



## Article 370 revocation matter of pride for country, BJP: PM Modi

» Aug 2019 decision ended two flags, two constitutions, strengthened national unity » Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder S P Mukherjee laid ideological foundation for move

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 25: Terming revocation of Article 370 in 2019 as matter of pride for BJP and the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the move strengthened national unity and fulfilled a long-pending ideological commitment.

Addressing the inaugural function of Rashtriya Prerna Sthal in Lucknow on the 101st birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, PM Modi, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, “The Rashtriya Prerna Sthal symbolises a vision that guided India towards self-respect and service.” Referring to the towering statues at the complex, he said, “These statues are very tall, but the inspiration they give to the nation is even greater.”

The Prime Minister said the



BJP-led government was proud to have removed Article 370, describing it as a decisive step towards completing the process of national integration.

He said the ideological foundation for the move had been laid decades ago by Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mukherjee.

“We are proud that our government got the opportunity

to remove the wall of Article 370,” Modi said, adding that the country could not function with “two flags and two constitutions.”

He said India was now firmly bound together by a single constitutional framework and a shared sense of unity.

Modi said the Rashtriya Prerna Sthal was dedicated to leaders whose ideas had

shaped India’s political and social journey, including Vajpayee, Mukherjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

He said preserving their legacy was essential for inspiring future generations and guiding the country’s development path.

The Prime Minister said the land on which the memorial has been built had remained neglected for decades and had turned into a massive garbage dump over the years.

He congratulated all those associated with the project for transforming the site into a modern national landmark. “I congratulate the people of Uttar Pradesh and the entire country for this inspirational place,” he said.

The Rashtriya Prerna Sthal, spread across 65 acres and developed at an estimated cost of around Rs 230 crore, features 65-foot-high | [More on P6](#)

## Art 370 abrogation completed unfinished task: Rajnath

‘Move ended separate laws in J&K, ensured equal constitutional rights’

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 25: Asserting that the abrogation of Article 370 completed an unfinished task linked to national integration, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the move fulfilled a long-cherished vision of Bharatiya Jana Sangh ideologue Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

Addressing a gathering after the inauguration of the Rashtriya Prerna Sthal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Lucknow, Singh, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, “The decision to remove the special constitutional provisions for Jammu and Kashmir was rooted in the ideological foundations laid decades ago.”

He said, “Upadhyaya had envisioned complete constitutional integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the country and had made sacrifices for that cause.”



Singh said the abrogation of Article 370 marked a decisive step towards ensuring unity and equal constitutional rights for citizens of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the move ended the system of separate laws and symbols, strengthening the idea of one nation governed by one Constitution.

Referring to other leaders associated with Jammu and Kashmir, the Defence Minister said Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mukherjee had also played a key role in advocating full

integration of the erstwhile state with India and had laid down his life for the cause.

He said PM Modi carried forward that legacy by taking the final step in August 2019.

Singh said that since the abrogation of Article 370, J&K has witnessed greater political stability, improved governance and enhanced focus on development.

He said the Centre’s policies were aimed at ensuring inclusive growth, infrastructure development and social justice for the people of the region.

The Defence Minister recalled an anecdote about former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, saying that when a Pakistani woman once expressed her wish to marry Vajpayee and asked for Kashmir as a gift, Vajpayee responded that he would agree only if she gave him the whole of Pakistan as dowry.

Singh said the NDA government was | [More on P6](#)

### BREIF NEWS

#### Army revises social media guidelines

Yogesh

The Indian Army has issued an internal directive revising its policy on the use of social media applications by personnel, underscoring the need for heightened operational security and responsible online conduct in an era of evolving cyber threats. The guidelines, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) disseminated through the Directorate General of Military Intelligence (DGMI), have come into immediate effect and existing rules stand | [More on P6](#)

#### Pulwama man found dead in Sgr houseboat

KNO Correspondent

A man from Pulwama district was found dead inside a houseboat in the Amira Kadal area of Srinagar on Thursday morning, officials said. An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the body of the man was found inside a houseboat moored along the Jhelum River at Amira Kadal under mysterious circumstances. He said police were informed immediately after the discovery, following | [More on P6](#)

#### Unidentified man found dead near LD Hospital

KNO Correspondent

An unidentified man was found lying unconscious on the roadside near LD Hospital in Srinagar on Thursday morning and was later declared dead at the hospital, officials said. An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that a police team brought the man, believed to be around 45 years old, to SMHS Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. “As per initial reports, the deceased was found lying on the roadside near LD Hospital,” | [More on P6](#)

## HM Shah to inaugurate 2-day ‘Anti-Terror Conference’ in New Delhi today

‘Focus on developing synergies to counter terrorism, addressing national security issues’

KNO DESK

New Delhi, Dec 25: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate 2-day ‘Anti-Terror Conference’ in New Delhi on Friday.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the conference, shaped under PM Narendra Modi’s vision of zero tolerance for terror, is being organized by the National Investigation Agency, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Notably, the annual conference has become a platform for brainstorming India’s next-generation strategies to counter emerging threats. “The conference is a meeting point for



operational forces; technical, legal, and forensic experts; and agencies engaged in counter terrorism for deliberations on issues impacting national security and threats emerging out of terrorism,” said an official.

He said, “The key focus of the conference is on developing synergies | [More on P6](#)

## India becoming fastest-growing economy under PM Modi: LG Sinha

Dreams of Mahamana, Vajpayee being realised

Bharat moving towards becoming Aatmanirbhar

KNO DESK

Jammu, Dec 25: Highlighting India’s rise as the world’s fastest-growing economy, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership, the nation is steadily moving towards realising the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Speaking at a commemorative event at Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Inter College in Ghazipur, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, “Under

### India advances towards historic sustainable growth: LG

Pays tribute to Babu Markandeya Singh



KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Dec 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday paid tributes to

Babu Markandeya Singh, a well-known socialist leader and former President of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) | [More on P6](#)

### Dulhasti Stage-II gets environmental clearance

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Dec 25: In a significant move, the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has recommended environmental clearance for Dulhasti hydroelectric project stage-II.

The EAC, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) recommended environmental clearance for 260 MW Dulhasti stage-II hydroelectric project during its meeting held on December 19, 2025. The proposed project is the extension of 390 MW operational Dulhasti Stage-I hydroelectric project, which was commissioned in 2007 and has been operating successfully since then.

The National Hydroelectric Power | [More on P6](#)

### Jingle bells in Srinagar

## Christmas celebrated with prayers, hope, harmony at Holy Family Church

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Dec 25: Christmas was celebrated with devotion and quiet joy at the Holy Family Catholic Church in Srinagar on Thursday amid the chill of December.

The church, situated in the heart of the city, Lal Chowk Srinagar, became a symbol of peace and attraction as members of the Christian community gathered to mark the birth of Jesus Christ.

With hymns filling the air



and the tune of “Jingle Bells” faintly echoing in the background, the faithful attended special Mass prayers that focused on compassion, harmony and goodwill.

The church premises were adorned with lights, stars and a Christmas tree reflecting both simplicity and spirit.

“We prayed for peace and prosperity for everyone in Jammu and Kashmir,” a member of the Church told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO). | [More on P6](#)

## Year-Ender 2025: Srinagar Airport handles 35.26 lakh passengers, 21,576 flights despite challenges

April sees highest traffic

Footfall dips post-Pahalgam attack

Slowdown continues in May–June

Recovery begins in July

Airport says modernisation to boost future capacity

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Dec 25: Reflecting both strength and bounce-back ability, Srinagar International Airport handled 35.26 lakh passengers and 21,576 flight movements between January and December 21, 2025, officials said here.

The year was marked by tourism peaks, weather challenges, and temporary route suspensions following the Pahalgam attack.

Official data, accessed by the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO), reveals a clear month-wise pattern: steady

growth till April, a sharp decline in May and June, followed by a gradual recovery towards year-end.

Month-wise Air Traffic Summary (2025):

January: 1,966 total flight



movements, 175,352 arrival passengers and 171,688 departure passengers, total 347,040 passengers, making it a steady winter operation.

February: 1,894 movements, 173,180 departures, 161,084 arrivals, total 334,264 passengers, making a stable flow.

March: 2,220 movements, 200,546 arrivals, 181,013 departures, total 381,559 passengers, making an early spring rise.

April: 2,872 movements, 224,056 arrivals, 245,846 departures, total 469,902 passengers, making it the peak tourism month.

May: 1,160 movements, 88,131 arrivals, 77,732 departures, total 165,863 passengers. The post-Pahalgam dip begins.

June - 1,492 movements, 129,896 arrivals, 111,410 departures, total 241,305 passengers, the month of which continued the slowdown. July - 1,992 movements, 152,281 arrivals, 149,103 departures, total

301,384 passengers. Gradual recovery signs show up.

August: 1,776 movements, 127,310 arrivals, 134,252 departures, total 261,562 passengers. Operations stabilize.

September: 1,646 movements, 138,941 arrivals, 137,004 departures, total 275,945 passengers. Consistent traffic.

October: 1,818 movements, 141,067 arrivals, 148,244 departures, total 289,311 passengers. Steady pre-winter flow.

November: 1,698 movements, 135,584 arrivals, 147,979 departures, total 283,563 passengers. Near-normal traffic.

December | [More on P6](#)



# I&FC land donors meet Jal Shakti Minister, seek resolution of demands



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 25: A delegation of land donors associated with the Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC) Department, Jammu, Thursday met with Jal Shakti Minister Javed Ahmed Rana and submitted a memorandum seeking resolution of their demands.

The delegation, as per an official statement, apprised the Minister that they have been working with the Irrigation & Flood Control Department with the Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC) Department, Jammu, Thursday met with Jal Shakti Minister Javed Ahmed Rana and submitted a memorandum seeking resolution of their demands.

The Minister assured the delegation that all their concerns are being examined carefully. He stated that the issues would be addressed in a phased manner by the current dispensation, in accordance with the existing rules.

# Secretary J&K Pahari Advisory Board concludes 3-day tour of Rajouri-Poonch

KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI-POONCH, DECEMBER 25: Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir Advisory Board for the development of Pahari Speaking People, Sapna Kotwal successfully completed a comprehensive three-day tour of the Pir Panjal region, covering Sunderbani, Nowshera, Rajouri, Surankote and Poonch.

The visit, as per an official statement, was designed to assess ground realities, review educational and residential facilities for Pahari students and strengthen community engagement with a focus on inclusive socio-economic development.



Sapna Kotwal conducted thorough reviews of hostel infrastructure, scrutinizing accommodation, sanitation, food arrangements, basic amenities, and the overall learning environment in Boys' and Girls' Pahari hostels in Rajouri and Poonch.

During direct interaction with students and staff, she listened to their concerns and suggestions. Emphasizing the critical importance of quality education and a supportive residential atmosphere, she assured them of the Board's unwavering commitment to enhancing hostel facilities and addressing genuine grievances in a time-bound manner.

The tour featured extensive interactions with civil society, legal professionals, youth groups and community stakeholders, reinforcing the Board's outreach efforts. During the tour, several delegations called on the Secretary and shared valuable perspectives on social justice, educational development and legal challenges.

Kotwal attentively heard their concerns and reiterated the Board's responsiveness to community needs.

Adding a significant dimension to the visit, Kotwal graced a Taekwondo Championship as the Chief Guest. She commended the organizers, particularly Rajinder Singh for promoting sports and constructive youth engagement.

Highlighting sports as a vital tool for building discipline, confidence and a healthy society, she encouraged young athletes to remain focused and positive. She also acknowledged the supportive presence and efforts of Dr. Nitin Sharma and Er. Shubham Kotwal, Media Coordinator and President of ADAPMA for their role in amplifying community voices and facilitating effective communication between the public and the administration.

Throughout her tour, Sapna Kotwal consistently reaffirmed the Advisory Board's dedication to improving educational infrastructure, empowering youth and fostering active community participation.

# DC Budgam reviews sports infrastructure, inspects playfields

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 25: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat conducted an extensive tour of various sports facilities across the district, including Qazi Bagh Budgam, Ichgam, (A & B) and Khel Gaon Wathoor, Chadoora.

During the inspection of the playfield at Qazi Bagh Budgam, developed by the Rural Development Department at a cost of Rs 10 lakh, the DC, as per an official statement, stated that the playfield's proximity to Budgam Airport provides a unique opportunity to develop the entire area into a dedicated sports zone.

He emphasised that such development would enable the conduct of multiple sports disciplines, besides creating a vibrant environment for sports activities throughout the year.

The DC said that the development of this area into a sports hub will be described as a step towards nurturing local talent and providing structured platforms for young athletes. He further said that the sports play a vital role in engaging youth in constructive activities, keeping them physically fit, mentally alert, and socially responsible. It was further



stated that participation in sports inculcates discipline, teamwork, leadership, and a spirit of healthy competition, which are essential attributes for nation-building.

The playfields at Ichgam A and B, developed under MGNREGA by the Rural Development Department/Gram Panchayat Ichgam at a cost of 9.21 lakh during FY 2024-25, were also inspected. The DC was apprised that the works stand completed. The visit was undertaken to explore the scope for further development and expansion, with the objective of upgrading the facility into a model playfield in Budgam district.

While interacting with local residents of Ichgam, the DC said that the district administration shall extend all possible assistance for further upgradation of the playfield. He emphasized that

improved sports infrastructure would allow youth to channel their energy in a positive direction, thereby helping in curbing social evils such as drug addiction and promoting a culture of fitness and well-being.

The DC also underlined the role of community participation in preserving and optimally utilizing sports assets for betterment of the youth. The DC also inspected the ongoing works at Khel Gaon Wathoor, Chadoora Budgam, one of the major sports infrastructure projects in the district.

The DC was apprised that the estimated project cost is Rs 5 crore, with Rs 478.35 lakh allotted, out of which Rs 338.32 lakh has been expended so far, achieving an overall physical progress of 90 percent. It was informed that the project is

targeted for 100 percent completion by the end of January.

During the inspection, the DC stated that facilities such as an indoor stadium, pavilion, and additional spectator seating are being envisioned in the expansion plan.

The DC stated that the objective is to develop Wathoor Khel Gaon on par with national-level sports facilities, capable of hosting major sporting events and training programmes. The DC further stated that the district administration remains fully committed towards promoting sports at the grassroots level, ensuring that rural and urban youth alike are provided with equal opportunities to excel in sports. He further said that such infrastructure will not only help in identifying and grooming sporting talent but will also contribute towards overall personality development of young people.

On the occasion, the DC also played a friendly cricket match with enthusiastic local players as a gesture of encouragement and sportsmanship, reinforcing the message that sports unite communities and inspire youth.

Besides, CPO Budgam, SDM chadoora, Tehsildar Chadoora, BDO Chadoora, other district and sectoral officials also accompanied the DC during his visit.

# Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore campaign concludes in Shopian

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 25: The week-long nationwide outreach campaign "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign initiated by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, GOI concluded successfully Thursday in District Shopian, witnessing widespread public participation and effective grievance redressal.

The campaign aimed at taking governance to the doorsteps of citizens, enhancing last-mile service delivery and strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms.

In Shopian district, the programme was executed in a systematic and inclusive manner, covering all 98 Panchayat Halqas, in addition to one outreach camp each at Tehsil Headquarters and two special camps at the District Headquarters were held, ensuring comprehensive geographic and administrative coverage.

On the concluding day, grievance redressal and public interaction camps were organised at Nazneenpora (Tehsil Keegam), Kanigam (Imamsahab), TurkWangam



(Block Chitragam), Panchayat Halqa Vehil, Berthipora-A&B, Panchayat Halqa Partabpora and HS Pora (Block Herman), where a large number of residents interacted directly with officers of the concerned departments. BDO, Nazir Ahmad presided over some of the camps in Imam Sahib and Herman blocks.

Throughout the campaign, the initiative played a pivotal role in addressing public grievances, resolving service delivery issues and creating awareness about government schemes and

entitlements. Officers from various line departments received, examined and acted upon grievances related to revenue, rural development, social welfare, public utilities, development works and other citizen-centric services, with many cases resolved on the spot and others taken up for time-bound disposal.

During the week long campaign, more than 400 applications were disposed of under service delivery mechanisms, underscoring the effectiveness and reach of the programme.

Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore

# Good Governance Week 2025 concludes in Anantnag

KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 25: The week-long Good Governance Week, Sushasan Saptah-2025 organised under the Campaign "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" concluded in Anantnag Thursday.

On the last day, public outreach programmes featuring awareness of government schemes and grievance redressal were held at Dooru, Shahabad, Larnoo, Qazigund, Larkipora and other areas of the district.

During these programmes, officers from line departments provided detailed information about ongoing government schemes and good governance practices being adopted to enhance the delivery of public services.

The public provided valuable feedback on key government services and also put forth their grievances. Notably, the Good Governance Week, which commenced on 19th December, witnessed extensive field outreach by the district administration wherein senior officers including ADDC, ACR, SDMs, ACD and others visited villages and far off places and interacted with citizens and civil society members regarding issues of development and public welfare schemes.

Additionally, sanction letters were handed over to the beneficiaries under different schemes of Agriculture, Horticulture, Social Welfare, ICDS, Rural Development, Health, Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry, Fisheries and other Departments.

The week-long initiative saw enthusiastic participation from the general public who lauded the move as a significant step towards strengthening public service delivery and people-centric governance.

# SANKALP-Hub, KVIB Bandipora hold women empowerment awareness programme

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 25 : Under the Directions of District Social Welfare Officer Bandipora, an awareness programme was organised by SANKALP-Hub in collaboration with Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) with the objective of Empowering women through self-employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The program aimed to create awareness about schemes and support systems available for income generation and sustainable livelihoods.

Officials from SANKALP-Hub and KVIB provided detailed information on KVIB schemes including PMEGP, Khadi-based activities, Skill development programs and financial assistance.

Emphasis was laid on encouraging women to take up micro-enterprises, home based industries and group based economic activities to promote Financial Assistance.

The participants included women from Self-help groups, aspiring entrepreneurs and local residents. The program successfully enhanced awareness and motivated women to actively participate in income-generation activities contributing to their overall socio-economic empowerment.

# DCPU Bandipora holds Child Marriage Free Bharat signature campaign

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 25: District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Mission Vatsalya Bandipora Thursday organized a comprehensive "Child Marriage Free Bharat" signature campaign in Bandipora with the objective of raising awareness and strengthening collective commitment to eliminate the social evil of child marriage.

The campaign witnessed enthusiastic participation from a wide cross-section of

society, reflecting strong community resolve toward safeguarding child Rights and well-being.

Officials from various Government departments, representatives of the District Legal Services Authority (DALSA), lawyers, students, young women achievers, media persons, and NGO actively participated in the event.

The diverse participation highlighted the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach in addressing child marriage and

promoting child Rights.

During the campaign, participants signed a pledge banner symbolizing their commitment to prevent child marriage and to spread awareness about its harmful physical, psychological, social, and legal consequences.

The event served as a platform to sensitize the public about existing laws, including the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, and the role of institutions in reporting and preventing such practices.

# Revenue Department Keller seizes JCB, tipper in Shopian illegal mining crackdown

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 25: In a significant late-night crackdown against illegal mining activities, the Revenue Department Keller, under the supervision of the Tehsildar Keller and Naib Tehsildar Berthipora, conducted a search operation in the Gujar Basti area of Kralcheck.

During the operation, officials apprehended individuals involved in illegal soil extraction and seized one JCB machine and one tipper being used for unauthorized excavation and transportation of soil.

The seized machinery has been handed over to Police Post Batipora, and an FIR has been registered in the matter. Further investigation is underway to identify all persons involved in the illegal activity.

The authorities have reiterated their firm commitment to continue strict action against illegal mining and soil extraction. They warned that violators will face stringent legal consequences, emphasizing that such enforcement drives will continue to safeguard natural resources and ensure strict adherence to the law.

efficiency and ensuring effective implementation of various educational schemes and initiatives.

On behalf of the District Administration Kathua, he wished him good health, happiness and a fulfilling post-retirement life, expressing hope that he would now be able to devote ample time to his family and personal pursuits. General Manager DIC, Mush-taq Chaudhary; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Vishavjeet Singh; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Vishav Partap Singh; CPO, Ranjit Thakur and other district officers, while speaking on the occasion, highlighted his professionalism, dedication to duty and cordial working style and conveyed their best wishes for a peaceful and contented post-retirement life.

# District Administration Kathua bids farewell to retiring CEO

KT NEWS DESK

KATHUA, DECEMBER 25: District Administration Kathua Thursday organized a farewell programme in view of the superannuation of Chief Education Officer Kathua Rajiv Abrol, who is scheduled to retire from government service on December 31, 2025. Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma, while extending warm wishes to the retiring officer, lauded his services during his brief stint as Chief Education Officer.

The DC, as per an official statement, appreciated Rajiv Abrol's sincere efforts towards strengthening academic standards, improving administrative



# Tourist influx in Sonamarg touches 4.17 lakh till November

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 25: Sonamarg, a major tourist destination in Kashmir, recorded a total of 417,091 tourists from January to November 2025, showing steady growth and consistent interest across seasons, official data reveals.

According to figures from the Tourist Police Post Sonamarg, the resort experienced a continuous influx of domestic, foreign, and local tourists throughout the year.

In January, around 55,934 tourists visited, including 53,676 domestic visitors, 1,114 foreigners, and 1,144 locals. February saw a slight increase with a total of 57,186 tourists—55,114 domestic, 2,019 foreigners, and 1,565 local visitors. March's footfall reached nearly 63,000 with 59,084 domestic tourists, 1,120 foreigners, and 2,749 locals. April experienced the highest



footfall of the year, with over 72,722 visitors—67,229 domestic, 1,434

foreigners, and 4,059 locals. May, however, saw a decline, with just

over 21,573 tourists—17,083 domestic, 486 foreigners, and 4,004 locals.

June's figures rose again to nearly 48,139, with 33,692 domestic, 281 foreigners, and 14,166 locals. July recorded close to 39,605 visitors—25,281 domestic, 159 foreigners, and 14,165 locals. August saw a decrease to roughly 32,139, including 12,124 domestic, 304 foreigners, and 19,711 locals.

September's numbers fell further to approximately 25,264, with nearly 6,945 domestic, 422 foreigners, and 17,897 locals. October recorded around 14,536 visitors—8,389 domestic, 391 foreigners, and 5,756 locals. November's footfall was just over 18,070, including 13,527 domestic, 459 foreigners, and 4,084 locals.

Officials told KNO that April marked the peak of tourist visits, coinciding with the spring tourism rush, while summer months remained busy due to local and domestic travellers. Despite the

seasonal slowdown in autumn, tourist arrivals remained steady into November.

Speaking to KNO, President of the Beopar Mandal Association Sonamarg, Furkan Ahmad, said, "Tourism plays a vital role in Sonamarg's economy. The rising number of visitors has positively impacted hotels, transporters, and local traders, strengthening the overall market."

The recent snowfall has led to a noticeable increase in tourist arrivals. To promote winter tourism, the Department of Tourism has organised comprehensive arrangements, including adventure activities such as skiing and ice skating.

"Special programmes and winter sports events are scheduled for December 31 to provide visitors with a memorable experience," Basharat Hussain, a tourist officer, said—(KNO)

## High alert on Jammu, Punjab frontier ahead of New Year

YOGESH

Jammu, Dec 25: Security forces have ramped up vigilance along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and in frontier districts of neighbouring Punjab following intelligence inputs about potential terrorist infiltrations from Pakistan.

An official said the alert comes amid dense fog conditions expected to persist for at least a month, providing cover for such attempts, especially as New Year's Eve approaches.

"After heightened security measures in Jammu, Samba, and Kathua districts, the Border Security Force (BSF) has extended the high alert to Punjab's border regions," the official added.

According to the inputs terrorists camping on the Pakistani side may shift their infiltration routes to Punjab, exploiting the thicker fog in areas like Pathankot and Gurdaspur, which border Kathua in Jammu.

"Additional deployments have been made along the IB in Punjab, particularly in Gurdaspur and Pathankot, to counter any attempts by terrorists to cross over," sources said.



"Searches are being conducted in various border zones. This move echoes past incidents, including an infiltration attempt a couple of years ago where terrorists crossed into Pathankot and used rural belts along the Kathua-Pathankot border to advance into mountainous areas," they added.

"Recent inputs indicate a group of three to four terrorists positioned close to the IB are waiting for an opportunity to cross over amidst inter fog," sources said, adding, "Behind the frontline BSF personnel, Border Police, Special Operations Group (SOG), and Village Defence Guards (VDGs) are on heightened surveillance, particularly at

night when infiltration risks are higher. Damaged fencing and border posts from August's monsoon floods in Jammu-Kathua and Punjab sectors have been fully repaired and reconstructed."

Senior BSF officers from Jammu and Punjab Frontiers are coordinating closely, with Western Command officials conducting regular inspections to ensure zero infiltration. An official said, "Advanced gadgetry is in place to detect intrusions even in low visibility. The region has seen escalated threats this year."

"Drone activities smuggling narcotics and arms have also increased along Punjab's IB, with several attempts foiled by BSF and Punjab Police," he added—(KNO)

## Over 1,100 police outreach events held in north Kashmir in 2025

WARIS FAYAZ

Baramulla, Dec 25: Jammu & Kashmir Police closed the year 2025 with an unprecedented push on community policing, using public darbars, Thana Diwas and PCPG (Police Community Partnership Group) meetings to reach thousands of residents across north Kashmir districts. The DIG's media cell shared the year-end figures. The North Kashmir Range rolled out over 1,100 outreach programmes in 2025, hearing nearly 2.3 lakh voices through interactions that focused on grievance redressal, awareness on new criminal laws and a united fight against drugs, according to the figures.

The year's thrust was on "policing beyond enforcement", a police spokesperson said. He said regular public darbars by senior officers, including IGP Kashmir, DIG North Kashmir Range and district SSPs, provided walk in platforms where citizens flagged complaints about investigations, drug menace, neighbourhood disputes and everyday policing services.

The spokesperson described the 2025 effort as a turning point in rebuilding trust in a border and conflict affected belt, saying that sustained face to face engagement has narrowed communication gaps and encouraged residents to share actionable inputs against drug peddlers, fraudsters and other offenders.

"Community cooperation is essential for tackling crime, drug abuse and other social evils," the spokesperson said. "Proactive engagement helps in early identification of problems and prevents youth from drifting towards violence and radicalisation."—(KNO)

## Pahalgam tourism festival begins



JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pahalgam, Dec 25: The Pahalgam Development Authority (PDA), in collaboration with other stakeholders, has organised a tourism festival in the picturesque tourist town to "further boost tourism and project the place as a vibrant, all-season destination".

The festival, which began amid much enthusiasm, will continue till the end of this month.

Chief Executive Officer of PDA, Hilal Ahmad said the initiative is part of a broader strategy to diversify tourism activities and attract visitors throughout the year. "Our focus is to develop Pahalgam as an

all-weather tourist destination. Through such festivals, we want to showcase the natural beauty, culture, adventure potential and hospitality of the region," he said.

Highlighting the symbolic inauguration of the festival, the CEO said it was formally inaugurated by a six-year-old girl from Mumbai. "We deliberately chose a young child to inaugurate the event to send a strong message — tourists belong to us, and we belong to them. Pahalgam welcomes everyone with open arms," he said.

Ahmad lauded the role of residents, hoteliers, ponywalas, guides and other stakeholders for their continued efforts in promoting

tourism. "The people of Pahalgam deserve immense appreciation. They have been working tirelessly to promote tourism in the area and have always extended warm hospitality to visitors," he said, adding that community participation is key to sustainable tourism development.

The CEO further said that the department is actively working on introducing snow sports in Betaab Valley to enhance winter tourism. "We are exploring the potential of snow-based activities so that tourists have more options during the winter months as well," he said.

Describing Pahalgam as a complete tourist package, Ahmad said the destination offers something for everyone. "Pahalgam has everything — breathtaking natural beauty, adventure, peace, culture and entertainment. It is a full package, and everyone must visit at least once to experience it," he added.

The ongoing Tourism Festival features a range of activities aimed at engaging visitors, promoting local culture and showcasing the tourism potential of the region, reinforcing Pahalgam's position as one of Kashmir's premier tourist destinations—(KNO)

## Post-snowfall, tourism Deptt plans to boost footfall

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 25 (KNO): As winter settles in following a fresh snowfall, the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department announced a series of upcoming promotional events and roadshows to boost tourist arrivals across the Valley.

Joint Director of Tourism, Kashmir, Wasim Raja, said that in collaboration with various stakeholders, the department will organise multiple activities and campaigns to sustain the current tourism momentum.

"Since the recent snowfall, we've observed a slight rise in tourist footfall, with hotels experiencing good occupancy. The response has been very encouraging," Raja told reporters in Srinagar during the Christmas Khewa Fest, a joint celebration hosted by the Tourism Department, JKHARA, and KHBOA.

Raja further said, "Our upcoming months are packed with promotional events and roadshows across the country to maintain this flow and broaden our outreach."

The Joint Director highlighted the importance of festivals such as Christmas, Lohri, and New Year in fostering cultural unity. "This year, both locals and visitors celebrated Christmas together, reflecting our warmth and shared joy," he said.

Expressing his commitment, Raja said, "We are determined to keep the festive spirit alive and will work closely with all partners to ensure a steady influx of tourists through winter, spring, and summer. The media also plays a crucial role in promoting this vibrant spirit."—(KNO)

## Court directs SMC, police to enforce Soura road order

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 25: A local court has directed the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) and the Police to ensure compliance of an earlier court order restraining authorities from obstructing the access road leading to the residence of a Soura resident.

The order was passed by the Court of Ist Civil Subordinate Judge/Municipal Magistrate Srinagar while hearing an application filed by Farooq Ahmad Lone, of Soura, seeking implementation of an order dated June 9, 2023.

The applicant had approached the court, alleging that despite clear judicial directions, officials of SKIMS and other concerned authorities had wilfully violated the restraint order by dumping construction material and blocking the gate and approach road leading to his house.

According to the plaintiff, the court had earlier restrained the concerned SKIMS authorities from closing the gate leading to the applicant's house except by adopting due process of law. However, it was alleged that despite having full knowledge of the order,

the non-applicants blocked the access road on multiple occasions in November and December 2025, causing serious hardship and affecting the applicant's right of ingress and egress. After hearing the counsel for the applicant and perusing the record, the court observed that preservation of the suit property was necessary, failing which the applicant's suit would become infructuous.

The court directed the Ward Officer concerned of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation



and the Station House Officer of the concerned police station to visit the spot, verify whether there has been any violation of the court's order dated June 9, 2023, and if found correct, implement the order in its true letter and spirit. The authorities have also been directed to file a compliance report before the court—(KNO)

## CBK books Govt employee in fake jobs, land allotment scam

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 25: The Economic Offences Wing of Crime Branch Kashmir has filed a chargesheet against suspended government employee for duping poor and unemployed persons through fake job appointments and forged land allotment orders in Srinagar.

According to a statement, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch Kashmir has submitted a chargesheet in FIR No. 54/2023 under Sections 419, 420, 467, 468 and 471 IPC before the Hon'ble Court of the 4th Additional Munsiff Judge, Srinagar, against accused Fouzia Afzal D/o Mohd Afzal Magray R/o Rehmatullah Colony, Sector-B, Fruit Mandi, Parimpora, Srinagar.

The statement reads, the case originated from a complaint alleging that the accused, a Class-IV employee posted in the office of Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, indulged in gross criminal misconduct by issuing fake allotment orders of shops and plots. During investigation, it was revealed that these forged orders bore fabricated signatures of the Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar and carried a forged seal of the District Magistrate, Srinagar.

It reads, Upon receipt of the complaint, a detailed probe was initiated by EOW Kashmir. The investigation revealed that the accused had duped lakhs of sums from many innocent poor persons and unemployed youth on the false pretext of providing shops at Jehangir Chowk, 5-marla plots at Bemina, and appointment orders for Junior Assistant posts in various government

## Winter plans activated across Kashmir: Div Com



RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Dec 25: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg on Thursday said that the administration is fully prepared for the winter and that the matter is being monitored at the highest level with all departments instructed to activate winter preparedness plans.

Speaking with reporters, the Divisional Commissioner said that the Chief Minister recently reviewed winter preparedness for both Jammu and Kashmir divisions.

He further said that district-level control rooms have been activated, while the divisional control room is functioning at the Integrated Command and Control Centre.

"The focus areas include snow clearance, swift restoration of power supply,

timely replacement of transformers, adequate winter stocking of ration and LPG, availability of public helpline numbers, strengthening of health facilities and ensuring proper heating arrangements.

He said that higher reaches have already received snowfall and expressed confidence that the administration is fully prepared to minimise inconvenience to the public when plains experience the snowfall.

He also clarified that the exercise related to revision of stamp duty rates is a routine administrative process carried out every year, with the revised rates coming into force from January 1. "The meeting was held according to established norms and the rates will be notified shortly," he said—(KNO)



EDITORIAL

## Friday Brief: Moderation (Wasatiyyah) As The Essence Of Islam

In a world often polarised between extremism and apathy, the Islamic principle of Wasatiyyah—moderation or the golden mean—emerges not as a modern compromise, but as a divine command and the defining character of the Muslim community. The Quran explicitly designates believers as “a middle nation” (2:143), a community of balance that bears witness to humanity. This foundational concept is not a passive midpoint but an active, vigilant state of

justice, wisdom, and proportion that permeates all aspects of life. The theological foundation is profound. Moderation stems from a balanced understanding of God’s absolute sovereignty and His boundless mercy. It rejects the extremes of despair and presumption, teaching hope grounded in effort and repentance. In worship, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) firmly cautioned against excess, stating, “Ruined are those who insist on hardship in matters of faith.” When

some companions wished to abandon worldly comforts for perpetual prayer, he redirected them to fulfil the rights of their bodies, families, and society, establishing a model where spiritual devotion enhances, rather than negates, responsible earthly life. This balance extends to ethics and conduct. In charity, one should not give so much as to become destitute, nor cling so tightly to wealth as to withhold what is due (25:67). In anger and emotion, the ideal is the middle way

between suppression and uncontrolled rage. Even in matters of doctrine and interpretation, the path of the early majority (Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah) was consciously forged between rigid literalism and speculative excess. Practically, Wasatiyyah is the antidote to the twin dangers of religious extremism (ghuluww) and secular dissolution. It commands justice and forbids transgression; it enjoins steadfastness without rigidity. The Prophet (PBUH) warned, “Beware of extremism

in religion, for those who came before you were destroyed by it.” Thus, Islamic moderation is a comprehensive framework for a virtuous, sustainable, and just life. It is a call to embody strength with compassion, conviction with tolerance, and piety with societal engagement. In an age of absolutes, it is this divinely ordained, balanced middle path—the path of wisdom, mercy, and proportion—that truly represents the enduring and merciful message of Islam.

# The VB-G RAM G Act 2025 Fixes Structural Gaps

The new Act preserves the legal right to work, expands entitlements, strengthens worker protections, and corrects structural weaknesses revealed through years of implementation. This is not demolition, but a process of renewal grounded in experience.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

The President of India has assented to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025, enhancing the statutory wage employment guarantee to 125 days and strengthening rural livelihoods through empowerment, convergence, and saturation-based delivery for a resilient, self-reliant rural Bharat.

A misreading by some

Yet, even as the VB-G RAM G Act comes into force, there are some who have advanced a set of assumptions that do not withstand careful scrutiny. It is being claimed that the employment guarantee has been weakened, that decentralisation and demand-based rights have been undermined without consultation, and that the reform represents fiscal withdrawal that is disguised as restructuring. Each of these assertions rests on a misreading of the Act’s substance and intent.

What has led to this misreading is a deeper conceptual error the assumption that welfare and development are opposing choices. The new framework is built on the opposite understanding: that welfare, anchored in an enhanced statutory livelihood guarantee, and development, anchored in durable infrastructure creation and productivity enhancement, are mutually reinforcing. Income support, asset creation, agricultural stability and long-term rural productivity are treated as a continuum rather than a trade-off. This is not aspirational rhetoric but an approach embedded in statutory design.

The suggestion that the legal right to

employment has been diluted is incorrect. The Act retains the statutory and justiciable character of the employment guarantee while strengthening its enforceability. Far from being curtailed, the entitlement has been expanded from 100 to 125 days. Procedural dis-entitlement clauses that previously nullified unemployment allowance in practice have been removed, and time-bound grievance redress mechanisms have been reinforced. The reform directly addresses the long-recognised gap between statutory promise and lived reality.

It is also argued that demand-based employment has been abandoned in favour of top-down planning. This rests on a false binary. Demand for work continues to originate from workers. What changes is that demand is no longer addressed only after distress has set in. By anchoring execution in advance, participatory village-level planning, the reform ensures that when workers seek employment, work is actually available rather than denied due to administrative unpreparedness. Planning, in this sense, does not suppress demand; it operationalises it.

The charge of centralisation overlooks the architecture of the law. Gram panchayats remain the primary planning and implementing authorities, and gram sabhas retain approval powers over local plans. What has changed is that decentralised planning is no longer ad hoc or episodic but institutionalised as a structured and participatory process. Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans are aggregated at the block, district, State and national levels to enable coordination, convergence and visibility across sectors, not to override local priorities. What is centralised is coherence; the decision-making authority remains local. This corrects fragmentation without undermining decentralisation.

Claims that the reform was pushed through without consultation are equally inconsistent with the record. The Bill was preceded by extensive consultations with State governments, technical workshops and multi-stakeholder

discussions. Core design features – village planning structures, convergence mechanisms and digital governance systems were shaped by feedback from States and by lessons drawn from years of implementation.

An increase in allocations, equity The broader premise that the employment guarantee was systematically weakened over the past decade does not align with facts. Budgetary allocations increased from 33,000 crore in 2013-14 to 286,000 crore in 2024-25. Person days generated rose from 1,660 crore in the period up to 2013-14 to 3,210 crore thereafter. Central funds released increased from 2.13 lakh crore to 8.53 lakh crore, and completed works expanded from 153 lakh to 862 lakh. Women’s participation rose from 48% to 56.73%. Over 99% of fund transfer orders are now generated on time, and nearly 99% of active workers are linked to the Aadhaar Payment Bridge. These trends point to sustained commitment and improved delivery, not neglect.

What became evident over time, however, was that implementation experience had also revealed structural weaknesses in the earlier framework itself-episodic employment, weak enforceability of unemployment allowance, fragmented asset creation and persistent scope for duplication and ghost entries. These weaknesses were visible on the ground during drought years, migration spikes and periods of disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fiscal restructuring under the new Act is also mischaracterised as abdication. The central government’s contribution is increasing – the provision for the Centre’s share rises from 86,000 crore to nearly 295,000 crore, underscoring continued and enhanced support for rural employment. The 60:40 funding model follows the long-established structure of centrally sponsored schemes, while the northeastern and Himalayan States and Jammu and Kashmir are accorded a differential 90:10 ratio. Far from signalling fiscal withdrawal, this framework reinforces shared responsibility and accountability.

Equity is ensured through rule-based normative allocation, with State-wise allocations determined on objective parameters prescribed in the Rules. States are treated not as mere implementing agencies but as partners in development, empowered to notify and operationalise their own schemes within the statutory framework. Flexibility is explicitly preserved: during natural disasters, or other extraordinary situations, States may recommend special relaxations, which includes expansion of permissible works and temporary enhancement of employment. Rule-based allocation and contextual flexibility are thus balanced in a manner consistent with cooperative federalism.

The Act empowers States to notify, in advance, periods aggregating to 60 days in a financial year covering peak sowing and harvesting seasons during which works shall not be undertaken. Differentiated notifications may be issued at the level of districts, blocks, or gram panchayats based on agro-climatic conditions, ensuring that the enhanced employment guarantee complements agricultural operations.

The UPA’s record From its very first tenure, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government failed to match rhetoric with delivery under MGNREGA. While the Congress manifesto promised “at least 100 days of work at a real wage of 100 per day”, the government capped wages at 100 as early as 2009 and kept them frozen for years, ignoring inflation and rising rural distress. The Centre openly admitted that States were acting arbitrarily under the scheme and justified the wage freeze by blaming State governments for ‘indiscriminate increases’. This admission itself exposed a serious governance failure: the Congress-led Centre was unable to control even its own State governments, allowing MGNREGA to become vulnerable to misuse, fake job cards, and financial leakages.

The UPA’s second term saw a steady decline in commitment to the scheme. Budgetary

allocations were cut from 240,100 crore in 2010-11 to 33,000 crore by 2012-13, despite growing demand from States. In a parliamentary reply in 2013, Minister of State Rajeev Shukla acknowledged that employment under MGNREGA had fallen sharply from 7.55 crore workers in 2010-11 to just 6.93 crore by November 2013. Delayed fund releases, lack of transparency in payments, and administrative apathy discouraged workers from seeking employment, directly undermining the legal guarantee promised under the Act.

The Comptroller and Auditor General’s 2013 report laid bare the true state of MGNREGA during the UPA years. It highlighted widespread corruption and mismanagement: over 4.33 lakh fake or defective job cards, thousands of crores lost to unaccounted withdrawals and irregular work, delayed or denied wages in 23 States, and poor record-keeping in more than half of India’s gram panchayats. States with the highest concentration of rural poor– Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra used only about 20% of allocated funds, proving that the scheme failed precisely where it was needed most.

To frame the debate as a choice between welfare and development is to pose a false dichotomy. Welfare, when anchored in a guaranteed livelihood, and development, when anchored in durable rural infrastructure and productivity, are not competing objectives but interdependent ones. The real decision was whether to freeze a framework that often under-delivered, or to reform it into a modern, enforceable, and integrated employment guarantee that advances welfare through development. The new Act preserves the legal right to work, expands entitlements, strengthens worker protections, and corrects structural weaknesses revealed through years of implementation. This is not demolition, but a process of renewal grounded in experience.

*The author is Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, and Rural Development, Government of India.*

## Transforming Energy Into Strength: SHANTI’s Vision For Viksit Bharat



Dr Jitendra Singh

When the monsoon first touches the Deccan, a million tiny rivulets knit themselves into rivers. It is not a thunderclap that turns water into force; it is patient joining—stream to stream, village to village—until the flow is confident enough to light a city. India’s journey with the atom has felt like that: quiet channels of science converging over decades, now gathering into a river strong enough to power a data centre at midnight, sterilise a meal in the afternoon, and help a clinician save a child by evening.

With the introduction of the SHANTI Bill—the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025—we are shaping the riverbed so that this flow reaches every home, industry and institution that needs dependable, clean energy and life enhancing applications.

To understand why this moment matters, we must begin with the context. Before 2014, India’s nuclear framework was anchored in two separate statutes: the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, which guided development and control, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, which provided a no fault compensation regime. Each served its time; each also reflected an era when nuclear capability was primarily a sovereign effort, with very limited pathways for the broader ecosystem—manufacturing, finance, insurance, startups, and advanced research—to participate. SHANTI draws these strands together, repealing both laws and replacing them with a single, modern architecture—in one stroke

conferring statutory status on our regulator, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), defining roles and responsibilities with clarity, and opening responsible avenues for public private participation while reserving sensitive functions to the Government.

Comparison tells us how far the river has widened. In the past decade India has achieved self reliance across the nuclear fuel cycle and carried the programme responsibly; now we are ready to scale—towards a national goal of 100 gigawatt (GW) nuclear capacity by 2047, adding reliable baseload power to support AI, quantum computing, indigenous semiconductor fabrication, and large scale data research. The Bill codifies this readiness: it creates a unified licensing and safety authorisation regime; it sets graded liability for operators— 3,000 crore for the largest reactors, down to 100 crore for smaller reactors and fuel cycle facilities—so innovation such as small reactors and small modular reactors (SMRs) can proceed with proportionate safeguards. It also establishes a Nuclear Liability Fund for situations where compensation exceeds the operator’s cap, and provides recourse to the international Convention on Supplementary Compensation—because compassion must be as scalable as technology.

Change, in the most meaningful sense, is what the ordinary citizen can feel. In healthcare, nuclear medicine has moved from promise to practice: targeted therapies for childhood blood cancers and prostate malignancies now flow from centres such as Tata Memorial, turning isotopes into instruments of healing. We have made headway in a decade; we are liberalising research pathways so that capable private institutes can add their ingenuity to national capacity. In food and agriculture, radiation technologies already help preserve produce, extend shelf life, and ensure safety; SHANTI recognises radiation facilities and generating equipment, bringing clarity and security to their everyday use—whether in a hospital’s therapy wing or a factory’s quality line.

Let me explain some of the terms we will live

with. A “nuclear incident” is an occurrence (or related series) that causes nuclear damage—or, despite reasonable preventive steps, poses a grave, imminent risk of doing so. “Nuclear damage” is broader than before: it includes loss of life or injury (including long term health impact), loss or damage to property, environmental restoration costs, loss of income linked to environmental use, and the costs of preventive and mitigation measures. A “safety authorisation” is written permission from the AERB; it is what ensures that radiation equipment, radioisotopes, and facilities that expose individuals to ionising radiation are designed, sited, operated and de-commissioned under standards that put safety first—always.

Safety is not a slogan; it is a discipline with numbers and routines. India’s operating plants are inspected every three months during construction and every six months in operation; licences are renewed every five years; the International Atomic Energy Agency benchmarks our parameters, and the AERB’s statutory status now gives it sharper teeth. Radiation is measured in microsieverts: the annual public limit is 1,000 µSv, while emissions at our stations are a tiny fraction—for instance, Koodankulam’s is around 0.002 of that unit, Tarapur around 0.2—evidence that design and operation keep doses well below thresholds. Seismic wisdom is built in: eastern and western coastal sites are sited far from high risk zones—hundreds to over a thousand kilometres away—because geography, too, must be engineered into safety.

What changes, then, in the citizen’s daily life? First, power you can trust—24x7, low carbon, and not hostage to the weather. When a textile cluster adds an SMR to its energy mix, it stabilises looms and livelihoods; when a district hospital relies on uninterrupted power for imaging, radiotherapy, and digital records, a patient’s anxiety is reduced to the one thing no law can cure—waiting time. SHANTI’s graded liability regime reduces barriers for smaller investors to build such plants while maintaining strict responsibility, and its unified rules simplify the

journey from design to operation.

Second, better redress when things go wrong. The Bill creates an Atomic Energy Redressal Advisory Council—comprised of the AEC Chairperson, BARC Director, AERB Chairperson, and CEA Chairperson—to hear review applications and facilitate conciliation with technical depth. It designates Claims Commissioners within thirty days of a notified incident to adjudicate compensation swiftly, and empowers the Government to constitute a Nuclear Damage Claims Commission for severe cases with quasi judicial powers modeled on civil courts—but guided by natural justice for speed and sensitivity. This is justice engineered for emergencies.

Third, a secure, transparent ecosystem. Restricted information provisions protect sensitive data—about sites, materials, designs—without choking legitimate public outreach on safety. The Government retains exclusive control of enrichment, reprocessing of spent fuel, heavy water production, and isotopic separations; all spent fuel is cooled and ultimately delivered back to Government custody—never handled by private operators—so long term stewardship remains a sovereign function. At the same time, research, design and innovation are exempted from licensing (with safety and national security caveats), so startups and universities can explore prototypes, sensors, AI enabled monitoring, and advanced materials that make reactors safer and radiation uses more precise.

Our journey has also learned from adjacent sectors. When we opened space to private participation five years ago, a fledgling economy grew to \$8 billion, with over 300 startups and a trajectory to quintuple within a decade. We expect a similar confidence effect here: alongside SHANTI, we have announced missions for SMRs with 20,000 crore earmarked, and a 1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation fund to catalyse private sector across domains. Nuclear energy will not be a solitary silo; it will be a node in India’s wider innovation surge.

Some worry about liability and courts; SHANTI is explicit. Operator carries the liability with caps

grated by installation, backed by mandatory insurance or financial security; beyond the cap, the Nuclear Liability Fund and, if needed, international supplementary compensation pool can be tapped. Civil courts will not be clogged with technical claims; specialised redressal commission will adjudicate, with appeals routed to the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (augmented with nuclear technical members) and, ultimately, to the Supreme Court. The intent is not to bypass justice, but to deliver it with speed, expertise and dignity.

And some fear sovereignty might be diluted; the opposite is true. Source and fissile materials remain under Government surveillance and accounting; uranium and thorium mining above notified grades is reserved to Government entities; acquisition rights in sensitive cases vest in the Centre; and emergency powers allow the Government to assume control across facilities and materials if the nation so demands. Sovereignty, safety, and scale reinforce each other.

In the end, a law is only as alive as the people it serves. I picture a small town whose street lights no longer flicker at midnight because a nearby reactor hums steadily; a farmer whose irradiated onions fetch a fairer price after a longer shelf life; a mother watching a linear accelerator calibrate a life-saving dose; a young engineer writing an algorithm that catches an anomaly before it becomes an incident. That is the India SHANTI seeks to midwife: Viksit Bharat powered by clean, reliable energy, protected by robust regulation, and propelled by the ingenuity of its citizens.

Rivers do not argue their way to the sea; they find it. With SHANTI, India’s nuclear river has found its course—safe, sovereign, and generous enough to carry every citizen with it.

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



# A Year Of Big-Ticket Reforms

While India celebrates former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s birth anniversary as Good Governance Day, it is worth noting that 2025 has witnessed some of the Modi government’s most decisive, big-ticket governance reforms.

Tuhin A. Sinha

While India celebrates former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary as Good Governance Day, it is worth noting that 2025 has witnessed some of the Modi government's most decisive, big-ticket governance reforms. These reforms only reinforce the Prime Minister's commitment to raise the governance bar and expedite India's 2047 goals. Good Governance Day, marked every December 25 since 2014, honours the legacy of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, one of India's most revered leaders and a founding figure of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Vajpayee, born in 1924, exemplified principles of accountability, transparency, and inclusive growth during his tenure as Prime Minister from 1998 to 2004. His administration pioneered initiatives like the Golden Quadrilateral highway project and telecom reforms, setting a benchmark for efficient governance. The same ethos of “Sushasan” (good governance) have underpinned the Modi government's reform agenda, transforming abstract ideals into concrete policies that prioritize citizen welfare, economic resilience, and systemic efficiency. 2025 emerged as a year of “reform blitz” for the Modi government, with over a dozen major bills passed in Parliament to turbo charge the economy amid global challenges like potential US tariffs and geopolitical uncertainties. These reforms, spanning nuclear energy, insurance, securities markets, labour laws, rural employment, and Waqf property management, were designed to unlock hundreds of billions in investments, simplify compliance, and position India as a global economic powerhouse.

By consolidating outdated laws, enhancing transparency, and opening sectors to private and foreign participation, the government aimed to boost GDP growth, create jobs, and achieve the targets of “Viksit Bharat” (Developed India) by 2047. Critics argued some changes diluted worker rights or increased government oversight, but proponents hailed them as decisive steps to correct historical wrongs, formalize informal sectors, and shield the economy from external shocks. A decoding of some of these reforms only underscores their importance in the country's journey ahead. One of the most contentious



yet corrective reforms of 2025 was the Waqf (Amendment) Act, passed in April, which overhauled the Waqf Act of 1995 and its 2013 amendments.

The 1995 Act had granted Waqf Boards unchecked powers to declare properties as Waqf, often leading to arbitrary claims on government, private, and even non-Muslim lands. The 2013 amendments exacerbated this by introducing “Waqf by user” – a provision allowing properties to be deemed Waqf based on historical usage, without formal documentation, enabling illegal land grabs estimated to affect millions of acres. The 2025 Act rectifies these wrongs by abolishing “Waqf by user,” ensuring only properties with valid deeds or explicit dedication can be classified as Waqf, thus preventing retrospective claims on government lands. This formalization paves the way for transparent management, including digitization of records and inclusion of non-Muslims in Waqf Councils for broader oversight.

By ending unchecked encroachments, the reform safeguards heritage while promoting socio-economic utilization of Waqf assets, potentially unlocking value for community welfare and reducing litigation. Implemented nationwide from 21 November 2025, the four new Labour Codes – on Wages, Social Security, Industrial Relations, and

Occupational Safety – consolidated 29 previous laws into a streamlined framework of four comprehensive labour codes, marking a historic overhaul. These codes enhance social security by mandating Provident Fund (PF), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), insurance, and gratuity for all workers, including those in unorganized sectors. A boon for gig and platform workers, the Social Security Code requires aggregators to contribute to a welfare fund, providing first-time coverage like accident benefits and pensions.

To boost women's workforce participation, provisions include extended maternity leave, creche facilities, and flexible work hours, addressing barriers that have kept female labour force participation below 40 per cent. Uniform minimum wages across industries and simplified compliance (reducing forms from hundreds to a few) make it easier for businesses to hire, potentially creating millions of jobs while protecting vulnerable workers from exploitation. The codes' focus on inclusivity positions them as a catalyst for a more equitable labour market. Enacted in December 2025, the VB–G RAM G Bill replaced the 2005 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with a modernized framework aligned with India's 2047 development goals. MGNREGA's 100-day guarantee often suffered

from delays, corruption, and limited focus on asset creation; the new Bill expands it to 125 days of wage employment per household, introduces Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards for seamless access, and raises administrative spending to 9 per cent for better tech-driven monitoring. It emphasizes livelihood security through skill-linked works and infrastructure projects, with seasonal pauses to align with agricultural cycles.

By capping funding and integrating digital tools, the reform curbs leakages and shifts from mere wage provision to sustainable rural empowerment. This overhaul is expected to enhance rural resilience, reduce migration, and contribute to balanced economic growth. The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, passed in December 2025, marked a seismic shift by allowing private and foreign firms full participation in India's nuclear sector for the first time since independence. Previously monopolized by state entities, the sector faced funding shortages and slow expansion. This single reform unlocks \$214 billion in investments. It streamlines regulations, promotes clean energy to meet net-zero targets, and bolsters energy security amid rising demands.

Safety remains paramount with enhanced oversight, positioning nuclear power as a cornerstone for sustainable development and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. The Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, approved in December 2025, raised Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in insurance from 74 to 100 per cent, fulfilling a long-pending demand to infuse capital and achieve “Insurance for All by 2047.” With penetration at just 3.8 per cent of GDP, the sector needed a boost; the reform reduces capital requirements for reinsurers from Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 1,000 crore, encouraging more players and innovation in products like micro-insurance. It mandates full premium reinvestment in India, addressing data privacy concerns while spurring job creation and skill development. This liberalization is projected to deepen market penetration, lower premiums through competition, and fortify financial resilience for millions. Introduced and passed in December 2025, the Securities Markets Code Bill unified three legacy laws – the

SEBI Act (1992), Depositories Act (1996), and Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act (1956) – into a single, contemporary code.

Outdated regulations had hampered efficiency; the new code strengthens the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) by expanding its board to 15 members, enhancing accountability, and bolstering investor protection through stricter penalties and faster dispute resolution. It simplifies compliance for intermediaries, promotes market participation, and integrates digital tools for transparency. This reform shields India's booming stock markets from volatility, attracts foreign inflows, and aligns with global standards, fostering a robust financial ecosystem. Moreover, In August 2025, PM Modi during his Independence Day speech, announced a dedicated Task Force for Next-Generation Reforms led by former Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba.

It aims to accelerate economic growth, slash red tape, and modernize governance by repealing obsolete laws, simplifying compliance, digitizing approvals, and decriminalizing minor offences building on prior elimination of over 40,000 compliances. Complementing this, the government advanced key trade pacts: India-UK CETA (July), India-EFTA TEPA (October, \$100B investments), India- New Zealand and India- Oman (December). Additionally, “GST 2.0” reforms (September) simplified rates to mainly 5 and 18 per cent, cut taxes on essentials and insurance, and boosted MSME refunds to stimulate consumption and growth.

These measures reflect conviction-driven reforms to insulate the economy and attract investments. The Modi government's 2025 reforms represent a decisive push towards systemic transformation, echoing Vajpayee's governance legacy while adapting to contemporary needs. From curbing land grabs to empowering gig workers and opening strategic sectors, these changes promise sustained growth, job creation, and equity. As India navigates 2026, the true test will be in implementation, but 2025 undoubtedly laid a resilient foundation for a pacy future.

The author is a national spokesperson of BJP and an author

Source: The Statesman

## Celebrating 25th Anniversary: Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) Transforming Rural Connectivity In India

### Press Information Bureau

Road infrastructure constitutes a fundamental pillar of rural development, enabling access to economic and social services, enhancing agricultural incomes, creating productive employment opportunities, and making a significant contribution to poverty reduction. Celebrating 25 years in 2025, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) stands out as one of India's most impactful rural infrastructure initiatives. Launched on 25 December 2000 to ensure all-weather connectivity to previously unconnected rural habitations, the programme has emerged as a key enabler of agricultural growth, employment generation, improved access to education and health services, and poverty alleviation. Over time, PMGSY has evolved into a key driver of socio-economic transformation, strengthening market integration, facilitating better price realization for farmers, and supporting both farm and non-farm livelihoods. Collectively, these outcomes underscore the programme's central role in advancing inclusive and sustainable rural development.

### From Connectivity to Consolidation: Phased Progress under PMGSY

Since its inception, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has sanctioned a total of 8,25,114 km of rural roads, of which 7,87,520 km have been completed, reflecting nearly 95 per cent physical progress as of December 2025.

Budgetary allocations to the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in recent years reflect the government's sustained emphasis on strengthening rural road connectivity. For the financial year 2025–26, the programme has been allocated Rs. 19,000 crore, underscoring the continued support for enhancing rural infrastructure, ensuring all-weather road connectivity, and boosting economic opportunities in rural areas.

### Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) Phase – I (2000)

Launched in 2000, Phase I of the programme served as the flagship initiative to provide all-weather road connectivity to eligible, previously unconnected rural habitations. It established the foundation for universal rural access by linking villages with markets, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities. Road connectivity projects for a total of 1,63,339 rural habitations have been sanctioned nationwide under Phase I.

### PMGSY Phase - II (2013)

Introduced in 2013, Phase II of the programme focused on strengthening and consolidating the existing rural road network. It prioritized the upgradation of economically important routes linking rural markets, growth centers, and service hubs, with the objective of improving transportation efficiency and accelerating rural economic development.

Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas (RCPLWEA) – (2016)

Launched in 2016, the road connectivity project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Area (RCPLWEA) is a targeted intervention for infrastructure development covering 44 most severely affected Left Wing Extremism (LWE) districts and adjoining areas across nine States- Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

The scheme serves a dual objective: Strengthen security operations by enhancing the mobility of security forces.

Promote socio-economic development by improving access to markets, educational institutions, and healthcare services in remote and underserved regions.

### PMGSY Phase III- (2019)

Launched in 2019, Phase III of the programme focuses on upgrading 1,25,000 km of Through Routes and Major Rural Links to strengthen connectivity between rural habitations and key socio-economic institutions, including Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), higher secondary schools, and healthcare facilities. As of December 2025, out of the total target, 1,22,393 km of road have been sanctioned, and 1,01,623 km (83%) have been constructed nationwide. The PMGSY-III has significantly improved mobility, enhanced access to education and healthcare, facilitated better integration with agricultural markets, increased employment opportunities, and contributed to broader rural socio-economic transformation.

### PMGSY Phase – IV (2024)

A total road length of 62,500 kilometres is proposed to be constructed during the implementation period from FY 2024–25 to 2028–29, with an overall financial outlay of Rs. 70,125 crore. Phase IV of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) aims to provide all-weather road connectivity to 25,000 unconnected rural habitations, based on Census

2011 population criteria:

Habitats with a population of 500 and above in plain areas,

250 and above in North-Eastern and Himalayan States/UTs, and

Habitations located in special category areas, including Tribal (Schedule V) regions, Aspirational Districts/Blocks, and Desert areas.

### Application of Advanced Technologies in Rural Road Development

The Government's systematic measures have significantly improved the quality, durability, and sustainability of rural roads constructed under PMGSY. Progress and performance of PMGSY road projects are closely monitored using advanced digital technologies and online platforms, ensuring greater efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

### Online Management, Monitoring, and Accounting System (OMMAS)

The Online Management, Monitoring, and Accounting System (OMMAS) enables real-time monitoring of all works under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, ensuring that physical and financial progress remains aligned with the targets assigned to states. To further strengthen the Project Management Information System (PMIS), it has been integrated within OMMAS to facilitate more effective management of construction activities for each road sanctioned under PMGSY-III.

OMMAS also supports quality assurance by capturing assessments carried out by independent quality monitors. Inspections conducted by National Quality Monitors (NQMs) and State Quality Monitors (SQMs) are uploaded through the Quality Monitoring System (QMS) mobile application, along with geo-tagged photographs from the field, and are subsequently reflected on the OMMAS portal. This framework enables real-time quality monitoring and enhances transparency in the delivery of durable rural infrastructure.

### e-MARG (electronic Maintenance of Rural Roads)

The Electronic Maintenance of PMGSY Roads (e-MARG) platform has been implemented across all States to ensure systematic monitoring of PMGSY road maintenance for a period of five years from the date of completion, corresponding to the Defect Liability Period (DLP). With the introduction

of e-MARG as a dedicated software module for maintenance payments, contractor payments during the DLP are now directly linked to road performance and quality outcomes. This performance-based contract management system has significantly strengthened accountability, improved maintenance standards, and enhanced the long-term durability of PMGSY assets.

### Use of Global Positioning System (GPS)

To strengthen transparency and accountability in road construction, the mandatory installation of a GPS-enabled Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) on all vehicles, machinery, and equipment deployed by contractors and Programme Implementation Units (PIUs) for PMGSY III works has been enforced since May 2022. This mechanism enables continuous monitoring of equipment deployment and operational duration, thereby ensuring adherence to prescribed construction processes and contributing to the attainment of stipulated road quality standards.

### D. Robust Technical Standards

The adoption of environmentally sustainable materials and advanced construction technologies in road development is actively promoted. Drawing on international best practices and evidence from indigenous research, the Indian Roads Congress (IRC) has formulated new standards and periodically revised existing guidelines to facilitate the adoption of such innovations. Accordingly, a wide range of eco-friendly materials, including fly ash, slag, construction and demolition waste, waste plastic, crumb rubber modified bitumen, geosynthetics, bio-bitumen, and bio-engineering measures, are being deployed in national Highway projects, subject to their availability and technical feasibility.

### Innovation and Climate Resilience

The adoption of innovative construction technologies, including the utilization of waste plastic, cold mix techniques, and Full Depth Reclamation, has enhanced the durability of rural roads while mitigating environmental impacts. As of July 2025, these sustainable methods have been employed in the construction of more than 1.24 lakh Km of roads, reflecting a strategic shift towards resilient and eco-friendly rural infrastructure development.

### Key Takeaways

- Since Its Inception, 8,25,114 km of rural roads have been sanctioned under PMGSY, with 7,87,520 km completed.
- Under PMGSY-III, 1,22,393 km were sanctioned, and 1,01,623 km were constructed.
- Under PMGSY-IV (2024–29), 25,000 habitations to be connected through 62,500 km of roads with an outlay of Rs 70,125 crore.
- Real-time monitoring through OMMAS, e-MARG, GPS tracking, and a three-tier quality system ensures accountability and durability.

### Three-Tier Quality Monitoring

To ensure the quality and long-term durability of rural roads, a robust three-tier Quality Monitoring System has been institutionalized.

Tier 1: Field-level quality checks by the executing agencies.

Tier 2: Inspections by independent State Quality Monitors (SQMs).

Tier 3: Surprise audits by National Quality Monitors (NQMs) deputed by the Ministry.

All Progress and quality assessments are monitored in real-time through the Online Management, Monitoring, and Accounting System (OMMAS).

### Conclusion

As the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) marks 25 years of transformative impact in 2025, it stands as a defining pillar of India's rural development journey. With nearly 96 per cent of the sanctioned rural road length completed, the programme has significantly enhanced rural accessibility, strengthened market linkages, improved access to education and healthcare, and accelerated inclusive economic growth. The phased evolution of PMGSY, from ensuring basic connectivity to consolidating networks, developing strategic rural links, and advancing universal last-mile access under Phase IV. The integration of advanced digital monitoring systems such as OMMAS, e-MARG, GPS-enabled tracking, and a robust three-tier quality assurance mechanism has ensured transparency, accountability, durability, and climate resilience. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, PMGSY extends beyond infrastructure creation to promote environmental sustainability, poverty reduction, and inclusive rural transformation.



## Jammu Division launches e-auction for advertising rights on Vande Bharat trains

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 25: Jammu Division of Northern Railway undertakes various initiatives from time to time to enhance passenger amenities and increase non-fare revenue. Under the leadership of Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Uchit Singhal, another unique initiative was taken with the successful conduct of the first-ever e-auction for the allocation of advertising rights on the inter-coach sliding doors of all Vande Bharat trains of the Jammu Division on December 24.

Earlier, in September, the LED screens of all Vande Bharat trains of the Jammu Division were allocated for advertising for a period of five years. This will generate revenue of approximately Rs. 1.3 crore for the railways over the next five years.

The recently concluded e-auction, which was held for the use of advertising space on the interior inter-coach sliding doors of Vande Bharat Express trains, was also successfully completed. Through this historic e-auction, advertising rights have been allocated for a period of three years. This will not only increase the division's revenue but also strengthen the division's vision of improving the passenger experience and providing effective advertising opportunities to local businesses.

The details of this e-auction are as follows:

1. Vande Bharat Train No. 26401/26402 will generate non-fare revenue of approximately Rs. 12.74 lakh for the railways



over three years.

2. Vande Bharat Train No. 26403/26404 will generate non-fare revenue of approximately Rs. 13.73 lakh for the railways over three years.

3. Vande Bharat Train No. 22478/22477 will generate non-fare revenue of approximately Rs. 17.70 lakh for the railways over three years.

The railways will receive a total revenue of approximately Rs. 44,17,920 over a period of three years. Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Mr. Uchit Singhal, commenting on the e-auction, said, "This reflects a unique initiative, demonstrating that the railways are exploring new and innovative ways to generate revenue. The Vande Bharat train is a premium service for passengers, and it offers a large and exclusive market for advertising brands. This step is in line with the broader policy of Indian Railways to monetize assets and expand alternative revenue channels. This initiative will provide passengers with useful information along with engaging advertisements, making their journey even more interesting and enjoyable."

## King Charles III calls for kindness, unity in Christmas message amid global conflicts

PTI

London, Dec 25: On a Christmas Day when the war in Ukraine casts a shadow over Europe, concerns over immigration divide societies, and some politicians fan anger and resentment, Britain's King Charles III called on people to focus on kindness instead of conflict.

Delivering his annual holiday address from Westminster Abbey, Charles said Thursday the Christmas story of wise men and shepherds travelling through the night to find their saviour shows how we can find strength in the "companionship and kindness of others."

"To this day, in times of uncertainty, these ways of living are treasured by all the great faiths and provide us with deep wells of hope, of resilience in the face of adversity," Charles said. "Peace through forgiveness, simply getting to know our neighbours and by showing respect to one another, creating new friendships."

"In this, with the great diversity of our communities, we can find the strength to ensure that right triumphs over wrong," he added.

The speech, which concluded with a Christmas carol sung by a Ukrainian choir, comes as European leaders rally support for Ukraine amid signs that US President Donald Trump is losing patience with America's traditional European allies.

At home, British politics have become increasingly



bitter as Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government struggles to control unauthorised migration and bolster creaking public services.

Charles, the titular head of the Church of England, chose Westminster Abbey as the site of his Christmas Day broadcast to underscore the theme of pilgrimage that ran through the speech. The abbey, known as the site of coronations and royal weddings, is also the focus of an annual pilgrimage honouring Edward the Confessor, an early king of England who was canonized as a saint in 1161.

"Pilgrimage is a word less used today, but it is of particular significance for our modern world, and especially at Christmas," he said. "This is about journeying forward into the future, while also journeying back to remember the past and learn from its lessons."

Charles and his family made their own pilgrimage on foot earlier in the day to St. Mary

Magdalene Church on the king's private Sandringham Estate, about 100 miles north of London.

Charles and Queen Camilla, along with Prince William and his wife, Kate, and their children, Princes George and Louis and Princess Charlotte, and extended family walked to the church and greeted the crowds of people after the service.

Events earlier this year marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II underscored the need to learn from the past, Charles said. While there are fewer and fewer living veterans of that conflict, we must remember the courage and sacrifice of those who fought the war and the way communities came together "in the face of such great challenge," he said.

"These are the values which have shaped our country and the Commonwealth," he said. "As we hear of division, both at home and abroad, they are the values of which we must never lose sight."

## Jammu Railway staff honoured for honesty, dedication in passenger service



KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 25: The excellent and conscientious work done by the ticket checking staff of the Jammu Division of Northern Railway was specially appreciated by the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singhal. The ticket checking staff demonstrated honesty by returning a passenger's luggage that had been left behind at the station.

Highlighting the incident, on December 23, a passenger traveling in coach C1 of train number 26403 Vande Bharat, which runs from Srinagar to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra, forgot his bag at Srinagar Railway Station. He informed the ticket checking staff on the train, Dinesh Kumar, about his missing bag.

Taking immediate action, Dinesh Kumar informed the Srinagar Station Superintendent, who located the passenger's luggage and deposited it in his office. The

next day, December 24, the ticket checking staff, while on duty on train number 26402 from Srinagar to Katra, brought the passenger's luggage with them from Srinagar and handed it over to the passenger at the Ticket Inspector's office in Katra after completing the verification process.

The passenger thanked the railway and the ticket checking staff, saying that the bag contained some important documents and money, which he received on time.

Commenting on this exemplary act, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singhal said, "The ticket checking staff of Jammu Division has set an example of dedication to duty, further enhancing the image of the railways. The dedication of the railway employees and their spirit of service to the passengers is inspiring. The railway is proud to honor such employees, and their actions serve as an example for other employees."

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Article 370 revocation

bronze statues of Vajpayee, Mukherjee and Upadhyaya. It also houses a state-of-the-art, lotus-shaped museum showcasing their lives, ideas and contributions to nation-building.

PM Modi was accompanied by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and other senior leaders.

After the inauguration, the Prime Minister toured the museum and viewed exhibits highlighting key milestones in the lives of the leaders commemorated at the site.

He said initiatives like the Rashtriya Purna Sthal reflected the government's commitment to national unity, respect for historical figures and the transformation of neglected spaces into enduring symbols of collective inspiration. (KNO)

### Art 370 abrogation

committed to the welfare of the poor and marginalised, a philosophy inspired by Upadhyaya's concept of "Antyodaya".

He said welfare schemes were now reaching the grassroots in Jammu and Kashmir, helping improve access to housing, healthcare, employment and basic services.

Highlighting broader national developments, Singh said India's global standing had improved significantly under the PM Modi led government.

He said India was now being heard with seriousness on the international stage and had emerged as one of the fastest-growing major economies.

The Rashtriya Purna Sthal, built over 65 acres at a cost of around Rs 230 crore, is dedicated to leaders including Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Syama Prasad Mukherjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya. Singh said preserving the legacy and ideas of such leaders was essential for guiding future generations.

He said the ideals of national unity, social harmony and development espoused by these leaders continued to shape policy decisions, including those related to Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

### Dulhasti Stage-II

Corporation entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on January 03, 2021, for execution of Dulhasti Stage-II hydroelectric project on Build-own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) basis for a period of 40 years on Chenab river in Kishtwar district.

The estimated project cost is Rs 327.45 crore. Of this, Rs 4564.57 lakh has been kept for the Environment Management Plan (EMP) and pollution control measures.

While recommending environmental clearance, the EAC directed that a study should be undertaken five years after commissioning of the project to assess its impact on the environment. "After 5 years of the commissioning of the project, a study shall be undertaken regarding the impact of the project on the environment. The study shall be undertaken by an independent agency," reads the record note of the meeting.

It also directed NHPC and Chenab Valley Power Projects Limited (CVPPL) to undertake a study, through a reputed government research institute, to formulate a strategy for sustainable environmental management of the Chenab River Basin. The study will cover aspects such as scientifically robust environmental flow regimes, restoration and maintenance of channel

morphology and sediment processes, protection and conservation of aquatic and riparian biodiversity, livelihood and community concerns, and integration of Marusudar River management within the Chenab basin cascade framework. (KNO)

### India becoming fastest

PM Modi's leadership dreams of Mahamana and Atal Ji are now being realized. India's emergence as the world's fastest-growing economy, is the testament to this transformation."

"For the first time in history, we see a strong and decisive government fulfilling the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. With the revival of ancient culture, upliftment of the poorest of the poor and transformation of villages into centers of dynamism, PM Modi is bringing the ideals of these great men to life," the Lieutenant Governor said.

While paying rich tributes to Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the occasion of their birth anniversary, he said, "The ideals and vision of Mahamana and Atal Ji for developed India and their message of social harmony, equality and justice will always inspire the people. They are the visionary architects of Modern India."

Notably, this year marks the 164th birth anniversary of Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and the 101st birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted Mahamana Malaviya's unparalleled contribution to India's educational, cultural and industrial advancement.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that Mahamana transformed modern education into a powerful driver of development.

"Mahamana established Banaras Hindu University (BHU) through public mobilization donations. Following his ideals, we have utilized Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to develop infrastructure, and in Jammu and Kashmir, we have laid the foundation for over 1,800 houses for families affected due to Pakistani Shelling during Operation Sindoor and recent natural disasters," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Paying tribute to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Lieutenant Governor said Atal Ji awakened India's inner strength and instilled a sense of self-esteem among fellow Indians on the global stage.

"Atal Ji prioritised good governance and economic development. His impact was universal. His administrative reforms and focus on transparency, accountability, and efficient, citizen-centric service delivery ensured inclusive and rapid development," he said. (KNO)

### India advances towards

Students' Union.

Speaking at his commemoration event in Varanasi, the Lieutenant Governor shed light on the life works of Babu Markandeya Singh. "Babu Markandeya Singh guided the youth with determination, wisdom and dedication. His life is an inspiration, guiding the young generation to contribute in the nation-building

Babu Markandeya Singh was a symbol of purity in politics and his life demonstrates a unique combination of fostering scientific excellence and exhibiting deep commitment to humanity. His life was guided by the principles of Peace, Social Justice, Human Service, Human Dignity," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that Babu

Markandeya Singh Ji was a true disciple of the revered Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Ji.

Mahamana always emphasized skill development, better education, and independent thinking, which he considered essential for socio-economic development and the establishment of a welfare state. Babu Markandeya Singh Ji was a living embodiment of these ideals, and he dedicated his entire life to the progress of society and nation-building, the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that India is moving confidently towards historic growth with clear objectives of sustainable development, capacity building and skill development, equal opportunity for all, to achieve the new frontiers of Knowledge for Innovations and creativity to build intellectual capital.

### HM Shah to inaugurate

among various stakeholders by establishing formal and informal channels for coordinated action against the menace of terrorism in the spirit of 'Whole of the Government approach' and to present substantive inputs for future policy formulation."

"The deliberations and discussions in the two-day conference aim to share experiences and good practices across law enforcement agencies in addressing counter-terrorism (CT) issues and lessons from terror investigations," the official said, adding, "The conference includes sessions on collecting evidence from foreign jurisdictions, digital forensics and data analysis in CT investigations, effective trial management, addressing radicalisation, espionage, and emerging hybrid threats to national security, among other topics related to terrorism."

Additionally, sessions on disrupting terror financing networks—tools, techniques, and case learnings—as well as creating future-ready CT strategies and building institutional capacities to address emerging national security issues have been incorporated."

The conference will be attended by senior police officers from States/UTs, officers from Central agencies/Departments dealing with issues related to Counter Terrorism and experts from related fields such as law, forensics, technology etc. (KNO)

### Christmas celebrated

"The festival is not just a celebration, but a reminder of faith and love in testing times."

Officials ensured elaborate security arrangements and smooth traffic movement around the church, allowing worshippers to attend the services without hindrance. "Everything remained peaceful, people came with warmth in their hearts," an officer posted outside the venue said.

Church authorities expressed gratitude to the administration for its cooperation and to the local community for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect and friendship.

Meanwhile, political leaders extended greetings to the people, wishing peace, joy and harmony for all communities on the blessed occasion of Christmas, as they too were present at Church. (KNO)

### Kashmir records 44 pc

a sharp 488 per cent above normal, while Kulgam and Shopian received lower rainfall than usual at 7 mm and 5.3 mm respectively.

Poonch in Jammu division witnessed a heavy 46 mm, exceeding the normal 5.6 mm by 721 per cent, whereas Kathua and Samba recorded

no rainfall during the week.

The department also said that most stations across Jammu division have experienced negative departures in weekly rainfall ranging from 30 to 100 per cent, whereas in Kashmir, the departure varied widely from deficits of 1 per cent in Anantnag to surpluses exceeding 250 per cent in Kupwara.

Meanwhile, the minimum temperatures remained below normal across UT.

In the Kashmir region, Sonamarg recorded the coldest at minus 73°C, followed by Gulmarg minus 54°C, Pahalgam minus 44°C, Shopian minus 40°C, Pulwama minus 38°C, Zethan Rafiabab minus 32°C, Srinagar Airport minus 34°C, and Pampore minus 25°C.

Budgam minus 23°C, Srinagar minus 22°C, Kupwara minus 20°C, Qazigund minus 18°C, Bandipora minus 14°C, Ganderbal minus 15°C, Anantnag minus 27°C, Kokernag minus 07°C, Kulgam minus 05°C, and Baramulla minus 09°C.

In the Jammu region, Katra recorded 8.4°C, Jammu 8.1°C, Kathua 8.0°C, Jammu Airport 7.3°C, Reasi 7.0°C, Kishtwar 5.2°C, Banihal 4.8°C, Batote 4.7°C, Udhampur 4.6°C, Ramban 4.2°C, Samba 2.9°C, and Rajouri 2.6°C, with Bhaderwah at 0.3°C.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded minus 10.2°C, Kargil minus 9.8°C, and Nubra Valley minus 8.3°C, according to Kashmir Weather.

"No significant precipitation was reported in the past 24 hours, and mainly dry weather is expected over the next 24 hours across Jammu and Kashmir," the Srinagar MeT office said.

"Isolated snowfall is forecast for higher reaches of Kashmir and scattered rain in some areas of the Jammu plains between December 31 and January 1, with improvement thereafter," it added.

Officials advised residents and authorities to remain vigilant about weather developments, especially in higher altitude regions prone to snowfall.

With winter conditions prevailing, the IMD cautioned that temperatures in the upper reaches are expected to fall further, while the plains are likely to remain dry, with only isolated instances of rain or fog affecting visibility. (KNO)

### Year-End 2025:

01-21: 1,042 movements, 86,982 arrivals, 87,724 departures, total 174,706 passengers. Reduced winter operations.

Before and After Pahalgam: A Shift in Air Traffic:

Data shows that until the attack in May, Srinagar Airport maintained full connectivity, including routes to Dehradun and Lucknow. Post-attack, these sectors were temporarily suspended, causing a notable decline in passenger footfall.

In April, the airport handled nearly 4.7 lakh passengers, the year's highest. However, by May, the count dropped by over 64 per cent, to 1.65 lakh, showing the immediate operational impact.

By July, traffic rebounded past 3 lakh, indicating a quick recovery through resumed tourism and steady domestic travel across routes like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chandigarh and Amritsar.

"Operations remained largely stable through the year except for a temporary lull after the Pahalgam incident," an airport official told KNO, adding that airlines, CISF and ATC teams ensured smooth functioning despite the high-altitude weather and operational stress.

Performance overview

From January to December 21, the airport recorded 10,784 arrivals and 10,792 departures, reflecting balanced operations. Passenger arrivals stood at 17,73,325 lakh, while departures reached 17,15,079 lakh. Overall, the airport handled 35.26 lakh passengers in 2025.

Officials further said that ongoing modernisation, including terminal upgrades and digital systems, will enhance capacity in 2026.

Srinagar Airport continues to serve as a vital link for tourism, pilgrimage and trade, anchoring Kashmir's aviation network despite periodic turbulence. (KNO)

### Army revises social

updated.

This move reflects a balanced approach, allowing limited digital access while maintaining strict safeguards against potential breaches, misinformation, or exploitation.

For Instagram and Similar Platforms (including YouTube, X — formerly Twitter — and Quora), army personnel may access these apps solely for viewing and monitoring content. Passive participation is permitted to stay informed or gather general knowledge. No comments, likes, posts, views, or any form of interaction are allowed.

Use of messaging Apps like Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Signal are limited for exchange of unclassified information of a general nature, but strictly limited to known contacts. Users bear full responsibility for verifying the recipient's identity to prevent unintended leaks.

While use of LinkedIn is permitted only for professional purposes, such as uploading resumes or researching potential employers/employees.

The Army has reiterated warnings against using VPNs, torrent sites, cracked software, or anonymous proxies, citing associated security risks.

This policy builds on prior restrictions imposed in 2020, when personnel were directed to delete accounts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram amid concerns over honey-trapping and data leaks linked to foreign intelligence agencies.

The updated rules aim to enable soldiers to remain digitally aware without compromising sensitive information.

Defence sources emphasized that the directive prioritizes vigilance, stating that the responsibility for secure and correct usage ultimately rests with individual users.

The Indian Army's official public information handle @adgpi has not yet posted about the update, but it aligns with ongoing efforts to counter misinformation and adapt to modern digital realities while safeguarding national security. (KNO)

### Pulwama man

which a team reached the spot and took cognizance of the matter.

"The body has been taken for medico-legal formalities to ascertain the cause of death," the official said, identifying the deceased as Younis Nisar, a resident of Pulwama.

Meanwhile, officials said this was the second such incident reported in Srinagar within a few hours, as an unidentified man was found dead near LD Hospital earlier in the day. Investigations have been taken up. (KNO)

### Unidentified man

the official said, adding that his identity and the cause of death are being ascertained.

Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance of the matter. (KNO)



# Nepotism that existed in sports before 2014 has ended; now poor can rise to top levels: PM Modi

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said irregularities in team selection and sports that often happened before 2014 came to an end a decade ago, and now children from even the poorest families can rise to the top levels purely through hard work and talent.

Addressing the ‘Sansad Khel Mahotsav’, a sports and fitness festival aimed at promoting a sporting culture and leadership among the youth, PM Modi said the scale of the Mahotsav is as vast as its impact.

Through this initiative, he said, the nation is discovering thousands of talented sportspersons.

“The festival is steadily emerging as a strong pillar of youth empowerment and nation-building. Another special aspect of the ‘Sansad Khel Mahotsav’ is the way it is playing a transformative role in changing societal mindsets,” he said.

The prime minister said that before 2014,



irregularities in team selection and sports infrastructure often took place in sports.

“Today, those practices have come to an end. Even children from the poorest families can now rise to the highest levels purely through hard work and talent,” he said.

PM Modi also referred to the allocation of more than Rs 3000 crore for the country’s sports budget, which was less than Rs 1200 crore before 2014. He said that through a special scheme, athletes are being provided monthly financial assistance

ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000 each.

“Today, I want to tell every athlete of the country that you are not just playing for your own victory, you are playing for the country, you are playing for the honour and dignity of the tricolour,” he said.

The prime minister also requested all parents to encourage their children to take part in sports and give them opportunities to participate in sporting activities.

Sports is not just a part of learning, it is also important for a healthy body and a healthy mind, he said.

Describing how sports culture is growing in the country, the prime minister said that from every corner of the country, inspiring examples are emerging that motivate the nation.

He said that in some places, differently abled athletes are defying limitations and reaching new heights, while on sports grounds elsewhere, young girls are striving tirelessly to turn their dreams into reality.

“Today, India’s athletes are breaking records, setting new benchmarks, and taking India to new heights on the global sporting map,” he said. PM Modi said that until a few years ago, family members would scold and reprimand the child for playing too much as it was then considered a waste of time. Today, he said, society, and even parents, have realised that playing does not ruin one’s life.

“Now they understand that their children, by excelling in sports, can change not only their own and their family’s fate, but also that of the entire village and

society. Today, opportunities in sports are not limited, but unlimited,” he said.

The prime minister said that in 2030, India will host the Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad and then the eyes of the entire world will be on India. “Not only that, India is also making efforts to host the biggest sports event, that is, the Olympics, in 2036,” he said.

The ‘Sansad Khel Mahotsav’ is a sports and fitness festival aimed at promoting a sporting culture and leadership among the youth. A key objective is to bring the community together through sports and fitness and to take the message of ‘Fit India’ to every home.

The festival features a three-level competition, including games at the village, block/ward, and parliamentary constituency levels. The sports categories include traditional games, football, volleyball, and cricket. The event also includes fun activities like tug of war, lemon spoon race, and sack races to ensure wider participation.

## India entered semiconductor industry a bit late, but it will soon start exporting: Shah



PTI

Bhopal, Dec 25: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said India made a strong but a bit late entry into the semiconductor industry, adding that the country will soon become self-reliant in the sector and start exporting.

He also said the geographical location of Madhya Pradesh is so attractive and its land so fertile that one can earn crores of rupees by investing even a small amount in the state.

Addressing the ‘Abhyudaya Madhya Pradesh Growth Summit’ here, he said, “We have made a strong entry into the semiconductor industry, although a bit late. In no time, we will not only become self-reliant in the semiconductor sector, but will also start exporting it.”

On the occasion, Shah inaugurated as well as performed the groundbreaking ceremony of industrial projects of Rs 2 lakh crore on the occasion of the 101st birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal

Bihar Vajpayee.

Remembering Vajpayee, he said, “Atal ji was a great orator, a sensitive poet, a leader dedicated to public welfare and remained ‘ajataashtru’ (person without enemies) in politics.”

Shah also paid tributes to Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya on his birth anniversary and C Rajagopalachari on his death anniversary.

The Union minister said Madhya Pradesh was once considered a backward state in the field of electricity, but today it has surplus power.

In cleanliness also, the state has left the entire country behind, he said. Shah also inaugurated the Gwalior Fair and dedicated to people the renovation work carried out at the Atal Museum on this occasion.

According to officials, 25,000 beneficiaries and thousands of entrepreneurs and investors are participating in the Growth Summit, organised to mark the birth anniversary of former PM Vajpayee.

These industrial projects will generate 1.93 lakh employment opportunities, an official said.

## FSSAI warns food businesses against labeling herbal infusions as ‘tea’

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 25: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued a stern warning to food business operators against using the word ‘tea’ for herbal infusions and plant-based blends not derived from Camellia sinensis, terming it a case of misbranding and misleading practices under the law.

The directive, issued on December 24, comes after the regulator found several food business operators (FBOs) marketing products, such as ‘Rooibos tea’, ‘herbal tea’ and ‘flower tea’, none of which are obtained from the Camellia sinensis plant. According to FSSAI regulations, the term ‘tea’ can only be used on packaging and labelling if the beverage is derived from Camellia sinensis.

This includes variants such as Kangra tea, green tea and instant tea. “Such plant-based or herbal infusions or blends, which are not derived from Camellia sinensis, do not qualify to be named as tea,” the FSSAI clarified.

The violation, it said, amounts to misleading and misbranding under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. The regulator has directed all FBOs, including those engaged in e-commerce, manufacturing, packing, marketing, import or sale of such products, to comply with food safety regulations.

## Unnao rape case: Plea filed in SC against suspension of Sengar's jail term

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 25: A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging a Delhi High Court order suspending the jail term of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case.

The petition filed by advocates Anjale Patel and Pooja Shilpkar has sought a stay on the high court order.

They contended that the HC passed the order without considering that the trial court observed that Sengar must remain in jail for the rest of his natural life.

The HC has committed a grave error in law as well as on facts in granting bail/suspension of sentence to Sengar despite his serious criminal antecedents and his established involvement in the heinous offences of rape, they said.

“The High Court failed to appreciate the material evidence relied upon



by the prosecution which clearly demonstrates the barbarity and brutality of the accused, coupled with his demonstrated muscle power, financial influence and criminal propensity, as evidenced from the fact that even while the victim’s father was under judicial custody, the accused orchestrated and executed victim’s father murder to silence the family and frustrate the due course of justice,” the plea said.

On December 23, the HC suspended the jail term of Sengar, who is serving

life imprisonment in the Unnao rape case, saying he has already served seven years and five months in prison.

Sengar’s sentence has been suspended by the high court till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case. He has challenged a December 2019 trial court verdict in the case. He will, however, 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.

Imposing several conditions, the HC directed Sengar, who kidnapped and raped the survivor when she was a minor, to furnish a personal bond of Rs 15 lakh with three sureties of the like amount.

It also directed him not to come within a 5-km radius of the survivor’s residence in Delhi and not to threaten her or her mother. Violation of any of the conditions would lead to the cancellation of bail, the HC said.

The rape case and other connected cases were transferred to Delhi from a trial court in Uttar Pradesh on the directions of the Supreme Court on August 1, 2019.

Sengar’s appeal against his conviction in the case of the custodial death of the survivor’s father is also pending, where he has sought suspension of sentence on the ground that he has already spent a substantial time in jail.

## Top Maoist Ganesh Uike, with Rs 1 cr bounty, 5 others killed in 2 gunfights in Odisha

PTI

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: Top Maoist leader Ganesh Uike was among six red rebels killed in two gun battles with security forces in Odisha’s Kandhamal district, police said on Thursday.

CPI (Maoist) central committee member Uike, who carried a bounty of Rs 1.1 crore on his head, was the chief of the banned outfit in Odisha, a senior officer heading anti-Naxal operations in the state said.

Two Maoists from Chhattisgarh were killed in an exchange of fire with security forces in Gumma forest in Belghar police station area on Wednesday night.

A fresh gun battle took place in a forest in Chakapad police station area on Thursday morning, in which four other Maoists, including Uike, were killed, he said.

“Four Maoists were killed in the gunfight. One of them was identified as 69-year-old Ganesh Uike, who is also known by his aliases Pakka Hanumantu, Rajesh Tiwari, Chamru and Rupa. He was a native of Pullemala village under Chendur mandal in Telangana’s Nalgonda district,” he said. The identity of the other three Naxals, including two women, was yet to be ascertained, the officer said.

Addressing a press conference, DGP Y B Khurania said, “Two Maoists were gunned down on Wednesday, and four were neutralised this morning. Killing of a central committee member is a big success for Odisha Police. It has broken the backbone

of the Maoists in the state.” Operations are underway at different places along the Kandhamal-Ganjam inter-district boundary and we hope to get more success. This is one of the biggest operations against Maoists in Odisha in recent times. We thank the security personnel involved in the operation. We are determined to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s target of eliminating Naxalism by March, 2026,” he added.

Based on intelligence inputs, a joint operation involving 23 teams – 20 of Special Operations Group of Odisha Police, two of CRPF and one of BSF – was launched in Chakapad police station area in Kandhamal district and bordering Rambha forest range in Ganjam district, another officer said.

“Multiple gunfights were reported on Thursday in different areas. Later, four bodies of Maoists –two men and women each – were recovered. Two INSAS rifles and a .303 rifle were also seized,” he added.

The Naxals killed on Wednesday night were identified as CPI(Maoist)’s area committee member Bari alias Rakesh, and dalam member Amrit, both from Chhattisgarh, a senior police officer said, adding they carried a cumulative bounty of Rs 23.65 lakh on their heads.

The gunfights took place after 22 Maoists surrendered before Khurania in neighbouring Malkangiri district on Tuesday.

## Industrial-logistics space demand hit record this year at 76.5 mn sq ft in 24 major cities

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 25: Demand for industrial and logistics spaces hit an all-time high this year, with leasing volumes rising nearly 19 per cent to 76.5 million square feet across 24 major cities in India, according to Savills.

Real estate consultant Savills India data showed that the manufacturing sector took on lease 29 per cent of spaces, followed by third-party logistics firms (28 per cent) and e-commerce players (12 per cent). “India’s Industrial and Logistics sector continued its strong post-pandemic growth trajectory in 2025, recording its highest-ever annual absorption of 76.5 million sq ft,” Savills India said.

In the 2024 calendar year, leasing of industrial and logistics spaces stood at 64.5 million square feet.

Out of the total leasing this year, the

consultant said that eight tier-I cities -- Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, and Pune -- saw 20 per cent growth in leasing to 59.5 million square feet this year from 49.7 million square feet in 2024.

Delhi-NCR remained the best performer, with leasing of 13 million square feet this year compared to 9.8 million square feet in 2024.

Leasing activities in tier-II and tier-III cities grew 14.5 per cent in the 2025 calendar year to 17 million square feet from 14.8 million square feet in the preceding year.

These 16 Tier II and Tier III cities are Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Hosur, Coimbatore, Rajpura, Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Surat, Indore, Kochi, Hubli, Vizag, Belgaum and Anantapur.

Savills India expects both supply and absorption of industrial and logistics spaces to surpass 80 million sq ft next year.

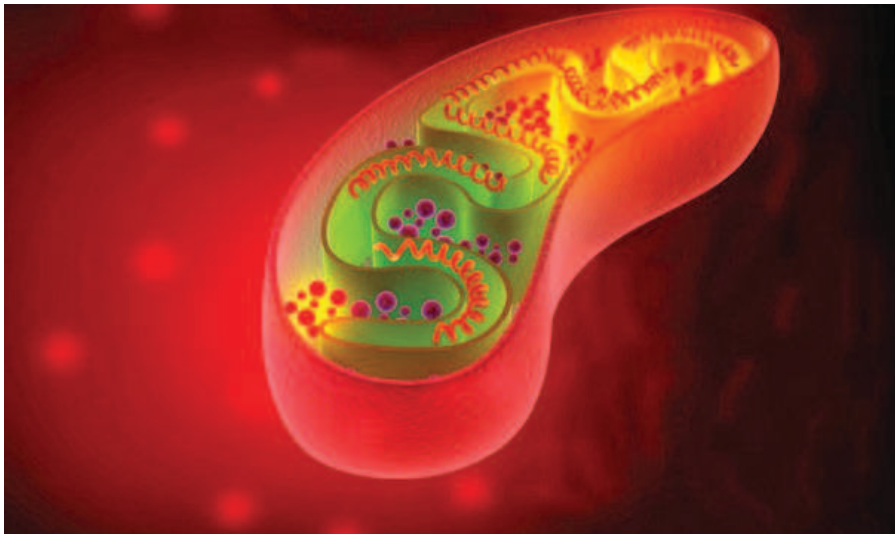
# Researchers develop experimental obesity drugs targeting energy production process of cell

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 25: Researchers have developed experimental drugs targeting mitochondria – the energy powerhouse of a cell – to work harder and burn more calories, which may make way for new treatments for obesity.

The team, led by researchers from the University of Technology Sydney in Australia, focussed on “mitochondrial uncouplers” – molecules that make cells burn energy less efficiently and release fuel as heat instead of converting it into energy the body can use.

“Mitochondria are often called the powerhouses of the cell. They turn the food you eat into chemical energy, called ATP or adenosine triphosphate. Mitochondrial uncouplers disrupt this process, triggering cells to



consume more fats to meet their energy needs,” lead researcher Tristan Rawling, associate professor of medicinal chemistry at the University of Technology Sydney, said.

Compounds inducing mitochondrial uncoupling

were first discovered about a century ago, but the drugs were lethal poisons that induced overheating and death, the researchers explained.

In a paper published in the journal Chemical Science, the team has

described safer ‘mild’ mitochondrial uncouplers by precisely adjusting the chemical structure of experimental molecules, allowing for a fine-tuning of how strongly the molecules boost the use of a cell’s energy. The discovery

allowed the researchers to better understand why the safer molecules behave differently – the mild mitochondrial uncouplers slow the energy-burning process to a level that cells can handle, protecting against adverse effects, they said.

The mild mitochondrial uncouplers also reduce oxidative stress in the cell, which is another advantage of the molecules – this could improve metabolic health, provide anti-aging effects and protect against neurodegenerative diseases such as dementia, the team said.

While the work is still at an early stage, the research offers a framework for designing a new generation of drugs that could induce mild mitochondrial uncoupling and harness the benefits without the dangers, the researchers said.



# UN turns 80 in 2025 amid global crises; India says ready for greater role

PTI

United Nations, Dec 25: The UN marked its 80th anniversary in 2025 amid global conflicts, financial crisis, and US President Donald Trump's criticism, as India urged the world body to focus on "leadership and hope" and expressed willingness to take on a greater role.

The conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, along with several others around the world from Sudan to Myanmar, raged unabated in 2025, yet again highlighting the ineptitude of the UN and its powerful, but polarised, Security Council in addressing global challenges.

As nations continue to grapple with humanitarian emergencies, climate chaos and economic inequality, questions are raised over the relevance of the UN and whether the 80-year-old organisation, founded in 1945, has solutions for the problems of a world in flux in the 21st century.

Against this backdrop, India gave a clarion call for reformed multilateralism. Addressing world leaders from the UN General Assembly podium in September, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar stressed that an "objective report card" will show that the UN is in a state of crisis.

"When peace is under threat from conflicts, when development is derailed by lack of resources, when human rights are violated by terrorism, the UN remains gridlocked. As its ability to forge common ground diminishes, belief in multilateralism also recedes," he said.

India categorically told the world that central to the erosion of the UN's credibility has been resistance to reform, and Delhi stands ready to assume greater responsibilities in an expanded UNSC, which, with its current 15 members, is not representative of the world of 2025. "Both



permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council must be expanded. A reformed Council must be truly representative. And India stands ready to assume greater responsibilities," Jaishankar said.

"The ninth decade of the UN must be one of leadership and hope. Bharat will do its fair share, and more," he said.

In the fight against terrorism, India continued to lead from the front in combating the scourge.

India exercised its right to defend its people against terrorism through Operation Sindoor that targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack in April perpetrated by The Resistance Front.

At a time when Pakistan was sitting in the UNSC as a non-permanent member, the organisation issued a statement condemning in the strongest terms the Pahalgam attack, and underlined the need to hold its perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors accountable

and bring them to justice.

The Resistance Front, a proxy of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group, also found mention for the first time in a Security Council report for its role in the Pahalgam attack.

The calls for reforming the UN also came from the highest echelons of the world body when Secretary General Antonio Guterres gave a clarion call to reform the Security Council to make it more representative, transparent, and effective.

As the UN was grappling with its myriad challenges, its 80th year coincided with one of its most harshest critics returning to power in the White House for a second term. Relations between the UN and Trump 1.0 were far from cordial and were characterised by severe criticism by the US President of the UN's effectiveness, with the American leader describing the world body as "just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time".

After Trump commenced his second presidency in January 2025, UN watchers and envoys

braced for a chilly and less than cordial relationship between 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and Turtle Bay.

Within hours of his swearing-in in January, Trump signed an executive order directing the US to withdraw, again, from the Paris climate agreement, echoing a similar directive from his first term. Within weeks of his second term, Trump issued an order directing that the US will not participate in the UN Human Rights Council, will conduct a review of its membership in UNESCO and suspend funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

And when Trump arrived at the UN Headquarters for the 80th General Assembly session in September, he did not hold back and delivered one of his harshest rebukes of the world body.

"What is the purpose of the United Nations? The UN has such tremendous potential... but it's not even coming close to living up to that potential... all they seem to do is write a really strongly worded letter and then

never follow that letter up. It's empty words and empty words don't solve war," Trump said in his speech.

Criticising the UN over migration, Trump said, "Not only is the UN not solving the problems it should... it's actually creating new problems for us to solve. The best example is... the crisis of uncontrolled migration... The United Nations is funding an assault on Western countries and their borders."

Trump noted that in 2024, the UN budgeted USD 372 million in cash assistance to support an estimated 624,000 migrants journeying into the US.

Trump also slammed the UN for its "predictions" about climate change, describing it as the "greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world".

Though the US remains the largest donor to the UN in 2025, it clawed back over USD 1 billion in funding to the world body.

Guterres, in December, said the UN ended 2024 with USD 760 million in unpaid assessments, most of it still outstanding, and has yet to receive USD 877 million in contributions due for 2025, bringing total arrears to around USD 1.586 billion.

In a sign of the times, the UN said it will no longer provide paper towels in UNHQ main campus restrooms servicing office spaces and encouraged use of electric hand-dryers. The move is expected to save over USD 100,000 per year. India voiced support for sustainable and predictable financing of the UN system, emphasising that resources should be used effectively and efficiently.

Underlining that both global peace and prosperity are endangered today, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Parvathaneni Harish, said that in the real world, nothing can run forever without reform and repair.

## After 17 years in exile, BNP leader Tarique Rahman returns to Dhaka to rousing welcome



PTI

Dhaka, Dec 25: Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) acting chairman Tarique Rahman returned home to a rousing welcome on Thursday after over 17 years in self-exile, a move that is expected to energise his party workers ahead of the February 12 parliamentary elections.

Rahman, the 60-year-old son of ailing former prime minister Khaleda Zia, has emerged as a leading contender for prime ministership in the polls even as the country's Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, has been trying to throw a stiff competition to the BNP in the polls.

The homecoming of the BNP heir apparent comes amid a fresh wave of unrest and political instability gripping Bangladesh following the killing of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi, who was a prominent face in last year's mass protests that forced the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina

government.

Rahman, accompanied by wife Zubaida and daughter Zai-uma, was received at the Hazrat Shahjalal International airport in Dhaka by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and other senior party leaders amid tight security.

BNP emerged as the fore-runner to capture power in the February polls as former prime minister Hasina's Awami League party has been barred from contesting the election.

Jamaat-e-Islami, the BNP's coalition partner during its 2001-2006 tenure in power, has emerged as its main rival in the upcoming polls after the interim government blocked Awami League's participation under the country's tough Anti-Terrorism Act.

After BNP announced Rahman's plan to return from London, he had said, "like any child, he longs to be near his critically ill mother at her moment of crisis."

## Uncovered million more documents potentially related to Jeffrey Epstein: US Dept of Justice

ANI

Washington, Dec 25: The United States Department of Justice has stated that it uncovered over a million additional documents "potentially related" to the Jeffrey Epstein case.

In an X post, the DOJ said that these documents will be released in the coming weeks.

"The US Attorney for the Southern District of New York and the FBI have informed the Department of Justice that they have uncovered over a million more documents potentially related to the Jeffrey Epstein case. The DOJ has received these documents from SDNY and the FBI to review them for release, in compliance with the Epstein Files Transparency Act, existing statutes, and judicial orders. We have lawyers working around the clock to review and make the legally required redactions to protect victims, and we will release the documents as soon as possible. Due to the mass volume of material, this process may take a few more weeks. The Department will continue to fully comply with federal law and President Trump's direction to release the files," DOJ said. Earlier on Tuesday (local time), the Department of Justice released 30,000 more pages of documents related to Jeffrey Epstein, while noting that some of these documents contain "untrue" claims made against President Donald Trump.

## 'India reaching new heights in field of sports under PM Modi'

PTI

Jaipur, Dec 25: Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Thursday said that India is reaching new heights in the field of sports under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that the Prime Minister had made sports a national priority, and initiatives like Khelo India were helping promote a culture of sports across the country.

Sharma was addressing the concluding ceremony of the Sansad Khel Mahotsav at Sawai Man Singh stadium here.

PM Modi addressed the closing ceremony virtually and lauded the Sports Festival,



saying that it had become a mass movement.

He said that thousands of talented athletes were emerging through the festival and it was becoming a strong pillar for

nation building.

CM Sharma said that under the guidance of the PM, the MP Sports Festival was providing opportunities to youth from towns and villages to showcase

their talent.

Initiatives such as the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) and the establishment of sports universities have significantly impacted athletes' lives, he opined.

Sharma added that the state government had taken concrete steps to promote sports in Rajasthan, including the successful organisation of the Khelo India University Games and the launch of the Sports Life Insurance Scheme, which provides accidental and life insurance cover up to Rs 25 lakh to international medalists.

The Chief Minister said no talented athlete in the state will be left behind due to lack of resources.

Ashes 2025-26

## Australia possible XI named for Boxing Day Test — Richardson returns after four years

REUTERS

Melbourne, Dec 25: Steve Smith will return to action in the Boxing Day Test against England as Australia opted to include four fast bowlers in its 12-man squad, with spinner Todd Murphy, brought in to replace Nathan Lyon, not finding a spot.

Fast bowler Jhye Richardson, who has not played in the longest format since 2021, has been brought back after a fine domestic form on his return from shoulder surgery.

Australia's Travis Head, Jake Weatherald, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith (c), Usman Khawaja, Alex Carey (wk), Cameron Green, Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland, Brendan Doggett, Michael Neser, Jhye Richardson

Brendan Doggett, who played in the first two Tests, and Michael Neser, who was part of the pink-ball encounter, have also been included, with Australia going for an all-pace attack.

"You just got to play what surface you're presented with," Smith, who missed the Adelaide test due to a bout of vertigo, told reporters on Thursday.

"The pitch has 10mm of grass, quite furry, quite green.

"I dare say it's going to offer similar conditions to today, quite cold and overcast. So, there's going to be quite a bit of movement.

"This one looks like it's going to offer a fair bit of assistance for the



seam bowlers, and the weather throughout the week looks conducive for that too."

The 29-year-old left-arm pacer Richardson's last appearance in the red-ball format was against England in December 2021 in which he picked five wickets to guide his side to a 275-run win.

"It's exciting to see Richardson back in the fold," Smith said. "He's had a pretty long layoff with injury, and we know the skills he can possess" "He's done it against England before in an Ashes. We've seen when he's had the opportunity at this level, he's been outstanding."

Meanwhile, veteran Usman Khawaja, who scored 82 and 40 in the previous Test after coming in as a last-minute replacement for Smith,

has been included at the expense of Josh Inglis.

Usman Khawaja's average over 60 over two innings in the third Test, playing as Steve Smith's replacement, earned him a call-up back into the potential playing 11.

"(It was) fortunate that Usman was able to come in and play the way he did in that first innings.

"We all thought he played really nicely last week. He's putting the pressure on when he needed to, and he absorbed it when he needed to.

"He's got that No.5 spot right now. "Cam (Cameron Green) with the way his whole package is set up helps us out at seven as well."

Australia has already retained the urn with a 3-0 lead in the five-Test series.



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Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> December





DHURANDHAR (A)

HINDI - 02:00 PM, 03:00 PM, 06:30 PM



TU MERI MAIN TERA MAIN TERA TU MERI

(U/A 16+) HINDI - 10:45 AM, 12:05 PM, 07:00 PM



AVATAR : FIRE AND ASH (UA 16+)

3D ENGLISH ATMOS WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES 06:00 PM - 3D HINDI - 02:40 PM



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