





### Let the victory over Polio continue with

## Two Drops of Life

India is polio free. But polio still exists in few countries and it may come back. Ensure your child's complete protection. Make sure polio vaccine is given every time so that India maintains its victory over polio.



**Department of Information & Public Relations, J&K**



**Polio Day**  
21 December 2025  
Sunday  
In all districts

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

**Dated: 20-12-2025**  
DIPK-9204/25

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## LG calls for frequent checking, surveillance of prisons across J&K

Chairs high-level review meeting, directs strengthening Home Dept wings



### KNO DESK

Jammu, Dec 20: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday called for frequent checking and surveillance of prisons across Jammu and Kashmir.

Chairing a high-level review meeting of Subordinate

Departments of Home Department at Lok Bhavan here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) took a comprehensive review of progress achieved under vital ongoing projects including construction of High Security Prison at Mahanpur Kathua;

establishment of Cyber Division at FSL Jammu, up-gradation of Cyber Division at FSL Srinagar and construction of Bunkers in Border Districts of J&K. The Lieutenant Governor instructed for sensitization of prison officers and staff and frequent checking and surveillance of prisons | [More on P6](#)

## Chillai Kalan to begin with rain, snowfall across Kashmir

- » Temps rise slightly across J&K
- » Fresh snowfall witnessed at hr reaches
- » Light to moderate rain expected in plains
- » Travellers urged to follow advisories

### Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 20: Minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir showed a marginal improvement on Saturday compared to the previous day, though cold



conditions continued to prevail. The weather department has forecast a spell of rain and snowfall over the next few

days, with the 40-day harsh winter period, locally known as Chillai Kalan, set to begin on December 21.

Chillai Kalan, a Persian term meaning "Major Cold", marks the coldest phase of winter in the Valley and will continue till January 31. It is followed by Chillai Khurd (Small Cold), from January 31 to February 19, and Chillai Bacha (Baby Cold), from February 20 to March 2.

Meanwhile, as per the details obtained by the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO), fresh snowfall began late Saturday evening in the Warwan Valley, Sinthan Top, Razdan Pass and Sadhna Top in north Kashmir and other upper reaches.

The Zojila Pass on the Srinagar-Ladakh highway also received | [More on P6](#)

## CM reviews preparedness, says govt ready

'Road clearance, power & water supply top priorities'

### Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Dec 20: With the first major snowfall of the season expected this weekend, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday reviewed the administration's preparedness across both divisions.

Chairing a high-level meeting in Srinagar, CM Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) directed departments to ensure uninterrupted essential services and pre-emptive deployment of men and machinery in vulnerable areas.

He said that while winter plans are "largely on track," the real test lies in their



on-ground implementation. "Winter preparedness plans are on pace, but the test of any plan is in its execution. This expected spell gives us time to refine our response before the harsher phase of winter sets in," he said.

The Chief Minister said that while precipitation is likely over the weekend, it may not be as widespread as later in the season

offering the administration an opportunity to strengthen coordination between departments and plug gaps in preparedness.

CM Omar during meeting also stressed that the administration's winter response will be measured on three key parameters road clearance, electricity supply, and drinking water availability. "These three are the ABC | [More on P6](#)

## J&K admin alerts public

### Sajid Raina/Umair Gul Ganaie

Srinagar, Dec 20: Administration on Saturday issued a series of weather and snowfall advisories for several districts across Kashmir in view of predicted heavy snowfall over upper reaches.

The Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Kokernag, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) advised commuters to avoid non-essential travel on the Daksum-Sinthan Top-Chhatroo Road and the Gowran-Margan Top-Warwan Road during snowfall and warned that vehicles must carry anti-skid or snow chains.

Police have been directed to close roads if they are deemed unsafe for vehicular movement.

Similarly, the District Police Kupwara issued an advisory. It urged residents, tourists, and trekkers to avoid unnecessary travel, exercise caution on snow-bound | [More on P6](#)

## Committed to TB-Mukt J&K: LG Sinha

Calls for conducting 'deep analysis', door-to-door campaigns

### KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 20: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday reviewed the implementation and progress of Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan in the UT of Jammu Kashmir.

The high-level meeting was attended by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Dr Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, Secretary, Health and Medical Education; Baseer UI Haq Chaudhary, Mission Director, NHM J&K; Deputy



Commissioners; Heads of Medical & Health institutions and departments and other senior officials.

The Lieutenant Governor reaffirmed the UT Administration's

commitment to the national goal of tuberculosis elimination. He emphasised on conducting a deep analysis of TB-related cases, and treatment outcomes. He called for seamless inter-departmental coordination and a robust community-based support system to ensure no patient is left behind.

The LG directed the Health Department and District Administrations to ramp-up testing and prioritizing the mapping of vulnerable populations. He directed for intensifying Door-to-Door IEC (Information, | [More on P6](#)

## Over 11 lakh J&K children to be administered polio today

### Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Dec 20: In a renewed push to safeguard India's hard-earned polio-free status, Jammu and Kashmir's Health Department has set up more than 5,000 polio booths across the Union Territory to vaccinate over 11 lakh children below the age of five during the Pulse Polio Immunisation (PPI) Drive scheduled for December 21, 2025 (tomorrow).

Health authorities have launched an extensive awareness campaign ahead of the drive, deploying public announcement vehicles in urban and rural areas, while doctors and senior officials are using social media platforms to share video messages urging parents to ensure participation in the campaign.

An official of the Health Department told the news agency - Kashmir | [More on P6](#)

## Where Centre helps, I thank it; on statehood, I won't lie to please anyone: Omar

### Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Dec 20: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday said he has consistently acknowledged and given credit to the Centre wherever it has acted fairly and deserved recognition.

Talking to the reporters here, CM Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "I will not lie to please anyone over the unfulfilled promise of restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood. I have never hesitated to criticise the Centre where it has fallen short."

He said that where the Centre has helped he has thanked them. "But when it comes to the issue of statehood, apart from assurances, nothing has been given," CM Omar said, adding, "I won't mislead people just to please someone. I say the same thing



here, in Delhi, and in the Assembly."

Rejecting suggestions that his tone changes between Srinagar and Delhi, Omar said, "Give me one example of where I have spoken differently. I am not among those who play politics or deceive the public. Wherever the Centre does the right thing, I appreciate it; where it falls short, I say so openly."

### READY TO TACKLE SNOWFALL

While referring to the snowfall prediction, the Chief Minister said his government has ensured full preparations in both divisions. "I came to Srinagar and held a meeting covering both the Kashmir and Jammu divisions, especially the areas where snowfall is expected. All preparations have

been made, but whether these will prove sufficient or not will only be known after tomorrow, once snowfall actually begins," he said.

The Chief Minister said the administration is "eagerly waiting" for snowfall as it will bring multiple benefits. "Even if this snowfall causes some inconvenience, none of us will complain. It will clean the air, reduce pollution and truly mark the beginning of our winter tourist season," he said.

### CRITICIZES MOVE TO RENAME MGNREGA

Omar also hit out at the reported move to rename the MGNREGA scheme as the 'G-Ram-Ji Bill', calling it "ill-thought, absurd and harmful to the spirit of federalism." "First, Mahatma Gandhi's name is being removed and then the | [More on P6](#)

## DC Srinagar reviews SRO-43 cases

Recommends fresh SRO-43 appointment cases for terror victims' NoKs



### KT News Desk

Srinagar, Dec 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Saturday chaired a meeting of the District Level Screening-cum-Coordination Committee (DLSCC) here to examine fresh cases filed under SRO-43 by the next of kin (NoKs) of terror-affected victims in the district. Senior Superintendent of Police

(SSP), Sandeep Chakravarty was present in the meeting.

The Committee undertook a comprehensive review of applications submitted under SRO-43 and assessed the eligibility of claimants for compassionate appointments and other means of relief in accordance with the prescribed guidelines.

The Committee conducted a comprehensive review comprehensive of | [More on P6](#)



Div Com Kashmir reviews ongoing works of SMC, SSCL

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 20: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, Saturday visited the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) office at Karanagar to review the progress of ongoing construction works of SMC and Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) buildings being executed under SSCL projects.

During the visit, the Divisional Commissioner, as per an official statement, was briefed by CEO SSCL, Faz Lul Haseeb, on the status of the G+3 storey building being constructed at an estimated cost of 14.7 crore. He was informed about the overall progress of the project and the tentative timeline for its completion.

The Divisional Commissioner also inspected other offices within the premises, including the SMC corporate office.

Expressing satisfaction over the pace and quality of the ongoing works, the Divisional Commissioner directed the executing agency to ensure adherence to the stipulated timelines for timely completion of the project.

Chief Engineer SSCL and other concerned officers were present during the inspection.



ICDS Social Audit underway across Kupwara

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 20: Social Audit of ICDS projects is underway across Kupwara district to bring accountability and transparency in poshan schemes.

The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, as per an official statement issued on Saturday has instructed that every Anganwadi centre and Panchayat in the district undergo a comprehensive social audit.

During the social audit, beneficiaries including pregnant and lactating mothers community members, former Panchayat representatives and volunteers in far-flung areas of Machhill and in other areas of Kupwara gathered in Aganwadi Centres, participated in lively discussions about the daily realities of child nutrition and education under the "Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi" programme.

The audit is being framed as a fact-finding dialogue as the auditors are inspecting kitchen equipment, the freshness of supplementary nutrition and attendance records, while Panchayat elders and youth review financial statements to compare allocated funds with actual outcomes.

Findings are read aloud in public meetings and entered into resolution registers and questionnaires, ensuring full transparency.

Meanwhile, social audit is going on across 11 ICDS projects of district Kupwara including Teetwal, Tangdar, Kalaroose, Wavoora, Sogam, Rajwar, Ramhall, Langate, Kralpora and Trehgam.

Women who once felt unheard are stepping forward to voice needs and propose improvements. School teachers have been documenting the scheme's impact on Anganwadi children's attendance and learning.

The collective effort signals a new era of accountability in Kupwara, where the welfare of the youngest citizens is a shared responsibility and development is measured not only in numbers but in the well-being of the people

DM Baramulla chairs NCORD meet, orders enhanced measures to curb drug abuse

KT NEWS DESK

BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 20: District Magistrate Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, chaired the 23rd meeting of the District Level Committee under the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) Saturday at the Meeting Hall of the DC's office Baramulla.

SSP Baramulla, Gurinderpal Singh; SSP Sopore, Iftakhar Talib; ADC Sopore, S.A Raina; ADC Baramulla, Syed Altaf Hussain; ACD, Mudasir Hussain Chaudhary along with other concerned district and sectoral officers, were present during the meeting.

During the meeting, as per an official statement, the District Social Welfare Officer, Sajad Ahmad Bhat gave a detailed presentation, highlighting ongoing awareness, preventive and rehabilitation initiatives

being implemented under various anti-drug programmes in the district.

The District Magistrate reviewed the overall anti-drug strategy and issued several important directions. He directed the launch of IEC Phase-II from 1st January, along with necessary training for resource persons, to strengthen public awareness and community outreach.

Minga Sherpa further directed the Municipal Committees and the Rural Development Department to ensure the installation of street lights and CCTV cameras at identified drug hotspots to enhance surveillance and safety. He also instructed the concerned authorities to register FIRs against persons involved in poppy cultivation and stressed strict action as per law.

The District Magistrate directed officers to conduct regular surprise inspections of pharmacies to curb the misuse and illegal sale of narcotic and psychotropic substances. He also instructed the Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) to ensure the completion of the DDAC building at Sopore by 15th January.

Additionally, the District Magistrate directed the ARTO to initiate action for suspension of driving licences of persons involved in NDPS cases, in accordance with prescribed norms.

The meeting concluded with an emphasis on strengthened inter-departmental coordination and a zero-tolerance approach towards drug abuse to ensure effective implementation of NCORD initiatives across the district.

Special grievance redressal camps held across Kupwara Tehsils

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 20: In continuation of the ongoing "Sushasan Saptah - Prashashan Gaon Ki Ore 2025" campaign, Special Grievance Redressal and Service Delivery Camps were successfully organized on Day 2 across all tehsils of district Kupwara.

The initiative, as per an official statement, aims to strengthen good governance by taking administration to the doorsteps of citizens and ensuring timely resolution of public grievances.

The camps witnessed active participation from residents across rural and

urban pockets, who availed themselves of a wide range of government services under one roof.

During the camps, public grievances related to revenue records, pensions, ration cards, electricity and water supply, roads, healthcare services, employment schemes, land issues, and welfare benefits were registered. Several cases were resolved on the spot, while others were forwarded to the concerned departments with strict timelines for disposal.

Special focus was laid on senior citizens, women, persons with disabilities, and beneficiaries of flagship government schemes.

DC Budgam reviews youth engagement, focuses on sports, empowerment plan

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, Saturday convened a comprehensive meeting to review and strategise the Youth Engagement and Empowerment Plan in the district.

The meeting focused on channelising youth energy towards recreational, sports, skill-based and constructive activities, besides intensifying awareness against drug abuse.

Addressing the officers, the DC stressed the need for coordinated and proactive efforts by all departments to meaningfully engage youth and safeguard them from social evils, particularly drugs. He advised the Police Department to strengthen drug awareness campaigns, counselling initiatives and community outreach programmes, especially at the grass-roots level.

The DC directed all concerned officers to come up with concrete, innovative and future-oriented action plans for youth engagement, ensuring maximum participation across urban



and rural areas. He underlined that sports, cultural activities, vocational training, awareness drives and employment-oriented programmes should be prioritised to positively shape the future of young generation.

The DC reiterated that youth empowerment remains a top priority of the district administration and called for

inter-departmental synergy to translate plans into impactful outcomes on the ground.

The meeting was attended by CPO Budgam, all SDMs, CEO Budgam, District Youth Services & Sports Officer Budgam, Assistant Labour Commissioner Budgam, DSP Headquarter besides other concerned officers.

GOVT. OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER

CUM DISTRICT MAGISTRATE KUPWARA

Phone: 01955-253335; Fax: 01955-252130; Email'- paaddc-kup@jk.gov.in

Subject: Empanelment of Motivators under Mission YUVA.

ORDER

In pursuance of Mission YUVA Communication issued vide No. ED/Plan/Mission YUVA/2025-26/941-50 dated 13-09-2025, and on the basis of the notification issued vide No. ADDCK/25/1335-36 dated 19-09-2025 regarding empanelment of Motivators under Mission YUVA, it is hereby notified as follows. A total of 27 applications were received through the online Mission YUVA Portal. Out of these, 24 applicants submitted their documents for physical verification before the Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee has recommended 24 candidates for Empanelment as Motivators under Mission YUVA.

Now, based on the recommendations of the District Selection Oversight Committee, Kupwara, sanction is hereby accorded for the empanelment of the following 24 candidates as Motivators under Mission YUVA:

List of Empaneled Candidates

S.No	Personal Details						Address	
	Name of candidate	Gender	Date of Birth	Father's Full Name	Mobile Number	Panchayat Ward	Block/ Municipal Corporation	
1	Ulfat Shafi	Fein ale	12/20/1999	Mohamad Shaft Mir	7006 125892	Audoora	Qalamabad	
2	Saima Majeed	Female	03-07-1995	Abdul Majeed Makhdoomi	7006166408	Shanoo	Qalamahad	
3	MUSHTAQ AHMAD BEIGH	Male	01-12-1995	GH MOHAMMAD BEIGH	9469137093	WADDER BALA	RAJWAR ZACHALDARA	
4	Tabasum Rashid Tantray	Male	10-05-1993	Ab Rashid Tantray	7006191770	Deedarpora	Qaziahad Supernaghama	
5	Rubeena khurshid	Female	02-01-1993	Rubeena khurshid	6006264674	Panzgam A	Reddi Chowkibal	
6	Zakir Hussain Ganiee	Male	02-10-1998	Farooq Ahmad Ganiee	6005663005	Hangah	Qalamabad	
7	ISHFAQ MUSTAFA MIR	Male	3/23/1994	OH MUSTAFA MIR	70061 84284	MARATGAM	MAWER QALAMABAD	
8	Anayat Ullah Bhat	Male	03-05-1991	Khazir Mohammad Bhat	6005872039	Yaroo	Langate	
9	FAYAZ AHMAD PEER	Male	03-09-1991	MOHAMMAD ARSAN PEER	9541280720	KHUDI	QALAMABAD	
10	Tanveer Ahmad Dar	Male	10-07-1995	Abdul Ahad Dar	9149579227	Drugmulla	Drugmulla A	
11	Abid nazir	Male	04-04-1999	Nazir ahmad chopan	6006849614	Ward no 5	Municipal corporation Handwara	
12	Jaffa Hussain Mir	Male	02-04-1993	Jaffer Hussain Mir	6005406210	Gund zonareshi	Reddi Chowkibal	
13	IMRAN MUSHTAQ	Male	08-08-2000	MUSHTAQ AHMAD KATARIA	7889379453	Tumina	REDDI CHOWKIBAL	
14	SOHAIL AHMAD SHEIKH	Male	02-03-1999	HABIBULLAH SHEIKH	9622599414	POHRUPETH	LANGATE	
15	Waseen Nazir lone	Male	11/15/1996	Nazir Ahmad Lone	6006768674	Radbu gha B	Drugnilla	
16	Parveena Akhter	Female	03-01-1996	Abdul Khaliq Lone	6366589444	SHOGHPQRA	Magam	
17	Shabeena jan	Female	05-02-2001	Gh Mohammad pir	8713014380	5	Kupwara	
18	Malik Mehraju Din	Male	04-10-2001	Abdul Ahad Malik	6006600556	Khumeriyal A	Kalarooos	
19	NA ZRUN NISA	Female	03-01-1994	FAROOQ AHMAD SHAH	7006166113	Branwari	Kupwara municipality	

Duration of Contract and Renewal

> The initial engagement period shall be 11 months from the date of joining.

• Performance shall be reviewed as per predefined KPIs of Mission YUVA...

> Renewal for an additional 11 months may be granted based on satisfactory performance and approval of the competent authority, subject to the project life cycle.

2. Roles and Reporting

The Empanelled personnel shall perform duties and report as prescribed in the Mission YUVA Operational Guidelines.

3. Terms and Conditions

..The selected candidates, shall, report to the Assistant Director Employment, DE&CC Kupwara (Member Secretary Mission YUVA) within 07 days of issuance with the following original documents for verification and completion of joining formalities:

> Domicile Certificate

> Date of Birth Certificate

> All Qualification Certificates

> Experience Certificates

> Undertaking

> Character Certificate issued by competent authority

Failure to report within the stipulated time shall be treated as unwillingness to join, and the next eligible candidate from the waiting list shall be considered.

1. Monthly consolidated remuneration shall be paid as per Mission YUVA norms, subject to verification of all documents.

All other terms and conditions shall remain governed strictly under Mission YUVA Operational Guidelines for Motivators engagements.

District Development Commissioner Kupwara

No:DDCK/25/2320-25

Dated: 19/12/2025

DIPK-9171/25 DATED: 20-12-2025

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

JAL SHAKTI (PHE) MECHANICAL

DIVISION (NORTH) SOPORE

Extension Corrigendum

Sub: Extension of e-tender.

Ref: This office E-NIT No. 35 of 2025-26, S. No. 01, 04, 05, 06, 07 and 08.

Due to poor response the above referred e-NIT is hereby extended as hereunder:

S. No.	Particulars	Date and time
1	Last date for online submission of bids	25-12-2025 (06:55 pm)
2	Date of online opening of bids	26-12-2025 (02:00 pm)

All other terms and conditions shall remain same.

No.: PHE/MDNS/DB/5094-97

Dated: 19-12-2025

Sd/-

Executive Engineer

Jal Shakti (PHE) Mechanical Division

(North) Sopore

DIPK-9197/25

DATED: 20-12-2025



# Widespread fog disrupts J&K travel, cancels flights



SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Dec 20: Dense fog covered large parts of Kashmir on Saturday, severely reducing visibility and disrupting road and air travel as cold conditions persisted.

In Srinagar, visibility dropped to just a few metres in several areas, prompting traffic authorities to urge motorists to exercise caution on major routes, including Airport Road and other key roads across north and south Kashmir. Commuters faced slower movement, particularly during peak morning hours.

Operations at Srinagar International Airport were affected, with several flights cancelled due to adverse weather conditions in parts of North India. Passengers were advised to check flight status with their airlines before travelling.

Jammu Airport also reported cancellations, including flights 6E5207 (Delhi-Jammu), 6E6510 (Jammu-Delhi), 6E2293 (Delhi-Jammu) and 6E2527 (Jammu-Delhi). Meanwhile, the road travel between districts was similarly impacted.

Traffic on stretches of the Srinagar-Jammu Highway slowed, while rural areas in

Budgam, Pulwama, Anantnag and Ganderbal recorded sharp overnight temperature drops, contributing to dense fog.

Locals said the reduced visibility delayed daily activities, with farmers postponing fieldwork and shopkeepers opening later than usual.

The Meteorological Department has forecast rain and snowfall over Jammu and Kashmir in the coming days.

Light to moderate snowfall is expected in higher reaches, while plains may receive light to moderate rain from the evening of December 20 to December 21.

December 22 may see light rain or snowfall at scattered to many places, followed by partly cloudy weather from December 23 to 30. A few higher reaches could receive light snowfall on December 31.

Authorities warned that higher reaches of Kupwara, Bandipora and Ganderbal districts may experience moderate to heavy snowfall on December 21.

Travellers and transporters were advised to plan journeys accordingly and follow traffic and administrative advisories to avoid inconvenience and accidents—(KNO)

## FSSAI declares eggs safe Dismisses cancer risk claims

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 20: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Saturday categorically dismissed claims linking eggs to cancer, stating that eggs available in the country are safe for human consumption and scientifically sound. The food safety body added that recent alarmist reports lack credible evidence.

In a statement, the FSSAI, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), described the claims about carcinogenic substances in eggs as “misleading, scientifically unsupported and capable of creating unnecessary public alarm”.

The regulator clarified that allegations concerning substances such as nitrofurans metabolites, compounds occasionally mentioned in online posts, are



unsubstantiated. It reiterated that the use of nitrofurans is prohibited at all stages of poultry and egg production under national food safety regulations.

The authority also explained that the Extraneous Maximum Residue Limit (EMRL) of 1.0 µg/kg for certain compounds exists solely for regulatory detection purposes and does not imply any permitted use or health risk. Trace residues below this threshold, officials said, do not constitute a food safety violation or pose any health concern. Meanwhile, Smita

Sethi, Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Jammu and Kashmir, told KNO that the department relies strictly on scientifically verified evidence rather than social media posts or unverified reports.

“We have collected about 49 samples from markets over three days, Saturday, Sunday and Monday as part of a routine drive to verify the claims,” Sethi said, adding that laboratory testing generally takes up to 14 days and that “half that period has not yet elapsed.”

She said the department will issue conclusions only after test results are received.

Moreover, the clarification follows a viral social media scare triggered by a post alleging that eggs were carcinogenic, which led to confusion among consumers and temporary disruptions in local markets—(KNO)

## Govt seals illegal stone quarry in Baramulla post-landslide

WARIS FAYAZ

Baramulla, Dec 20: Authorities on Saturday sealed a stone quarry in Baramulla's Khanpora area following a massive landslide that struck the locality on Friday evening—triggering panic among the residents.

Officials from the Department of Geology and Mining, accompanied by revenue officials and other concerned departments carried out the sealing operation after an initial probe pointed to illegal quarrying as the cause of the slope's instability.

A police spokesperson said that Baramulla Police have registered FIR No. 219/2025 in connection with the incident.

“The landslide posed a serious threat to human life and raised apprehensions of damage to public and private property. An investigation has been launched, and those found involved in illegal stone quarrying will be dealt with as per the law,” the spokesperson said.

Officials from the Geology and Mining Department said that no one would be allowed to undertake illegal excavation or mining activities in the area. “Strict action will be taken against violators. These activities endanger both the environment and human safety.”

*Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in*

### Pheran Day

## Div Com Kashmir lauds artisans for preserving craft legacy

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 20: Urging people to follow safety advisories, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Saturday called for greater caution during the winter season to prevent fire incidents.

He also appreciated Kashmiri artisans for preserving the region's centuries-old craft traditions while creatively blending them with modern aesthetics.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of Pheran Day – Jashn-e-Chillai Kalan celebrations held at Kashmir Haat, Srinagar, Divisional



Commissioner Garg said that in view of the rising number of fire incidents during winters, the public must adhere strictly to the Fire Prevention

ensure electric devices are turned off when not in use,” Div Com Garg said.

Highlighting the administration's winter preparedness, he said the Integrated Command and Control Centre and district-level control rooms are functioning round the clock. “All DCs have established control rooms and nodal officers have been deployed to ensure uninterrupted power supply, snow clearance, and essential services,” he said.

The event also marked the 40th anniversary of Kashmiri Artisans' Day, underscoring the

continuing vibrancy of the Valley's traditional craftsmanship.

“The traditional attire of Kashmir and our handicrafts are a reflection of our warmth and aesthetics. All the artisans who are with us today deserve a lot of credit for keeping this legacy alive while adapting to changing times,” he said.

He also congratulated the Department of Handicrafts and Handlooms for organising regular initiatives to promote local artisans, including festivals, exhibitions, and new marketing platforms.

*Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in*

# 10 students among 15 injured in Jammu bus accident

YOGESH

Jammu, Dec 20: At least ten students, four teachers and a cook were injured after a school picnic bus met with an accident in Jammu on Saturday.

The bus ran over the divider and overturned on the Ring Road near Bishnah area this evening, triggering panic. Officials said that the bus was carrying students of a private school Pragwal Akhnoor and was returning from a picnic. At least 15 persons sustained injuries in the accident.

They said that some of the injured students were shifted to AIIMS Jammu, while others were taken to Government Medical College, Jammu for treatment.

Police and rescue teams rushed to the spot soon after the accident to help the victims. Principal

Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu told KNO that all the injured are stable and every possible assistance is being provided to them. “All senior medical teams from surgery, ortho, paediatrics, critical care are present and taking care,” he added.

The injured were identified as:

1. Saveeta Manhas age 35 yrs W/o Arjun Singh R/o Sajwal Akhnoor. (teacher)
2. Bandna kumari age 22 yrs D/o Tarseem Singh R/o Meerpur Pargwal. (teacher)
3. Saroj Devi age 34 yrs W/o Balwinder Singh R/o Pargwal. (teacher)
4. Sohan Singh age 35 yrs S/o Sham Singh R/o Pargwal. (teacher)
5. Naksh Thakur age 10 yrs S/o Tarseem Singh R/o Pargwal. (student)
6. Neeraj Singh age 52 yrs S/o Baldev

7. Mavisksha Rajput age 06 yrs D/o Arjun Singh R/o Gurha Manhasa, Pargwal. (student)
8. Paras Rajput age 09 yrs S/o Sohan Singh R/o Pargwal. (student)
9. Abhay Kumar age 15 yrs S/o Pritam Chand R/o Pindi Pargwal. (student)
10. Dhanvir Singh age 11 yrs S/o Parshotam Singh R/o Pargwal (Student)
11. Sneha Manhas age 25 yrs D/o Tarseem Singh R/o Pargwal (Teacher)
12. Jeewan Manhas age 16 yrs S/o Veer Bahdur Singh R/o Pargwal (Student)
13. Manvi Sharma age 16 yrs D/o Joginder Kumar R/o Pargwal. (Student)
14. Lakshmi Verma age 16 yrs D/o Raj Kumar R/o Pargwal (student)
15. Mandeep Singh, 17 yrs, (student)—(KNO)

## Water tankers ensured supply during prolonged dry spell: Govt

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 20: As Jammu and Kashmir prepares for the first significant rainfall and snowfall in over a month, water delivery services have played a vital role in ensuring an uninterrupted water supply across the Valley amid a prolonged dry spell.

With groundwater sources depleted and water demand rising, the Jal Shakti Department said it has been actively managing water tanker operations to meet the needs of residents during this period of scarcity.

Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti



Kashmir, Er Rakesh Kumar Gupta said that the department operates 101 water lorries deployed across Kashmir. “Our department currently operates 80 of

its own water tankers and has hired 21 more, bringing the total to 101 across Kashmir,” Gupta said. “We hope that the upcoming wet spell will recharge groundwater sources and ease the pressure on our water resources.”

Meanwhile, officials in the Jal Shakti PHE Department, Kashmir, said that since the dry spell began in early November, the department has been responding to an average of over 11 water tankers requests daily, delivering thousands of litres of water to areas where water supply is under stress.

*Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in*

## Rotavirus vaccine shortage worries Pulwama residents

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pulwama, Dec 20: A temporary shortage of the Rotavirus (Rota) vaccine in south Kashmir's Pulwama district has caused concern among parents, particularly those with infants due for routine immunisation.

The Rota vaccine is a crucial component of the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) and is administered to infants to protect them from rotavirus infection, a leading cause of severe diarrhoea, dehydration and hospitalisation among young children.

Parents visiting primary health centres and sub-district hospitals over the past few weeks have expressed anxiety after being informed that the vaccine is currently unavailable.

Many said that the repeated visits to health facilities without success have added to their stress.

“We came to the health centre twice this week for our child's scheduled dose, but we were told the vaccine is not available,” said a parent from Pampore. “Rotavirus causes serious illness in babies, and as parents, we are naturally worried when a vaccine is delayed.”

Another parent from Kakapora said that while health workers assured them it was a temporary issue, the lack of clarity initially created panic. “Immunisation schedules are very important for infants. Any disruption makes us anxious about our child's health,” the parent added.

Health officials, however, have clarified that the shortage is short-term and there is no cause for alarm.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Pulwama, Dr Tahmeena Jameel, said the delay is due to supply-related issues and the vaccine is expected to be available shortly.

*Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in*

## Chief Justice inaugurates court complex at Hiranagar

KT NEWS DESK

Kathua, Dec 20: Chief Justice High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli Saturday inaugurated newly constructed Court Complex at Hiranagar in a solemn ceremony.

The ceremony was attended by Justice Sanjeev Kumar and Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Administrative Judge for District Kathua, MK Sharma, Registrar General High Court; Rajeev Gupta Registrar Vigilance; Jatinder Singh Jamwal, Principal District and Sessions Judge Kathua; Vijay Kumar Sharma, MLA Hiranagar; Rajesh Sharma, Deputy Commissioner Kathua; Shiv Kumar Sharma DIG J-K-S Range; Mohita Sharma SSP Kathua and other officers were also present

on the occasion.

In his address, the Chief Justice congratulated all stakeholders associated with the completion of the project and stated that creation of such infrastructure is part of sustained efforts to take justice closer to the people.

He observed that while infrastructure facilitates access to justice, its effective delivery depends upon the commitment and cooperation of all stakeholders in the justice delivery system.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar expressed satisfaction at witnessing the steady progression of judicial infrastructure in the district, recalling the commencement of the Kathua Court Complex, the residential complex for judicial officers and now the dedication of the Hiranagar Court

Complex.

Addressing the gathering Justice Rajnesh Oswal described the occasion as momentous and expressed hope that the newly created court infrastructure would adequately serve the needs of litigants and the judiciary for years to come. He emphasized collective responsibility in preserving and maintaining the facility.

Earlier, Jatinder Singh Jamwal, Principal District and Sessions Judge Kathua, in his address, welcomed the Chief Justice and other dignitaries.

Advocate Nareish Gupta, President Bar Association Hiranagar, in his address, thanked Judges of High Court for ensuring timely completion of the new Court complex project and made a prayer for upgradation of the Court

to the level of Senior Civil Judge as also for creation of additional Sessions Court.

Among others, Umesh Sharma, Registrar IT High Court; Faizan-i-Nazar, CPC e-Courts; Y.C. Katoh President of Bar Associations Kathua; Besides Judicial Officers, members of the bar association, judicial staff and para-legal volunteers were also present.

On the occasion, dignitaries were presented with souvenirs and saplings as a symbolic gesture and token of gratitude.

The proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks presented by Munisiff Judicial Magistrate 1st Class, Hiranagar, LakshayBadyal.

Urvashi Raina Sub-Judge, Secretary, DLSA Kathua, conducted the proceedings.

## ACB arrests Patwari in bribery case

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 20: The Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Saturday trapped and arrested a revenue official, of Shopian district while accepting a bribe of rupees 25,000 for issuing a favourable report in a property case. According to a statement, J&K Anti Corruption Bureau received a written complaint alleging therein that complainant had submitted an application in Tehsil Office Shopian, regarding the equal proportion of ancestral property of his wife and his sister in law, which had not been transferred in equal share of their ancestral property amongst their siblings (04 sisters). The statement reads, the application was submitted before Tehsildar Shopian near about three months before, and Tehsildar concerned has forwarded his application to concerned Patwari for necessary action. When the complainant approached the Patwari of Patwar Halqa Pinjura Shopian, he (Patwari)

demanding 25000 as bribe from the complainant in lieu of providing favourable report.

“The complainant chose not to pay bribe and instead approached Anti Corruption Bureau for taking legal action against the Patwari as provided under law,” it reads.

The statement reads, on receipt of the complaint, a discreet verification was conducted which confirmed the demand by the said patwari and accordingly Case FIR No. 05/2025 u/s 7 of P/C Act 1988 was registered in PS ACB Anantnag and investigation was taken up.

“During the course of investigation a trap team was constituted. The team laid a successful trap and caught the said patwari red handed while demanding and accepting bribe. He was arrested on spot by the ACB team. The bribe amount was also recovered from his possession in presence of independent witnesses associated with the trap team.”



# Crafted In India, Delivered Globally: Exports Powered By Trade Agreements

Press Information Bureau

## India's Trade Story at a Glance

Driven by diversification, innovation, and strategic trade reforms, India continues to strengthen its position in global markets. From strong post-pandemic recovery to enduring global uncertainties, India's exports are not just growing, they are setting new benchmarks. The year-on-year rise from November 2024 to November 2025 highlights India as a trusted and reliable partner in global trade.

Between November 2024 and November 2025, India's total exports rose from US\$ 64.05 billion to US\$ 73.99 billion, registering a strong 15.52% growth, while imports remained largely stable at US\$ 80.63 billion. Consequently, the trade deficit narrowed significantly by 61.07%, from US\$ 17.06 billion to US\$ 6.64 billion. Despite trade disruption, this growth reflects India's resilience, with high-value commodities, widening global partnerships, and policy reforms supporting a more balanced and globally integrated trade trajectory.

For export growth India is also focused on enhancing its international trade relations. India's trade agreements with other economies reinforces its commitment to inclusive growth, benefiting farmers, artisans, workers, MSMEs while safeguarding core national interests. Most recently, the India-Oman agreement builds on long standing bilateral ties, creating a forward looking and balanced economic framework.

## Powering Global Trade: India's Export Journey

India's exports recorded year-on-year growth in November 2025, reflecting sustained momentum in external trade. The increase was supported by higher export values across key merchandise and services sectors, alongside steady demand from major partner countries. This performance underscores the resilience of India's export sector amid evolving global trade conditions.

Merchandise exports during November 2025 were US\$ 38.13 Billion as compared to US\$ 31.94 Billion in November 2024, registering a growth of 19.38% over the year.

Services export for November 2025 is US\$ 35.86 Billion as compared to US\$ 32.11 Billion in November 2024, indicating growth of 11.67% in a year.

The share of merchandise exports was 51.53%, whereas service exports constituted 48.47% share in total exports in November 2025.

Readymade garments of all textiles, a labor-intensive sector, continue to contribute positively. Exports rose to USD 1247.37 Million with 11.27% increase in November 2025 compared to last year. Some of the large export markets for India which clocked impressive growth rates were UAE (14.5%), UK (1.5%), Japan (19.0%), Germany (2.9%), Spain (9.0%) and France (9.2%). On the other hand, some of the other markets that recorded higher growth rates were Egypt (27%), Saudi Arabia (12.5%), Hong Kong (69%) etc. This performance highlights the sector's adaptability and competitiveness in the face of global uncertainties.

Similarly, Organic and Inorganic Chemicals exports grew by 18.49% over the year in November 2025. India's drugs and pharmaceutical sector which is recognised as the Pharmacy of the World, experienced 20.19% growth in exports over the year. Indian pharma exports are destined to more than 200 countries around the globe including highly regulated markets of US, West Europe, Japan and Australia indicating diversification in this sector too.

Export of Gems and Jewellery also registered a growth of 27.8% in November, 2025. Indian jewellery is admired for its craftsmanship, design, and cultural richness. Demand is growing in key markets such as the United States, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, and Europe, especially for gold, diamond, and coloured gemstone jewellery.

India has witnessed a remarkable surge in petroleum product exports over the last decade. India is the seventh-largest exporter of refined petroleum products and ranks among the top five refining nations globally, due to its robust infrastructure and strategic geographic location. The export growth in November 2025 was 11.65% when compared from the corresponding year in the last year. Key export destinations include South Asian, African, and European countries.

Engineering goods, a traditional pillar of India's exports, have recorded steady growth, with the US as the top destination, followed by the UAE, Germany, the UK, and Saudi Arabia. To sustain momentum, the government has rolled out measures such as Zero Duty EPCG and the Market Access Initiative (MAI) to support exporters and boost overseas revenues.

With a target of building a \$500 billion domestic electronics ecosystem by 2030-31, India is now firmly on track to become a global leader in electronic design, manufacturing, and exports. Leading the way are mobile phones from just 1,500 crore in 2014-15, mobile phone exports reached 2 lakh crore in 2024-25, growing 127 times in a single decade. Indian electronics goods are now exported to major markets, with the top five destinations in FY 2024-25 being the United States, United Arab



Emirates, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

## Export Diversification: A Strategic Approach

Export diversification has emerged as a deliberate policy strategy. It helps navigate uncertain global trade environments marked by geopolitical tensions, demand volatility, and supply chain disruptions. By expanding across products and markets, countries reduce over-dependence on limited partners and build resilience against external shocks. This approach strengthens trade stability, competitiveness, and long-term economic security amid global uncertainties.

## Avoiding export instability and reducing dependency

Commodity dependent exports are inherently exposed to sharp price fluctuations, which can lead to instability in export earnings if countries rely on a narrow set of products. Such volatility may heighten macroeconomic uncertainty and dampen long-term investment decisions. Export diversification offers a pathway to greater stability by spreading risk across products and markets, thereby supporting sustained export growth and long-term economic resilience.

## Building resilience against global demand shocks

Building resilience against global demand shocks is crucial, as limited export diversification can leave economies vulnerable to sudden downturns in global demand. Diversifying exports enhances the ability to absorb such economic shocks by spreading risk across sectors and markets, thereby ensuring greater stability in export performance.

## Encouraging knowledge spillover

Export diversification fosters flow of ideas, skills, and information by encouraging the adoption of new production techniques, management practices, and marketing capabilities that can diffuse across industries. By expanding the range of export products, economies strengthen learning, innovation, and productivity, supporting higher per capita income growth over the long term.

## Strengthening macroeconomic stability

Exports alone accounted for 21.2% of India's GDP in 2024. Limited diversification can expose the economy to global uncertainties and export shortfalls, affecting macroeconomic stability. Export diversification strengthens stability by broadening economic activity, reducing vulnerability to external shocks, and supporting sustainable growth and improved living standards.

## Expanding Global Ties: Unlocking Trade Opportunities for India

As India's economic footprint continues to expand worldwide, it has emerged as a preferred partner for deeper trade and economic collaboration.

## India and Oman sign CEPA: India's 2nd FTA in the last 6 months after UK

### DID YOU KNOW?

Oman is a key pillar of India's West Asia Policy and India's oldest strategic partner in the region. The strong economic partnership is reflected in 6,000+ India-Oman joint ventures

operating in Oman.

India signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Oman on 18 December 2025, marking a significant step in strengthening economic engagement with the Gulf region, as the two countries commemorate 70 years of diplomatic relations. The agreement underscores India's growing stature as a trusted and dependable global trade partner.

The agreement opens new export opportunities for India's labour-intensive sectors- such as agriculture, textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, engineering, pharmaceuticals, and automobiles- supporting job creation and empowering artisans, women-led enterprises, and MSMEs.

India held a 10.24% share in Oman's agricultural imports in 2024, ranking second among suppliers. Major export items include Basmati rice, parboiled rice, bananas, potatoes, onions, meal of soyabean, sweet biscuits, cashew kernels, mixed condiments, butter, fish body oil, prawn & shrimps feed, frozen boneless bovine meat, and fertilized eggs.

Duty free access to boneless meat of bovine animals, other fresh eggs, sweet biscuits, cashew kernels, other fats & oils derived from milk, other mixed condiments & seasonings, prepared/preserved potatoes, other egg yolks not dried, guar gum, kabuli chana and other cheese provide a competitive edge over other countries exporting to Oman.

Elimination of the tariff from butter, sugar confectionery, bakery products, poultry meat & offal, mixed condiments & mixed seasoning, other fruit squash prepared/preserved, natural honey strengthens India's position in Oman's market.

CEPA offers unprecedented market access for Indian goods with zero-duty access on 98.08% of Oman's tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports by value.

It marks the first-ever commitment by any country on traditional medicine across all modes opening significant opportunities for India's wellness sectors and AYUSH, which anchors India's traditional medicine sector through a comprehensive institutional framework.

For the first time, Oman has offered commitments across key mode 4 categories, high quality temporary entry and temporary stay commitments for intra-corporate transferees, and contractual service suppliers, business visitors and independent professionals and liberalised entry and stay for professionals in accountancy, taxation, architecture, medical and allied sectors.

Besides, India has signed a series of major Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with global economies, strengthening its position in international trade and opening new markets for Indian businesses.

India concluded a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the United Kingdom in 2025. CETA provides an unprecedented duty-free access to 99% of India's exports to the UK, covering nearly 100% of the trade value, benefiting sectors such as textiles, leather, marine products, gems, engineering goods, chemicals, and auto components.

Notably, the agreement goes beyond goods and addresses services, a core strength of India's economy. India exported over US\$ 19.8 billion in services to the UK in 2023, and CETA promises to expand this further.

Additionally, in a first by UK, mobility for professionals across IT, healthcare, finance, and education is being eased with CETA. This offers streamlined entry for contractual service suppliers, business visitors, intra-corporate transferees, independent professionals.

## Key Takeaways

- Between November 2024 and November 2025, India's total exports rose from US\$ 64.05 billion to US\$ 73.99 billion, registering a strong 15.52% growth.
- India has inked a series of major Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), the most recent being the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Oman. Active negotiations ongoing with several other countries.
- Export diversification is further poised to strengthen trade stability, competitiveness, and long-term economic security amid global uncertainties.

Another major breakthrough is the Double Contribution Convention- that will save Indian firms and workers 4,000+ crore by removing the need for dual social security contributions.

Marking its first FTA with four developed European nations, India signed a trade and economic partnership agreement with the EFTA countries- Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein- in 2024. The agreement improves market access for Indian pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, and services, backed by strong investment commitments, including USD 100 billion in investment and the creation of one million jobs in India.

India's Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the United Arab Emirates, signed in 2022, has substantially reduced tariffs on over 90%of Indian exports- particularly in gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, and engineering goods- supporting the target of exceeding \$100 billion in bilateral trade.

With Australia, India concluded the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) in 2022, eliminating or reducing tariffs on most traded goods. The agreement has opened the Australian market to Indian textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and agriculture.

In Africa, India signed its first trade pact with the continent through the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) with Mauritius in 2021. The agreement enables easier market access for Indian exporters while strengthening Mauritius' role as a gateway to African markets.

Besides these concluded agreements, several major economies are currently engaged in active negotiations with India to deepen trade and investment ties through FTAs and comprehensive economic partnerships.

India and Israel signed the Terms of Reference for an FTA in November 2025. The proposed pact is expected to deepen cooperation in sectors such as fintech, agri-tech, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, machine learning, pharmaceuticals, space and defence.

India and the United States continue discussions on a bilateral trade agreement, with rounds of talks held in 2025. Under the ambitious "Mission 500", both countries aim to more than double US-India trade to \$500 billion by 2030 to be achieved by deepening the trade relationship across multiple sectors.

India is also in discussion with European Union (EU) for an FTA. Technical discussions on key chapters of the FTA such as market access for goods, rules of origin, services, technical barriers to trade, trade and sustainable development etc. took place in December 2025.

Discussions for the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) is also underway, which holds potential to unleash the full economic potential of the member countries and further strengthen regional cooperation.

The India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) negotiations are advancing, covering a wide range of areas including goods, services and mobility, digital trade, rules of origin, legal and institutional provisions, environment, labour, and gender, bringing greater understanding for convergence in the remaining provisions.

India and Mexico meetings have been centered on strengthening bilateral trade and investment relations, with discussions focused on expanding trade, investment, expanding economic cooperation, fostering business collaborations, and exploring opportunities across diverse sectors.

Negotiations are also underway with New Zealand for an FTA or Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with key tracks including trade in goods, trade in services, economic and trade cooperation, and rules of origin. The proposed FTA is expected to significantly enhance trade flows, deepen investment linkages, strengthen supply-chain resilience, and provide greater predictability and market access for businesses.

With Canada, India continues discussions on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, supported by agreed terms of reference. The proposed agreement aims to raise bilateral trade to around \$50 billion by 2030 through tariff reductions and clearer frameworks for services and investment.

India is actively negotiating an FTA with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and exploring a similar arrangement with Qatar, with the objective of strengthening ties across trade, energy, investment, and security.

The expanding network of concluded

agreements and ongoing negotiations reflects a broader shift in India's international economic engagement. Together, these partnerships position India to play a central role in shaping contemporary trade architectures anchored in mutual growth, resilience, and strategic trust.

## Boosting India's Export Competitiveness

The Government has implemented a comprehensive set of policy and institutional measures to strengthen India's export ecosystem. These measures are strengthening India's export competitiveness and integration with global markets.

## Export Promotion Mission

The Export Promotion Mission, was approved on 12 November, 2025, with a total outlay of Rs.25,060 crore for FY 2025-26 to FY 2030-31. The mission operates through two integrated sub-schemes, Niryat Protsahan and Niryat Disha. Niryat Protsahan focuses on improving access to affordable trade finance for MSMEs through a range of instruments. Niryat Disha focuses on non-financial enablers that enhance market readiness and competitiveness, such as export quality and compliance support, assistance for international branding, packaging and others.

## Labour Reforms

The integration of 29 labour laws into four Labour Codes has streamlined compliance, enhanced industrial efficiency, and strengthened worker protection. The reforms provide export-oriented industries with simplified regulations, flexible hiring provisions, unified registrations and returns, and expanded social security coverage, while ensuring occupational safety and welfare. At the same time, workers benefit from universal minimum wages, timely and transparent wage payments, mandatory appointment letters, grievance redressal mechanisms, and comprehensive social security protection.

## Next Gen GST 2.0 Reforms

Since 22 September 2025, Next Gen GST 2.0 reforms have come into effect. 90% provisional refunds for zero rated supplies and inverted duty structure claims are being provided on a system driven, risk-based basis. The removal of value-based threshold limits for GST refunds on exports supports small exporters by enabling refund claims on low-value consignments. GST rate reductions across packaging materials, textiles, leather, wood, trucks, delivery vans, toys, and sports goods lower production, freight, and logistics costs, enhance export competitiveness, and support domestic manufacturing. Further, revised place of supply rules for "intermediary services" enables Indian service exporters to claim export related benefits, while correction of inverted duty structures in textiles and food processing eases working capital pressures and reduces refund dependency.

India's other export promotion schemes comprise targeted government initiatives to reduce costs, strengthen infrastructure, improve quality standards, and enhance export competitiveness. The Foreign Trade Policy 2023 provides incentive-based support, promotes market diversification, and enables closure of legacy authorisations, while the RoDTEP (Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products) scheme reimburses embedded duties and taxes, with 58,000 crore disbursed up to March 2025.

Export ecosystems are being strengthened through the initiatives such as Districts as Export Hubs which are making states and districts active players in trade. 734 districts have been identified with export potential while District Export Action Plans (DEAP) has been prepared for 590 districts. The role of Special Economic Zones is also significant in the trade promotion, as it recorded exports of 14.56 lakh crore in FY 2024-25.

Infrastructure and manufacturing competitiveness are being enhanced through the Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES), PM GatiShakti, the National Logistics Policy. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, launched in 2020 is boosting manufacturing across 14 sectors, has attracted 1.76 lakh crore investments, generated 16.5 lakh crore in output, and created over 12 lakh jobs by March 2025. Further support is being provided through ease of doing business reforms and digital trade platforms such as the National Single Window System, Trade Connect e-Platform, E-Commerce Export Hubs, and ICEGATE.

## Conclusion

India's export performance between over the recent years reflects steady momentum, marked by diversification across products and markets and a balanced contribution from merchandise and services exports. The export basket recorded higher export values across major commodities. The export growth was accompanied by deeper engagement with key partner countries and emerging markets, supported by continued policy and procedural reforms. Together, these trends underscore India's evolving export profile and its deepening integration with global trade networks.

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



# Registration for allied, healthcare professionals to begin in J&K

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 20: The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP) is all set to commence the registration process for Allied and Healthcare Professionals in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

According to an official communique issued here Saturday by the Chairperson, State Allied and Healthcare Council J&K, the online registration portal, mandated under the NCAHP Act, 2021, aims to provide seamless and efficient registration for professionals and institutions.

Eligible professionals are



advised to prepare their documents and details as the portal is expected to go live soon. The draft regulations governing the registration are available on the Commission's website and are nearing finalization.

Further updates on the launch date and registration procedure will be communicated in due course. The professionals can contact the State Allied and Healthcare Council, J&K at Jammu and Srinagar for queries.

# J&K Judicial Academy holds workshop on judicial sensitivity in civil suits

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 20: Under the patronage of Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (Patron-in-Chief, J&K Judicial Academy), Arun Palli and guidance of Chairperson and Members of Governing Committee for J&K Judicial Academy, the Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy Saturday organised a one-day workshop on "Enhancing Judicial Sensitivity in the Conduct of Civil Suits" for Civil Judges (Junior Division) of Jammu Province at the J&K Judicial Academy premises, Janipur, Jammu.

The inaugural address, as per an official statement, was delivered by Justice Rahul Bharti, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, and Member, Governing Committee of the J&K Judicial Academy. Justice Bharti expressed concern over the practice of repeated adjournments in civil cases, observing that



courts often grant time for years together at the request of both parties, resulting in enormous wastage of judicial time. He remarked that this concern formed the basis for conceptualizing the present programme.

Emphasizing that every case requires 100 percent mental and physical commitment, he cautioned against passing the burden of pending cases to successors and observed that habits formed at the entry level shape efficiency at higher judicial positions.

The first technical session was conducted by Justice Janak Raj Kotwal, Former Judge, High Court of J&K, who deliberated

examination and cross-examination of witnesses, maintaining dignity of litigants, appreciating evidence in the light of ground realities and exercising judicial discretion meaningfully to prevent delays caused by non-cooperation of counsel or witnesses.

The third session was conducted by Naseer Ahmad Dar, Director, J&K Judicial Academy, who through a PowerPoint Presentation discussed on balancing the urgency and fairness while deciding interim applications and final adjudication. He emphasized proportionality, equity, sensitivity in socially and emotionally charged disputes, the importance of hearing all parties effectively, delivering reasoned and concise judgments and ensuring timely pronouncement of judgments in accordance with the Code of Civil Procedure.

The sessions were highly interactive and evoked active participation from the judicial officers.

## SDH Baderwah gets Patient Transport Ambulance

KT News Desk

DODA, DECEMBER 20: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Doda, Harvinder Singh Saturday flagged off a Patient Transport Ambulance for Sub District Hospital (SDH) Baderwah provided by the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

The flag-off ceremony, as per an official statement, was held in the presence of Independent Director Steel Authority of India, Advocate Manjeet Razdan; Additional Deputy Commissioner Baderwah, Sunil Kumar Bhutyal; Chief Planning Officer, Manesh Kumar Manhas; Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Tanvir Ahmed; Block Medical Officer Baderwah, Dr. Varsha Sharma and other senior health department officials.

The Deputy Commissioner welcomed the Steel Authority of India for its valuable contribution towards strengthening healthcare infrastructure in the district. He said that the addition of the patient transport ambulance would significantly enhance emergency medical response and improve patient referral services, especially for residents of Baderwah and adjoining remote areas.

He further emphasized that such CSR initiatives play a vital role in supplementing government efforts to provide accessible, timely and quality healthcare services to the people. The DC expressed hope that the ambulance would be optimally utilized to ensure prompt transportation of patients, particularly during medical emergencies, thereby reducing response time and improving overall healthcare delivery in the sub-division.

## GDC Marh observes World Meditation Day with special sessions

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 20: To celebrate World Meditation Day, Government Degree College (GDC), Marh organized two meditation sessions for faculty members and Semester-I students under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan.

The sessions, as per an official statement, were conducted by Sonakshi, Abhishek and Sushil- volunteers from the Isha Foundation. They guided participants through meditation practices, including elements of the Miracle of Mind initiative.

The programme aimed at reducing stress, improving focus and promoting mental well-being and an addiction-free lifestyle. The programme was organized by Prof Malti Rajput, Nodal Officer NMBA under the guidance of Prof. Ramneek Kaur, Principal of the college.

Faculty and students participated enthusiastically and appreciated the initiative.

# DRSC reviews winter preparedness, road safety measures in Doda

KT News Desk

DODA, DECEMBER 20: The 4th District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) meeting was chaired Saturday by the Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh to review road safety measures, winter preparedness and ongoing infrastructure works across the district.

The DC, as per an official statement, directed the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to ensure regular maintenance and uninterrupted road connectivity during snowfall, with special focus on the Paddri road and other snow-prone stretches. Emphasis was laid on maintaining smooth traffic flow during adverse weather conditions amid the ongoing winter season.

The DC instructed the General Manager, NHIDCL, to ensure immediate removal and proper disposal of dumped construction material from roadsides to enhance commuter safety and prevent accidents.

Directions were also issued for installing crash barriers at vulnerable locations,



improving road geometry, ensuring proper gradients at critical points such as Raggi Nallah and Khellani Nallah and undertaking works to mitigate landslide risks in sensitive areas.

The installation of reflective studs, traffic signboards and safety signage on all major and accident-prone roads was also stressed. The DC further directed the XENs of PWD (R&B) to ensure proper drainage systems along roads to prevent water-logging and road damage especially during winter.

Maintenance of link roads across the district was reviewed and instructions were issued to prioritize winter preparedness.

The removal of large boulders from vulnerable locations

was assessed, with directions to coordinate with the Fire and Emergency Services and ensure the availability of hydra vehicles during critical situations.

Passenger amenities along roadsides were also reviewed, with instructions to improve hygiene and toilet facilities.

Issues related to traffic regulation were discussed in detail. The DC directed the Traffic Police, ARTO and concerned officers to take strict action against unauthorized parking, rash and drunken driving and illegal dumping of material on roads, including registration of FIRs where required.

Night-time disposal of construction material was advised to avoid disruption to daytime

traffic. The movement and regulation of electric auto-rickshaws were reviewed, with directions to fix proper operational limits and ensure uninterrupted but regulated movement.

The meeting was attended by ADC Baderwah Sunil Bhutyal, ASP Headquarters Mohammad Aslam, SDMs, XENs, CMO and representatives from BRO, Education Department, Fire and Emergency Services and other concerned departments.

The GM NHIDCL attended the meeting virtually, while stakeholders highlighted the present status and execution of ongoing works and urged enhanced inter-departmental coordination for improved road safety across the district.

## Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign continues across Kishtwar

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 20: The Day-2 of the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" - 5th Good Governance Week campaign was successfully conducted across all 13 blocks of District Kishtwar. The programme is observed every year around December 25, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to bring government services closer to the people.

The main aim of the campaign, as per an official statement, is to solve public problems, improve services and ensure people-friendly governance at the village level.

Under the directions of Deputy Commissioner, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, officers from different departments like RDD, Revenue, Health, AYUSH,

Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Forest and Horticulture visited all blocks according to the schedule issued by the District Administration.

During the programme, officers listened to people's issues and resolved many grievances on the spot. People were also informed about important government schemes such as PM Jan Dhan Yojana, PM Shram Yogi Maandhan, PM Kisan Maandhan, Mission YUVA, HADP, PM Awas Yojana (PMAY) and other welfare schemes.

Several on-the-spot services were provided to the public, including Ayushman Cards, Distribution of Marriage Certificates, Domicile Certificates and other revenue-related services.

The Forest Department also carried out plant distribution and plantation drives in

different blocks including Atholi Block (Paddar), Nagni Block (Kishtwar) across the District.

An awareness-cum-free medicine distribution camp was organized by the Animal Husbandry Department Kishtwar at Village Karthie, Panchayat Jar, where farmers were informed about welfare schemes of the Animal Husbandry Department.

During the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" programme at Nagseni Block, an applicant raised a grievance regarding the non-availability of 200 mushroom cultivation bags for livelihood support. The issue was immediately taken up by the Chief Agriculture Officer, Kishtwar (nominated Nodal Officer by the District Administration) and after verification, the grievance was resolved on the spot, with the assurance to supply required mushroom bags.



Addressing the residents from Zaloosa, Haptmar, Kadipora, Hakhpura and adjacent localities, the Speaker emphasised that the Jal Jeevan Mission is more than just a series of engineering projects; it is aimed at transforming the quality of life in rural Kashmir.

"These schemes will not only save time and reduce the drudgery of fetching water from distant sources, a burden often borne by our women and children, but will also significantly improve public health by preventing water-borne diseases," stated Abdul Rahim Rather.

During the tour, the Speaker was accompanied by SE PHE, Kulmach Objipathi, Hakhpura Haptmar and Sheer Check.

## Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore Campaign in full swing across Udhampur

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 20: As part of the ongoing "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign, Municipal Committee Ramnagar successfully cleared two legacy waste sites, marking a significant step towards creating a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable urban environment.

A series of activities were conducted at Block Chanunta under the campaign to promote good governance, enhance service delivery and ensure effective redressal of public grievances at the grassroots level through active people's participation.

Further, a Revenue Camp under the theme Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore was organised at Village Chapper, Sarota.

## Mission Director reviews HADP, JKCIIP projects in Doda

KT News Desk

DODA, DECEMBER 20: Mission Director, Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Sandeep Kumar Saturday reviewed the progress and impact of the developmental projects of the HADP and Jammu & Kashmir Climate Innovation Programme (JKCIIP) in the District Doda here at a meeting cum training programme.

The review-cum one-day training and awareness programme, as per an official statement, focused on exploring opportunities, benefits and future prospects for farmers,

youth, Krishi Udyamis and agri-business entrepreneurs in the district.

The Mission Director interacted with farmers and highlighted the government's sustained efforts to double farmers' income through innovation, diversification and value addition.

The programme was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Harvinder Singh; Director Horticulture, Gul Sayed; Director Animal Husbandry, Dr. Sanjay Gupta; ADDC, Roshan Lal; CPO, Manesh Kumar Manhas and Chief Agriculture Officer, Amjad Hussain Malik along with officers from the



Horticulture and Animal Husbandry Departments, progressive farmers, youth and other stakeholders.

The Chief Agriculture Officer informed the meeting that around 2,500 applications have been received under JKCIIP

Programme (GAP), highlighting funding patterns, eligibility criteria and implementation strategies.

Addressing the gathering, the Mission Director stressed the need for proper planning, sustained handholding and inter-departmental convergence to boost local agricultural production and promote agri-entrepreneurship. He assured farmers of adequate financial support for viable and innovative projects and encouraged stakeholders to focus on market linkages, branding, value addition and export potential of local produce such as black zeera,

rajmash and other niche crops. He also reviewed agriculture losses caused by recent floods and assured that issues related to Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans, approvals and credit flow would be taken up with the concerned authorities for early resolution.

During the interactive session, Deputy Commissioner, Harvinder Singh emphasised grassroots implementation of HADP and JKCIIP. He directed the Krishi Gram Guides (KGGs) to ensure maximum registration of farmers and work in close coordination with later within their respective jurisdictions.



District NCORD meeting

## DC Srinagar, SSP review anti-drug measures

### Calls for intensified IEC campaign, stronger action against drug menace

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Dec 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Saturday chaired a meeting of District Level Committee on Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) here to review the ongoing anti-drug measures and efforts in the fight against drug abuse and its peddlers in the district. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Sandeep Chakravathy was also present in the meeting.

The DC took a latest appraisal of the enforcement actions and preventive initiatives undertaken by various departments in the district to combat drug menace and deterrence against drug peddlers. He emphasised a multi-pronged approach with focused attention on tougher enforcement measures against drug peddlers.

Labroo stressed the need for intensifying Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns across all Municipal wards and Panchayat Blocks, especially among youth,



and vulnerable sections of society.

The DC also called for closer coordination among enforcement agencies to ensure strict action against drug peddlers and traffickers.

The SSP Srinagar highlighted the importance of intelligence-based operations and sustained surveillance to dismantle drug supply networks operating in the district.

The meeting decided to

further strengthen coordination among stakeholder departments and continue focused enforcement, preventive awareness, and rehabilitation measures to effectively combat the drug menace in Srinagar district.

During the review, the Committee took stock of enforcement actions and preventive initiatives undertaken by various departments. It was informed that over 170 cases

related to narcotics have been registered so far, leading to the arrest of 289 individuals. Additionally, cash amounting to Rs 25.62 lakh and 58 vehicles were seized.

Further over 200 bank accounts were frozen, and properties worth approximately Rs 15 crore were attached besides recovery of contraband substances in connection with drug-related cases from January 01, 2025 to December 19, 2025.

The meeting further noted that 14 driving licences and 20 drug licences had been suspended for violations linked to narcotics offences.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aadil Fareed; Superintendent of Police, Umar Shah; SDM West Irfan Bahadur; Asstnt Commisisoner Revenue, Umar Gulzar; District Social Welfare Officer, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, ARTO, Muazam Ali and Officers of Excise, Drug Control Organization, DYS&S, Heads of ATFs and other concerned.

## LG meets Para-Archers, athletes from SMVD Shrine Board



KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 20: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday met International Para-Archer Payal Nag and a 6-year-old Para Archer Master Aayush, at Lok Bhawan. The athletes

were accompanied by Archery Coach Abhilasha Chaudhary.

The LG also met FISU World University Games silver medalist Hrithik Sharma and archer Shubham Sharma.

“The remarkable achievements of athletes from Shri

Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board Sports Complex, Katra, is a source of inspiration for many aspiring athletes,” the Lieutenant Governor said. He extended his best wishes to the athletes and the coach for their future games.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### LG calls for frequent

across UT of J&K.

He also directed for expediting the pace of works and strengthening of various wings of the Home Department through coordinated efforts.

The meeting discussed the Budget and Expenditure Position of Prisons, Prosecution, Home Guards/CD & SDRF, Fire & Emergency Services, Forensic Sciences Laboratory, Sainik Welfare, and Advisory Board under PSA in BE 2025-26.

The meeting was attended by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary, Deepak Kumar, Director General of Police, Prisons; Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary Home; Santosh D. Vaidya, Principal Secretary, Finance Department; Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor; Abdul Ghani Mir, Commandant General Home Guards; Alok Kumar, Director Fire and Emergency Services; Brig. Pankaj Chib (Retd), Director Sainik Welfare Department; Om Prakash, Director, Forensic Sciences Laboratory (FSL) and other senior officials. (KNO)

### Committed to

Education, and Communication) campaign to educate the public on symptoms, diagnostics, and the availability of treatment.

District Administrations were directed to adopt best practices to achieve the goal of TB Mukt Jammu Kashmir and TB Mukt Bharat.

The meeting also discussed the district-wise status of Treatment Outcome, Presumptive TB Testing Rate, TB Case Notification & Drug-resistant TB Cases, Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) Status, Ni-kshay Mitra Initiative, saturation of Ayushman Bharat Golden cards with special focus on covering all TB patients, incentivisation of ASHAs, implementation of ‘One Patient - One Ni-kshay Mitra’ model, procurements of treatment and testing equipment. It was informed that J&K has achieved the 99% coverage (28,62,686 individuals) in Vulnerable Population.

Dr Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, Secretary, Health and Medical Education gave a detailed presentation on performance of Jammu Kashmir on various Parameters under National TB Elimination Programme. He also presented an Action Taken Report on directives passed in the previous meeting.

### Chillai Kalan to

fresh snowfall.

In the Kashmir Valley, Pulwama recorded the coldest night at minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, up from minus 4.0 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Shopian followed at minus 2.9 degrees Celsius, improving from minus 3.5 degrees Celsius recorded on Friday.

Pampore registered a minimum of minus 2.0 degrees Celsius, warmer than minus 3.5 degrees Celsius the previous day.

Srinagar city recorded a low of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, significantly higher than Friday's minus 2.1 degrees Celsius.

At Srinagar Airport, the minimum temperature settled at minus 1.6 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 3.4 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Qazigund and Pahalgam recorded minus 1.0 degrees Celsius each, showing improvement from minus 1.8 degrees Celsius and minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Kupwara registered minus 0.7 degrees Celsius, up from minus 2.8 degrees Celsius, while Baramulla improved to minus 1.5 degrees Celsius from minus 3.6 degrees Celsius. Bandipora recorded minus 0.9 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 2.8 degrees Celsius on Friday. Gulmarg, the ski resort, saw a minimum of 2.0 degrees Celsius, up from 1.0 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, night temperatures also rose at most places. Jammu city recorded 9.3 degrees Celsius, slightly lower than 9.9 degrees Celsius the previous day, while Jammu Airport settled at 11.0 degrees Celsius, nearly unchanged from 11.1 degrees Celsius. Banihal recorded 3.8 degrees Celsius, marginally higher than 3.5 degrees Celsius, and Baderwah improved to 4.4 degrees Celsius from 2.3 degrees Celsius.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.2 degrees Celsius, slightly warmer than minus 4.6 degrees Celsius a day earlier, while Kargil recorded minus 4.0 degrees Celsius on Friday

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has forecast a spell of rain and snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir over the next few days.

Light to moderate snowfall is likely over higher reaches, while light to moderate rain is expected at most places in the plains from the evening of December 20 to the evening of December 21.

On December 22, light rain or snowfall is forecast at scattered to many places, followed by partly cloudy weather from December 23 to December 30. There is also a possibility of light snowfall at a few higher reaches on December 31, officials said.

An advisory has been issued warning that a few higher reaches of Kupwara, Bandipora and Ganderbal districts may receive moderate to heavy snowfall, particularly on December 21.

Authorities have advised travellers and transporters to plan their journeys accordingly and strictly follow traffic and administrative advisories to avoid inconvenience and accidents.

The onset of Chillai Kalan is traditionally associated with the harshest winter conditions in Kashmir, during which temperatures often plunge well below freezing, bringing challenges to daily life but also attracting tourists to snowbound destinations in the Valley. (KNO)

### CM reviews

of our winter response. Everything else flows from them. People's access to hospitals, mobility and daily life depend on how efficiently we manage these,” he said.

He directed departments to maintain a pre-emptive approach, ensuring advance deployment of manpower and machinery in high-altitude and snow-prone areas. Reviewing power sector arrangements, the Chief Minister called for strict monitoring of transformer oil stocks and immediate replacement of damaged distribution transformers (DTs), warning that any shortages must be addressed promptly.

“The vehicle that goes to remove a damaged DT must also carry the replacement. The idea of buffer stock is to minimise downtime replace, repair and rotate, not move equipment back and forth unnecessarily,” he told officials.

In the health sector, Omar instructed optimal utilisation of 4x4 ambulances, noting that in many cases ambulances equipped with snow chains would suffice. He directed the Health Department and district administrations to prioritise deployment in snowbound and remote areas where access becomes challenging.

For urban areas, particularly Srinagar, the Chief Minister laid stress on advance placement of mobile dewatering pumps in localities prone to waterlogging, such as Airport Road and MA Road. He also expressed concern over sanitation and passenger facilities at Srinagar Airport during flight disruptions, directing the administration to coordinate with airport authorities for improved cleanliness and basic amenities.

Turning to Jammu division, CM noted that while snow preparedness is largely adequate, several roads temporarily restored after the September–October rains remain vulnerable. He called for heightened vigilance against landslides, especially along NH-44 between Nashri and Udhampur, to prevent prolonged disruptions to inter-regional connectivity.

He said 24x7 control rooms have been activated across all districts to handle weather-related emergencies and that lessons learned from the upcoming spell would be used to refine future response mechanisms.

Top officials, including Divisional Commissioners Anshul Garg Kashmir and Ramesh Kumar Jammu, presented detailed action plans covering snow clearance, stocking of essential supplies, power and water readiness, healthcare access, helicopter services and support measures for vulnerable groups in snowbound regions such as Gurez, Machhil, Karnah, Poonch and Rajouri.

Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javed Dar and Satish Sharma, Advisor to CM Nasir Aslam Wani,

Additional Chief Secretary to CM Dheeraj Gupta, ACS Power Shailendra Kumar, ACS PWD Anil Kumar Singh and heads of key departments including Disaster Management, Health, RDD, Transport and Civil Aviation were present.

All Deputy Commissioners and top police officials, including IGP Kashmir and IGP Traffic also attended the meeting, while several officers joined via video conferencing.

Notably, as the Valley awaits its first major snowfall, the administration hopes the spell will not only ease pollution but also mark the start of Kashmir's winter tourism season, a vital lifeline for the region's economy.

Talking to reporters after the review meeting, the Chief Minister said the administration is “eagerly waiting” for snowfall, calling it a much-needed spell to clean the air and revive tourism. “We are waiting for this snowfall—it will clean the air, reduce pollution and kick-start the winter tourism season. All preparations have been made from our side,” he said. (KNO)

### J&K admin

roads, and follow directions from administration and police authorities.

In Gurez, the SDM ordered suspension of vehicular traffic from 4 PM on Friday as a precautionary measure. Police were directed not to allow vehicles to move between Gurez and Bandipora beyond the cutoff timing, and the order will remain in force until further instructions.

The SDM Gulmarg advised that heavy vehicles and vehicles without anti-skid chains should not ply on the Tangmarg-Gulmarg road until further notice, in the interest of public safety.

Traffic Police Rural Kashmir also issued a comprehensive advisory urging motorists traveling on hilly roads to adhere to prescribed cut-off timings, ensure anti-skid equipment is fitted, and avoid road-side parking during adverse weather.

Commuters were advised to plan journeys during daylight hours and maintain vehicle fitness to avoid accidents.

Authorities have advised travellers and transporters to plan their journeys accordingly and strictly follow traffic and administrative advisories to avoid inconvenience and accidents.

Meanwhile, fresh snowfall was reported at Sonamarg on the Srinagar–Sonamarg–Gumri (SSG) Road, prompting authorities to advise the general public to avoid travel on the Srinagar–Kargil route without prior confirmation of road status.

Officials said commuters should check with the Traffic Control Unit (TCU) Srinagar or PCR Kargil before undertaking any journey, as weather conditions may affect road safety and movement.

They urged travelers to remain cautious and adhere to advisories issued by traffic authorities in view of the snowfall.

### HIGH-LEVEL COORDINATION MEETING HELD AT QAZIGUND

In view of the weather forecast predicting moderate to heavy snowfall in the higher reaches and light to moderate rain/snowfall in the plains from the afternoon of December 20 to December 23, 2025, a high-level co-ordination meeting was convened today at Qazigund under the chairmanship of the Senior Superintendent of Police, Traffic Rural Kashmir, R. P. Singh.

The meeting was attended by senior officers and key stakeholders, including representatives from the District Police, Civil Administration, Ramki, Beacon, Nowyug Tunnel (Qazigund–Banihal Tunnel) authorities, and Toll Plaza authorities of Qazigund and Banihal. Senior traffic officers, namely DySP Traffic Qazigund, SDPO Qazigund, Tehsildar Qazigund, DTI Qazigund, DTI Anantnag, IC Police Post Jawahar Tunnel, along with other officers and officials, also participated.

The meeting primarily focused on ensuring effective traffic management and the safety of commuters on National Highway-44 (NH-44) during the anticipated adverse weather conditions.

All concerned agencies were directed to

ensure prompt, continuous, and efficient snow clearance operations to keep NH-44 functional and minimize disruptions to vehicular movement.

Cemented barricades shall be installed at various cut points along NH-44 to prevent wrong-lane driving and ensure disciplined and orderly traffic flow.

Deployment of Machinery at Slippery Points: Adequate snow-clearing machinery and recovery equipment will be stationed at all identified slippery and accident-prone locations to prevent mishaps and ensure safe passage of vehicles.

Enhanced Traffic Personnel Deployment: A substantial deployment of traffic personnel has been planned from Pampore to the Nowyug Tunnel at Qazigund, with special emphasis on sensitive and critical stretches of the highway.

The Navyug Tunnel authorities were specifically instructed to proactively regulate or stop traffic during adverse weather conditions to avoid vehicles getting stranded inside the tunnel.

Toll plaza authorities at Qazigund and Banihal were advised to maintain close coordination with all stakeholders to ensure timely and effective responses to evolving situations.

Commuters and drivers were strongly advised to strictly adhere to traffic advisories, drive with caution, and avoid unnecessary travel during periods of heavy snowfall in the interest of their own safety.

While addressing the meeting, the SSP Traffic Rural Kashmir emphasized the need for seamless coordination, effective communication, and swift response mechanisms among all participating agencies. He urged all stakeholders to prioritize public safety and remain alert and prepared to deal with any exigency arising due to inclement weather.

A comprehensive and robust action plan was finalized during the meeting to mitigate the impact of heavy snowfall and to ensure smooth, safe, and uninterrupted movement of traffic on NH-44.

MET FORECASTS RAIN, SNOW

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has forecast a spell of rain and snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir over the next few days.

Light to moderate snowfall is likely over higher reaches, while light to moderate rain is expected at most places in the plains from the evening of December 20 to the evening of December 21.

On December 22, light rain or snowfall is forecast scattered to many places, followed by partly cloudy weather from December 23 to December 30. There is also a possibility of light snowfall at a few higher reaches on December 31, officials said.

An advisory has been issued warning that a few higher reaches of Kupwara, Bandipora and Ganderbal districts may receive moderate to heavy snowfall, particularly on December 21. (KNO)

### DC Srinagar

the cases/claims submitted under SRO-43 by NoKs of those affected by terror related incidents in Srinagar District.

After a detailed scrutiny of the applications/cases, the Committee recommended fresh cases of Srinagar district to the Government for consideration for compassionate appointment under the provisions of SRO-43.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned departments to ensure expeditious disposal of cases so that relief reaches victim families without further delay. The stakeholder departments were instructed to expedite the examination of remaining cases, complete all necessary formalities under rules and ensure timely verification to facilitate swift appointments in favour of the victim families.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aadil Fareed; SP Headquarter, Umar Shah; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar; all Tehsildars, and senior Officers from Security agencies, besides other concerned.

### Where Centre

financial burden is being shifted to the states. This will hurt states like ours. At least put some thought into naming a Bill—“G-Ram-Ji” sounds more like a Bollywood title than a welfare law,” he said with a smile.

DRY SPELL HAS CAUSED DISTRESS

Later, speaking to reporters in Katra, Omar said the long dry spell since November had caused distress across J&K, with rising pollution and reduced water levels. “We are waiting for the rain and snow and it is been dry since November. I can feel water shortage everywhere, and pollution has also gone up in Jammu and Kashmir,” he said.

He added that snowfall would not only clean the air but also revive winter tourism. “Whether it’s rain or snow, the air will get cleaner. The bigger thing is that our winter tourist season will start. If there’s snow in Patnitop, Baderwah, Pahalgam, Sonamarg, or Gulmarg, tourists from across the country will come to enjoy the beauty,” he said.

DEFENDS RAHUL GANDHI

Asked about BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia’s remarks that Rahul Gandhi “defames India abroad,” Omar replied, “Is it a crime to go abroad? Everyone does it, the Prime Minister, ministers and others. So why should the BJP object when Rahul Gandhi does the same? Why this selective outrage?” (KNO)

### Over 11 lakh

News Observer (KNO) that the initiative aims to leave no child behind, particularly in remote, border and vulnerable pockets of the Union Territory.

Appealing to parents and caregivers, the Health Department reiterated that every child below five years must be administered polio drops under the national slogan “Do Boond Zindagi Ke” to keep the virus at bay.

The official said that although India has remained polio-free for more than a decade, the risk of reintroduction persists.

“India has not reported a polio case since 2011, but the threat still exists due to the continued circulation of the virus in neighbouring countries. Polio cases were reported in Pakistan in September this year and in Afghanistan in October, which is a matter of serious concern,” he said.

He added that Jammu and Kashmir’s geographical location and population movement make sustained vigilance and high immunisation coverage crucial to prevent any resurgence of the disease.

The department, he said, has strengthened both immunisation and disease surveillance mechanisms to ensure early detection of any potential threat.

“We are maintaining strict surveillance, including stool sample testing, to detect any possible poliovirus circulation at an early stage. Surveillance is as important as vaccination in keeping polio at bay,” the official added.

According to doctors, the Non-Polio Acute Flaccid Paralysis (Non-Polio AFP) rate, a key indicator used globally to assess surveillance sensitivity, must be above two per 100,000 children below 15 years of age.

“In Jammu and Kashmir, the Non-Polio AFP rate stands at 12, the highest in the country. This reflects the strength of our surveillance network and our capacity to promptly detect and investigate suspected cases,” the official said.

Health officials said that in addition to booth-based vaccination, special house-to-house teams will visit households on Monday to vaccinate children who may miss the drive, while mobile teams have been deployed in remote and hard-to-reach areas to ensure complete coverage.

Authorities reiterated that polio drops are safe, free of cost, and essential even for children who have previously received doses. They said repeated doses strengthen immunity and are necessary until polio is eradicated globally.

The Health Department has called upon community leaders, teachers, religious institutions and civil society organisations to actively support the campaign and help spread awareness to ensure that every child below five years of age receives polio drops on December 21, thereby keeping Jammu and Kashmir – and India – polio-free. (KNO)



# Will end ‘maha jungle raj’ in Bengal; TMC making people suffer to oppose BJP: PM

PTI

Kolkata, Dec 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday lashed out at the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, calling the state's prevailing situation "maha jungle raj" and alleging that corruption, nepotism and appeasement of the ruling dispensation have prevented development in the state.

Addressing a massive gathering at Taherpur in Nadia district over the phone from Kolkata, Modi urged the people to provide a chance to the BJP in the upcoming assembly polls to form a "double engine government" in the state. Dense fog at the venue prevented the Prime Minister's helicopter from landing at the makeshift helipad there and forced him to return to the Kolkata airport.

"Let the TMC oppose me and BJP as much as it wants, but the ruling party cannot hold people



to ransom, make them suffer and stop Bengal's progress," Modi said at the Parivartan Sankalpa Sabha, the fourth such meeting in Bengal this year. "We will end TMC's 'maha jungle raj' in Bengal where corruption, nepotism and appeasement politics are ruling the roost," Modi claimed. He alleged that the Mamata Banerjee-led party was opposing

the ongoing SIR exercise to "save infiltrators from getting identified".

Claiming that the popular sentiment on Bengal's grassroots was to "gain freedom from TMC's misrule", the Prime Minister said, "the lanes and alleys of the state are resonating with cries of the slogan 'Banchte chai, BJP tai' (Need BJP to live)."

## Delhi airport sees 129 flight cancellations on Saturday

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 20: At least 129 flights were cancelled at the Delhi airport on Saturday due to dense fog, according to an official.

Flight operations have been disrupted for the past several days at Delhi and other airports due to dense fog, resulting in low visibility conditions.

The official said at least 66 arrivals and 63 departures have been cancelled.

"Low Visibility Procedures are currently in progress at Delhi Airport. All flight operations are functioning normally," Delhi airport operator DIAL said in a post on X in the afternoon.

Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) operates the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), the country's largest airport, which generally handles around 1,300 flights daily.

## Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Exp mows down 7 elephants in Assam

### 5 coaches derailed

PTI

Nagaon/ Guwahati, Dec 20: At least seven elephants were killed, and one was injured after a herd of jumbos was hit by the Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Express in Assam's Hojai district early Saturday, officials said.

Five coaches and the train's engine also derailed, they said.

Initially, all eight elephants were reported to have been killed, though later it was said that one of the calves was found injured.

No passengers were injured in the accident, which occurred at 2.17 am, they said.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has asked the Forest department to conduct a detailed enquiry and secure wildlife corridors, while state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi blamed "unplanned and poorly regulated development under the present government" for the accident.

Several trains have been cancelled, regulated or short-terminated following the mishap.

Nagaon Divisional Forest Officer Suhas Kadam told PTI that the accident in Changjurai village is suspected to have occurred due to heavy fog in the area.

"Autopsy of the dead jumbos is underway, and treatment is on for the injured one by local veterinary doctors. Cremation will be done near the accident site. Legal formalities are being followed," he said.

NFR chief spokesperson Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said the accident took place in the Jamunamukh-Kampur section under the Lumding division, about 126 km from Guwahati.

The Sairang-New Delhi



Rajdhani Express connects Mizoram's Sairang (near Aizawl) to the Anand Vihar Terminal in Delhi.

He claimed that the accident took place at a location which is not a designated elephant corridor. "The train driver, on observing the herd of elephants, applied emergency brakes. However, the jumbos dashed with the train," he added.

Sharma said accident relief trains and top officials, including the NFR general manager and the divisional railway manager of Lumding, reached the site soon after the mishap.

Helpline numbers -- 0361-2731621 / 2731622 / 2731623 -- have been activated at Guwahati railway station, he added.

The NFR spokesperson said the passengers of the affected coaches were temporarily accommodated in the vacant berths available in other compartments, and the train, without the derailed coaches, left the site for Guwahati at 6.11 am. The passengers will be accommodated in additional coaches, which will be added to the train at Guwahati, and the train will resume its journey after that, he said.

Trains scheduled to pass through the affected section have been diverted through the UP line, and restoration work is underway, Sharma added.

He further said that nine trains have been cancelled, 13

regulated, and two short-terminated following the accident.

Rangiya New Tinsukia Express, Guwahati Jorhat Town Jan Shatabdi Express, Guwahati-Badarpur Vistadome Express, and New Tinsukia Rangiya Express are among the cancelled trains.

Train No. 15769 (Alipurduar-Mariani) will be short-terminated at Digaru and will remain cancelled between Digaru-Mariani, and 15770 (Mariani-Alipurduar) will be short originated from Digaru and will remain cancelled between Mariani-Digaru for the day. Among the trains regulated are Sealdah-Sabroom Kanchanjunga Express, Dibrugarh-New Delhi Rajdhani Express, Dibrugarh-Kanyakumari Vivek Express, and New Tinsukia-SMV Bengaluru Express, Sharma added.

Meanwhile, the chief minister ordered a thorough enquiry into the accident.

"We are deeply saddened by the death of seven elephants - three adults and four calves - in a tragic train collision earlier today," he said in a post on X.

"I have directed the Forest department to conduct a detailed enquiry on this deeply disturbing accident and take steps to further secure our wildlife corridors, particularly during low visibility seasons," Sarma added.

## Dawood Ibrahim, gang wars and more: Mumbai underworld insider reveals secrets in new book

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 20: The book's disclosures include accounts the network of Dawood Ibrahim (in this file photo), get-togethers he organised to call a truce among feuding groups, the failed plan to assassinate Chhota Rajan etc.



Shyam Kishore Garikapati, a former associate of Dawood Ibrahim who once moved through the darkest corridors of Mumbai's organised crime, has broken his silence in a new book that promises to challenge long-held narratives about the city's underworld.

"Black Scorpion: To Hell and Back", written and self-published by journalists Vijay Shekhar, Raju Santhanam and Calvin Joshua, is a true-crime narrative based on the life and testimony of Garikapati, known within the underworld as "Black Scorpion".

Set against the backdrop of Mumbai in the 1980s and 1990s, the book revisits an era marked by gang wars, shifting loyalties and brutal killings involving some of the most notorious names in organised crime, including Dawood Ibrahim, Chhota Rajan, Karim Lala, Varadarajan Mudaliar and Arun Gawli.

The book offers a first-person insider's view, drawn from Garikapati's lived experience, court records and over 100 hours of taped interviews

conducted by the authors. Garikapati spent more than 12 years in prison and was among the earliest accused to be tried under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA). He has been incarcerated in Tihar, Arthur Road, Nashik and Yerawada jails, where he also encountered the likes of Charles Sobhraj and terrorist Masood Azhar, as well as Kiran Bedi who inspired him to change his life.

"What makes 'Black Scorpion' both controversial and compelling is that it does not deny the past. Instead, it challenges official and popular narratives where they diverge from lived reality, reopening uncomfortable questions about the gang wars of the 80s right up to post-1992 gang wars — suggesting that misinformation, mistrust, and impulsive decision-making, rather than ideology or long-term strategy, drove some of Mumbai's bloodiest episodes," the authors said in a statement.

## 'Disappointed' to witness naqab row, says Bihar Governor Khan

PTI

Patna, Dec 20: Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Saturday said he was "disappointed" to witness the row after the naqab (veil) of a doctor was removed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Khan was referring to a video clip which sparked a major political row, which took place on Monday at the chief minister's secretariat in Patna when Ayush doctors had gathered to receive their letters of appointment. When the woman came up for her letter, Kumar saw her naqab, said 'what is this' and then removed the veil.

"It pains me to hear the word 'dispute' in this case. Can there be any row between a father and a daughter?" Khan asked.

Talking to reporters, the governor said, "What have you people made out of it? This man considers female students as his daughters.

Meanwhile, Principal of the Government Tibbi College and Hospital, Mahfoozur Rahman said, "Nusrat's family said that they want to escape media coverage, and that the female doctor will rethink whether to join or not." Though Saturday is the last date of joining, the principal said that the government and the department will

consider extending the date in this "special case".

"It is up to Nusrat, eventually. She can also consider the option to pursue higher education over the posting, which will improve her chances in the future," the principal said.

He said, as per her family, if Nusrat joins, she will do it with her privacy intact.

"Nusrat Parveen's husband said that the family is disappointed by the row peddled by



the media," he said.

"They have also denounced the news of their travel to Kolkata as false," he said, adding that there is "no anger among the family members with Nitish Kumar or the government." He claimed that Nusrat last attended the college on December 17 or 18, and did not express any sort of anger or resentment.

The principal claimed to have talked to Nusrat's family over the telephone on Friday evening.

"They said that wrong news is being disseminated in the media, and want to escape any sort of

## Too much sweating: Is it stress, hormones, or something worse?

TOI HEALTH

New Delhi, Dec 20: The body cools itself off by sweating. But when it gets too much, is unpredictable, or makes people uncomfortable in social situations, a lot of people worry in silence: Is something wrong with me?

Dr. Meenakshi Jain, Senior Consultant, Psychiatry Department, Amrita Hospital, Faridabad, shares that she sees a lot of patients who come in with anxiety, panic attacks, or trouble sleeping. But what bothers them the most is that they sweat too much.

**What is anxiety-related sweating?**

In clinical settings, anxiety-related sweating has a specific pattern. It typically comes on quickly, not because of physical activity but because of anticipation, such as before a meeting, during social contacts, or in crowded places. Even when it's cool outside, palms get clammy, the face flushes, or sweat soaks through clothes. This is not made up or blown out of proportion. When you're anxious, your body goes into "fight or flight" mode, which releases stress hormones that make sweat glands work too hard, especially in the palms, soles, face, and underarms.

But not all excessive sweating is caused by mental health issues, and this is an important difference. Many patients think they are "overly

anxious," but their bodies may be telling them something else. Changes in hormones, especially during perimenopause and menopause, can trigger abrupt hot flashes and night sweats that are very similar to anxiety symptoms. Thyroid problems can also cause perspiration that doesn't stop, along with changes in weight, heart palpitations, or an inability to handle heat. It is important not to call every case stress-related without a full medical evaluation from a mental health point of view.

**What to watch out for**

What Dr. Jain suggests is that you should pay special attention to night sweating. Anxiety can make it hard to sleep and make you feel restless. However, soaking night sweats that require changing clothes or sheets over and over again may be a sign of infections, hormonal imbalances, or other medical problems. If you sweat mostly at night and lose weight, have a fever, or feel tired for no reason, you should never dismiss it.

Drugs might also be a part of it. Some antidepressants, anti-anxiety medicines, and even ordinary painkillers might make you sweat more as a negative effect. Patients generally don't want to say anything about this since they think it's not a big deal. In fact, uncontrolled perspiration from medicine can make it harder to stick

to therapy and lower the quality of life. Changes are often possible.

**Breaking the taboo**

Dr. Jain reveals that one crucial thing she tells her patients is that sweating because of worry is real, manageable, and not a sign of weakness. Therapy, stress management strategies, and, when necessary, medication can help a lot with symptoms. Learning to spot things that set you off, like caffeine, not getting enough sleep, or too much mental stimulation all the time, can also help a lot.

Mental health care works best when it works alongside physical health care at the same time. If sweating doesn't stop, gets worse, or comes with other physical symptoms, a doctor and a mental health expert need to work together to figure out what's going on. The idea is not to pick between "mind" and "body," but to see how closely they are intertwined.

**Summing it up**

Too much sweating is a problem that affects mental health, hormones, and general medicine. The first step is to listen to your body without making any assumptions. This bothersome symptom can often be handled when it is addressed early and in a holistic way. This can be done by soothing the mind, healing the body, or caring for both at the same time.

## 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](http://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](http://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-9137/25

DATED: 20-12-2025

Sd/  
Chief Medical Officer  
Baramulla



# US military launches strikes in Syria against Daesh fighters after American deaths

AP

Washington, Dec 20: The Trump administration launched military strikes Friday in Syria to "eliminate" Daesh group fighters and weapons sites in retaliation for an ambush attack that killed two US troops and an American interpreter almost a week ago.

A US official described it as "a large-scale" strike that hit 70 targets in areas across central Syria that had Daesh (also known as Islamic State or IS) infrastructure and weapons. Another US official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive operations, said more strikes should be expected.

The attack was conducted using F-15 Eagle jets, A-10 Thunderbolt ground attack aircraft and AH-64 Apache helicopters, the officials said. F-16 fighter jets from Jordan and HIMARS rocket artillery also were used, one official said.

"This is not the beginning of a war — it is a declaration of vengeance. The United States of America, under President Trump's leadership, will never hesitate and never relent to defend our people," Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said on social media.

President Donald Trump had pledged "very serious retaliation" after the shooting in the Syrian desert, for which he blamed Daesh. The troops were among hundreds of US troops deployed in eastern Syria as part of a coalition fighting the terrorist group.

Trump in a social media post said the strikes were targeting Daesh "strongholds." He reiterated his support for Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, who he said was "fully in support" of the US effort



to target the militant group.

Trump also offered an all-caps threat, warning the group against attacking US personnel again.

"All terrorists who are evil enough to attack Americans are hereby warned — YOU WILL BE HIT HARDER THAN YOU HAVE EVER BEEN HIT BEFORE IF YOU, IN ANY WAY, ATTACK OR THREATEN THE USA.," the president added.

The attack was a major test for the warming ties between the United States and Syria since the ouster of autocratic leader Bashar Assad a year ago. Trump has stressed that Syria was fighting alongside US troops and said Al-Sharaa was "extremely angry and disturbed by this attack," which came as the US military is expanding its cooperation with Syrian security forces.

Syria's foreign ministry in a statement on X following the launch of US strikes said that last week's attack "underscores the urgent necessity of strengthening international cooperation to

combat terrorism in all its forms" and that Syria is committed "to fighting Daesh and ensuring that it has no safe havens on Syrian territory and will continue to intensify military operations against it wherever it poses a threat."

Daesh has not claimed responsibility for the attack on the US service members, but the group has claimed responsibility for two attacks on Syrian security forces since, one of which killed four Syrian soldiers in Idlib province. The group in its statements described Al-Sharaa's government and army as "apostates." While Al-Sharaa once led a group affiliated with Al-Qaeda, he has had a long-running enmity with Daesh.

Syrian state television reported that the US strikes hit targets in rural areas of Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa provinces and in the Jabal Al-Amour area near Palmyra. It said they targeted "weapons storage sites and headquarters used by Daesh as launching points for its operations in the region." Trump

this week met privately with the families of the slain Americans at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware before he joined top military officials and other dignitaries on the tarmac for the dignified transfer, a solemn and largely silent ritual honoring US service members killed in action.

President Donald Trump, from left, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Air Force Gen. Dan Caine attend a casualty return ceremony at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, on Dec. 17, 2025, of soldiers who were killed in an attack in Syria last week. (AP)

The guardsmen killed in Syria last Saturday were Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, 25, of Des Moines, and Sgt. William Nathaniel Howard, 29, of Marshalltown, according to the US Army. Ayad Mansoor Sakat, of Macomb, Michigan, a US civilian working as an interpreter, was also killed.

The shooting nearly a week ago near the historic city of Palmyra also wounded three other US troops as well as members of Syria's security forces, and the gunman was killed. The assailant had joined Syria's internal security forces as a base security guard two months ago and recently was reassigned because of suspicions that he might be affiliated with Daesh, Interior Ministry spokesperson Nour Al-Din Al-Baba has said.

The man stormed a meeting between US and Syrian security officials who were having lunch together and opened fire after clashing with Syrian guards.

When asked for further information, the Pentagon referred AP to Hegseth's social media post.

## T20 WC Squad: Gill Dropped; selectors call back Ishan Kishan & Rinku Singh

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 20: Taking a bold call with an eye to maximise impact over reputation, the Indian selectors on Saturday dropped Shubman Gill from the T20 World Cup squad and brought back wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan along with Rinku Singh.

Gill's omission is the most interesting decision of the selection meeting in Mumbai although given his form, it wasn't very surprising.

Despite being one of India's most consistent batters across Tests and ODIs, Gill has struggled to nail down a fixed role in T20Is, particularly as an opener, where India are now prioritising high-impact starts over accumulation.

His strike-rate concerns in powerplays and the emergence of more explosive options appear to have weighed against him. He only scored 4, 0 and 28 in three games against South Africa.

"Shubman Gill is short of runs at the moment and missed last WC too," chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar said at the press conference.

In contrast, Ishan's return reflects the selectors' renewed emphasis on left-right combinations and aggressive wicket-keeping-batters at the top.

Kishan, who has been out of favour for much of the year following fitness



and availability issues, has impressed in recent Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, leading Jharkhand to the title with a splendid hundred.

"It's not about Gill's form. We wanted to have a keeper at the top," skipper Suryakumar said on Gill's omission.

Kishan's inclusion meant that talented Yashasvi Jaiswal had to miss out while Jitesh also lost his place on the squad.

India have doubled down on power at the top and middle order, picking Abhishek Sharma alongside Suryakumar, Tilak Varma and Kishan, while Rinku's presence continues India's commitment to a specialist finisher who can absorb pressure and explode at the death. All-round depth remains a cornerstone of the squad.

Hardik Pandya will once again shoulder the responsibility of balancing the XI, supported by Shivam Dube, whose ability to target spinners has become a major asset, and the Axar-Washington Sundar duo, offering

variety, control and batting depth.

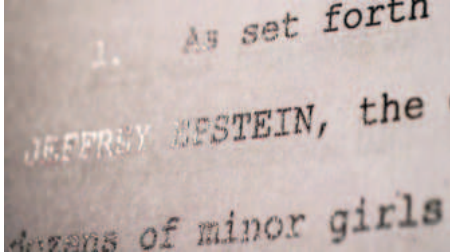
The bowling unit blends experience with experimentation.

Jasprit Bumrah leads the pace attack alongside Arshdeep Singh, India's most reliable left-arm option in T20Is. Harshit Rana's inclusion points to a forward-looking approach, with the selectors backing raw pace and bounce as a point of difference.

Spin will be handled by Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthi, a pairing that provides both wrist-spin guile and mystery, especially effective in the middle overs on abrasive surfaces. Washington Sundar and Axar bring in the much-needed versatility.

Squad: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel (vc), Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Sanju Samson (wk), Washington Sundar, Varun Chakravarthi, Ishan Kishan (wk), Rinku Singh.

## What the first batch of Epstein files reveals



ANI

Washington, Dec 20: The US Justice Department released a batch of documents related to Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking investigation, including photos and records showing Bill Clinton, Ghislaine Maxwell, and Michael Jackson in social settings with Epstein, CNN reported.

The files, made public under the Epstein Files Transparency Act, are heavily redacted to protect victims and ongoing investigations.

Some of the material was already made public, but other documents are "very likely to have never seen the light of day before," CNN reported. The released materials included multiple pages and large datasets.

Some notable revelations include former US

President Bill Clinton, swimming with Ghislaine Maxwell and relaxing in a hot tub with an unidentified person; Michael Jackson posing with Epstein and Clinton.

Other prominent figures, Mick Jagger, Woody Allen, and Noam Chomsky, are also featured in the released documents.

Earlier, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer released a statement slamming Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche for saying the department will release some of the files at a later date, despite today's deadline.

Blanche said in an interview on Fox News that "several hundred thousand" documents in their possession will be released today, with more to come in the weeks ahead. US President Donald Trump signed into law legislation passed by Congress in November that mandates the release of all non-exempt information from the files by December 19, CNN reported.

The Epstein Files Transparency Act required the Department of Justice to release files related to the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein by today. At around 4 pm (local time), the Justice Department released some of the documents.

## Bangladesh unrest: Conspiracy to destabilise upcoming national election, says BNP

ANI

Dhaka, Dec 20: The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) claims that the recent unrest, including attacks on newspaper offices and other establishments, is a conspiracy to destabilise the upcoming national election scheduled for February 2026, BD News reported.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir stated that these "heinous attacks" are aimed at disrupting the democratic transition process and foiling the election.

The violence erupted after the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, a youth leader and election candidate, who was shot by masked assailants. Protests and attacks followed, targeting media



outlets, including Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, with allegations of being pro-government or pro-India.

Chhayanaut, Udichi, and the Indian High Commission in Khulna were also targeted amid anger and protests following the news of the

death of Inqilab Manch convener Sharif Osman Bin Hadi.

Alamgir expressed the party's reaction at a press conference after the BNP's national standing committee meeting on Friday night. The BNP is pointing fingers at the government, alleging that it's trying to create an atmosphere of fear and instability to delay or disrupt the polls. They've urged all patriotic forces to unite against this conspiracy and ensure a peaceful election.

"We strongly condemn and express our disgust at these heinous incidents. These incidents prove that an old and identified group wants to lead the country towards anarchy systematically," he said, as quoted by BD News.

### U-19 Asia Cup 2025 Final

## India, Pakistan meet again with title on the line



PTI

Dubai, Dec 20: Eyeing a record-extending 12th title, a dominant India will look to underline its supremacy over arch-rival Pakistan when they clash in the Under-19 Asia Cup final at the ICC Academy, here on Sunday.

The Ayush Mhatre-led Indian Colts have been a class apart, winning all three Group A matches to finish ahead of Pakistan, which suffered its only group-stage defeat against India, a 90-run loss last Sunday.

India carried that momentum into the semifinal on Friday, brushing aside Sri Lanka by eight wickets. Pakistan, on the other hand, reached the final by knocking out defending champion Bangladesh. India's

march to the final has been built on an all-round effort, with batters and bowlers gelling together seamlessly to form a formidable unit.

With the bat, India has been nothing short of spectacular, posting two 400-plus totals. The 50-over tournament has seen the rise of exciting young talents, such as 17-year-old wicket-keeper-batter Abhigyan Kundu.

If teenage prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi set the tone in the opener against UAE with a breathtaking 95-ball 171 as India piled up 433/6, Kundu etched his name into the record books against Malaysia.

The left-hander smashed an unbeaten 125-ball 209, becoming the first Indian to score a double-century in Youth ODIs. The duo will look

for yet another good show against a disciplined Pakistan bowling attack.

Even when the top-order has faltered, India's middle-order has risen to the occasion.

Hyderabad's Aaron George has been the glue, registering three successive half-centuries, often batting through the critical middle overs while maintaining a strike rate of 100-plus.

He has been ably supported by Vihaan Malhotra, who offers a left-handed option and is fresh from a 61 not out against Sri Lanka.

Adding depth is all-rounder Kanishk Chouhan, who has reimagined the finisher's role with a strike rate of over 127, while making timely breakthroughs with the ball.

Chouhan has picked up six wickets in four matches, including a telling 3/33 against Pakistan in the group stage.

With the ball, India has been led by pacer Deepesh Devendran, the joint-highest wicket-taker in the tournament with 11 scalps, alongside Pakistan's Abdul Subhan.

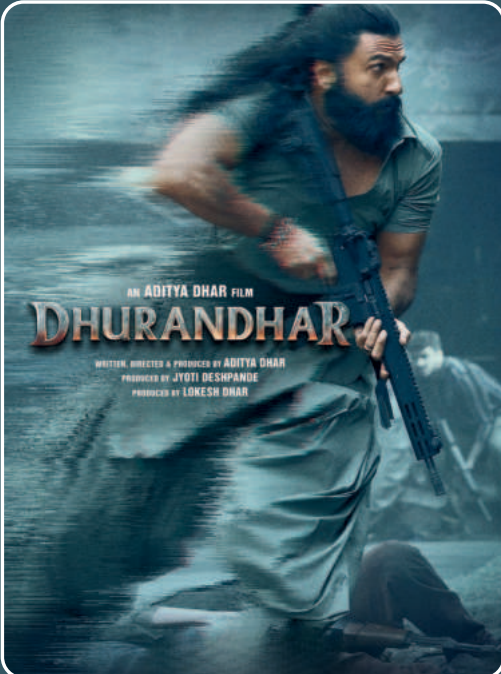
Deepesh has thrived by bowling probing lines at 130 kmph-plus as a first-change bowler.

His standout spell of 5/22 against Malaysia showcased his threat, while against Pakistan he dismantled the top-order, removing three batters in successive overs, including tournament top-scorer Sameer Minhas.

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