delegation, others call on LG Sinha



KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 19: Gaurav Gupta, BJP Spokesperson called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday.

A delegation of J&K High Court Bar Association Jammu led by its President Advocate K. Nirmal Kotwal called on the Lieutenant Governor. The members of delegation put-forth the issues pertaining to the Jammu & Kashmir Tenancy Act 2025, shifting of traffic courts, establishment of Lawyers Colony at

Jammu, and various other welfare issues of the legal fraternity.

Mohammad Iqbal Ahangar, Chairman, OBC Welfare Association J&K UT and former President, Municipal Committee Dooru-Verinag called on LG Sinha.

Harpreet Singh, Chairman, Jammu Sanskriti School also called on the Lieutenant Governor and briefed him on the school's upcoming exhibition on Sustainable Development Goals. He was accompanied by Rohini Aima, Principal & Vice Chairperson; Meena Kumari

and Pooja Wazir, Co-ordinators of the school.

Chaitanya Gupta, Station Head, 98.3 Radio Mirchi Jammu, also called on LG Manoj Sinha and briefed him on Radio Mirchi Jammu's upcoming campaign ahead of the 77th Republic Day of India. He was accompanied by Radio Jockey Tani Sharma. The campaign is envisioned as a heartfelt expression of gratitude from the people of Jammu to the nation's true heroes, honouring their selfless sacrifices and unwavering service to the country.

Div Rly Manager Jammu conducts intensive inspection of rail bridges

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 19: The Divisional Railway Manager of Jammu Division, Vivek Kumar, regularly conducts detailed inspections of stations and railway sections to assess passenger safety, facilities, and the status of ongoing development works.

Recently, the Divisional Railway Manager conducted a surprise inspection of the railway section between Jammu and Pathankot Cantt. During this inspection, a thorough examination was conducted of Railway Bridge No. 17, located between Kathua and Madhopur, and Railway Bridge No. 137, located between Ghagwal and Hiranagar. Other senior officers of the division were also present during the inspection.

The main objective of the inspection was to review the

progress of repair and restoration work on the bridges damaged by recent rains, so that train operations could be fully restored as soon as possible.

Prioritizing passenger safety, the railway administration had already initiated the repair work, which is currently progressing smoothly. During his inspection, the Divisional Railway Manager expressed satisfaction with the ongoing repair work and instructed the concerned officers and staff to complete it as soon as possible.

During his inspection, Divisional Railway Manager Shri Vivek Kumar stated, "The repair work on Railway Bridges No. 17 and 137, which were damaged due to the rains, is progressing rapidly and will be completed in the near future so that train operations can return to normal."

Div Com Kashmir reviews Republic Day Arrangements

Stresses inter-departmental coordination for flawless celebrations

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Dec 19: In view of the upcoming Republic Day celebrations, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Friday convened a comprehensive meeting of divisional-level officers to finalize a detailed plan ensuring a smooth, peaceful, and vibrant observance of the national festival.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Commissioner SMC, DIG Central Kashmir, and senior officers from various departments including Information, Education, Health, JalShakti, R&B, MED, PDD, Youth Services & Sports, Tourism, Hospitality & Protocol, Floriculture, Colleges, Culture, Traffic Police, and other security agencies.

Chairing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner directed the Joint Director, Information Kashmir to ensure timely playing of Shehnai Vadan, nomination of a commentator, installation of a public addressing system, and organization of quiz and essay writing competitions as part of Republic Day activities.

He instructed the DIG Armed Police to designate an officer responsible for unfurling the National Flag on the day of the event. The Director Floriculture was directed to make creative floral arrangements for the decoration of the dais.

SSP Security was asked to ensure comprehensive security arrangements at the venue, including the safety of VIPs and deployment of anti-sabotage teams.

Police and other security agencies were further directed to facilitate the orderly and disciplined entry of participants.

To ensure the comfort of participants, the R&B Department was instructed to arrange proper seating, waterproof tentage and installation of display screens at the venue besides illumination of key infrastructure across the city.

The Mechanical Engineering Department (MED) was directed to ensure road clearance in case of snowfall, while the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) was asked to keep dewatering pumps ready at the venue.

The Div Com emphasized that practice sessions for contingents and cultural troupes should commence from January.

The Hospitality & Protocol Department was directed to arrange refreshments for participants, while the District Administration was tasked with the distribution of invitation cards for the main function and the At-Home programme.

Also, SMC was instructed to ensure cleanliness and sanitation of the venue. Fire & Emergency Services Department was directed to deploy fire tenders, the Health Department to set up medical kiosks, and the Traffic Police to identify parking spaces and issue a traffic diversion plan to ensure smooth vehicular movement.

Similarly, RTC and SSSL were asked to provide buses to various departments, including the Education Department, for ferrying participants to and from the venue.

India showed tradition, science can advance together: Tedros at WHO summit on traditional medicine

PTI

New Delhi: On the closing day of the Second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine, the global health body's director general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on Friday said that healthcare must be integrated and inclusive, while stressing that science and tradition are complementary to each other.

The summit, jointly

organised with the Government of India, opened on Wednesday and brought together ministers, scientists, indigenous leaders and practitioners from more than 100 countries.

Addressing the summit, the WHO director general said, "Traditional medicine can help address many of the threats to the health of our modern world, the growing burden on economic capabilities, and inequitable access to healthcare

services."

Commending India, he said the country has shown that tradition and innovation can advance together. "India has shown the world that traditional wisdom and modern science are not inconsistent, but complementary to each other."

"Traditional medicine can help address many of the threats to the health of our modern world, the growing

burden of economic capabilities, and inequitable access to services and healthcare," Tedros said, adding, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has helped bring this vision to the world."

About the outcome of the summit, he said, "We have agreed to ensure safety, quality and public trust through common and risk-based regulation. We have also agreed to safeguard biodiversity and

traditional knowledge while respecting cultural heritage, intellectual property and equitable sharing."

The WHO D-G added, "We have agreed to harness digital technologies and innovation responsibly to improve access to research and data generation, and we have agreed to integrate safe and effective traditional medicine into health systems, especially private healthcare."

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Indian knowledge

unity and social cohesion.

Highlighting the contemporary relevance of traditional wisdom, the Lieutenant Governor said India's ancient knowledge systems offer a blueprint for a successful modern world while ensuring the well-being of all.

He said these systems provide a roadmap for sustainable development and innovation, and present a holistic framework to effectively address issues such as climate change, thereby helping build a sustainable future.

The Lieutenant Governor stressed the importance of the youth embracing India's civilisational values. He urged the young generation to inculcate ancient ideals and values in present-day life to contribute meaningfully to nation-building and global well-being.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated and extended his best wishes to the editor of the "Kartavya Marg" and everyone associated with the publication.

He applauded Shri Kailash Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust for its commitment and dedicated efforts towards promotion of India's ancient knowledge traditions, folk culture, astrology, and Vedic sciences, while fostering moral awareness, and cultural pride within society.

He said the complete knowledge system rooted in the Vedas and encompasses a holistic worldview will offer solutions to modern challenges.

"Our ancient texts like Vedas and Upanishads are a treasure of knowledge in mathematics, medicine, physics, botany, chemistry, arts and humanities. Various philosophical schools and art and architecture are profoundly relevant today to build a resilient society," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He emphasized that the endeavours like "Kartavya Marg" play an inspiring role in connecting the younger generation with their traditions and cultural heritage. He said the young generation must inculcate ancient values and ideals in our present-day life.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that the Indian culture, ethics and values help in navigating complex challenges and cultivating virtues to promote harmony and oneness in the society.

"Our ancient knowledge system and embedded wisdom offer a blueprint for a successful modern world while ensuring the well-being of all, roadmap for sustainable development and innovation and a holistic framework to effectively deal with issues like climate change to build a sustainable future," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Mahant Rohit Shastri, President, Shri Kailash Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust, informed that the annual publication is brought out in Hindi, Sanskrit, English, and Dogri, ensuring that its message of knowledge, culture, and values reaches readers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Members of the Trust, including Prof. Sharat Sharma, Dr. Vishav Gupta, Rajeev Sharma, Vinay Agrawal, Vinay Jamwal, Nigam Gupta, Prabesh Gandotra, Naresh Raina, Lucky Sharma, Prabodh Sharma, M.L. Verma, Dr. Vivek Arya, Yoginder Singh, and Satish Jandyal were present on the occasion. (KNO)

Traditional medicine

the participation, dialogue and commitment witnessed during the past three days of this summit have deepened the belief that the world is ready to move forward together in this direction.

"Everyone has to make a resolve to advance traditional medicine with trust, respect and responsibility," the prime minister said.

PM Modi launched several landmark Ayush initiatives including My Ayush Integrated Services Portal (MAISP). He also unveiled the Ayush Mark, which is envisioned as a global benchmark for the quality of Ayush products and services.

Modi released the WHO technical report on training in Yoga and the Book 'From Roots to Global Reach: 11 Years of Transformation in Ayush'.

He also released a commemorative postal stamp on Ashwagandha, symbolising the global resonance of India's traditional medicinal heritage.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Union ministers J P Nadda and Prataprao Jadhav were present among other dignitaries at the event.

Modi said in the 21st century, the challenge of maintaining balance in life is set to become even greater.

He said that the advent of a new technological era, with AI and robotics, represents the biggest transformation in human history, and the way of living will change in unprecedented ways in the coming years.

Modi stressed the need to remain mindful that such sudden lifestyle changes, coupled with the convenience of resources and facilities without physical labour, will create unforeseen challenges for human bodies.

The prime minister said that traditional healthcare must not only focus on present needs but also address future responsibilities, which are a shared obligation for all.

MHA clears

The MHA has also ordered promotion of 13 IAS officers of J&K segment of AGMUT cadre to Selection Grade.

According to the order, Avny Lavasa, Anshul Garg, Vikas Kundal, Nidhi Malik, Nazim Khan, Shaheel-ul Rehman Rather, Pradeep Kumar, Rahul Sharma, Narinder Bali, Aijaz Ahmad Bhat and Majid Khalil Ahmad Drabu have been promoted to Selection Grade w.e.f. 01.01. 2026.

Dr Shah Faesal and Sheikh Arshad Ayub- who are currently on central deputation- have also been granted promotion to Selection Grade on proforma basis.

Three IAS officers posted in Jammu and Kashmir have also been promoted to the Junior Administrative Grade.

The officers include Ayushi Sudan (Deputy Commissioner Samba), Bilal Mohiuddin (Deputy Commissioner Budgam) and Minga Sherpa (Deputy Commissioner Baramulla), (KNO)

3 IPS officers

Choudhary, who is currently on deputation with the NIA, has been granted proforma promotion to DIG grade.

The ministry has further approved the promotion of 10 IPS officers of the J&K segment to the Selection Grade (Level-13) with effect from January 1, 2026. Those promoted include Ashish Kumar Mishra, Nagpure Amod Ashok, Gurinder Pal Singh, Altaf Ahmed Shah, Bakar Hussain Samoon, Ajaz Ahmad Bhat, Ranjit Singh Samyal and Mohammad Yaseen Kichloo. Chandan Kohli, currently on central deputation, has been granted proforma promotion to selection grade.

Besides, six IPS officers have been promoted to the Junior Administrative Grade (JAG, Level-12). Those promoted to JAG include

Bisma Qazi, Tanushree, Sahil Sarangal, Anayat Ali Choudhary, Nikhil Borkar and Mohita Sharma. (KNO)

12 cancelled, 18 delayed

stating that airport operations across North India may continue to face disruptions and urged passengers to stay connected with their airlines for real-time updates.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) also appealed to travellers to rely only on official communication channels, allow extra time for airport processes and assured that facilitation teams are assisting passengers at major airports. (KNO)

CS reviews progress

(UEM) solutions in the offices of Heads of Departments, besides other measures aimed at safeguarding government digital infrastructure against emerging cyber threats.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the progress of key projects, including augmentation of the State Data Centre (SDC), operationalization of a Mini Security Operations Centre (SOC), adoption of official government e-mail IDs by employees, expansion of Government Drive usage, and capacity-building initiatives undertaken to promote cyber hygiene across departments.

Stressing the need for a holistic and robust protection mechanism for IT assets, the Chief Secretary directed that all concerned Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) to complete the inventorization of IT assets on the e-SAM portal within the next one month to strengthen monitoring and security of government assets.

He further instructed the NIC to prepare a comprehensive action plan within a month for augmenting the capacity of the State Data Centre and implementing additional cyber security measures to make the system foolproof across J&K.

Earlier the IGP, Crime, Sujit Singh apprised the meeting about a comprehensive and in-depth assessment of cyber forensic capabilities at CICE, J&K. He added that the process involves a detailed examination of existing systems, emerging requirements and future-ready initiatives aimed at strengthening cyber forensic infrastructure across the UT.

Singh further apprised that a structured three-phase approach has been adopted for this purpose. The first phase focuses on a thorough evaluation of technical specifications and proposed tools required for the establishment of CICE and Cyber Police Stations.

The second phase involves examination of these tools in the context of emerging cyber threats such as deep fakes, encrypted mobile communications and data breaches. The third phase entails comparative analysis and consultations regarding the latest tools available in the market.

During the meeting, Secretary, Information Technology Department, Dr. Piyush Singla, gave detailed overview of the implementation of cyber security plan in J&K. He informed that the security audit of departmental websites has been completed, and 35 redundant websites have been decommissioned after due consultation with the concerned departments.

He further apprised that EDR and UEM solutions have been successfully deployed across the Civil Secretariat complexes in Jammu and Srinagar, covering nearly 5,100 devices, with an additional 15,000 devices in HoD offices scheduled to be secured by January 2026.

The meeting was also informed that 28

departments have initiated the census of IT assets following nomination of users, while 14 departments have been asked to expedite the process. With regard to the adoption of official government e-mail IDs, it was informed that the user base has reached 1.81 lakh, with about 35,000 users added since May 2025, and 3,500 requests processed since the last review meeting.

Other cyber security initiatives discussed included deployment of 19 honey pots by the department, with CERT-In scheduled to provide training for their effective usage. It was also revealed that the white listing of USB/pen drives remains limited to 30 cases, while the number of Government Drive users has increased to 318 across departments.

CEO, JaKeGA, Mahima Madan, briefed the meeting on key interventions undertaken by the agency, including migration of select applications to the national MeghRaj Cloud, augmentation of the State Data Centre, operationalization of the Mini SOC at Jammu, which is planned to be upgraded into a full-fledged SOC and the phased migration of government websites from IPv4 to IPv6 by the end of the current year.

Emphasizing a proactive and coordinated approach to cyber security, the Chief Secretary underscored that robust digital safety mechanisms are vital for ensuring efficiency, transparency, and reliability in governance. He directed all departments to work in close coordination with the IT Department, plug existing gaps, adopt best cyber security practices, and complete all pending tasks within the stipulated timelines.

Rain, snowfall

and minus 1.5 degrees Celsius respectively a day earlier.

Baramulla recorded minus 3.6 degrees Celsius, down from minus 1.8 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara recorded minus 2.8 degrees Celsius compared to minus 1.0 degrees Celsius on Thursday.

Gulmarg recorded 1.0 degrees Celsius, slightly lower than 1.6 degrees Celsius recorded the previous day. Pahalgam recorded minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, compared to 0.4 degrees Celsius earlier.

Kokernag recorded 0.5 degrees Celsius against 1.8 degrees Celsius on Thursday, while Kulgam recorded 0.9 degrees Celsius, down from 2.0 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded 9.9 degrees Celsius, lower than 11.0 degrees Celsius a day earlier, while Jammu airport recorded 11.1 degrees Celsius compared to 11.5 degrees Celsius on Thursday.

Banihal recorded 3.5 degrees Celsius against 5.7 degrees Celsius, and Bhaderwah recorded 2.3 degrees Celsius compared to 5.0 degrees Celsius earlier.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.6 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 3.4 degrees Celsius on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the MeT officials said the next 24 hours are expected to remain largely dry, with only isolated chances of precipitation at a few places. From the evening of December 20, cloudy weather is likely to set in across the region, followed by rain in the plains and snowfall over higher reaches.

According to MeT officials, December 21 may witness fairly widespread rainfall in the plains and snowfall in higher reaches, particularly in north Kashmir. Upper reaches of north Kashmir are likely to receive snowfall, while the plains of Kupwara may receive 2 to 3 inches of snow.

Srinagar is likely to receive 1 to 2 inches of snowfall during the period, they said.

MeT officials said parts of central Kashmir may also witness similar weather conditions, with snowfall in isolated areas. They added that another weak western disturbance is likely to affect the region around December 22.

The officials said weather conditions are expected to remain mostly dry but cloudy from December 22 to December 24. Thereafter, dry weather is likely to prevail across Kashmir till December 28.

They advised people, especially those travelling to higher reaches, to remain cautious during the period of expected snowfall. (KNO)

Army Commander

addressing the soldiers, Lieutenant General Sharma emphasized the importance of maintaining mission readiness amid emerging security challenges. "We need to stay mission ready for emerging challenges by incorporating technology & integration with other agencies," he said.

The GOC-in-C commended the troops for their professional excellence and adaptability, forged through rigorous and innovative training.

Lt Gen Sharma praised the soldiers for their unwavering dedication, high state of alertness, and professionalism while operating in challenging terrain and dynamic threat environments.

During the visit, Lt Gen Sharma was briefed on ongoing counter-terrorism tasks and measures to strengthen the security grid in the hinterland region of Poonch district, a strategically sensitive area along the Line of Control (LoC).

"Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, #ArmyCdrNC, visited Shahsitar, #Surankote to assess the operational readiness of units deployed for counter terrorism tasks," the official Northern Command account stated. (KNO)

Saffron growers say

weather patterns linked to climate change, a lack of timely irrigation, and the unavailability of high-quality corms.

"Porcupines are adding salt to our wounds," Ishrat said. "If this issue is not addressed immediately, there will be no saffron corm left in these fields in the coming years."

The growers recalled that a few years ago, a repellent spray provided by SKUAST-Kashmir offered some temporary relief, but the effect was short-lived, and the problem persists.

"We are not experts. The government must consult technical experts and scientists who can guide us on effective and sustainable ways to prevent porcupine damage," said another grower from Lethpora. "So far, no long-term solution has been provided."

Locals said they have repeatedly brought the issue to the notice of the concerned departments, including agriculture and wildlife authorities, but no concrete steps have been taken.

"We are not asking for compensation alone. We want preventive measures," said a group of farmers. "If saffron cultivation collapses further, it will not only affect farmers but also Kashmir's identity, as Pampore saffron is known worldwide."

The farmers have appealed to the authorities to intervene at the earliest, deploy expert teams on the ground and introduce scientifically proven measures to protect saffron corms from porcupines before the damage becomes irreversible. (KNO)

'No PUC, No Fuel' rule: Awareness improves; checks across Delhi pumps uneven

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 19: A day after the enforcement of BS-VI compliance and mandatory pollution-under-control certificates at Delhi's border points and petrol pumps, awareness among commuters appeared to have increased on Friday, with many people voluntarily producing documents before refuelling.

Nischal Singhania, president of the Delhi Petrol Dealers' Association, told PTI that queues at pollution-under-control (PUC) certification centres remained unchanged, while fuel sales had taken a hit in some border areas.

"Earlier, there was uncertainty about how long the 'No PUC, No Fuel' rule would continue. Now, it is clear that it will remain in force till GRAP-IV is in place. Sales have dipped in border areas. Pump owners in Badarpur reported a decline yesterday, and the trend has continued," he said.

Singhania, however, said compliance levels had improved. "Customers are themselves taking out their PUC certificates while coming to refuel. This is a positive sign," he added. Despite the



overall increase in awareness, checks were not uniformly enforced across the city. At a few petrol pumps, commuters reported that no verification was carried out on Friday. Piyush, a commuter at a petrol pump on Rohtak Road, said he could buy fuel without being asked for his PUC certificate and that there was no visible police or enforcement presence at the site.

Another commuter, Bhushan Singh, travelling from Gulabi Bagh to his workplace, said the situation at the pump he visited was "like any other day".

Meanwhile, teams from the traffic police and transport department were deployed at city entry points, toll plazas and petrol pumps

to check PUC certificates and BS-VI compliance.

Traffic personnel were also stationed at key intersections with smart number plate recognition devices to verify documents and issue challans, even as some motorists requested leniency during the checks. Several motorists approaching the Bijwasan toll plaza on the Dwarka Expressway were seen slowing down abruptly after spotting enforcement barricades and Delhi Traffic Police personnel positioned just ahead of the toll point.

As traffic personnel flagged down vehicles for document verification, a noticeable number of cars could be seen taking sudden U-turns, heading back

towards the Gurugram side to evade inspection.

The scene near the toll plaza reflected heightened enforcement under the ongoing restrictions, with traffic police teams stationed strategically on the carriageway.

Vehicles were stopped intermittently, while others slowed down considerably upon seeing personnel in reflective jackets checking registration numbers and pollution-related documents on the spot. Some drivers, after briefly halting and assessing the situation, chose to turn back, causing brief congestion on the expressway. "A deployment near toll plazas is always strategic," a senior traffic police officer

said. He further said drivers automatically reduce their speed when they see enforcement teams close to toll points. It becomes easier for traffic personnel to stop vehicles smoothly and check papers without causing major traffic disruption.

He added that the department has already taken steps to ensure motorists are aware of the latest restrictions.

"We have pasted information boards at various Delhi-UP and Haryana-Delhi border points clearly explaining the rules and different norms under the recently enforced GRAP-IV. The idea is to ensure compliance through awareness, not just penal action," the officer said. According to the officer, enforcement has been significantly scaled up across the national capital.

"More than 100 teams of the Delhi Traffic Police have been deployed at vulnerable entry and exit points, including expressways, highways and border areas.

These teams are tasked with checking vehicle documents, ensuring adherence to pollution norms and preventing the entry of restricted vehicles into Delhi," he added.

IBM to skill 5 million Indian youth in AI, Cybersecurity and Quantum by 2030

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 19: American technology firm IBM on Friday announced its commitment to skill 5 million learners across India in frontier technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and quantum computing, by 2030.

The initiative, delivered through 'IBM SkillsBuild' programme, aims to create a future-ready workforce and broaden access to advanced digital skills and employability for both students and adult learners, the company said in a statement.

As part of the program, IBM will expand its education outreach across schools, universities, and vocational ecosystems. The company will collaborate with

the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to drive hands-on AI learning pathways, faculty enablement programs, hackathons, and internships.

"India possesses the talent and ambition to lead the world in AI & Quantum. Fluency in frontier technologies will define economic competitiveness, scientific progress and societal transformation... By democratising access to advanced skills, we are enabling the youth and students to build, innovate and accelerate India's growth," IBM Chairman and CEO Arvind Krishna said.

This India-specific target is a part of IBM's global mission to train 30 million people worldwide by 2030.

Stock markets surge after four days of decline; Sensex jumps 447 points

PTI

Mumbai, Dec 19: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged on Friday after four days of decline in tandem with a rally in global markets as a lower-than-expected US consumer price inflation data for November reinforced expectations of further interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve.

Fresh foreign fund inflows also drove the equity markets higher.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 447.55 points, or 0.53 per cent, to settle at 84,929.36. During the day, it surged 585.69 points, or 0.69 per cent, to 85,067.50.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 150.85 points, or 0.58 per cent, to 25,966.40.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics, Power Grid, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Asian Paints, Reliance Industries, and Bajaj Finserv were among the biggest gainers. However, HCL

Tech, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank, and Sun Pharma were the laggards.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled in positive territory.

Equity markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended higher on Thursday.

"Investor sentiment remained steady and constructive, supported by favourable global cues as renewed optimism around further monetary easing by the US Federal Reserve -- following lower-than-expected November inflation data -- boosted global risk appetite.

"A recovery in the Indian rupee against the US dollar further added to confidence, leading to broad-based buying through the session," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Air purifiers to be installed in 10,000 classrooms in first phase: Delhi Edu Min

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 19: Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood on Friday announced that air purifiers will be installed in 10,000 classrooms to ensure clean air for the students.

Addressing a press conference, Sood said that the government is committed towards tackling the problem of pollution through long-term administrative reforms and policy measures.

"We are not those who flaunt IIT degrees and do campaigns like Odd-Even or Gaadi On, Gaadi Off campaign. We are tackling the issue of pollution through long-term administrative measures," he said, taking a dig at the previous Aam Aadmi Party government.

The Odd-Even scheme, first introduced by the Aam Aadmi Party under the then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, was implemented twice in 2016, from January 1 to 15 and again from April 15 to 30.

The scheme aimed to curb vehicular pollution by restricting the movement of private vehicles based on the last digit of their registration numbers.

According to Sood, there



are 38,000 classrooms, and air purifiers will be installed in them in a phased manner.

"We want our children to study smart and also breathe smart air. In the first phase, air purifiers will be installed in 10,000 classrooms. Tenders have been floated today itself," he added.

Official data shows there are 1,047 government and government-aided schools.

The minister, who also holds the urban development portfolio, said the Public Works Department, using the environment cess, will also procure mechanical road sweepers for each of the assembly constituencies.

"Money is also being provided to MCD for procuring mechanical road sweepers. The Aam Aadmi Party government did nothing for MCD. Salaries were not released for sanitation workers. They were at the helm in MCD for two years. But what did they do?" he asked.

Sood also said Delhi is surrounded by states, and the weather conditions there determine the weather here.

"We are committed towards the issue of eradicating pollution. I want to assure people of Delhi that we are taking all possible steps which will show their results on the ground very soon," he added.

Adani to invest Rs 1 lakh crore in airports; eyes aggressive bids in next privatisation round



REUTERS/ PTI

New Delhi, Dec 19: Adani Enterprises plans to aggressively bid for 11 airports that the federal government plans to lease to the private sector, as part of the company's \$11 billion expansion strategy for airport infrastructure over the next five years.

The Adani Group, through its airport arm Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL), is India's largest airport infrastructure operator. It controls a significant share of India's air traffic, accounting for roughly 23 per cent of passenger movements and about 33 per cent of cargo traffic nationwide.

The Indian government is leasing out government-owned airports for long periods to private players while incentivising building new ones. It plans to have 350 to 400 airports by 2047 from 163 currently. Earlier this year, New Delhi outlined plans to lease out 11 airports, including at Amritsar and Varanasi.

"We will be bidding for all (11) of them," Jeet Adani, director at Adani Airports Holdings Limited (AAHL), said in an interview in Mumbai this week.

Adani Airports manages seven airports across India and is set to operationalise the first airport it has built from scratch - a new airport near Mumbai - this month.

Navi Mumbai International Airport will become the latest addition to the Adani Group's expanding airport portfolio, further strengthening its presence in India's aviation infrastructure.

The airport, being developed by Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMIAL) in which the Adani Group holds a 74 per cent stake, is scheduled to commence commercial operations on December 25.

Built at an initial cost of Rs 19,650 crore, the first phase will have a capacity to handle 20 million passengers annually, with plans to scale up to 90 million passengers over time, easing capacity constraints at Mumbai's existing airport and supporting long-term growth in the region's air traffic.

Adani group had acquired the Mumbai airport from GVK Group. Beside the two airports at Mumbai, Adani Group operates six other airports at Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur and Mangaluru. This

portfolio includes a mix of metro and regional airports, with the group also planning to bid aggressively for the next round of airport privatisations.

"As a staunch believer, bullish believer in this industry, we would be 100 per cent very aggressive in the next round of bidding for all 11 (airports)," he said.

In the previous round of privatisation in 2019, Adani Group won six airports - Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur and Mangaluru - and acquired Mumbai Airport from the GVK Group in 2021.

The Civil Aviation Ministry has identified 11 airports, including six smaller ones, for operations under the public-private partnership model, while the National Monetisation Pipeline envisages leasing 25 Airports Authority of India-operated airports between 2022 and 2025.

IPO PLANS

Jeet Adani said there is no fixed timeline for a public listing of AAHL but an initial public offering or a de-merger would depend on achieving some milestones including the business becoming cash positive.

Currently, AAHL is "largely" EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) positive, but due to the capital expenditure cycle, more cash needs to be deployed, he said.

When asked about a possible valuation for the business, Jeet Adani said that has not been set but the company will look at "comparable multiples" when deciding that

Adani and GMR are rushing to tap into booming air travel in India. About 174 million passengers travelled from and within the south Asian country by air in 2024, 10 per cent more than a year ago, data from the International Air Transport Association showed. Indian airlines have placed orders for over 1,300 aircraft since 2023.

Jeet Adani said the company has no plans to enter the airline business, citing thin margins.

"You need to have a certain mindset to run an airline. I don't think we have that mindset. Our comfort and our core competency is in creating hard assets on the ground, long gestation assets, running them quite efficiently," he said.

India could see 2 million cancer patients by 2040, warns MoS Jitendra Singh: What it means?

TOI HEALT

New Delhi, Dec 19: India may soon face a sharply rising cancer burden. The number of cancer patients in the country could touch 2 million by 2040, as per Jitendra Singh, Minister of States in the Prime Minister's office. Responding during the question hour in Rajya Sabha, Singh said "we stand at number 3, after China and the USA, as far as prevalence of cancer is concerned."

The MoS mentioned that this could have been possible due to a number of reasons, the changing spectrum of disease in this country. Singh also highlighted that many non-communicable diseases, including cancer, are now happening at the early stages of life, which were earlier happening in the later decades.

What's driving the cancer

rise in India For the sharp rise in cancer cases, a number of causes are linked. In his speech, Singh mentioned that in India, a large proportion of citizens over 60 years of age has increased, and this adds to the overall disease burden. According to data from the Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention study, population size and age structure together accounted for a major part of the increase in cancer cases in Delhi, contributing up to about 60 % of the rise in men and women, highlighting how demographic shifts amplify cancer counts even if age-specific rates remain stable.

Also, a Global Burden of Disease study reported that the highest cancer prevalence rates in India occur in older age groups (ages 60-74), showing how ageing populations contribute disproportionately to the total

burden.

Lifestyle and environmental factors

According to data in the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, up to 70% of cancer cases in India are attributed to modifiable risk factors such as tobacco use, alcohol, unhealthy diets, lack of physical activity, obesity, and pollution. Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of cancer in India.

Environmental exposure and pollution

The World Health Organisation (WHO) determined outdoor air pollution as a Group 1 carcinogen. Prolonged exposure to high levels of air pollution is linked to an increased risk of lung cancer, even among people who have never smoked. As per reports, major Indian cities often record PM2.5 levels far above

safe limits increasing long-term health risks.

Common cancers growing in India

Noting India's diversity, MoS Jitendra Singh said the nature and prevalence of cancers vary by region for instance, head and neck cancers are more common in the northeastern states.

Certain cancers that most frequently diagnosed in India are:

Breast cancer, which is the leading cancer among Indian women, followed by cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is largely prevalent with HPV vaccination and early detection.

Largely driven by tobacco use, the prevalence is followed by oral cancer, especially in men. Lung cancer continues to be a major cancer in India for both sexes and is rising among women too, driven by tobacco smoking, air pollution and other

risk factors.

In urban populations, colorectal cancer is among the rising non-tobacco associated cancers in India.

What this means

The warning by the MoS directly puts an effect on everyday health decisions. According to estimated data from NIH, one in nine Indians may develop cancer during their lifetime.

Singh said, the government has launched an ambitious programme to provide cancer care facilities in almost every district hospital across the country. "We are in discussions with the health ministry on how best to make it available to a larger population at an affordable cost or free of charge," said the MoS.

Also, preventive steps taken today can decide how the future unfolds for India's cancer story.

Situation tense in Bangladesh after unrest over uprising leader's death

PTI

Dhaka/ New Delhi, Dec 19: Tension gripped Bangladesh on Friday after the death of prominent July Uprising leader Sharif Osman Hadi triggered protests and violence in various parts of the country.

While no incidents of violence were reported in the morning, Thursday night saw attacks and vandalism in various parts of the country after Chief Adviser Yunus confirmed Inquilab Mancha leader Hadi's death.

The initial announcement of Hadi's death had earlier come from the Inquilab Mancha, and his body will be brought home later in the day.

Hadi, a candidate in the scheduled February 12 general elections, died while undergoing treatment at a Singapore hospital after fighting for his life for six days.

He was shot in the head last week by masked gunmen as he initiated his election campaign at central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area.

Protesters on Thursday took to the streets and attacked offices of newspapers and vandalised 32 Dhanmandi, the home of Bangladesh's founding father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Protesters also hurled bricks and stones at the residence the Assistant Indian High Commissioner in Chattogram, at 1:30 am, but failed to cause any damage.

Police responded with tear gas and baton charges, dispersing the crowd and detaining 12 protesters. Senior



officials assured the assistant high commissioner of security.

Last night, the National Citizen Party (NCP), a large offshoot of Students against Discrimination (SAD) that led last year's violent protest — dubbed the July Uprising — joined a mourning procession on the Dhaka University campus.

Supporters of the group chanted anti-India slogans alleging Hadi's assailants fled to India after committing the murder. They called upon the interim government to close the Indian high commission until they were returned.

"The interim government, until India returns assassins of Hadi Bhai, the Indian High Commission to Bangladesh will remain closed. Now or Never. We are in a war!" said Sarjis Alm, a key leader of NCP.

In Dhaka, protesters attacked the

office of a leading cultural group Chhaya Nat and brought out the furniture, setting it on fire.

Sporadic violence was also reported from other parts of the country.

A group of people, believed to be part of the protesters, attacked the offices of Bangla newspaper Prothom Alo's office and the nearby Daily Star at the capital's Karwan Bazar, near the Shahbagh intersection.

Reports said they vandalised several floors while journalists and staff of the newspaper were trapped inside, and the mob ignited a fire in front of the building.

In his address, Yunus vowed to bring those involved in Hadi's brutal murder to justice quickly, saying, "No leniency will be shown" to the killers.

"I sincerely call upon all citizens — keep your patience and restraint," he said.

'Trump admin could strip some naturalised Americans of their citizenship'

PTI

New York/Washington, Dec 19: The Trump administration is looking at plans to strip some naturalised Americans of their citizenship, the latest in a series of efforts undertaken by President Donald Trump to crack down on immigration.

A report in the New York Times cited new internal guidance issued on Tuesday to US Citizenship and Immigration Services field offices, asking them to "supply Office of Immigration Litigation with 100-200 denaturalisation cases per month" in fiscal year 2026.

While federal law provides for stripping naturalised Americans of their citizenship if they committed fraud while applying for citizenship or in a handful of other situations, the new guidance "would represent a massive escalation of denaturalisation in the modern era," said the report.

It added that such a move could impact people who had made honest mistakes on their citizenship paperwork and "sow



fear among law-abiding Americans."

The guidance is the latest in a series of measures announced by Trump in his second term in the White House as part of an intensified crackdown on immigration, both illegal and legal.

The NYT report added that there are about 26 million naturalised Americans in the country, citing Census Bureau data. USCIS estimates show that more than 800,000 new citizens were sworn in last year, most of whom were born in Mexico, India, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic or Vietnam.

"It's no secret that US Citizenship and Immigration Services' war on fraud includes prioritising those who've unlawfully

monthly quotas that are 10 times higher than the total annual number of denaturalisations in recent years turns a serious and rare tool into a blunt instrument and fuels unnecessary fear and uncertainty for the millions of naturalised Americans."

The NYT report said the new guidance was part of a document outlining USCIS priorities for the 2026 fiscal year, which began in October and listed goals such as "provide employee feedback opportunities", "strengthen management of high-risk cases" and "pursue denaturalisation."

The Justice Department has also said it would make denaturalisation a priority this year. In a memo earlier this year, officials said they would target individuals in an array of categories beyond committing fraud in obtaining citizenship.

"Categories of eligible people include gang members, those who committed financial fraud, individuals connected to drug cartels and violent criminals," the NYT report said.

Cyclone-hit Sri Lanka's recovery fund exceeds SLR 4 billion: Official



PTI

Colombo, Dec 19: Cyclone-hit Sri Lanka's rebuilding fund has exceeded SLR 4.2 billion through contributions, a top finance ministry official said on Friday. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake constituted the 'Rebuild Sri Lanka Fund' in the immediate aftermath of the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah.

"Based on the update that has been received from the Treasury Operations Department of the Ministry of Finance, we are happy to share that as of today the total amount received is SLR 4,286 million, which comprises of deposits of SLR 4,263 million direct deposits into the bank accounts as well as SLR 23 million received in foreign currencies, signifying a total of over SLR 4.2 billion rupees," Harshana Suriyapperuma said. He added that the amount equals USD 13.86 million. The amount received in foreign currencies itself had exceeded USD 6 million, he said.

Contributions had come from well-wishers, supporters, Sri Lankan entrepreneurs, organisations, businesses, overseas Sri Lankans, and other organisations assisting the island nation at the moment, he said.

Suriyapperuma said the government was aware of the moves by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and many other organisations to grant assistance to Sri Lanka for its rebuilding efforts. The money received through the bank accounts collected through North America was ranked at the highest position, followed by donations and contributions received from Australia, China, and the UK, Suriyapperuma said. The Sri Lankan parliament is expected to give its nod to the SLR 500 billion supplementary estimate later today to cover the recovery expenditure.

The cost of recovery is expected to be around USD 6-7 billion, according to the government's preliminary estimates. Widespread flooding, landslides and severe infrastructure collapse across the island nation severely strained the country's disaster-response capacity in the wake of Cyclone Ditwah.

Only 4 games? Inglis's big IPL buy raises eyebrows

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 19: Australian batter Josh Inglis, who was to be available for only four IPL matches next year, could play more games after securing a hefty bid from Lucknow Super Giants in the recent players' auction, triggering uneasiness in the BCCI and his former franchise Punjab Kings.

Inglis was released by Punjab Kings before the auction due to his limited availability even though the team was keen to retain him. In its pre-auction communication to the 10 teams, the BCCI had clearly stated that Inglis will be available for only four games in IPL 2026 because of his marriage.

The BCCI and the IPL Governing Council are now closely monitoring the situation as it is believed that he may alter his



personal schedule for IPL commitments.

The Lucknow Super Giants and Sunrisers Hyderabad went on a bidding war for the 30-year-old before the former acquired him for Rs 8.6 crore, which was Rs 6 crore higher than his previous fee deal with Punjab.

The entire episode has ignited a discussion on whether Inglis took advantage of the situation, and the BCCI and the GC might have

to take a look at it.

"The communication was clear (about Inglis' availability for IPL 2026), but we need to check whether anything has changed about his personal plans, or whether those teams knew about his personal plans much more than others," a source close to the developments told PTI.

However, he said Punjab Kings are yet to raise an official complaint.

Inglis was scheduled to

get married on April 18, followed by a honeymoon holiday, which would have seen him missing a large part of the IPL 2026, which begins on March 26.

Both Lucknow and Sunrisers have a heavy Australian presence in their dugout.

The LSG have Justin Langer and Tom Moody as coach and director, while SRH is led by current Australian skipper Pat Cummins. Even Daniel Vettori, the SRH head coach, has been working as the assistant coach of the Australian men's team since 2022.

However, the teams concerned were not forthcoming with a reaction.

"He was going to be out for personal reasons but that's always subject to change. You never know people can make different decisions once the auction is done.

Military goals will be achieved in Ukraine: Putin



AP

Moscow, Dec 19: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday that Moscow's troops were advancing across the battlefield in Ukraine, voicing confidence that the Kremlin's military goals would be achieved. Speaking at his highly orchestrated year-end news conference, Putin declared that Russian forces have "fully seized strategic initiative" and would make more gains by the year's end.

Russia's larger, better-equipped army has made slow but steady progress in Ukraine in recent months.

The annual live news conference is combined with a nationwide call-in show that offers Russians across the country the opportunity to ask

questions of Putin, who has led the country for 25 years. Putin has used it to cement his power and air his views on domestic and global affairs.

This year, observers are watching for Putin's remarks on Ukraine and the US-backed peace plan there. US President Donald Trump has unleashed an extensive diplomatic push to end nearly four years of fighting after Russia sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, but Washington's efforts have run into sharply conflicting demands by Moscow and Kyiv.

Putin reaffirmed that Moscow was ready for a peaceful settlement that would address the "root causes" of the conflict, a reference to the Kremlin's tough conditions for a deal.

Earlier this week, Putin warned this week that Moscow would seek to extend its gains in Ukraine if Kyiv and its Western allies reject the Kremlin's demands. The Russian leader wants all the areas in four key regions captured by his forces, as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which was illegally annexed in 2014, to be recognised as Russian territory.

Gambhir should be like a manager to the players, not coach: Kapil Dev

PTI

Kolkata, Dec 19: India's first World Cup-winning captain, Kapil Dev, on Thursday said a modern-day head coach's role is more about "managing" players than actually coaching them, amid criticism surrounding Gautam Gambhir's working style.

Following India's 0-2 Test series defeat to South Africa, Gambhir has come under fire as India's head coach, and his ploy of constant player rotation and reliance on part-timers have been slammed.

Kapil said the term 'coach' is often misunderstood in contemporary cricket. "Today the word 'coach' is very common. Gautam Gambhir can't be a coach. He can be a manager of the team," Kapil said at the Indian Chamber of Commerce's centenary session.

"When you say coach, coach is where I learn in the school and college (sic). Those were the people, my coach there," he added.

Kapil said, "How can Gautam be a coach to a leg-spinner or to the wicketkeeper? I think you have to manage. That's more important. As a manager, you give them encouragement to say, 'You can do it,' because

when you become a manager, the young boys look up to you," he said.

"How can my manager or captain give me that comfort? That's what the manager's and captain's job is—to give comfort to the team and always say, 'You can do better.' That's the way I look at it." Kapil said his own philosophy as captain was to back players going through a lean phase.

"I think you have to give comfort to the people who are not playing



well. If somebody made a hundred I don't want to have a drink and dinner with him," he said.

"There are a lot of people there... As a captain, I would like to have a drink with people, or I like to have dinner with people who are not performing. "You need to give them the confidence, and that's what happens. So, I think it's very important as a captain, and your role is not only your performance; it is also about putting the team together."

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