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Dated: 24.12.2025
DIPK-9318/25

PM Modi-led regime brought lasting peace to J&K: Amit Shah

'Decisive policies, sustained efforts over past decade transformed internal security scenario across country'

KNO Monitoring Desk

Srinagar, Dec 24: Asserting that PM Modi led government has brought lasting peace to Jammu and Kashmir, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that that decisive policies and sustained efforts over the past decade have transformed internal security scenario across the country.

Addressing the Passing Out Parade (POP) of the Recruit Basic Course (RBC) Batch-93 at Panchkula (Haryana), Shah, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "A few years ago, there were three big challenges in the country in the matter of law and order— left-wing extremism, terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, and armed groups in



the northeast. But after 10 years from the formation of the Modi government, there is peace in these three areas, and the

country is safe on these three fronts."

Shah said PM Modi led government stands like a rock with

the states in their fight against drug and human trafficking, cybercrime, and organised crime.

Addressing the recruits, he said, "Your leadership is ready for it, and you will have to strengthen the hands of your leadership."

"We stand like a rock with the states," he said, referring to the Union government.

He said that the role of forensic science under the new criminal laws has been decided.

"In crimes in which punishment is more than seven years, a visit by forensic experts to the scene of the crime has been made compulsory, and the main objective of this is to ensure punishment for the guilty," he said.

Shah told the constables that they were joining the police force at a | [More on P6](#)

India's LVM-3 success boosts its role in global launch market: PM

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday congratulated Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for placing the heaviest satellite in orbit from India using the LVM3 rocket and strengthening the foundation for future missions such as the Gaganyaan.

The Prime Minister also said that the success of the heavy-lift LVM3 rocket also reinforced India's growing role in the global commercial launch market. ISRO's LVM3 rocket places the 6.5-tonne Bluebird Block 2 satellite of U.S.-based firm AST Space Mobile into a 520 km circular orbit.

"A significant stride in India's space sector. The successful LVM3-M6 launch, placing the heaviest satellite ever launched from Indian soil, the spacecraft of the U.S., BlueBird Block-2, into its intended orbit, marks a proud



milestone in India's space journey," PM Modi said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

"It strengthens India's heavy-lift launch capability and reinforces our growing role in the global commercial launch market," the Prime Minister said.

PM Modi said, "The LVM3 launch was also reflective of efforts towards an Aatmanirbhar Bharat and congratulated hardworking space scientists and engineers."

Powered by India's youth, our space programme is getting more advanced and impactful.

"India continues to soar higher in the world of space! Powered by India's youth, our space programme is getting more advanced and impactful," the Prime Minister said.

"With LVM3 demonstrating reliable heavy-lift performance, we are strengthening the foundations for future missions such as Gaganyaan, expanding | [More on P6](#)

Dir Info condole demise of Jammu Jottings Chief Editor

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 24: Director, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Nitish Rajora, has expressed profound grief and sorrow over the demise of Subash Mehra, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Jammu Jottings Newspaper. Mehra breathed his last on Wednesday at ASCOMS Hospital after a prolonged illness.

Conveying deep sympathies with the bereaved family, the Director prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul besides courage to the family members to bear this irreparable loss.

The Director described Subash Mehra as a noble soul and a great human being who always projected the interests of the common masses with the dint of his journalistic aptitude and determination. "The loss of late Mehra has created a void in the world of journalism and his contribution to the society would always be remembered by the media fraternity," Rajora said. He also expressed solidarity with the Managing Editor, Mohit Mehra, son of the deceased.

IGP Kashmir chairs security review meeting

Calls for heightened vigilance, coordination



KNO

Srinagar, Dec 24: Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, V.K. Birdi, IPS, chaired a security review meeting at the Police Control Room, Kashmir, to assess preparedness for the peaceful celebration of upcoming events.

According to a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the meeting was attended by all DIsG of Kashmir Zone, DIG CRPF North/South Srinagar, DIG CID Kashmir, all district SSPs of Kashmir Zone, SSP PCR Kashmir, SSP Railways, and other senior officers.

At the outset of the meeting, IGP Kashmir was briefed by the officers on security arrangements and deployment plans. V.K. Birdi directed that all preparations be completed in advance and instructed officers to strengthen checkpoints, especially during night hours, and maintain heightened vigilance at vulnerable locations across the Valley.

He emphasized the need for strict vigilance against elements posing threats to peace and security and underscored the importance of maintaining a high level of alertness, along with enhanced area domination | [More on P6](#)

Cold conditions prevail in J&K

Snow chances loom over next week

Western disturbance likely in Dec-end

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 24: Cold conditions continued to prevail across Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday as maximum temperatures in many parts of the Kashmir division remained 0-2 degrees Celsius below normal. Several areas of the Jammu division recorded day temperatures 1-3 degrees above normal, officials said.

Night temperatures, however, stayed above normal by 4-5 degrees at many places in Kashmir and by 2-4 degrees at several locations in Jammu.

Gulmarg was the coldest place in the Valley with a minimum temperature of minus 4.2 degrees Celsius, while Bhaderwah recorded the lowest night temperature in the Jammu division at 0.6 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department said.



Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

The Meteorological Centre Srinagar has forecast partly cloudy weather across Jammu and Kashmir from December 24 to 28, with generally cloudy conditions and the possibility of light snowfall at isolated higher reaches on December 29.

Officials said that from December 30 to January 1, the region is likely to witness generally cloudy weather with chances of light rain over the plains and light snowfall over higher areas at scattered places.

The weather is expected

to remain partly to generally cloudy from January 2 to 5.

Meanwhile, travellers and transporters have been advised to follow traffic and administrative advisories, while moderate to dense fog is likely to affect the plains of the Jammu division during the next four days, the officials added.

Another weather forecaster said that J&K is likely to witness mostly dry and cold conditions till December 29, with a western disturbance expected to affect the region between December 30 | [More on P6](#)

LG Sinha, CM Omar greet people on Christmas

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 24: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah have extended their heartfelt greetings to the people on the joyous occasion of Christmas.

In a message, the Lieutenant Governor said, "On the joyous occasion of Christmas, I convey my warm greetings to the people. I hope that this occasion of festivity ushers in love and harmony amongst the people."

He added, "The festival, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, serves as a reminder to embrace Lord Christ's teachings of love, compassion, and forgiveness in our daily lives. This auspicious occasion inspires us to renew our commitment towards the welfare of each other for a prosperous future for all. May the spirit of Christmas encourage us to help those in need and bring peace, prosperity and happiness to all."

CM Abdullah described Christmas as a festival symbolising peace, love and compassion. He said | [More on P6](#)

J&K Education 2025: Confronting hard truths, tackling crises

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Dec 23: In 2025, Jammu and Kashmir's School Education system was confronted by some hard truths. The reality on the ground with poor learning outcomes, crumbling infrastructure, poor teaching quality was dramatically different than the actuality on ground.

However, the department had taken some important steps to overcome some of the major issues like inadequate staff, infrastructure and students enrolments.

The educational system was left in a 'sorry state' due to continued high dropout rates, continuing poor learning levels, and continuing lack of adequate resources.

As such, there was an urgent need for accountability, a substantial investment in quality, and a clear re-direction of focus from enrolling students, to providing all students with quality educational opportunities and helping ensure that they received that quality education.

In the outgoing fiscal year, the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO)

ISSUES

- Disrupted Academic Calendar
- Teacher Shortage and Quality
- High Dropout, Low Retention Rates
- Critical Infrastructure & Resource Gaps
- Poor Learning Outcomes
- Declining Enrolment
- Digital Distraction
- Psycho-Social Environment



DEVELOPMENTS

- Academic Reforms
- Infrastructure Focus
- Accountability Measures
- Student Welfare Measures
- Academic Reforms
- Policy & Administrative Actions

published a series of stories—highlighting the developments and loopholes in the School Education Department of

Jammu and Kashmir.

Issues....
Academic session short by over 30%

In the academic session 2024-2025, Jammu and Kashmir has recorded deficit academic days by more than 30 percent.

An official had informed that in the academic year 2024-25, Jammu and Kashmir has recorded below 150 working academic days against the mandated 220 days.

It also said that there shall be a minimum of at least 180 academic days | [More on P6](#)

Div Com Kashmir directs educational institutions to set up in-situ de-addiction systems



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 24: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, chaired a meeting on Wednesday to review and strengthen measures aimed at curbing the growing menace of substance abuse in the Valley.

Emphasising the need for

coordinated and sustained efforts by all concerned departments, the Div Com, as per an official statement, directed educational institutions, including schools and colleges, to establish in-situ de-addiction mechanisms within their respective campuses.

He instructed that each educational

institution shall nominate one male and one female nodal officer responsible for implementation of IEC (Information, Education and Communication) activities, student counselling, identification of vulnerable individuals, and continuous monitoring and tracking of affected students.

Wakf authorities were directed to organize orientation programmes for religious leaders to effectively utilize their influence in society for generating awareness regarding the harmful effects of substance abuse and promoting social responsibility.

With regard to coaching institutions and student accommodations, IMHANS was directed to develop a structured monitoring framework to keep effective oversight on coaching hubs.

Director Health Services was instructed to prepare a comprehensive training calendar for training of trainers, with the objective of creating a robust pool of trained resource persons for educational institutions.

Further, Director Colleges and Director Schools were directed to compile and submit a list of staff members to be trained and assigned the responsibility of identification, counselling, and monitoring of students vulnerable to substance abuse.

The Div Com emphasized the conduct of regular awareness sessions, maintenance of performance reports, and documentation and dissemination of success stories.

Police Department was directed to enhance surveillance over identified drug hotspots across Srinagar city and other districts in close coordination with the Health Department.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao SWD Srinagar holds sensitisation programme with SHGs

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 24: Social Welfare Department (SQD), SANKALP- Hub for Empowerment of Women- Mission Shakti Srinagar organized Sensitization Programme with the members of Self Help groups associated with NRLM at Government Degree college for Women Nawakadal under the banner of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP).

The programme, as per an official statement, focused on key issues such as prevention of gender-based discrimination, importance of girl child education, PC&PNDT Act, prohibition of child Marriage and legal provisions for the protection of women and children.

Participants were sensitized about the objectives of the BBBP scheme and the collective role of society in ensuring a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for girls.

Resource Person, SANKALP-HEW Mission Shakti, Srinagar while addressing the gathering, emphasized that educating and empowering the girl child is fundamental to social and economic development. The speaker highlighted that changing mindsets at the grassroots level is essential for achieving the goals of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative.

Later, Spokespersons from the Government Degree college, spoke about the importance of collective responsibility in protecting the rights of girls and ensuring equal opportunities for them. The speakers also highlighted various government initiatives and legal safeguards available for the welfare, education, and safety of women and children.

The programme witnessed active participation from Self Help Group members from NRLM. Informative sessions, interactive discussions, and awareness talks were conducted to reinforce the message of "Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child." The event concluded with a pledge by participants to support gender equality and work collectively towards the empowerment and well-being of girls in society. Such sensitization programmes will continue to be organized under the BBBP scheme to strengthen community engagement and promote positive social change.

DC Srinagar reviews PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana implementation

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR DECEMBER 24: To assess the progress achieved in installation of Solar Rooftops under PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana across the district, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, who is also the Chairman Monitoring and Management Committee of the scheme, Wednesday chaired a review meeting at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

Besides, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Executive Engineers of KPDCL, Lead District Manager (Banks), the meeting was attended by KPDCL Engineers and empanelled scheme vendors who presented team wise appraisal of the ongoing installation works and the current status of implementation under the centrally sponsored scheme.

At the outset, the DC, as per an official an official statement, took a detailed assessment of division-wise

and team-wise performance, focusing on targets achieved, applications received, and installations completed across all four Electric Divisions of Srinagar. On the occasion, the DC stressed the concerned and stakeholders to reach all the eligible households in a time bound manner so that consumers can avail the benefits of the scheme. He directed all stakeholders to ensure greater public awareness, faster banking facilitation and timely installation of solar rooftops so that benefits reach the beneficiaries without delay.

During the meeting, the DC appreciated the efforts of teams performing well in the implementation of the scheme and took cognizance of poor performers, directing them to improve their pace and efficiency to meet the prescribed targets.

Earlier, the DC was informed that more than 3,000 solar rooftops have been installed in the district so far under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.



DC Ganderbal reviews arrangements for Republic Day-2026 celebrations

KT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 24: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, Wednesday chaired a comprehensive meeting to review and finalize arrangements for the forthcoming Republic Day-2026 celebrations in the district.

The DC conducted a detailed review of all key preparations to ensure a successful and well-coordinated event. The arrangements discussed included preparedness of the main venue, podium and stage setup, security and traffic management, seating and transportation facilities, barricading, uninterrupted power supply, stationing of water tanker and ROs, parking, deployment of ambulance and medical staff, deployment of fire tenders, public address system,

sanitation, refreshments, and decoration of prominent buildings.

It was informed that the main function will be held at Qamaria Stadium, Ganderbal, where the National Flag will be unfurled by the chief guest.

The programme will feature a ceremonial march past by contingents of the District Police, CRPF, Armed Police, IRP, PTS Manigam, Forest Protection Force, along with students from various educational institutions.

The DC also emphasised proper arrangements be made for a vibrant cultural performances on the occasion of Republic Day. He stressed the need to ensure fool-proof and meticulous arrangements for the befitting celebration of the nation event.

The DC also directed that flag unfurling

ceremonies be carried out across all government offices in the district prior to the main function to mark the occasion. He further emphasized the importance of the National Flag unfurling and instructed officers to ensure strict adherence to the Flag Code and the National Anthem protocol.

The meeting stressed cleanliness, proper illumination of Mini-Secretariat and other government offices. Special emphasis was laid on public convenience, smooth crowd management, and emergency preparedness.

Departments were assigned specific responsibilities, and monitoring committees were constituted to oversee execution on the ground and ensure timely completion of all arrangements.

Deputy CM felicitates Rollball World Cup gold medallists from J&K

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 24: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Wednesday felicitated the winners of the 7th Rollball World Cup, held in Dubai from December 14 to 18, 2025, for their outstanding performance at the international level.

Representing India, Hiteshwar Singh and Suvidha Sarin, who competed in the Men's and Women's categories respectively clinched gold medals in their respective events, bringing immense pride and laurels to the Jammu and Kashmir.

Congratulating the players on their remarkable achievement, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an



official statement, lauded their dedication, discipline and perseverance.

He said that their success reflects the immense sporting potential of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

"J&K youth possess exceptional talent and the ability to compete at any national and international level. With the right platform, encouragement and institutional support, they can excel and bring glory to the region," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He reiterated the Government's commitment to promoting sports culture in Jammu and Kashmir and assured all necessary support to budding sportspersons to help them realise their full potential.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL IRRIGATION DIVISION SRINAGAR NEAR J&K BANK, ZALDAGAR

Telefax No. 0194-2952696 e.mail Id: to-exenmidsrinagar@jk.gov.in

Gist of Short-Term e-NIT No. 35 OF 2025-26 Dated: -23-12-2025

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of UT of J&K, Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division, Srinagar, invites e- tenders on item rate basis by e-tendering mode for:-

S.No	Particulars of the work	Tender fee (In Rs.)	Estimated Cost	EMD Amount	50 % Exemption Allowed for SSI/MSE	Completion Period	Class/ Registration Type (Qualification criteria)
1	2	3	4	4	5	6	7
	Repair works to 04 cusec horizontal pump (Unit 1st) at LIS Lar Chanthan of MISD Ganderbal.	100.00		3578.94	Yes	21 days	Mechanical Contractors/ SSI Unit Holders/ Workshop holders/ other firms having relevant experience.

The bidding process shall be completed online in two covers viz. Cover '1st' consisting of Tender Document fee, EMD in the form of CDR/FDR, Pre-qualification. Cover '2nd' shall consist of Financial Bid in the prescribed B0Q.

The critical dates are as tabulated below: -

i	Publish Date	23-12-2025 at 1630 hrs
ii	Document Download/sale start Date	23-12-2025 from 1630 hrs
iii	Clarification start date	N.A
iv	Bid submission start date	23-12-2025 from 1630 hrs
v	Clarification end date	N.A
vi	Bid submission/ Document Download/sale end date	01-01-2026 upto 1400 hrs
vii	Date and time of Bid opening	02-01-2026 at 1230 hrs

The bid uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on scheduled date /time or any other date convenient to the tender opening authority in the office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division, Zaldagar Srinagar. All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in PWD Form No. 25 & 33.

Position of funds	Budgetary Provisions
Position of AAA	Accorded under order No. II-MCO OF 2025-26 Dated: - 08-05-2025
Position of Technical sanction	Sanctioned vide No. 60 of 2025-26 dated: 18-08-2025.

No. MIDSITs/4600-05

Dated: 23-12-2025

DIPK-9311/25

DATED: 24-12-2025

Executive Engineer,
Mechanical Irrigation
Division, Srinagar

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR (UT) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION PULWAMA

TENDER NOTICE

Fresh Against NIT 100(sno.01) and NIT 119

E-NIT No:Fresh130 /EEP/RNB/of 2025-26/9634-44

Dated: 23 /12/2025

Phone:-01933-295302 E-mail:-techrpbpu1786@gmail.com

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT term e-tenders (In Single Cover system) are invited on %age Basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Government for the following work :-

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. Lacs.)	Cost of T/D (Rs.)	Earnest Money (In %age.)	Time of Completion in working Days	Class of Contract	Major Head of Accounts	Administrative Accord Approval No:	Call No:
1	Construction Of additional room and lavatory at Niabat office Pulwama.	4.89	200/-	2% of ADV. cost	90 days	DEE	Regular component of UT Capex Budget 2025-26	192-DDCP of 2025 Dt.12.11.2025	3rd call

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of date given below:-

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23 - 12-2025
2.	Bid downloading Start Date	23- 12-2025 from 10:00 A.M
3.	Bid submission Start Date	23- 12-2025 from 10:00 A.M
4.	Bid Submission End Date	02- 01-2026 upto 0 4:00 P.M
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	03- 01 -2026 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Div.Pulwama
6.	Submission of Performance Security(PS)	Within three (03) days of receipt of LOA. (The First lowest successful bidder has to provide 5% of allotted cost as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and EMD of 2% shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance security.

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in the shape of Treasury Challan /Receipt as per Annexure -C (Debited to M.H.0059 PWD) and EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama (The Date of Treasury Challan and EMD should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date.

- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.
- EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The Contractors are advised to visit the site and to be aware of the conditions for launching at site of work before quoting the rates.
- The contractor shall also be responsible for any theft/ damage to any of the component at site and the cost of damage/ theft if any shall be deducted from the work done or CDR of the Contractor till completion of work and handing over.
- The 1st lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama within three (03) days after the date of receipt of letter of acceptance and shall be released after successful completion of DLP. The Bank Guarantee should be valid for 45 days beyond DLP

Head Draftsman
Pulwama

DIPK-9291/25

DATED: 24-12-2025

Technical Officer

Executive Engineer
R&B Division

48% Sgr households enjoy 24x7 electricity: CM Omar

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 24: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday said that nearly 48 percent households in Srinagar enjoy uninterrupted electricity supply following a successful Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) trial with zero power cuts. Office of the Chief Minister, in a post on X congratulated KPDCI on making another 83 areas in Srinagar 24-hour power zones following a successful RDSS trial with zero power cuts. “With this, 108 areas in Srinagar now enjoy round-the-clock,



uninterrupted electricity supply, benefiting 1.25 lakh households, nearly 48% of the city. Similar

upgrades are underway in other districts to ensure 24x7 power supply,” he said. Pertinently, last year,

CM Omar had informed that his government was trying their best to provide better facilities to the

people and the complaints would pour in with regard to the pesky power cuts as it is the outcome of overloading. However, he had informed that the 24x7 electricity would be possible only when the 100 per cent metering is done. Furthermore, the CM as reported by KNO had also stated that adequate arrangements were put in place for better facilities to the people during winters. Omar added that the tourist rush is expected to increase once the snowfall occurs, adding that the efforts are on to make J&K a round-the-year tourist destination—(KNO)

“With this, 108 areas in Srinagar now enjoy round-the-clock, uninterrupted electricity supply, benefiting 1.25 lakh households, nearly 48% of the city. Similar upgrades are underway in other districts to ensure 24x7 power supply,

Div Com Kashmir reviews stamp duty rates revision

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Dec 24: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg Wednesday chaired a meeting of Deputy Commissioners and concerned departmental officers to review the proposed revision of stamp duty rates for the upcoming year. During the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner directed the Deputy Commissioners to rationalise the proposed increase in stamp duty in accordance with prevailing market value rates, transaction patterns, and land-use categories. He emphasised the need to address anomalies in stamp duty rates, particularly in contiguous and adjoining areas, to ensure uniformity and fairness. The Div Com further urged officers to ensure that revisions remain within reasonable limits, taking into account factors such as land use,



commercial significance, and the level of development in different areas. The meeting was attended by officers from the Forest Department, Registration Department, Public Works Department (PWD), Land Survey and Records, Agriculture

Department, Industries and Commerce Department, Town Planning Department, and the Stamps Department, besides the Assistant Commissioner Central, OSD to the Divisional Commissioner, and other concerned officials.

Centre pushing Kargil health sector: LG Ladakh



RAJA SYED RATHER

Kargil, Dec 24: Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh Kavin-der Gupta on Wednesday said the Centre is providing all possible support to ensure overall development of the health sector in Kargil. Congratulating the people of Kargil LG Gupta said that despite living in remote and difficult terrain, residents are now receiving improved healthcare facilities. “This has been possible due to the collective efforts of the UT Administration and full backing of the Government of India,” he added. “The hard work was not only done by our elected representatives, but also by the Chief Secretary and Principal Secretary, who played a

significant role. My predecessor, former Lieutenant Governor Brigadier (Dr) Mishra, also made an important contribution,” he said. LG Gupta said the administration remains committed to further strengthening the health sector in Ladakh. “There is a need for technical staff. In the coming times, doctors and technicians will be sent for training so that they can operate advanced machines and provide services to people on a rotational basis,” he added. On the demand for a mini-AIIMS in Ladakh, LG Gupta said the administration would make sincere efforts. “We are trying and efforts often succeed. We do not make promises, as promises can be broken,” he said—(KNO)

Year-Ender...

202 FIRs, 272 arrests in north Kashmir's anti-mining crackdown



WARIS FAYAZ

Baramulla, Dec 24: Acting tough against offenders involved in illegal mining and sand extraction, Police in North Kashmir registered 202 FIRs and arrested 272 accused in the year 2025. Police carried out a sustained crackdown in Baramulla, Kupwara, Bandipora, Sopore and Handwara. It also seized 240 vehicles, including tippers, tractors and earth moving machines that were allegedly used for unlawful excavation and transportation of minerals from rivers and nallahs. Officials said the operations were conducted through surprise night raids, intensified naka checking and joint inspections along with the Geology and Mining Department at identified hotspots along riverbeds and extraction sites. Police have warned that unauthorized mining will invite strict legal action under relevant sections of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act and other applicable laws, urging people to report violations to help protect fragile riverine ecosystems—(KNO)

Jammu-Srinagar NH traffic crawls, other roads shut

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 24: Traffic moved slowly on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on Wednesday due to single-lane traffic and the breakdown of two heavy motor vehicles (HNVs). An official while sharing the details said, “Light Motor Vehicles (LMVs) and passenger vehicles have been advised to travel on NH-44 during the day and avoid night journeys, particularly between Nashri Tunnel and Navyug Tunnel, where HMV movement may cause delays.” He urged the drivers to maintain strict lane discipline and warned that overtaking or wrong-lane driving can lead to congestion. The official said, “Subject to fair weather and road conditions, LMVs, passenger vehicles, private cars, and HMVs (good carrier) will be allowed to move in both directions on NH-44 on Thursday.” Meanwhile, Traffic Control Units (TCUs) in Jammu and Srinagar have been asked to coordinate with TCU Ramban



regarding road conditions and Security forces convoys have been advised to move on the NH-44 only after confirmation of road status. According to the officials the Kishtwar-Sinthan-Anantnag NH-244 remains closed due to snow accumulation while vehicles on the Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumari (SSG) Road, will be allowed to move in a regulated manner after getting a green signal from BRO. “LMVs and HMVs (up to six tyres) with anti-skid chains will be permitted from Minamarg towards Srinagar between 8 AM and 11:30 AM, and from Sonamarg towards Kargil between 1 PM and 4 PM,” the official said, adding, “Similarly, on Mughal Road, LMVs and private cars with

anti-skid chains will be allowed from Behramgala towards Shopian and Herpora-Shopian towards Poonch between 10:30 AM and 2:30 PM, subject to fair weather and road clearance from GREF. Vehicles will not be allowed after the cutoff timings. Security forces convoys will coordinate their movement to avoid disrupting civil traffic.” Commuters have been urged to confirm road conditions before travel from the following Traffic Control Units: Jammu (0191-2459048, 0191-2740550, 9419147732, 103), Srinagar (0194-2450022, 2485396, 18001807091, 103), Ramban (9419993745, 1800-180-7043), Udhampur (8491928625), PCR Kishtwar (9906154100), and PCR Kargil (9541902330, 9541902331)—(KNO)

CBK chargesheets Arunachal woman in online fraud case

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 24: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch Kashmir (CBK) has filed a chargesheet in a 26 lakh rupees international online fraud case, unraveling a sophisticated impersonation racket run by an Arunachal Pradesh woman. Officials said the accused allegedly duped a local businessman through fake social media profiles, forged identity documents and a bogus international business deal, routing the defrauded money through multiple bank accounts. According to a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Crime Branch Kashmir, has filed a chargesheet before the Court of Judge Small Causes, Srinagar, in connection with FIR No. 17/2020, registered under Sections 419, 420, 468, 471 RPC and Section 66-D of the Information Technology Act. The statement reads, the chargesheet has been submitted against accused Jumbom Riba D/o Henjum Riba, resident of Village Pagi, P.O./P.S. Basar, District Lepa Rada, West Siang, Arunachal Pradesh, for her alleged involvement in a sophisticated online cheating and impersonation racket involving international dimensions.

It reads, the case originated from a written complaint wherein the complainant alleged that he was contacted through social media by a woman identifying herself as Christiana, claiming to be a Secretary with Abbot Pharmaceutical, United Kingdom. On the pretext of offering dealership rights for a product named “Agasina Nut,” purportedly sourced from Arunachal Pradesh, the complainant was induced with promises of high profits and an international purchase agreement. Acting on these assurances, the complainant transferred approximately 26.25 lakh into multiple bank accounts. The fraud was further facilitated through a staged and fake demonstration of currency conversion, leading to substantial financial loss.

The statement also reads, during investigation, EOW Kashmir established that the accused used forged and non-genuine identity documents, including fake voter ID cards, to open multiple bank accounts in the names of Tabu Juli and Aisha Kholi across various banks. These accounts were operated by the accused herself and were used for routing, diversion, and withdrawal of funds. Transaction analysis revealed rapid inter-bank transfers and cash withdrawals, with no legitimate source of income to justify the credits. “The investigation conclusively proved offences of cheating, impersonation, forgery, and use of forged documents as genuine. Accordingly, the investigation has been concluded as proved, and the chargesheet has been produced in absentia under Section 512 CrPC for judicial determination. Economic Offences Wing Kashmir urges people to remain alert & don't fall prey to fraudsters online & offline,” it reads further—(KNO)

Traffic police push to unsnarl city roads

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 24: Traffic Police Srinagar on Wednesday intensified enforcement drives across the city to check violations and ease congestion on the city roads. SSP Traffic Srinagar Ajaz Ahmad Bhat said, “The drives will continue daily and violators will have to face the law.” “The vehicles without valid documents, fitness certificates or driving licences will face strict action. Wrong parking, overloading and minors driving vehicles will not be tolerated,” he added. “This is not a one-day drive. We are on the roads every day and have further intensified enforcement to bring discipline on city roads,” the SSP said. He said the department is targeting vehicles with incomplete documentation, expired fitness certificates, non-transfer of registration certificates and those



violating pollution norms. He added that many vehicles have crossed their permissible lifespan but are still plying on roads. The SSP said, “Vehicles coming from Budgam or other outside areas are not allowed to enter the city, and wherever entry is permitted for public convenience, it will be regulated and terminated at designated points.” He said major arteries like MA Road and Residency Road need immediate decongestion. The SSP said simultaneous drives are underway across

Srinagar, including Boulevard, Batamaloo and Qamarwari areas, with officers deployed at multiple locations. He said special measures have been put in place to regulate Sumo vehicles near Jahangir Chowk, which were creating a chaos. Passengers coming from Budgam have been advised to disembark near Shergari Police Station, while designated stands have been arranged for vehicles. Similar arrangements for mini-buses will be introduced in the coming days. The SSP appealed to commuters to use public transport and cooperate with traffic authorities, saying efforts are underway to ensure smooth movement and availability of e-rickshaws in congested sectors. He said public feedback is being acted upon and people can contact PCR numbers 103 along with Traffic Control Unit numbers, to report violations or grievances—(KNO)

ACB files chargesheet against businessman for bribing SP City South Jammu

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 24: The Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday filed a chargesheet for allegedly offering a bribe of Rs: 30,000 to the Superintendent of Police, City South Jammu. Officials said the bribe was allegedly offered in exchange for extending the date of an exhibition-cum-sale at Gole Market, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu. According to a statement, ACB said that on 24-12-2025, Jammu & Kashmir Anti Corruption Bureau produced charge-sheet in case FIR No. 01/2024 u/s 8 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 before the Hon'ble Court of Special Judge, Anti-Corruption, Jammu against Chander Sekhar Vohra, Proprietor of M/s Asian Associates, for offering bribe to the Superintendent of Police, City South, Jammu, for seeking undue favour in connection with extending the date of exhibition cum sale at Gole Market, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu. The statement reads, the instant case came to be registered at PS ACB

Jammu, upon the receipt of a written complaint lodged by the then Superintendent of Police, City South, Jammu, alleging therein that the above named individual approached her to seek undue favour in connection with the extension of the exhibition date for the exhibition cum sale at Gole Market, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu and tried to bribe her by offering bribe amount of 30,000 for doing the needful. During the course of investigation, a team was constituted and the accused, namely, Sekhar Vohra, Proprietor of M/s Asian Associates, was caught on spot, in the office of SP City south, Jammu, for offering bribe of 30,000 to her for seeking undue favour. The bribe money was also recovered and seized on spot in presence of independent witnesses. It reads, after the completion of investigation of the case as Proved, charge-sheet has been produced against the said accused in the Hon'ble Court of Special Judge, Anti-Corruption, Jammu on 24-12-2025 for judicial determination—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Saffron Diplomacy: A Model For Shared Prosperity

The arrival of a high-level Iranian delegation at SKUAST-Kashmir marks a significant and welcome evolution in international cooperation. More than a technical exchange between the world's two premier saffron-growing regions, it is a powerful example of 'science diplomacy' in action where shared agricultural heritage and common challenges forge pathways to mutual growth and understanding, transcending geopolitical currents. Kashmir's saffron, with its coveted GI tag, is more than an

economic commodity; it is a cultural emblem and a lifeline for thousands of farmers. Yet, the industry faces existential threats from climate change, market volatility, and authenticity concerns. Iran, possessing centuries of expertise and facing similar climatic pressures, is an ideal partner. This collaboration, facilitated by international bodies like ICRISAT, moves beyond traditional aid models to a partnership of equals. It is a dialogue where traditional wisdom from the fields of Khorasan meets cutting-edge

innovation from Kashmir's research stations in Pampore. The focus of this visit - on traceability, authenticity, climate-resilient crop modelling, and market enhancement - is precisely targeted. By working together to establish rigorous scientific standards and sharing best practices, both regions can combat adulteration, command premium prices in the global 'Red Gold' market, and build consumer trust. The tour of facilities like the Centre for Artificial Intelligence underscores a forward-looking approach, leveraging

technology to safeguard a traditional craft. The collaboration has profound benefits. For farmers, it promises greater yield stability and income security. For science, it accelerates innovation through the cross-pollination of ideas. For diplomacy, it builds enduring people-to-people connections grounded in tangible, peaceful collaboration. This initiative demonstrates that shared economic interests, particularly in sustainable agriculture, can be a formidable force for goodwill and regional stability.

We hope the collaboration seeds a long-term framework for joint research, scholar exchange, and coordinated market strategy. Such partnerships are a blueprint for the future where nations collaborate not just in boardrooms, but in laboratories and fields, turning common challenges into shared prosperity. Kashmir's saffron, nurtured by both local dedication and global science, can truly become a symbol of how the world can work together, one precious strand at a time.

National Consumer Day: ‘Efficient And Speedy Disposal Through Digital Justice’

National Consumer Day 2025 will feature a series of launches, recognitions, and announcements aimed at strengthening consumer protection, awareness, and institutional capacity. The programme will highlight progress in digital grievance redressal, quality assurance, legal metrology, and consumer awareness, while fostering collaboration among key institutions.

Press Information Bureau

National Consumer Day is observed in India on 24 December each year to highlight the significance of consumer rights and the broader framework of consumer protection. It was on this day that the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, received the President's assent, establishing a comprehensive set of rights for consumers. These include the right to be protected, the right to be informed, the right to be assured, the right to be heard, the right to seek redressal, and the right to consumer awareness. The observance aims to raise awareness and promote responsible practices among consumers and other stakeholders. In 2025, National Consumer Day is guided by the theme “Efficient and Speedy Disposal through Digital Justice,” reflecting India's continued focus on technology-enabled, accessible, and timely consumer grievance redressal.

Reimagining Consumer Rights: Stronger Laws, Faster Redressal, and Better Outcomes

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, represents a significant reform in the safeguarding of consumer interests in India. Enacted on 20 July 2020, it supersedes the Consumer Protection Act of 1986 and introduces a more contemporary framework for dispute resolution and marketplace accountability. The Act seeks to safeguard consumer welfare and promote fairness in commercial transactions by facilitating informed decision-making, ensuring uniform and equitable outcomes, and enabling prompt and effective grievance redressal. The law guarantees several key rights, including the right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, and standards of goods or services, thereby safe guarding consumers against unfair trade practices. To operationalise its objectives, the Act establishes a three-tier adjudicatory structure for consumer dispute resolution: District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum (District Forum) - the first tier, located at the district court, adjudicates complaints involving claims up to Rs. 50 lakhs.

State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (State Commission) - the second-tier, state-level body deals with complaints exceeding Rs. 50 lakhs and up to Rs. 2 crore.

National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (National Commission) - the apex tier, operating at the national level, addresses complaints involving complaints above Rs. 2 crore.

In July 2025, 10 States, along with the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) recorded a disposal rate of more than 100 percent. This indicates that the volume of cases resolved during the month surpassed the number of newly filed cases, demonstrating enhanced efficiency and a reinforced commitment to delivering timely consumer justice.

The District Forum and State Commission are constituted by individual State Governments with the approval of the Central Government, whereas the National Commission is established directly by the Central Government. These adjudicatory bodies do not supersede the jurisdiction of civil courts, instead, they provide an alternative mechanism for resolving consumer grievances.

Role and functions of the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), established on 24 July 2020 under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, serves as a regulatory body mandated to safeguard the interests of consumers as a collective. It functions encompass:

Protecting, promoting, and enforcing the rights of consumers

Preventing the occurrence of unfair trade practices

Ensuring goods and services are not sold in violation of the Act

Monitoring and regulating advertisements to prevent false or misleading claims

Initiating actions against manufacturers, endorsers, and publishers involved in disseminating misleading advertisements

The CCPA is empowered to mandate the recall of unsafe goods and services, discontinue unfair trade practices, levy penalties, and initiate prosecution when required.

Catalysing Consumer Protection Initiatives: The Consumer Welfare Fund

The Consumer Welfare Fund aims to support initiatives that protect consumer interests and strengthen the consumer movement across the nation. Financial assistance is extended to States and Union Territories for the establishment of a Consumer Welfare Corpus Fund, with contributions structured on a 75:25 ratio, and on a 90:10 ratio for Special Category States and designated Union Territories. Programme activities are funded through the interest accrued on this corpus. During the financial year 2024-25 (as on 31.12.2024), an amount of Rs.38.68 Crore has been released to the States/UTs.

Building a Responsive and Reliable Consumer Redressal Framework

A responsive and reliable consumer redressal system is crucial for providing individuals with timely and equitable solutions to grievances arising from the purchase of goods or services. Strengthening this system not only builds trust in the marketplace but also empowers consumers by ensuring that their concerns are recognised, addressed, and resolved in an efficient manner.

e-Jagriti - Revolutionizing Consumer Justice in 2025

e-Jagriti, launched on 1 January 2025, has rapidly emerged as a significant digital platform for consumer grievance redressal in India. It integrates earlier systems, including OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, and CONFONET, into a single, streamlined interface, thereby enhancing accessibility and simplifying procedures. Now operational across the NCDRC and all States and Union Territories, the platform enables users to file complaints, make payments, participate in virtual hearings, and monitor case progress. Its multilingual support, chatbot assistance, voice-to-text features, and secure digital access ensure usability for all consumers, including senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Key Benefits of e-Jagriti

Global Accessibility: The platform allows both non-resident Indians and domestic users to file and manage cases remotely, supported by secure end-to-end encryption and role-based secure access.

Efficiency and Speed: Automated workflows, real-time SMS and email notifications, and virtual hearings have significantly improved the overall efficiency of the system. Notably, ten states and the NCDRC have recently recorded disposal rates exceeding 100 percent.

Inclusivity: The platform offers multilingual interfaces and accessibility features, making it user-friendly for people from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Secure Transactions: Integration with Bharat Kosh and PayGov payment gateways ensures that fee payment processes are efficient, secure, and user-friendly.

Justice Delivered for a Consumer in Tripura

A consumer in West Tripura secured relief after enduring 8 years of issues with a Rs.85,000 LG Side by Side refrigerator that leaked water and failed to defrost despite repeated repairs. The case, filed as DC/272/CC/33/2025, was resolved within 5 months with the Commission holding LG India and the service centre liable for deficiency in service and unfair trade practices.

The order awarded a full refund with 7.5 percent annual interest, along with Rs.12,000 towards repair expenses, Rs.50,000 for mental agony and Rs.20,000 for litigation, totaling more than Rs.1.67 Lakh, to be paid within 30 days. The outcome shows that e-Jagriti continues to empower consumers and hold brands accountable for long term service responsibilities.

As of mid-November 2025, the platform has facilitated the filing of over 1.35 lakh case filings and enabled the disposal of over 1.31 lakh cases, supported by a user base of over 2.81 lakh registered individuals, including 1,400 non-resident Indians (NRIs). A total of 466 complaints were filed by Non-Resident Indians from countries including the United States (146), the United Kingdom (52), the UAE (47), Canada (39), Australia (26), and Germany (18).

In 2025, e-Jagriti demonstrated a marked enhancement in case disposal efficiency. Between July and August, 27,545 cases were resolved, compared with 27,080 newly filed. During September and October, 24,504 cases were disposed of, against 21,592 newly filed. Both intervals show performance levels surpassing those of 2024, reflecting faster clearance of pending cases and more effective grievance redressal. Additionally, the platform has issued over 2 lakh SMS alerts and more than 12 lakh email notifications, ensuring real-time communication and timely compliance.

National Consumer Helpline 2.0

The Department of Consumer Affairs has upgraded the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) with the introduction of AI-enabled NCH 2.0, offering multilingual assistance, chatbot-supported interactions, and expedited grievance resolution. The portal enables consumers to register complaints online, seek pre-litigation remedies, and access information regarding their rights. The National Consumer Helpline has substantially expanded its outreach and operational efficiency by integrating advanced technological solutions. The number of calls received by NCH has grown nearly tenfold, from 12,553 calls in December 2015 to 1,55,138 calls in December 2024. This exponential growth reflects the rising confidence of consumers in the helpline. Similarly, the average number of complaints registered per month has surged from 37,062 in 2017 to 1,11,951 in 2024. It now resolves over 12 lakh complaints annually, with many being addressed within 21 days, supported by 1,169 companies onboarded as partners and AI-based systems that ensure faster grievance resolution. Digital channels account for nearly 65 percent of grievance registrations, with a notable increase in WhatsApp-based submissions, rising from 3 percent in March 2023 to 20 percent in March 2025. The National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has successfully facilitated a refund of Rs.27.61 crore to consumers between 25th April 2025 and 31st October 2025. This significant redressal was achieved across 30 sectors, effectively addressing 49,333 consumer grievances related to refund claims.

The National Consumer Helpline is available in 17 languages and enables consumers to submit grievances through the Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism via multiple channels, including WhatsApp, SMS, email, the NCH app, the web portal, and the Umang app. The Department encourages consumers to utilize the toll-free number 1915 or the online portal to ensure that their concerns regarding goods or services are addressed promptly and effectively.

Jago Grahak Jago Portal and Mobile App

The Department of Consumer Affairs has implemented advanced digital tools to safeguard consumers from deceptive online practices. Developed as part of a real-time intelligent cyber-physical system on the Airavat AI Supercomputer, these tools analyse platform text and design to identify potential dark patterns. The Jago Grahak Jago App

offers verified e-commerce information and alerts users to potentially unsafe websites, while the Jagriti App enables consumers to report suspicious URLs directly to the Central Consumer Protection Authority. The Jagriti Dashboard further supports monitoring by providing real-time assessments of platforms. Collectively, these tools enhance oversight, facilitate swift corrective action, and reinforce the protection of consumer rights.

Dark patterns are design tactics used to mislead or pressure consumers into choices they may not intend to make. The CCPA has addressed this issue by issuing guidelines that curb practices such as drip pricing, disguised advertisements and false urgency, ensuring greater fairness and transparency in the digital marketplace.

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

The Bureau of Indian Standards serves as India's national standard body under the BIS Act, 2016. It plays a central role in the formulation of standards, product certification, and quality assurance. Through its activities in standard development, certification, and testing, BIS contributes to the availability of safe and reliable products, mitigates health risks for consumers, supports export competitiveness and import substitution, and prevents unnecessary variation in product specifications across the market.

Over 22,300 Indian Standards are in force, with 94 percent aligned with international norms established by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). Since 2014, the scope of mandatory certification has expanded significantly, from 106 products governed by 14 Quality Control Orders (QCOs) to 773 goods now regulated through 191 QCOs plus two horizontal QCOs.

Hallmarking of Gold and Silver Jewellery- BIS Care App

The BIS Care app enables consumers to easily verify hallmarked jewellery by simply entering the HUID number to check purity, product type, and details of the jeweller and hallmarking centre. Available free on both Android and iOS in 12 languages, it also allows users to verify ISI marks, check licence numbers, and register complaints about suspected non-compliant products. The app serves as a valuable tool for informed purchasing and supports BIS efforts to ensure the availability of safe products and fair-trade practices for consumers nationwide.

National Test House

The National Test House (NTH) functions under the administrative control of the Department of Consumer Affairs in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution, and is one of India's leading scientific institutions. Established in 1912 under the Railway Board, it has grown into a trusted laboratory for testing, calibration, evaluation, and quality control of a wide range of engineering materials and finished products. NTH issues test certificates that comply with national and international standards as well as customer-specific requirements, ensuring reliability and quality in assessment. The institution plays an important role across industry, trade, and standardisation, supporting the growth of indigenous manufacturing and acting as a vital link between industrial research and production.

The National Test House is modernising its operations through the adoption of digital solutions. The Laboratory Data Automation System (LDAS) is being introduced to reduce manual errors, shorten turnaround times, and expedite the completion of quality tests, thereby enhancing overall capacity and efficiency. Additionally, a new mobile application will enable both industry and consumers to access laboratory services more easily, streamlining engagement and

improving service delivery. The recent performance of NTH reflects its strong growth, with sample testing increasing by 60.36 percent to 45,926 samples in 2024-25, and revenue rising by 49.89 percent to Rs.44.45 crore, compared to Rs.29.66 crore in the previous year with targeted revenue for FY 2025-26 being Rs.80 crore.

The Legal Metrology Rules- Recent Amendments (2025)

In October 2025, the Department of Consumer Affairs notified the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Amendment Rules, 2025, specifying that medical device packages will now adhere to the labeling requirements outlined in the Medical Devices Rules, 2017. In October 2025, the Legal Metrology (Government Approved Test Centre) Amendment Rules, 2025, were notified, expanding the scope of approved test centres by recognizing regional reference laboratories and national test houses. To support compliance following GST-linked price revisions, the government has allowed manufacturers and packers to use existing packaging until March 2026. Under the 2025 relaxations, they may update MRPs without redesigning packages, ensuring regulatory adherence while easing business operations. In November 2025, the department issued the Draft Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) (Second) Amendment Rules, 2025, proposing to make it mandatory for e-commerce platforms selling imported packaged goods to offer a searchable and sortable filter by 'Country of Origin'. In December 2025, a new amendment made it mandatory for all pan masala packages, regardless of size, to display the Retail Sale Price along with all other required declarations as of 1 February 2026.

Overall, these amendments streamline regulatory requirements, eliminate earlier ambiguities, and enhance clarity across various sectors, including medical device labeling, measurement verification, and the packaging of goods. By expanding the verification network, strengthening disclosure norms, and tightening pricing transparency, the reforms collectively enhance consistency, accountability, and consumer protection. Furthermore, they support a more reliable regulatory environment that empowers consumers to make informed choices and ensures fairer market practices.

Conclusion

National Consumer Day 2025 highlights India's ongoing commitment to safeguarding consumer rights and promoting trust in the marketplace. The theme “Efficient and Speedy Disposal through Digital Justice” is evident in the continued expansion of digital grievance redressal platforms such as e-Jagriti and the upgraded National Consumer Helpline, which have improved access, transparency, and disposal efficiency across the country. The wide range of programme activities, including digital launches, institutional collaborations, awareness initiatives, and recognition of innovation, underscores a coordinated approach to consumer empowerment.

The reforms and initiatives highlighted, including the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the establishment of the Central Consumer Protection Authority, expansion of the Consumer Welfare Fund, and the advancement of accessible grievance redressal systems, reflect a shift towards a responsive and technology-driven consumer justice system. Progress through BIS, National Test House, and the Legal Metrology framework has further strengthened quality assurance, standardisation, and accuracy in trade. Collectively, these measures demonstrate steady progress towards a fair, transparent, and consumer-centric ecosystem, reinforcing the core message that informed and empowered consumers are central to a healthy and equitable economy.

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

Deputy CM calls for pro-public decisions on Gair Mumkin Khads issues Chairs sub-committee review meeting

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 24: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Sub-Committee constituted to examine the issues related to Gair Mumkin Khads in Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting, held at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu, was attended by Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs Departments, Javed Ahmad Rana and Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Departments, Javid Ahmad Dar, as members of the Sub-Committee.

Additional Chief Secretary, Jal Shakti Department, Shaleen Kabra, briefed the Sub-Committee on the current status of Gair Mumkin Khads and the challenges associated with their identification, protection and management.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, emphasised the need for taking pro-public and pragmatic decisions to ensure amicable redress of genuine issues faced by the people. He stressed that the policy interventions must strike a balance between the environmental protection and safeguarding the livelihoods



and property rights of citizens.

The Sub-Committee discussed in detail the existing status of Gair Mumkin Khads, Daryas and Nallahs, along with related concerns with the objective of providing relief to the general public wherever required.

The Deputy Chief Minister called for sensitization of all stakeholders and directed for proper scientific mapping of Gair Mumkin Khads, Nallahs and adjacent non-cultivable waste lands.

The meeting also discussed climatic challenges and measures being taken to mitigate climatic impact on the environment, human life and properties.

The Deputy Chief Minister asked for comprehensive mapping of flood-prone areas to strengthen the disaster preparedness and mitigate risks. He further instructed the concerned departments to take stringent action against the illegal encroachments and ensure retrieval of encroached land across Jammu and Kashmir in a time-bound manner.

The members of the Sub-Committee put forth their valuable suggestions and highlighted various public concerns requiring urgent attention.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Special Secretary, Jal Shakti and other concerned officers.

Sakeena Itoo reviews health sector action plan for vision 2030

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 24: In line with the Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah's Vision 2030 for health sector, aligned with J&K Vision Document @2047, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Wednesday chaired a detailed review meeting at Civil Secretariat here to assess the Health Department's action plan for achieving this goal, primarily aimed at strengthening the public healthcare system across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Secretary, Health and Medical Education, Dr Syed Abid Rasheed Shah; MD NHM, Baseer ul Haq Chaudhary; CEO State Health Agency, Ananth Dwivedi; Managing Director, JKMSCL, Tariq Hussain Ganai; Commissioner Food and Drug Administration, Smita Sethi; Director SKIMS, Dr. Ashraf Ganie; Director Finance Health, Director Planning Health, Director Health Services Kashmir/Jammu, Director Coordination, New GMCs, Director Family Welfare and Immunization, Principals of all Medical Colleges and other concerned officers, either in person or through video conferencing.

During the meeting, Minister Sakeena held detailed assessment of key priority areas like upgradation of healthcare infrastructure, strengthening primary and secondary healthcare services, human resource optimization, adoption of modern medical technologies, and improved availability of essential medicines and diagnostics. She



also laid special emphasis on ensuring last-mile delivery of health services, particularly in rural and far-flung areas.

The Minister emphasized upon the officers that the action plan for achieving the Vision 2030 must be meticulously designed to translate the Chief Minister's vision of accessible, affordable and quality healthcare for all into tangible outcomes on the ground. "Time-bound implementation of ongoing initiatives, efficient resource utilization and people-centric approach in healthcare delivery is vital for achieving the objectives of Vision 2030", Minister Sakeena stated.

Minister Sakeena stressed on the importance of inter-departmental coordination and continuous monitoring to achieve the targets set under Vision 2030. She directed officials to adopt innovative solutions, leverage digital health initiatives, and enhance accountability mechanisms to improve patient outcomes.

While reviewing the overall functioning of health sector across J&K, the Minister emphasized on the procurement of quality equipments for the health facilities which meet the dire needs of general public.

She also called upon officers to maintain transparency in tender procedures as well as timely deployment of procured machines and equipments in hospitals.

She further directed the officers for immediate deployment of newly procured Ambulance fleet in hospitals, highlighting that the Ambulances are basic need for improving health care services.

To plug the gaps of manpower, doctors and paramedical staff, in rural and far-flung areas, the Minister called upon the department to frame an incentive scheme, so that doctors and other staff posted in rural and far-flung areas get additional benefits while they are serving in these areas. She also called upon the Secretary Health to rationalize the NHM doctors and other staff, and post them at places facing staff crunches. She also asked the Secretary to cancel attachments of all NHM doctors and post them at their respective place of postings.

The Minister also asked the CEO State Health Agency to strengthen the Anti Fraud Unit of the organisation so that the frauds involved in Sehat Scheme are timely tapped and due action is taken against the violators. She asked the CEO to

break nexus between doctors and private hospitals involved in deceiving of patients under Sehat Scheme.

While reviewing the functioning of Food and Drug Administration, the Minister called upon the Commissioner for constant surveillance of food and eatery products being brought in to Jammu and Kashmir. She underscored that the market checking squads need to be strengthened at block, tehsil and district levels to maintain the food standards across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister also asked the Commissioner to actively pursue the cases against the violators and take due action as per law against them.

Reiterating the Omar Abdullah led Government's commitment to accessible, affordable health care services, the Minister said that the Health Department remains focused on building a resilient, inclusive and responsive healthcare system that meets the evolving needs of the population and upholds the promise of universal health coverage.

During the meeting, Director Planning Health gave a detailed presentation on the action plan for achieving objectives of Vision 2030.

Principal Secretary Finance chairs Fare Revision Committee meet in Jammu



KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 24: Principal Secretary Finance, Santosh D Vaidya chaired a high-level meeting of the Fare Revision Committee (FRC) at Civil Secretariat here to deliberate upon the issue of revision of passenger transport fares across the Union Territory.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Secretary Transport, Avny Lavasa; Acting Transport Commissioner, J&K, Anju Gupta; Managing Director JKRTC Abdul Rashid War; Representative of Headquarters Northern Command (C/o 56 APO); Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir; Regional Transport Officer, Jammu, Additional Secretary GAD; members of the Committee, including representatives of various Transporters' Associations of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

During the meeting, the representatives of the transporters submitted a proposal seeking a hike of 40% in passenger fares, citing a substantial increase in operational costs.

The Committee held a detailed and threadbare discussion on the matter, taking

into account multiple factors such as the sharp rise in the cost of spare parts, fuel-related expenses, taxes, maintenance costs, and other operational inputs. A comprehensive cost analysis exercise was also examined during the deliberations.

While acknowledging the genuine concerns raised by the transporters, the Committee also carefully considered the socio-economic impact of fare revision on the general public, with particular emphasis on ensuring that the common man is not subjected to an undue financial burden.

After extensive deliberations and consensus among all stakeholders, it was unanimously decided that an 18% increase in passenger fares would be implemented across all categories of passenger vehicles operating in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and the revised fares shall come into effect from 01.01.2026.

The decision reflects a balanced approach aimed at safeguarding the sustainability of the transport sector while simultaneously protecting the interests of commuters.

Marriage Assistance Scheme brings relief to distressed widow at Bhaderwah

KT News Desk

BHADERWAH, DECEMBER 24: A touching example of responsive governance was witnessed during a Grievance Redressal Camp held under the "Prashasan Gaon ki Our" campaign at Udrana-Bhaderwah, where prompt intervention by the Social Welfare Department brought much-needed relief to a distressed widow and her family.

During the camp, while awareness was being imparted about various welfare schemes, particularly the Marriage Assistance Scheme, an elderly woman brought to the notice of the Tehsil Social Welfare Officer (TSWO) Bhaderwah, the plight of a widow from the village who was suffering from mental distress due to financial hardships ahead of the marriage of her two daughters.

Taking immediate cognizance of the matter, the TSWO visited the widow's residence, as she was unable to attend the camp or visit the TSWO office owing to old age and bad health.

The widow, aged above 65 years, informed that her husband Subhash Rathore, a farmer by profession, passed away a few years ago, leaving the family with no stable source of income forcing them to make ends meet by the widow pension provided by the Social Welfare Department and the meager earnings from tuitions given by her younger daughter, which together constitute the family's only means of sustenance.



She further stated that her two daughters aged 29 and 26 years are engaged—one at Thathri and the other at Hanga-Bhaderwah. However, due to the financial constraints, she is finding it extremely difficult to meet the marriage expenses and is therefore compelled to delay the marriages.

After assessing the case, the TSWO assured the family of financial assistance of Rs 50,000 (Rupees Fifty Thousand) each for both daughters under the Marriage Assistance Scheme, as the family holds a BPL ration card. He also explained the documentation requirements, shared his contact details, and assured full departmental support in preparation and online submission of documents.

The assurance brought immense relief to the widow, who expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Social Welfare Department, stating that the support would enable her to solemnize her daughters' marriages in the coming months.

The widow's younger daughter Shiveti Rathore appreciated the proactive and compassionate role of the Social Welfare Department and lauded TSWO Shah Nawaz Ahmad for his empathetic approach. She emphasized the need for greater awareness of welfare schemes among economically weaker sections, so that every deserving and downtrodden person may benefit.

The TSWO assured that with the support and able guidance of the District Development Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah and District Social Welfare Officer, such initiatives would be further intensified to ensure that no eligible beneficiary remains deprived of government welfare schemes.

Department, stating that the support would enable her to solemnize her daughters' marriages in the coming months.

The widow's younger daughter Shiveti Rathore appreciated the proactive and compassionate role of the Social Welfare Department and lauded TSWO Shah Nawaz Ahmad for his empathetic approach. She emphasized the need for greater awareness of welfare schemes among economically weaker sections, so that every deserving and downtrodden person may benefit.

The TSWO assured that with the support and able guidance of the District Development Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah and District Social Welfare Officer, such initiatives would be further intensified to ensure that no eligible beneficiary remains deprived of government welfare schemes.

DIET Kishtwar concludes 5-Day capacity building programme on IT Tools

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 24: District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Kishtwar successfully concluded a five-day Capacity Building Programme on the use of various IT Tools for Educational Purposes (Level-III) on Wednesday at its Complex.

The programme was attended by 72 teachers from Zone Inderwal. The training aimed at enhancing the digital competence of teachers

and promoting integration of Information Technology tools in the teaching-learning process.

Principal, Tirath Lal emphasized the importance of technology-enabled education to improve classroom practices and student engagement.

At the concluding session, participants appreciated the initiative and expressed that the training will greatly help them in adopting innovative and ICT-based teaching methodologies.

DC Kishtwar approves 61 Youth Projects under Mission YUVA

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 24: The District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) met on Wednesday in Kishtwar under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Pankaj Kumar Sharma to review and approve applications submitted under the Mission YUVA scheme.

A total of 61 applications, duly verified by the Small Business Development Units (SBDUs), were presented before the Committee. Each proposal was assessed based on eligibility, project feasibility and the socio-economic background of the applicant.

After detailed scrutiny, the Committee approved all applications with 60 of them seeking financial assistance under the Nano Enterprises Scheme and one under MSME.

Emphasising the importance of empowering youth to drive local economic growth, the DC directed the AD Employment to ensure that all approved cases are forwarded to banks at the earliest to ensure timely disbursement of the loan assistance.

The meeting was attended by the ADDC, Vinod Kumar Behnal; DSWO, Tariq Parvez Qazi; AD Employment, Mamta Sudershan; FM DIC and other concerned officers.

Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore in full swing across Doda District

KT News Desk

DODA, DECEMBER 24: Under the ongoing "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign launched as part of Good Governance Week (19-25 December 2025), the district administration Doda is organising a series of awareness programmes, grievance redressal camps and outreach activities across the district.

On the day six, as per an official statement issued on Wednesday field activities and outreach camps were organized



at Panchayat Udhyanpur (Tehsil Bhalla), Udrana-Bhaderwah, Panchayat Malhori (Village Kalhota)- Gandoh, Village Badroon (Zone Ghat), Assar and Panchayat Bhagwah Lower B. The functionaries from the Government departments

such as Social Welfare, Health, Agriculture, AYUSH and PWD (R&B) directly interacted with local residents, listened to their grievances, disseminated information about government welfare schemes and provided on-the-spot services.

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 24: Additional Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Prem Singh Wednesday convened a meeting of officers from the line departments to review the action plan for winter preparedness.

Detailed discussions were held on key aspects, including road clearance in snow prone areas, ensuring smooth vehicular movement on the National Highway, identification of



additional parking locations at Patnitop and maintaining uninterrupted connectivity during the winter season.

The ADC directed the

concerned departments to activate men and machinery well in advance to avoid disruption to traffic and essential services. The JPDCL was instructed to

maintain an adequate buffer stock of power transformers and wires at sub-divisional workshops to facilitate timely replacement and repairs.

Similarly, the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department was directed to ensure availability of sufficient essential items including ration and LPG both in remote areas and at sales centres. He also called for enhanced efforts to complete the stocking of essential commodities in snow-bound and remote areas.

LVM3-M6 success boosts India's futuristic missions: Jitendra Singh

PTI

Jammu, Dec 24: Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday congratulated ISRO for the successful LVM3-M6 mission, saying the achievement would significantly boost India's futuristic space missions like the proposed Bharatiya Antariksh Station and Chandrayaan-4.

Indian Space Research

Organisation's (ISRO) heaviest rocket, LVM3-M6, successfully placed a US communication satellite into the low Earth orbit, a feat described by the space agency chief as a Christmas gift to the country.

"I think it is the moment of glory for the country. It has been possible because of the progress of the last 10 to 12 years (under the Prime Minister Narendra

Modi-led government). Even though the American satellites were being launched from Sriharikota earlier as well, today's launch has demonstrated to the world that we have the capacity to launch a satellite as heavy as 6,000 kgs," the minister told reporters here.

Singh, the minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office, was here to participate in the

'Swadeshi Mela' organised by the local unit of the BJP to promote the 'vocal for local' mission. The mela was inaugurated by Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Sat Sharma.

He said the success of the LVM3-M6 mission would be useful for India's futuristic plans, particularly the proposed Bharatiya Antariksh Station, expected to be

launched by 2035, as well as Chandrayaan-4, as such programmes would require heavy payload launches.

The minister said the mission was also a strong example of public-private participation, noting that the satellite belonged to a Texas-based American company engaged in developing communication satellites.

The launch, he added, demonstrated India's growing capability to enter an era where 5G services could be delivered directly to mobile phones via satellites, without the need for towers, terminals or signal pillars.

"Even though India is not into satellite telecoms at present, whenever it happens, we will already be prepared. This is an indication of the future-ready

strategies being followed by India," Singh said.

He said India had proved more than once that it has not only come into its own in space technology but is also ahead of many countries in several areas, citing the example of Chandrayaan missions, including Chandrayaan-3, which was the first mission to land near the Moon's south pole.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

PM Modi-led

time when the Colonial-era laws had been replaced by the new criminal laws.

He said the batch is the first from Haryana since the implementation of the new criminal laws.

As many as 5,061 newly trained constables formally joined the state police force from the batch.

This is the first batch in which 85 per cent youth are graduates and above, with an average age of 26, Shah said. (KNO)

India's LVM-3 success

commercial launch services and deepening global partnerships," he added.

"This increased capability and boost to self-reliance are wonderful for the coming generations," the Prime Minister said.

LG Sinha, CM Omar

the teachings of Jesus Christ continue to inspire humanity to uphold the values of kindness, forgiveness and harmony. "Christmas is not merely a celebration; it is a reaffirmation of our shared values of harmony and mutual respect, where people from all communities come together in a spirit of unity," he said.

Omar highlighted the rich secular ethos and age-old tradition of brotherhood in Jammu and Kashmir, and urged people to mark the occasion by extending support to the less privileged so that everyone can partake in the joy of the festival.

The Chief Minister wished peace, prosperity and happiness to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and prayed for a future marked by greater harmony and goodwill.

Cold conditions

and January 2, bringing widespread rain and snowfall.

The forecaster said that, as per current indications, the season's first snowfall is also possible over the plains of Kashmir, including Srinagar city.

He added that forecast clarity is expected to improve in the coming days as weather model signals become more consistent and reliable. (KNO)

IGP Kashmir

within respective jurisdictions.

Furthermore, with an expected rise in tourist footfall ahead of New Year celebrations, IGP Kashmir emphasized multi-layered security at key tourist destinations, including cable car terminals, forest tracks, crowded tourist spots, and major access routes. He stressed coordinated patrolling, real-time intelligence sharing, and continuous surveillance.

Keeping in view the weather forecast, V.K. Birdi directed officers to ensure the operational readiness of personnel and equipment to handle any weather-related contingencies and maintain uninterrupted security and public assistance. The security of highways, railway tracks, and railway stations across the Valley was also reviewed.

The meeting concluded with a collective commitment to heightened vigilance, improved coordination, and the effective execution of security protocols to ensure the peaceful and orderly conduct of all scheduled events. (KNO)

J&K Education 2025:

in a year. "In one academic year, at least 180 working academic days are considered fairly good but unfortunately, there were less than 150 academic days due to the inclement weather, flood like situation and extended summer vacations."

"Although, almost all the government schools complete their syllabi but there were time constraints that burdened the kids," the official said.

Why students prefer pvt schools over govt institutes?

The government school in Jammu and Kashmir despite having 244 percent extra institutions in comparison to private schools, the Teacher School Ratio (TSR) in public schools is very low.

KNO had reported that in only 5452 private schools, more than 12 Lakh students were enrolled in comparison to the 18,785 government schools wherein only over 14 Lakh students were enrolled—thus raising a question on claims of the authorities with regard to the influx in student enrolment in government-run-schools.

The official figures reveal that there are a total of 5452 private schools in Jammu and Kashmir wherein at least 70,234 teachers are posted to teach over 12,03,064 students.

However, in a shocking revelation, the official figures reveal that there were a total of 14,21,643 students in 18,785 government schools wherein at least 96,380 teachers were posted.

3rd highest dropout rate

With a dropout rate of more than 13 percent at secondary school level, Jammu and Kashmir in 2025 was grappling with worst 'abandonment' student rate in north India

The official figures in 2025 had further revealed that the dropout rate at secondary level in Ladakh was 19.84 which is highest in states across the northern region of India.

"The dropout rate at Secondary level in Jammu and Kashmir is 13.42 while the Ladakh territory was staggering at 19.84 percent," the official figures said.

The official figures also said that the dropout rate at Primary Level in Jammu and Kashmir was 1.6 percent and 4.3 percent in Ladakh.

It also reveals that the dropout rate at Upper Primary level in Jammu and Kashmir was 3.2 percent and the Ladakh territory was facing a drop-out rate of 5.8 percent.

Students quitting studies midway

In Jammu and Kashmir, over 17 percent of students at primary level and 12 percent learners at senior secondary level quit studies midway—thus raising a question on the functioning of the department.

The official figures earlier this year had revealed that "The retention rate at Primary level in Jammu and Kashmir was 82.70 and 88.42 at senior secondary level."

Quoting the official documents, KNO however had reported that, "About 46,000 Out of School Children (OoSC) have been mainstreamed."

The documents further state that a notable shift of thousands of students from private to government schools has been recorded.

"There has been impressive enrolment of 217,890 students in 2022-23, marking a 17.87 percent increase in total enrolment," it reads.

Reading and learning issues

In a worrisome development, only 21 percent of fifth standard students in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir government schools can read text level of second class.

On the contrary, more than 60 percent of 5th standard students studying in private schools of Jammu and Kashmir can read text level of second class.

ASER survey while assessing the learning 'recovery' since COVID in reading and arithmetic has revealed that "In government schools of Jammu and Kashmir, 18.1 percent of 5th standard students were able to read text of 2nd class level in 2022. However, in the year 2024, only 21.8 percent 5th standard students of government schools were able to read the text of 2nd class."

The report states that there was an improvement of 3.7 percent in reading from 2022-2024 in government schools.

The study further states that in private schools of Jammu and Kashmir, at least 54.9 percent students of 5th standard were able to read the text of 2nd class in 2022 and in 2024, at least 60.3 percent of students were able to read the text of 2nd class.

Weak Mathematics among students

In Jammu and Kashmir only 16 percent 5th class students in government schools of rural areas can solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit.

Similarly, at least 37 percent students of 5th class enrolled in private school in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir can solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit.

The latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) in a latest survey while assessing the learning 'recovery' since COVID in reading and arithmetic has revealed that "In government schools of Jammu and Kashmir, 14 percent of 5th standard students were able to solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit in 2022. In the year 2024, at least 16.3 percent 5th standard students of government schools were able to solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit."

In private schools, at least 32.1 percent students of 5th class were able to solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit in 2022 and 37.6 percent in 2024.

The ASER survey states that there was an improvement of 2.3 percent in government schools and 5.5 percent in private schools since 2022-24 with regard to learning 'recovery' since COVID in reading and arithmetic.

Underage students

In Jammu and Kashmir more than 13 percent of students enrolled in Grade-I were underage in 2024.

Besides, the enrolment in early childhood education programs or preschool was high with over 90 percent for ages 3 and 4.

The main finding of the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) of 2024 reveals, "Enrolment in early childhood education programs or preschool is high with over 90 percent for ages 3 and 4."

"Underage" (under-age 5) children enrolled in the first standard is declining. In 2024, in the first standard, 13.4 percent of children are underage," it reads.

It also said that of Age 6-14, overall enrolment in school for the age group remains very high at 99.4 percent.

Social Media over Education

In Jammu and Kashmir, more than 79 percent students of 14-16 years of age in a survey have reported that they use Smartphones for social media related activities while only 64 percent students have reported that they use the gadget for education purposes.

ASER of 2024 that was released on Tuesday, of those who can use a Smartphone, 79.4 percent of adolescents of 14-16 years of age says that they used the Smartphone for social media purposes in the seven days prior to the survey.

The report further states that the 64 percent students had used Smartphones for education related activities seven days prior to the survey.

Severe learning gap

In rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir, the education system at middle class level in 2025 was showing a decline trend among the 8th class wherein less than 50 percent of government schools students are not able to read the texts of 2nd standard level.

Besides, more than 70 percent of students in government schools in the rural areas are not able to do the division tasks in mathematics.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) of 2024 report released in 2025 states that during the survey it found only 47.2 percent students in Jammu and Kashmir were able to read 2nd

standard level text.

The survey further suggests that the reading of the books of junior classes was in decline trend because at least 55.5 percent students were able to read 2nd standard level text in 2018 that reduced to 50.2 percent in 2022 and 47.2 percent in 2024.

Neglected digital infrastructure

More than 98 percent of educational institutes in the year 2025 were lacking digital library services—raising a question of limiting students' access to a wide range of restructured and efficient information.

The total number of schools having less than two percent of digital libraries does not remain confined to government-run-schools only but the majority of the private schools of Jammu and Kashmir also lack the vital services for the students.

Only 373 schools across Jammu and Kashmir were having digital library services available for the students.

The official figures in 2025 had revealed that "Among the total 24,296 government and private schools of Jammu and Kashmir, only 373 institutions that amount to 1.53 percent were having the digital libraries."

'Chronic lack of professionalism'

Among all states of India, Jammu and Kashmir education sector has second highest 'Untrained Teachers' at Pre-Primary and Upper Primary levels.

Besides, the Union Territory has 4th highest untrained teachers at primary level as well.

The recent official figures reveal that the highest numbers of untrained teachers were reported in Tamil Nadu followed by Jammu and Kashmir wherein only 22.3 percent of teachers at Pre-Primary levels (Kindergartens) were trained to teach the students.

The official figures also reveal that only 16.4 percent male and 25.2 percent teachers at both government and private sectors were trained to teach the students at Pre-Primary levels.

It also states that the Upper-Primary level schools in Jammu and Kashmir were also having second highest untrained teachers.

Libraries lack essential books

In Jammu and Kashmir, more than 50 percent of those government-run-schools having library set-up have no textbooks available for the students and teachers.

The official figures reveal that only 49.78 percent government schools were having books available in the libraries across Jammu and Kashmir.

The official figures also reveal that in 2025 at least 50.22 percent government schools have no books available in the institute libraries.

The figures further reveal that in private schools of Jammu and Kashmir only 73.73 percent institutes were having the library with books facility for the students while 26.27 percent libraries were without books.

Dearth of teachers

Owing to the non-recruitment since 2019, the government in 2025 had said that the School Education Department Monday was facing a dearth of teaching staff.

The government however further said that it was making all efforts to make proper rationalization to streamline the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR).

The Education Minister, Sakina Itoo in a response to the concerned respondent in legislative assembly said, "Yes, it is a fact that there is shortage of teachers in the schools mainly due to non-recruitment of Teachers since 2019 in view of SAC decision where under the posts of General Line Teachers stand frozen for conversion of RETs in to Grade-II and Grade-III Teachers."

Enrolment issues

Despite having a share of more than 77 percent of government-run-schools in Jammu and Kashmir, the School Education Department in 2025 had managed to enrol only 54 percent of students—thus raising a question on quality and functioning of the department.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) for Government of India (GoI) in a recent report has said, "The UT has 77.32 percent government schools out of the total number of schools. However, a matter of concern is that only 54.06 percent of students are enrolled in these government-run schools."

The MoE said, "It was highlighted that enrolment in private schools is higher in comparison to government schools."

'Poor utilization of funds'

The Ministry of Education (MoE) that in the past five years Jammu and Kashmir have utilized only 69.90 percent of the total available funds for the School Education Department.

The official document in 2025 had revealed that under Cumulative Budget and Expenditure "An analysis of the budget and expenditure over the last five years indicates that in the financial year 2024-25, the UT has been able to utilise only while the percentage of budget utilisation against the approved outlay stands at only 55.38 percent."

MoE in this regard has requested the concerned authorities of Jammu and Kashmir to prioritise the release of the 3rd and 4th instalment by ensuring the expenditure of the available funds on time.

Vacant lecturer posts

Till the month of June, In Jammu and Kashmir at least '4200' lecturer posts are lying vacant—thus raising a question on the quality of education at secondary level in government-run-schools.

The School Education Department in a review meeting with Education Minister Sakina Itoo

had stated that there is a sanctioned strength of 10,330 lecturer posts out of which 6130 are in position.

The official documents further reveal that there is a vacancy of 4200 lecturer posts in the department.

However, the school education department in the meeting further states that 594 lecturer posts have been referred to the Public Service Commission (PSC) for direct recruitment.

Schools without separate toilets for girls

In Jammu and Kashmir at least 1900 government-run-schools lack basic amenities of separate girls toilets while 8.5 percent of schools are without electricity.

Education Minister Sakina Itoo in a one of the review meetings in 2025 about the basic amenities such as functional girls toilets, drinking water and power supply was informed that "Still 1900 schools are without separate girls toilets and 8.5 percent schools are without electricity."

Education or Family work?

In Jammu and Kashmir at least 17 percent of students engage in family work after completing 10th standard, reveals a report of Ministry of Education (MoE).

Stating the status of 'students outside the educational system' the report said that, "Students exit the education system after Grade 10 because of different reasons like taking up a job, doing an apprenticeship, repeating the grade, and participating in family work."

It also said that the schools reported the exit of students through percentages (0-25 percent, 26-50 percent, 51-75 percent, 76-100 percent.

The MoE has taken a 50 benchmark to identify gaps in the system.

Mocking of classmates

In Jammu and Kashmir at least 38 percent of school students are reportedly being mocked by their classmates—thus raising a question on the functioning of anti-ragging cells in educational institutes.

According to the official document from the Ministry of Education (MoE) "At least 38 percent of students reported that their classmates made fun of them."

The MoE figures highlight critical areas requiring attention to create a safer and more student-friendly school environment.

School fees more than national average

In Jammu and Kashmir, 87 percent of students are paying course fees in schools. However, on the contrary only 57.1 percent of students pay such charges at the national level.

The official figures in 2025 had revealed that at least 87 percent of students reported expenditure on course fees by level of current enrolment for Jammu and Kashmir including 89.3 percent among the male and 84.3 percent among the female students.

It also said that the national percentage of students reported expenditure on course fees by level of current enrollment for each state and UT was 57.1 percent in 2025.

'Schools with zero enrolments'

In Jammu and Kashmir, till the second week of October, at least 61 teachers in are posted or deployed in those schools having zero enrolments—thus raising a question on managing the human resources and quality of education.

Besides, the official data reveals that Jammu and Kashmir has at least 146 such schools where in no student is enrolled.

According to the official figures mentioned in Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE Plus) 2024-25, Jammu and Kashmir has 61 teachers in those schools having zero enrolments and 146 schools with zero enrolments.

Schools run by 'single teachers'

Over 32,000 school students according to the official figures during the outgoing fiscal were being taught by single teachers in 1371 educational institutes—thus raising a question on quality of education and availability of staff.

According to the official figures available, Jammu and Kashmir has at least 1371 schools wherein single teachers have been posted or deployed.

The figures reveal that there is an enrolment of 32,303 students enrolled in those schools where only single teachers are posted or deployed.

Private schooling costs parents over Rs 37,000 In Jammu and Kashmir, on an average a student of a private senior secondary institute bears a cost of over Rs 37,000 on school expenditure during the current academic year.

Besides, the students of government secondary schools also spent over Rs 14,000 on school expenditure during the current academic year.

The official figures in 2025 had revealed that on an average, a senior secondary student in both rural and urban areas of Jammu and Kashmir reported spending of Rs 37,291 on school expenditure during the current academic year.

It also states that on an average the student government higher secondary spends at least Rs 14,652 on school expenditure during the current academic year.

DEVELOPMENTS

Streamlining textbook, curriculum issues

Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo in 2025 had ordered the Director of School Education to issue a detailed order regarding curriculum and textbooks.

The minister had said that the directives shall be followed by all schools and asked the CEO to implement it in letter and spirit.

Minister Itoo said this in a meeting that was

held on Wednesday wherein she assessed the issues related to fee fixation and regulation of Private Schools across Jammu and Kashmir.

Staff infusion for hanging schools

Jammu and Kashmir Education Minister Sakina Itoo in 2025 had directed the School Education Department (SED) to move a proposal for creation of staff for 184 hanging schools for the concurrence of the Finance Department.

The minister in a meeting with top officers was apprised that there are 184 Hanging Schools upgraded from time to time without creation of staff and are functioning through internal arrangement.

Age relaxation criteria for Class-1

School Education Department in 2025 granted a one-time relaxation up to September-30 for reckoning the minimum age for admission to Class 1st for the students of Jammu division.

However, the department clarified that with effect from the academic session 2026-27 onwards, the minimum age for admission to Nursery, Balvatika, Pre-School, Anganwadi shall be reckoned as on 31st March of the concerned academic year.

"The matter has been carefully examined with reference to the NEP-2020, which prescribes that a child seeking admission into Nursery, Balvatika, Pre School and Anganwadi should have completed the age of three years," the department had said.

Acting tough against poor performers

The School Education Department in 2025 sought explanation from the lecturers for having poor results in 12th standard of the previous academic session.

DSEK had said, " The Administrative Department in August 2024 had forwarded a list of lecturers whose result of 12th standard examination for the academic session 2023-24 was found poor and unsatisfactory in violation of standing norms."

DSEK said that the communication was endorsed to all the Chief Education Officers (CEOs) by DSEK with a request to furnish the details of these lecturers as desired by Administrative Department

15% syllabi relaxation for all classes

The Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (BOSE) earlier this year had announced syllabus relaxation of 15 percent for 10th, 11th and 12th standard examination.

Director Academics of BOSE in a notification said that the decision was taken upon the recommendations received from the DSEK and DSEJ and pleas received from other stakeholders regarding reduction in syllabus due to delayed commencement of academic session this year coupled with disruptions in academic calendar due to heat wave, torrential rains, cloudbursts and floods.

Taking over of schools affiliated with Jel, FAT

In August 2025, the government had ordered taking over of 215 schools that were affiliated proscribed organisation Jamat-e-Islami (Jel) and Falah-e-Aam Trust (FAT).

Secretary to government for School Education Department (SED) had said that the 215 Jel and FAT schools were reported adversely upon by the intelligence agencies.

The secretary in an order had said that the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India in February 2019 and February 2024 issued under sub-section (1) of section (3) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967) declared the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), Jammu and Kashmir as an unlawful association.

"The Intelligence Agencies (IA) have identified a number of schools which were found to be directly or indirectly affiliated with proscribed organisation Jamat-e-Islami (Jel) and Falah-e-Aam Trust (FAT)," reads the order.

De-freezing of GLT posts

In a major development, the government in 2025 had said that it was mulling to de-freeze the half of General Line Teachers (GLTs) posts that were freed by the erstwhile State Administrative Council (SAC) in December-2018.

Pertinently, in 2018, the SAC had freed 6576 GLT posts for drawl of salaries of Rehbar-e-Taleem (ReTs) teachers.

Education Minister Sakina Itoo in a review meeting has directed to de-freeze the posts of General Line Teachers.

Distributing free textbooks, uniform

In Jammu and Kashmir more than 13 lakh students of government-run-schools are being provided perks of free textbooks and uniforms under the Right to Education Act.

An official said that under Right to Education, "At least eight lakh students of classes 1st to 8th are provided with the free uniform. The usual cost for the uniform is Rs 600 per child."

Besides, the official had said, "At least 5.50 lakh children of classes 3rd to 5th are provided with free textbooks."

"Basic, Standard' level math for Class-10 proposal

In the last week of November, the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) had proposed to introduce dual-level mathematics examination for Class-10 wherein students will have the option to choose between 'Basic or Standard' levels.

The official had said that the proposal is aimed to reduce the stress among those students who do not wish to continue mathematics at senior secondary level.

"The idea behind introducing the two levels or two Question papers of varied difficulty is that the students who do not study Mathematics after Class 10th need not to be tested for the standard skills," the official had said.—(KNO)

ISRO's 'Bahubali' rocket places 6,000 kg US communication satellite into orbit

PTI

Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh), Dec 24: In a historic Christmas eve mission, ISRO's heaviest rocket, LVM3-M6, successfully placed a heavy US communication satellite into orbit on Wednesday, a feat described by the space agency chief as a season's gift to the country.

The 6,100 kg BlueBird Block-2 satellite is part of a constellation of global Low Earth Orbit (LEO) mission to provide direct-to-mobile connectivity through satellite that would enable 4G and 5G voice and video calls, texts, streaming and data for everyone, everywhere at all times. It was the heaviest satellite to be launched from Indian soil, ISRO said.

ISRO said the LVM3-M6, nicknamed 'Bahubali' for its heavy-lift capability, injected the satellite into its intended orbit in a textbook launch.

LVM3-M6 carried the communication satellite as part of a commercial deal between NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) and US-based AST SpaceMobile (AST and Science, LLC).

NewSpace India is the commercial arm of the ISRO. On Wednesday, the 43.5 metre tall rocket soared majestically at 8.55 am from the second launch pad here at the end of a 24 hour countdown.

After a flight journey of about 15 minutes, the spacecraft got separated from the launch vehicle and it was successfully placed into the orbit, bringing all-round cheers in the Mission Control Centre here. On the successful launch, ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said, "I am extremely happy to say that the LVM3M6 Bahubali rocket has successfully placed the



Bluebird Block-2 satellite into the intended orbit. Let me congratulate NewSpace India and AST Space Mobile on the outstanding achievement."

The satellite was placed in a 518 km circular orbit against the planned 520 km altitude, he said, describing it as a "textbook launch".

The LVM3 rocket has demonstrated its 100 per cent success rate, he added.

Weighing 6,100 kg, the communication satellite is the heaviest payload to be placed into the LEO in LVM3 launch history from Indian soil, the space agency said.

The previous heaviest was the LVM3-M5 Communication Satellite 03, weighing about 4,400 kg, which was successfully launched by ISRO on November 2 in the Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

According to Narayanan, this is the first time ISRO has launched two LVM3 rockets within just 52 days, following the earlier successful mission on November 2.

Addressing his team from

the Mission Control Centre post the launch, he thanked them for one of the finest performances of any rocket and said this mission brings India's total to 434 satellites launched for 34 countries.

"The reward for hard work is more work, and we have a lot of programmes on hand," he remarked.

Narayanan hailed the successful launch of the Bluebird Block-2 satellite as a "New Year and Christmas gift to Bharat."

Listing the highlights of the LVM3-Bluebird Block-2 mission, he said, the placing of the satellite precisely into the intended orbit is the best accuracy so far achieved ever on Indian soil.

"Today's launch is also another important one. It is the heaviest satellite to be launched from Indian soil. That has been accomplished today. Close to 6,000 kg, to be precise 5,908 kg, that is the heaviest satellite ever launched from Indian soil and we have achieved it in this mission," he later told

reporters.

Highlighting the accuracy of the launch, Narayanan, also the Secretary, Department of Space, said, "We targeted a 520 km circular orbit. We have placed the satellite at 518.5 km altitude, which is 1.5 km less than the target."

"It is one of the best launches made anywhere in the world. And this is the best accuracy so far achieved from the Indian launchers also," he said.

Narayanan reflected on a year of achievements, driven by high-stakes missions such as the NISAR mission, taken up with NASA, CMS-03 and the latest mission.

On the ambitious Gagan-yaan mission, he said, "We have to accomplish uncrewed missions, and we are getting towards that."

One of the important commitments made by the central government is the commission of navigation satellites.

"That satellite series we are going to continue and we are

going to start placing them in the intended orbit," he said.

Wednesday's mission is aimed at deploying the next-generation communication satellite designed to provide high-speed cellular broadband directly to smartphones.

AST SpaceMobile is building the first and only space-based cellular broadband network, which is accessible directly by smartphones and designed for both commercial and government applications.

The LVM3-M6, also known as the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-MkIII), is a three-stage rocket with a cryogenic engine designed and developed by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre.

The vehicle uses two S200 solid rocket boosters to provide the huge amount of thrust required for the lift-off. The booster has been developed by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram.

According to AST Space-Mobile, it has launched five satellites, Bluebird 1-5 in September 2024, which provide continuous coverage across the United States and other select countries

The company has planned to launch similar satellites to augment its network support and has partnered with over 50 mobile operators across the globe.

The LVM3-M6 is the sixth operational flight of LVM3 and third dedicated commercial mission to launch the Bluebird Block-2 spacecraft.

The LVM3 has a spectacular pedigree of completing eight consecutive successful launches, including the ambitious Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3 missions, the space agency said.

Delhi HC directs GST Council to meet, consider lowering GST on air purifiers

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 24: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the GST Council to meet at the earliest and consider lowering or abolishing goods and services tax on air purifiers in view of worsening air quality in the national capital.

A bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela listed the matter for December 26 to enable the council for the authorities to inform the court as to when can the council meet.

Earlier in the day, the high court expressed displeasure over the authorities doing nothing to grant exemption from taxes on air purifiers in this "emergency situation" when the air quality index (AQI) is 'very poor'.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking directions to



the central government to classify air purifiers as "medical devices" and reduce the goods and services tax (GST) to the five per cent slab. Air purifiers are currently taxed at 18 per cent.

The petition by advocate Kapil Madan said that purifiers cannot be treated as luxury items in view of the "extreme emergency crisis" caused by severe air pollution in Delhi.

It contended that access to clean indoor

air has become indispensable for health and survival.

"Imposition of GST at the highest slab upon air-purifiers, a device that has become indispensable for securing minimally safe indoor air, renders such equipment financially inaccessible to large segments of the population and thereby inflicts an arbitrary, unreasonable, and constitutionally impermissible burden," the plea said.

Unnao rape case survivor to move SC against suspension of Sengar's jail term

PTI

Unnao (UP), Dec 24: The 2017 Unnao rape case survivor on Wednesday termed the Delhi High Court's decision to suspend the jail term of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar "kaal (death)" for her family and said that she would move the Supreme Court against it.

The HC on Tuesday suspended the sentence of Sengar, who is serving life imprisonment in the case, and ordered his release on bail pending the disposal of his appeal against his conviction by a trial court in December 2019.

In its order, the high court directed that Sengar shall not come within a 5-km

radius of the victim's residence and shall not threaten the survivor or her mother. It also said violation of the conditions would automatically lead to cancellation of bail.

Sengar, however, will remain in jail since he is also serving 10 years' imprisonment in the custodial death case of the victim's father and has not been granted bail in that case. Reacting to the verdict, the survivor, who was a minor when she was kidnapped and raped by Sengar in 2017, told PTI over phone from Delhi that security for her family members, lawyers and witnesses had already been withdrawn and the court's decision had deepened her fears.

Shiv Sena (UBT), MNS announce alliance ahead of Mumbai civic polls



PTI

Mumbai, Dec 24: Putting months of speculation to rest, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray on Wednesday formally announced the alliance of their parties ahead of the January 15 Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections.

Addressing a joint news conference in Mumbai along with Raj, Uddhav said the two parties have come together to stay together. The cousins said they have united for the cause of 'Marathi manoo' and Maharashtra.

Uddhav said their grandfather Prabodhankar Thackeray, a social reformer and writer, was a key figure in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement and so were his father Bal Thackeray and uncle Shrikant, Raj Thackeray's father, who played a role in ensuring that Mumbai continues to be a part of the state.

"Mumbai's mayor will be Marathi and will be ours," Raj said.

Uddhav said the parties have finalised their seat sharing for the Nashik Municipal Corporation where elections are due on January 15, along with Mumbai and 27 other municipal corporations in the state.

Talks are underway for an alliance between the two parties in other civic bodies, he added.

"Those who can't bear to see what is happening in the BJP can also come with us," Uddhav said.

The much-hyped news conference lasted barely for 16

minutes without any clarity on the seat-sharing arrangement in the 227 ward-BMC.

Raj did not share details of the seat sharing between the two parties for the high-stakes BMC elections, leading to speculations that talks are still underway in some wards that have influence of both the parties.

The news conference was held at a luxury hotel in Worli, the constituency of Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray.

The backdrop banner at the news conference had the image of Bal Thackeray, the founder of undivided Shiv Sena, and party symbols of the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the MNS.

Prior to coming to the venue, Raj and Uddhav paid respect to Bal Thackeray at his memorial in Shivaji Park. They reached the venue together in Raj's vehicle.

The family bonhomie was on full display at the press conference. Uddhav's wife Rashmi and son Aaditya, and Raj's wife Sharmila and son Amit were also present.

In the state assembly polls last year, the Shiv Sena (UBT) won 20 of the 288 seats, while the MNS drew a blank.

The parties came together to oppose Maharashtra's government's decision to introduce a three-language formula in schools and "imposition" of Hindi language.

They held a joint 'victory rally' in July to celebrate the state government's decision to withdraw its orders on the introduction of Hindi along with Marathi and English for Classes 1 to 5.

Two dynasts have come together fearing defeat: BJP



PTI

Mumbai, Dec 24: Two "dynasts" have come together fearing defeat in the upcoming BMC polls, the BJP said on Wednesday, after Shiv Sena-UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena president Raj Thackeray announced an alliance of their parties.

Addressing a joint press conference in Mumbai along with his cousin Raj Thackeray, Uddhav Thackeray said the two parties have come together to stay together.

Reacting to the development, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said, "Two dynasts have come together. They have forged an alliance between their parties fearing defeat. The people of Mumbai want to choose development under the NDA-BJP."

This clearly shows that they have come together to save their "deposits" from being forfeited in the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections, he said.

"The people of Mumbai are with the NDA-BJP and they will choose development," Bhandari said.

The BMC polls are scheduled to be held on January 15.

Bombay HC stays banks' action against Anil Ambani, Reliance Communications Says RBI directions violated

PTI

Mumbai, Dec 24: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday stayed all present and future actions by three banks seeking to declare the accounts of Anil Ambani and his company Reliance Communications Ltd as 'fraud', noting that the provisions of the RBI's Master Directions were violated in the process.

The action was based on a forensic audit report prepared by an external auditor, BDO LLP, noted Justice Milind Jadhav.

But this report cannot be relied upon because it had not been signed by a duly qualified chartered accountant (CA) as required under the Reserve Bank of India's 2024 Master Directions on fraud, the judge said.

If interim relief was not given to Ambani and Reliance Communications, it would cause "grave and irreparable harm / loss", said the order.

"Principles of natural justice are based on the maxim 'justice should not only be done but should manifestly be seen to be done', the HC said, adding that a forensic

audit report prepared by an external auditor cannot be relied upon by the banks to issue a show-cause notice.

"The RBI Master Directions are mandatory in nature and they operate within a binding statutory framework requiring banks to engage auditors strictly in accordance with applicable law," said the court order.

The consequences of allowing the banks to declare the accounts of Ambani and his company as fraud are "virtually drastic and lead to disastrous consequences like being blacklisted, barred from new bank loans / credit for years, criminal FIR filing, reputation damage, impacting fundamental rights to financial access and civil death," said the high court. The court also berated the banks for their belated action against Ambani and his company and said this was a "classic case where the banks have woken up from their deep slumber" seeking to conduct forensic audit for the period from 2013 to 2017 in 2019.

Ambani had challenged show-cause notices issued by the Indian Overseas Bank, IDBI and Bank of Baroda, seeking

to declare his and Reliance Communications' accounts as fraud accounts.

As an interim relief, he sought a stay to the notices and an injunction against any coercive action on the ground that BDO LLP was not qualified to conduct the forensic audit as its signatory was not a chartered accountant.

BDO LLP was an accounting consultancy firm and not an audit firm, Ambani claimed.

The banks argued that the audit report was submitted as per the 2016 RBI Master Directions, according to which an external auditor need not be a CA.

Ambani belatedly challenged the report on the ground of the auditor's qualification, and it was an afterthought and a malafide exercise, the banks said.

But the court maintained that as per the RBI's Master Directions, a person shall be eligible for appointment as an auditor of a company only if he or she is a CA. Further, BDO LLP had worked as a consultant for the lender banks earlier, and it created a conflicting position as an independent auditor, the HC said.

Non-vegetarian diet, poor sleep, obesity associated with increased risk of breast cancer: ICMR study

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 24: Non-vegetarian diet, poor sleep and obesity have been associated with increased risk of breast cancer which is expected to rise by about 5.6 per cent annually leading to an estimated increase of 0.05 million new cases per year, according to an ICMR study.

Reproductive timing, hormonal exposure and family history also influence breast cancer risk primarily among Indian women, stated the study conducted by ICMR's National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research based in Bengaluru.

In 2022, an estimated 2.3 million women worldwide were newly diagnosed with



breast cancer, resulting in approximately 670,000 deaths.

In India, breast cancer is one of the leading cancer sites, with an estimated 2,21,757 cases reported in 2022, accounting for close to a quarter (22.8 per cent) of

cancers in women.

This study was a systematic review of the Indian studies assessing breast cancer risk factors among Indian women published up to December 22, 2024.

A meta-analysis using a random effects model

estimated pooled associations between key risk factors and breast cancer.

Among the 1,871 articles identified, 31 studies met the inclusion criteria of which case-control studies were of moderate to high quality.

The study stated found that early menopause -- before 50 years -- showed an inverse association with breast cancer, whereas menopause after 50 years was associated with more than a twofold increase in risk.

Reproductive and hormonal factors, including age at marriage, pregnancy, abortion history, age at first and last childbirth, breastfeeding, oral contraceptive use, parity, and number of children were also examined.

US, Ukraine reach consensus on key issues to end war but territorial disputes remain

AP

KYIV, Dec 24: The United States and Ukraine have reached a consensus on several critical issues aimed at bringing an end to the nearly four-year conflict, but sensitive issues around territorial control in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, along with the management of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, remain unresolved, Ukraine's president said.

Volodymyr Zelensky spoke as the US showed the 20-point plan, hammered out after marathon talks in Florida in recent days, to Russian negotiators. A response is expected from Moscow on Wednesday, Zelensky said.

The Ukrainian president briefed journalists on each point of the plan on Tuesday. His comments were embargoed until Wednesday morning. The draft proposal, which reflects Ukraine's wishes, intertwines political and commercial interests to safeguard security while boosting economic potential.

At the heart of the negotiations lies the contentious territorial dispute concerning the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, known as the Donbas. This is "the most difficult point," Zelensky said. He said these matters will be discussed at the leaders level.

Russia continues to assert



maximalist demands, insisting that Ukraine relinquish the remaining territory in Donbas that it has not captured — an ultimatum that Ukraine has rejected. Russia has captured most of Luhansk and about 70 percent of Donetsk.

In a bid to facilitate compromise, the United States has proposed transforming these areas into free economic zones. Ukraine insists that any arrangement must be contingent upon a referendum, allowing the Ukrainian people to determine their own fate. Ukraine is demanding the demilitarization of the area and the presence of an international force to ensure stability, Zelensky said.

How the Zaporizhzhia nuclear

power plant, the largest plant in Europe which is under Russian occupation, will be managed is another contentious issue. The US is proposing a consortium with Ukraine and Russia, with each party having an equal stake in the enterprise.

But Zelensky countered with a joint venture proposal between the US and Ukraine, in which the Americans are able to decide how to distribute their share, presuming it would go to Russia.

"We did not reach a consensus with the American side on the territory of the Donetsk region and on the ZNPP," Zelensky said, referring to the power plant in Zaporizhzhia. "But we have significantly brought most of the positions closer together.

In principle, all other consensus in this agreement has been found between us and them."

A free economic zone compromise

Point 14, which covers territories that cut across the eastern front line, and Point 12, which discusses management of the Zaporizhzhia plant, will likely be major sticking points in the talks.

Zelensky said: "We are in a situation where the Russians want us to leave the Donetsk region, and the Americans are trying to find a way so that it is 'not a way out' — because we are against leaving — they want to find a demilitarized zone or a free economic zone in this, that is, a format that can provide for the views of both sides."

The draft states that the contact line, which cuts across five Ukrainian regions, be frozen once the agreement is signed.

Ukraine's stance is that any attempt to create a free economic zone must be ratified by a referendum, affirming that the Ukrainian people ultimately hold the decision-making power, Zelensky said. This process will require 60 days, he added, during which time hostilities should stop to allow the process to happen.

More difficult discussions would require hammering out how far troops would be required

to move back, per Ukraine's proposal, and where international forces would be stationed. Zelensky said ultimately "people can choose: this ending suits us or not," he said.

The draft also proposes that Russian forces withdraw from Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv regions, and that international forces be located along the contact line to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

"Since there is no faith in the Russians, and they have repeatedly broken their promises, today's contact line is turning into a line of a de facto free economic zone, and international forces should be there to guarantee that no one will enter there under any guise — neither 'little green men' nor Russian military disguised as civilians," Zelensky said.

Managing Zaporizhzhia power plant

Ukraine is also proposing that the occupied city of Enerhodar, which is connected to the Zaporizhzhia power plant, be a demilitarized free economic zone, Zelensky said. This point required 15 hours of discussions with the US, he said.

For now, the US proposes that the plant be jointly operated by Ukraine, the US and Russia, with each side receiving dividends from the enterprise.

Rohit Sharma shows why he's still a mighty big crowd puller!



PTI

Jaipur, Dec 24: Rohit Sharma was doing Rohit Sharma things on a balmy December afternoon.

He played the swivel pull, the effortlessly lofted six down the ground, and swept the pacers from Sikkim for a good measure, as 'Hitman' lovers in the Pink City got the best present on Christmas Eve.

On a weekday, around 20,000-plus people from the city decided that the best thing to do was to watch the maestro in action — and that too for free. His 37th List A hundred, a 155 off 93 balls, wasn't just about the quality. It was also about the entertainment quotient.

It resembled a concert where fans had come to watch their favourite singer belt out one chartbuster after another. It wasn't about the BCCI diktat, or proving anything to the national selectors, or a head coach who wants to "abolish star culture". The day was all about a hero and his fans, and by the time they left the stadium, 18 fours and nine sixes from the former India skipper had more than satiated their appetite.

By 9 am, all roads led to the Sawai Mansingh Stadium. On the morning of a working day, if 80 percent of a stadium is full, you can understand why stars are so intrinsic to Indian cricket. People skipped jobs, students bunked college, and Rajasthan Sports Council employees, who had the best view from the balconies of their building, didn't want to be left out either.

The now-familiar chants of "Mumbai chaa Rajaa Rohit Sharma" (Mumbai's King Rohit Sharma) reverberated across the stands as fans caught a glimpse of the star.

Once the crowd came to know that Mumbai were fielding, a few thousand left with a prayer on their lips that Sikkim would show enough batting firepower to allow them to watch their hero bat to their heart's content. Then there

were the aggressive Rohit loyalists who started shouting, "Gambhir kidhar hai, dekh raha hai na?" (Gautam Gambhir, where are you, are you watching, right?).

It could also well have been directed at national selector R.P. Singh, who was sitting near the boundary line.

Used to adulation for the longest time, the former India captain merely raised his hand to acknowledge his fans.

Once news spread that Sikkim had scored a decent 236 for seven, the atmosphere changed. There were no empty seats across three stands, save the one above the dressing room, which was closed for security reasons.

There were also enough people willing to put their bones and joints at risk, sitting precariously on the edge of the terrace atop the Sports Council building.

They didn't care if Angkrish Raghuvanshi existed — every dot ball he played was met with boos.

But once Rohit hit his first pick-up swivel pull behind square off Kranthi Kumar, the decibel levels rose.

Truth be told, Sikkim's bowlers — Kranthi, Palzor and left-arm spinner Gurinder — were overawed and lacked quality.

There were too many half-trackers. In fact, Rohit went down on one knee and swept seamer Palzor behind square. There were two catches dropped, but who cared?

Rohit knew the quality of the attack and his 62-ball century and 91-ball 150 were followed by a fleeting moment of bat-raising. Finally, Kranthi Kumar's wide delivery found the edge of his bat. It was a tired-looking shot. But there had been enough entertainment on a working day, and fans began to vacate the stands thereafter.

The Hitman carnival was over for the day, but not before another customised Rohit Sharma rhyme echoed across the venue: "Dal Baati Choorma, Rohit Sharma Soorma."

Libya's Army chief, four others killed in air crash in Turkey

ANI

Ankara, Dec 24: Libya's Army Chief of Staff, Mohammed Ali Ahmed al-Haddad, and four others were killed in an air crash near Turkey's capital city, Ankara, Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah said.

As reported by Al Jazeera, Prime Minister Dbeibah termed it a "tragic accident", stating that the crash occurred on Tuesday while the officials were returning from a visit to Turkey.

"This great tragedy is a great loss for the nation, the military establishment, and all the people, as we have lost men who served their country with sincerity and dedication and were an example of discipline, responsibility, and national commitment," he said in the statement.

He said that the other people killed in the crash were the ground forces chief of staff, Al-Fitouri Gharibil, the director of the Military Manufacturing Authority, Mahmoud Al-Qatawi, an adviser to al-Haddad, Muhammad Al-Asawi Diab, and a military photographer, Muhammad

Omar Ahmed Mahjoub.

A senior Turkish official said that three crew members were also killed in the crash, adding that the aircraft had sought an emergency landing after reporting an electrical malfunction, as reported by Al Jazeera.

"A private jet carrying Libyan Chief of General Staff Mohammed al-Haddad, four members of his entourage and three crew members reported an emergency to the air traffic control centre due to an electrical failure, asking for an emergency landing," Burhanettin Duran, head of the presidency's communications directorate, said on X. A Turkish official told Al Jazeera, "Initial reports from the investigation rule out any sabotage to the Libyan Army Chief plane crash, initial cause is technical failure."

Turkiye's Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya wrote on X, "The wreckage of the business jet that departed Ankara's Esenboga airport for Tripoli has been located by Turkish gendarmerie approximately two kilometres south of Kesikkavak village in the Haymana district."

‘China, Russia ties stronger than ever despite sanctions by US, EU’



PTI

Beijing, Dec 24: A top Russian diplomat has said that the US and the EU sanctions against his country after the Ukraine war have not weakened close ties between Beijing and Moscow as the two allies fostered closer dialogue and higher levels of mutual trust.

China-Russia relations had reached "their highest level in history" in terms of depth and mutual trust, and ties between the two countries would continue to develop in

a steady and dynamic manner, Russia's ambassador to China, Igor Morgulov, said at a forum at Renmin University in Beijing on Tuesday.

He attributed the momentum in part to close head-of-state diplomacy between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, as well as the series of activities commemorating the anniversaries to mark the end of World War II.

Morgulov portrayed the deepening partnership as a response to efforts

aimed at constraining both countries' technological development and distorting fair competition.

China and Russia had expanded cooperation in an "extremely complex" international environment, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Wednesday.

The two countries opened efficient communication channels, worked to stabilise global production and logistics chains and established reliable bilateral settlement mechanisms.

"Almost all bilateral trade is now conducted in local currencies," Morgulov said, adding that the two economies were "complementary, with broad and multidimensional space for cooperation".

Russia has faced extensive sanctions from the US and EU since 2022, targeting its economy, energy, finance, and individuals to weaken its war effort in Ukraine.

Ashes: Nathan Lyon determined to bounce back after surgery



AFP

Melbourne, Dec 24: Off-spinner Nathan Lyon is determined to fight his way back into the Australian team after undergoing surgery for a torn hamstring, coach Andrew McDonald said.

The 38-year-old faces an extended period on the sidelines after damaging his right hamstring saving a boundary on day five of the third Ashes Test in Adelaide.

McDonald said Lyon remained a key part of their plans as reports speculated that his 141-Test career could be over. It is

the second serious injury Lyon has sustained in two years after being ruled out of the previous Ashes series against England with a calf injury picked up at Lord's in 2023.

He had surgery on Tuesday, but was expected to be with the team during the fourth Ashes Test in Melbourne starting Friday.

"He's pretty shattered," McDonald told cricket.com.au late Tuesday. "He's a huge part of what we do. "He's facing a long recovery timeframe. That type of injury, it's going to be a hard period for him to get back to where he was.

"But he still wants to do it and

that's the main thing."

After the final two Ashes Tests in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia's next series is not until the middle of 2026, when they host Bangladesh.

After that is a busy period culminating in a five-Test tour of India from late-January 2027, and then the 150th anniversary Test against England in March.

"India's on the horizon, he'll be a key part of that," McDonald said of Lyon.

"We've got New Zealand (and) South Africa before that. So, get through this rehab and then (we'll) look forward."

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Watch List

Thursday, 25th December

DHURANDHAR (A)
 HINDI - 10:40 AM, 01:40 PM, 03:00 PM, 06:30 PM

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 HINDI - 10:45 AM, 12:05 PM, 07:00 PM

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