



How LG Sinha, CM Omar, other leaders shaped J&K politics in 2025

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Dec 29: As 2025 nears its end, the news agency- Kashmir News Observer (KNO) looks at how Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and other politicians shaped the political landscape in Jammu and Kashmir during the year. The healer - Manoj Sinha



In 2025, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha emerged as an architect of healing in Jammu & Kashmir, with his initiatives empowering victims of terror, Pakistani shelling and natural calamities.

Manoj Sinha's initiative to provide government jobs to families of terror victims in Jammu & Kashmir was appreciated across the board,

both within the region and at the national level. His efforts empowered grief-stricken communities who had long been forgotten by successive regimes in Jammu & Kashmir and abandoned by society.

Sinha's vision of healing extended beyond terror-related victims, as he played a key role in facilitating the construction of new houses for families

affected by Pakistani shelling during Operation Sindoor and by natural calamities in the Union Territory.

Beleaguered politician - Omar Abdullah

For Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, 2025 proved to be a year of crisis, and he found himself repeatedly steering his

government through storm after storm.

His government found itself in the midst of political and non-political controversies, one after another. Omar was himself trying to defuse the controversies. He was often seen blaming the Union Territory's power architecture and Kashmir-based opposition parties to wriggle himself out

of controversies.

Superb performer - Aga Ruhullah

In 2025, the National Conference's rebel MP Aga Ruhullah Mehdi emerged as a superb performer both inside and outside Parliament. His vociferous anti-government positioning, | [More on P6](#)

MeT predicts snowfall across J&K till Jan 1

Upper reaches to witness heavy snowfall | Zojila, other high-altitude areas under advisory | Flights may get affected | Tourists arrive to celebrate New Year

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Dec 29: Light to moderate snowfall is likely at many places across Jammu and Kashmir from Tuesday, with higher reaches of the Union Territory expected to receive fresh snow till January 1, the Meteorological Department said on Monday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD), according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said weather conditions would remain generally cloudy on December 30, with the possibility of light rain or snowfall at several places towards the evening.

"From December 31 to January 1, light rain or snow is likely at most places, while a few higher reaches of North and Central Kashmir may receive moderate snowfall," it said.

According to the forecast, snowfall activity is also expected to be more pronounced along the Zojila-Drass axis and over the Siachen area.

"Light to moderate snowfall



is also likely in parts of the Kargil and Zaskar regions, as well as higher reaches of Leh district," it said.

The IMD said snowfall accumulation of up to 10 inches is possible at Zojila during this period.

Meanwhile, according to officials, snowfall has begun in the higher reaches of the Kashmir, including Razdan Top and Zojila, and was continuing in these areas at the time of filing

this report.

Meanwhile, tourists in good numbers have reached winter destinations across Kashmir to celebrate the New Year, amid forecasts of peak snowfall, which was largely absent in the region during the same period last year.

A weather advisory issued by MeT warned of a high risk of temporary disruption of surface transport over the Zojila pass due to heavy snowfall on December 31. | [More on P6](#)

J&K Tourism continues to thrive with over 1.58 crore visitors in 2025

» Kashmir logs 10.47 lakh domestic, 21,361 foreign tourists » Jammu draws 1.47 crore pilgrims, visitors



Pic: Waris Fayaz

Waris Fayaz

Srinagar, Dec 29: 2025 has been a mixed year for Jammu and Kashmir's tourism sector, with overall footfall remaining high with strong domestic

and foreign numbers, despite security-related disruptions and seasonal fluctuations.

As per the details obtained by the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO), tourist arrivals to

the Jammu and Kashmir crossed the one crore fifty-eight lakh visitors mark, driven by robust pilgrimage, leisure and adventure travel, with the officials acknowledged that the | [More on P6](#)

Tourism 'back on track': Kashmir eyes vibrant 2026

Director Qamar Sajad reveals plans

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Dec 29: After witnessing fluctuations throughout the year, Jammu and Kashmir's tourism sector has regained its pace, with strong bookings reported in November and December.

Director Tourism Kashmir Syed Qamar Sajad, speaking exclusively to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the department is optimistic about a vibrant 2026, as the Valley's tourism graph continues | [More on P6](#)

India rejects Pakistan's remarks on minorities

'Abysmal record speaks for itself'

KNO Desk

Srinagar, Dec 29: Reacting sharply to Pakistan's remarks on minorities, India on Monday rejected the claims, saying its (Pakistan's) horrific and systemic victimisation of minorities of various faiths is a well-established fact.

According to a statement, issued to news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in response to media queries regarding remarks by Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson, India's External Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "we reject the reported remarks from a country whose abysmal record on this front speaks for itself".

He said that Pakistan's horrific and systemic victimisation of minorities of various faiths is a well-established fact. "No amount of finger pointing will obfuscate it," Jaiswal said.

Earlier, | [More on P6](#)

LG Sinha interacts with IAS Officer Trainees



KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 29: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday interacted with the IAS Officer Trainees of the 2025 Batch, who are on their 5-day visit to Jammu as a part of the Winter Study Tour (Bharat Darshan Programme).

The Officer Trainees are currently undergoing Phase-1 training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie.

During the interaction, the Lieutenant Governor shared his insights on governance and public service. He also

highlighted the transformational journey of Jammu Kashmir across the sectors.

The Group of IAS Officer Trainees comprised of Muskan Srivastava, Haryana Cadre; Meghna Chakravorty and Mudita Bansal, West Bengal Cadre; Deepak Godara, AGMUT Cadre; Saichaitanya Jadhav, Rahul Raghavan and Aman Tiwari, Tamil Nadu Cadre; Venkatesh Banna, Andhra Pradesh Cadre, is led by Umesh Kumar Meena (Rajasthan Cadre), with Vidhi (AGMUT Cadre) as the Associate Group Leader. Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu was also present | [More on P6](#)

JKPSC submits 66th Annual Report to LG

KT News Desk

Jammu, Dec 29: Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) on Monday submitted its 66th Annual Report for the year 2024-25 to the Lieutenant Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha, at Lok Bhavan Jammu. The delegation of the Members of the Commission - Dr Rajiv Singh, Shri Tariq Ahmad Zargar, Shri Yashpal Kotwal and Shri Asaf Mehmood Sagar, was led by Chairman JKPSC, Shri Arun Kumar Choudhary.

The report was submitted in terms of Article 323(2) of the Constitution of India. The report outlines a year of significant administrative reforms and presents a comprehensive review of | [More on P6](#)

Lieutenant Governor chairs 6th J&K UT Wildlife Board meeting



KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 29: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday chaired the 6th meeting of Wildlife Board for the UT of J&K, at Lok Bhavan.

The meeting was attended by Javed Ahmed Rana, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs Departments; Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal and Mian Mehar Ali, Members of Legislative Assembly; Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Sheetal Nanda, Commissioner Secretary to Government, Forest, Ecology & Environment;

Suresh Kumar Gupta, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Hoff; Sarvesh Rai, PCCF / Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K; Sujit Kumar, IGP Security; eminent Conservationists, Ecologists, Environmentalists, representatives of Army and NGOs dealing with Wildlife, and other board members.

The Board, which met under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor, accorded wildlife clearance to several projects and recommended some proposals to National Board of Wildlife for final approval. These included projects of 4G-saturation, Jal Jeevan Mission, re-alignment of transmission | [More on P6](#)

Longer power cuts likely for high loss zones

PDD likely to roll out new power curtailment schedule

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Dec 29: The Power Development Department (PDD) is likely to announce a new power curtailment schedule for consumers in the Kashmir division, which will include extra hours of load shedding in the high AT&C losses.

Sources informed the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (KPDCL) is devising a new power curtailment plan that is likely to be rolled out in coming days.

It also said that the power feeders having losses of more than 40 percent may face restrictions of 4-6 hours.

"As of now, the areas with more than 40 percent Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses are facing a power curtailment of nearly 4 hours. However, in the revised schedule, these feeders may | [More on P6](#)

Year Ender: CBK records all-time high case disposal in 2025, major gains across all units

223 cases disposed—highest ever, amid strong performance in vigilance, scrutiny, public complaint redressal

Rehan Qayoom Mir/ Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Dec 29: The Crime Branch Kashmir (CBK) has achieved its highest-ever case disposal in 2025, marking a milestone in its performance and internal efficiency.

The official year-end figures paint a picture of improved efficiency across key units of the agency, from crime investigations and vigilance to complaint redressal and



verification, signaling a strong institutional focus on backlog reduction and procedural accountability.

Official data accessed by the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), reveals a notable rise in case clearances,

departmental vigilance and public complaint resolution compared to the previous year.

OVERALL CRIME DISPOSAL

In 2025, the CBK handled 1,108 crime cases, including an opening balance of 932 and 164 fresh registrations. By December 20, the agency had disposed of 223 cases, the highest in its operational history.

Of these, 167 cases were charge-sheeted, 30 marked

as "not applicable", 25 transferred and one cancelled or quashed. The pending investigation load as of December 20 stood at 885 cases.

Compared to 2024, when the total workload was 1,123 cases and 191 disposals, the 2025 data shows an increase of 32 disposals, reflecting a sharper pace of investigations and improved monitoring.

DEPARTMENTAL VIGILANCE
The departmental vigilance section handled | [More on P6](#)

Child labour persists at tourist hotspots

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Dec 29: Despite clear legal prohibitions and repeated government assurances, incidents of child labour continue to surface at several popular, especially tourist destinations across Kashmir. This has triggered serious concern among educators and social activists who are demanding stronger enforcement and sustained awareness drives.

From pony rides to assisting tourists at scenic locations, minors, many of them below the age of 14, are increasingly being seen working at tourist



hubs and even factories, where mostly non-local children can be seen working.

Activists warn that this trend not only violates child labour laws but also poses a grave threat to the educational future and overall | [More on P6](#)

High Court MCC begins 3-day advanced mediation training at Jammu, Srinagar

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 29: Under the patronage of Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli, the Mediation and Conciliation Committee (MCC) of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh Monday inaugurated three day training programme 'Conduct of Mediation- Advanced Course (Capsule Course), Training of Trainers Programme', simultaneously at Jammu and Srinagar campuses of J&K Judicial Academy (JKJA).

The course, as per an official statement, is being held in collaboration with Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy and J&K Legal Services Authority and is scheduled from December 29 to 31, 2025. This 20-hour advanced mediation training course is aimed at enhancing the skills of mediators across the union territory.

At the Jammu campus, the inaugural session commenced with a welcome address by Director J&K Judicial Academy, Naseer Ahmad Dar, who highlighted the growing importance of mediation in strengthening the justice delivery system. He emphasized that advanced and practice-oriented mediation training plays a crucial role in equipping mediators with the skills required for effective conflict resolution. During his address, the Director also introduced the resource person and welcomed participants to



the three-day programme.

At the Srinagar campus, the programme opened with a welcome address by Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Srinagar, Tabasum Qadir Parray, who underscored the relevance of mediation training in enhancing dispute resolution mechanisms. She encouraged participants to actively engage with the course content and practical exercises. The inaugural session at Srinagar was also attended by Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Anantnag, Mir Sayeem Qayoom.

The inaugural day featured Rita Das Mouzumdar, Advocate, Gauhati High Court, Assam, as the

Resource Person at the Srinagar Campus, and Suman Sharma, Advocate, Gauhati High Court, Assam, along with Balbir Kour, Advocate, Punjab & Haryana High Court, as the Resource Persons at the Jammu Campus. All the Resource Persons are accredited Mediation Trainers with the Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC) of the Supreme Court of India.

As per the course curriculum, the first day included structured theoretical and practical modules focusing on advanced mediation concepts. Session I dealt with Understanding Conflict and Conflict Resolution, covering the

perception of conflict, causes of disputes, and resolution mechanisms. This session included a Role Play Exercise followed by group discussion and reflection.

Session II focused on Mediation, including its definition, components, and the role of the mediator, with emphasis on core mediation principles. Session III addressed Conduct of Mediation, covering joint sessions, individual sessions, techniques to break deadlocks, and methods of closing mediation proceedings. The session provided participants with a comprehensive, start-to- finish overview of the mediation process. The sessions combined lectures, role-plays, and interactive discussions, enabling participants to apply theoretical principles to practical mediation scenarios.

The three-day advanced course aims to deepen participants' understanding of mediation processes, enhance practical skills, and strengthen the capacity of trained mediators across the Union Territory.

Across both centres, participants appreciated the hands-on, simulation-based approach, noting that the structured role-plays offered practical clarity on how mediation tools can be integrated into everyday work. The simultaneous conduct of the programme at Jammu and Srinagar reflects the on-going efforts of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh to broaden mediation awareness and strengthen ADR capacity across the Union Territory.

SMC Commissioner reviews SCADA-based dewatering operations in Srinagar

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 29: In view of the forecasted wet spell and to ensure the city's preparedness against waterlogging, the Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, on Monday conducted a comprehensive inspection of the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) Control Room at the Drainage Circle Office, Darish Kadal.

During the inspection, the Commissioner, as per a statement, assessed the functioning and operational efficiency of the SCADA-based dewatering system, which provides real-time monitoring and centralized control of dewatering equipment

installed at 80 dewatering stations across Srinagar city and its adjoining areas. The system is operated through the Main Control Centre (MCC) at Darish Kadal, with a Backup Control Centre (BCC) at JKERA Complex, Rambagh, ensuring operational continuity and redundancy.

The Commissioner closely examined live operational feeds, system performance indicators, and emergency response readiness. Emphasising zero tolerance towards lapses, he issued firm directions for round-the-clock monitoring, swift resolution of technical faults, and strict adherence to maintenance protocols to ensure uninterrupted dewatering operations during adverse weather conditions.

DC Kulgam inaugurates 11 KV Chattabal power feeder at Chawalgam

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, DECEMBER 29: To improve electricity supply in Kulgam town and adjoining areas, Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan Monday inaugurated the newly created 11 KV Chattabal Power Feeder at Chawalgam.

The newly commissioned feeder, as per an official statement, has been segregated from the existing Chawalgam feeder with the objective of ensuring reliable and rationalised power distribution in Chawalgam and Chattabal areas, which had long been a demand

of local residents.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that the creation of new feeder will bring in rationalized electricity distribution and help improve the electricity supply significantly in Chattabal and Chawalgam areas.

Officials informed that the project will benefit residents of the surrounding areas by easing load pressure on existing feeders and enhancing overall power distribution efficiency.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Executive Engineer, KPDCL Kulgam, Assistant Executive Engineers, other concerned officers and locals.

DC Srinagar reviews infrastructure upgrade at Abhinandan School for Specially Abled

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR DECEMBER 29:- Deputy Commissioner(DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo Monday visited Abhinandan Home Solina, Kashmir's oldest institution for specially abled children and inspected progress of infrastructure upgradation works on Rs 9.90 crore project for construction of new, state of the art Educational Complex and School for Specially Abled Children.

He also took stock of the ongoing finishing works of the Hostel-cum-Kitchen Complex being executed at a cost of Rs 1.66 crore for students of Abhinandan Home.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, conducted an on-site inspection of the ongoing infrastructure upgradation works for the construction of the School for Specially-Abled Children, being executed at a cost of Rs 9.90 crore.

The project is being developed on a state-of-the-art pattern under the Social Welfare Department and will be the first of its kind institution in the entire Kashmir Division catering specifically to children with visual and hearing special abilities.

While reviewing the progress of the key project, the DC stressed the need for close coordination among all line departments to ensure timely completion of the work. He emphasised the need for added efforts by the executing agency to accelerate the pace of work to complete the project ahead of the scheduled timeline, while maintaining strict adherence to quality standards.

The DC also instructed the executing agency to ensure timely procurement of lifts and completion of internal electrification works for School for Specially Abled Children well in advance to avoid any delay in the overall execution of the project.

On the occasion, the DC was informed that the new facility will comprise a Principal's Office, Staff Room, Indoor Games Court, Gymnasium, Medical Room, Therapy Room, Classrooms, Washroom Blocks, Computer Lab, Library, Dormitory, and Dining Hall.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the under completion Hostel-cum-Kitchen Complex being executed at a cost of Rs 1.66 crore for students of Abhinandan Home. He directed the executing agency to expedite the finishing works so that the facility is made functional at the earliest.

During the visit, the DC was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; District Social Welfare Officer, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad; Executive Engineer R&B, Executive Engineer KPDCL, Executive Engineer Water Works, Tehsildar South, Deputy CEO, Officials from Abhinandan Home and other concerned.

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GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
IRRIGATION DIVISION OMPORA BUDGAM.

(Email ID: mehrajudrat.8531@jk.gov.in)

e-NIT.No.24 of 12/2025

For and on behalf of the LT. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders on percentage basis are invited from approved and eligible contractors Registered with Union Territory of J&K Govt.

S. No	Name of work	Estt. Cost of work amount in lacs	Performance security @ 3%	Time of completion	Class of contract	Cost of tender document	Head of account
1	Construction of GCI Shed at S.E Office Hydraulic Circle Budgam	2.01	6030	15 Days	DEE	200	M&R 2711
2	Stage contract for urgent nature of restoration works under M.H 2711-MandR for Irrigation Sub Division Budgam for the year 2025-26(Phase II)	1.82	5460	Financial year 2025-26	DEE	200	M&R 2711

No of works Advertised: 02 (Two)

Position of Funds (Budgetary provision).

Position of Technical Sanction Accorded.

Position of Administrative Approval Accorded.

The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria specifications, Bill of quantities, set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen /downloaded from departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in

1.	Publishing date	29-12-2025 (6 PM)
2.	Download date start	29-12-2025 (6 PM)
3.	Bid submission date starts	29-12-2025 (6 PM)
4.	Bid submission date ends	09-01-2026 upto (4 PM)
5.	Bid Opening date	10-01-2026 at (11:00 AM)

The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the departmental website.

General terms and conditions:-

1. The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website jktenders.gov.in from 29-12-2025 to 09-01-2026 upto 4:00 PM. The Bids will be opened on 10-01-2026 at 11:00 AM . Online documents can be seen and downloaded from the website.

i) The complete bidding process will be online.

ii) Technical bids of bidder shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division Ompora Budgam.

2. Bid document contains qualifying criteria for bidder, specification, conditions and other details.

3. Any item /items not included in the rate list but found necessary during the execution of work shall be paid as per the rates of J&K SSR 2022.

4. Any omission /Typographic error shall be read as per the J&K SSR 2022, and as per the corrigendum / errata issued to J&K SSR 2022 in vogue.

5. The rates should be strictly quoted as per the unit advertised in the rate list.

6. The contractors shall inspect & examine the site, and shall satisfy himself about the location of the site, its approaches and nature of the ground and sub soil before uploading the bids/submission of tender.

7. If the contractor fails to complete the work within the stipulated time period, the penalty of RS.0.01% of the allotted cost of work shall be imposed upon the Contractor recurring on daily basis. In addition to penalty prescribed in agreement form 25/26 double.

8. During the execution of work, department reserves the right to vary the quantity provided in the contract.

9. Tender drawings furnished with the tender document shall not be deemed as working drawings. These may vary from the actual working drawing.

10. The contractors shall carry out the various mandatory tests as per specification (e.g the crushing strength of concrete i.e. cube tests, gradation test for aggregate, slump test etc) as directed by Engineer In-charge. all testing charges/expenses etc shall be borne by the contractor.

11. The concrete mix shall be designed as per revised BIS (IS: 10262 of 2009) and concreting shall be strictly done as per the mix design by the contractor.

Executive Engineer
Irrigation Division
Ompora Budgam.

No:-5271-85
Date:-29-12-2025

DIPK-9448/25
DATED: 29-12-2025

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL
TRANSPORT OFFICER, BUDGAM

Email: artobudgam1@gmail.com Pincode: 191111

No: ARTO/Bud/1077-81

PUBLIC NOTICE

Dated: 27/12/2025

It has come to the notice of this office that a considerable number of vehicle owners residing in District Budgam are plying motor vehicles purchased from outside the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir without completing the mandatory process of re-registration within the UT.

In various cases, No Objection Certificates (NOCs) have already been issued by the concerned Transport Authorities of the respective States/Union Territories from where such vehicles were brought. However, despite issuance of NOCs, the required re-registration has not been completed by the vehicle owners.

The operation of such vehicles without re-registration within the jurisdiction of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir constitutes a violation of the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, particularly Section 47, and also results in administrative and enforcement challenges for the Transport Department.

Accordingly, all such vehicle owners of District Budgam are hereby directed to ensure completion of the re-registration of their vehicles within fifteen (15) days from the date of issuance of this notice.

Failure to comply with the above directions shall render the defaulters liable to seizure/impounding of the vehicle under Section 47 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, in addition to penal action as prescribed under the relevant statutory provisions.

Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Budgam

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL
TRANSPORT OFFICER, BUDGAM

Email: artobudgam1@gmail.com Pincode: 191111

No: ARTO/Bud/1077-81

Public Notice

Dated: 27/12/2025

Whereas various applicants have applied for online transfer of ownership of vehicles, but have failed to complete the submission of prerequisite formalities.

Whereas such applicants have neither modified their applications nor uploaded the re-quired documents, and have also not completed e-KYC as mandated under Section 50 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

Now, therefore, through this public notice, one week's time from the date of issuance of this notice is hereby granted to all such applicants to upload the requisite documents and complete e-KYC, failing which their applications shall be Cancelled /Disposed as per the pro-visions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and rules made thereunder.

Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Budgam

DIPK-9442/25
DATED: 29-12-2025

New Year celebrations

Security forces on high alert in J&K

YOGESH

Jammu, Dec 29: To ensure safe New Year celebrations, security forces in Jammu and Kashmir have intensified checking and monitoring across high-influx areas, including venues hosting parties, as part of a maximum alert.

The additional checkpoints have been deployed at entry points, plugging every major road connectivity with enhanced patrols, area domination exercises, and surprise verifications to thwart any potential threats during the festive season.

Amid these measures, multiple suspicious recoveries were reported in forward and border districts, officials told KNO.

They said that in Poonch district's Mendhar sector, the Special



Operations Group (SOG) of Jammu and Kashmir Police, acting on specific intelligence, recovered an unidentified drone abandoned in an open field at Gohled village.

A police team promptly secured the site, seized the device, and initiated an

investigation to determine its origin and possible operator, officials said.

Separately, during search operations in Udhampur district's Chenani area, security forces recovered a magazine of an AK assault rifle along with seven

live rounds from an open field in Sudhmahadev.

In Jammu's Akhnoor sector, an aircraft-shaped balloon bearing markings of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in English and Urdu was seized from an agricultural field in border village Gurah Manhasa, Pragwal area.

Officials stated that the balloon was likely drifted across the border by wind. These incidents underscore the heightened vigilance along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB), with increased deployments and anti-sabotage checks in urban and hinterland areas.

Authorities have appealed to citizens to stay vigilant and immediately report any suspicious objects or activities to the nearest police station for swift action—(KNO)

Surveillance, traffic rules tightened on Sonamarg-Gund stretch

RAJA SYED RATHER

Ganderbal, Dec 29: Ahead of New Year celebrations, authorities in Ganderbal have intensified surveillance and traffic regulation along the Sonamarg-Gund stretch to ensure a safe and orderly festive period.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ganderbal Khalil Ahmed Poswal visited Sonamarg and adjoining areas on Monday.

He inspected the security arrangements and issued on-spot directions.

He was accompanied by SDPO Kangan Rajeev Raina, Station House Officers of Sonamarg and Gund, personnel from the Special Operations Group (SOG), besides Traffic and Tourist Police.

Officials said enhanced checking is being carried out at the Sonamarg Tunnel

and other vulnerable points, especially as tourist inflow has increased following recent snowfall. Special focus, they said, is being laid on maintaining traffic discipline to avoid congestion during peak hours.

SDPO Kangan Rajeev Raina said that advance planning has been completed and comprehensive arrangements are in place ahead of December 31. "District Police Ganderbal is maintaining robust security at all tourist spots. We have increased deployment to ensure smooth traffic movement," he said, adding that the SHO Sonamarg and SHO Gund is actively engaged in managing ground-level arrangements.

He said that security forces, including the Army, CRPF and J&K Police, are jointly monitoring the situation. "Deployment has been made

at strategic locations, and any violation of traffic rules or public order will be dealt with strictly," he added.

With more snowfall forecast and several New Year events scheduled, police have further strengthened patrolling at key tourist destinations. The objective, officials said, is to provide a secure and pleasant environment for visitors while upholding Kashmir's tradition of hospitality.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Department has lined up cultural programmes for New Year's Eve, and coordination with the district administration and local stakeholders is underway to ensure peaceful celebrations. Police have appealed to tourists and residents to cooperate with authorities for a safe and smooth welcome to the New Year—(KNO)

BSF on high alert along J&K borders

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Dec 29: Security forces along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir have been placed on high alert ahead of New Year celebrations, officials said on Monday.

A senior official said that the heightened vigilance aims to ensure robust border security and prevent any infiltration or ceasefire violations during the holiday period.

Key frontier areas, including North Kashmir's Gurez sector, Uri, Karnah, Tangdhar, and the other sectors in Jammu region, are under close surveillance.

Along the IB in Jammu, the BSF personnel are conducting round-the-clock patrolling, digital monitoring, and other precautionary measures. "Troops have intensified surveillance along the LoC, maintaining strict dominance over sensitive sectors. Our forces are fully alert and prepared to respond swiftly to any infiltration attempts," the official said.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Snowfall brings tourist rush to Valley: Director Tourism

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 29: Director Tourism Kashmir, Syed Qamar Sajad on Monday said that with the onset of winter and fresh snowfall, tourists have begun flocking to the Valley, giving a boost to winter sports and activities, particularly in Gulmarg.

"After the snowfall, many tourists have turned up in Gulmarg. The boost to winter games and activities has already taken place, and in the coming days, we anticipate even more activity during our seven-day carnival," Sajad told reporters at 'Jashne-Wandeh', a Prelude to New Year, at Nehru Park, Dal Lake, Srinagar.

The Director said,



"Peace prevails in the Valley, and people should come to Kashmir to enjoy its serenity, natural beauty and picturesque landscapes."

"Our message to people across the country is to come to the Valley, enjoy the peace and serenity here and take in the company

of nature and the picturesque landscape of Kashmir," he added.

Similarly, the festivities also included joy shikara rides, a floating exhibition and traditional music, aimed at promoting local livelihoods and highlighting the beauty of Dal Lake, the Director said—(KNO)

Gulmarg full, J&K starts youth ski camp

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Dec 29: With Gulmarg recording nearly 100 percent occupancy for the New Year week celebrations, officials from the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department on Monday announced a 14-day integrated skiing programme for young enthusiasts.

They said the programme will cover key destinations including Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Doodhpathri and Gulmarg, providing training on varied slopes and winter sports facilities.

Director Tourism Kashmir, Syed Qamar Sajad, said winter tourism has seen a remarkable revival this season. "Gulmarg continues to be the winter games capital of the country. Occupancy is almost 100 per cent, just like previous years," he said.

Sajad said the destination's

growing popularity stems from upgraded facilities, including Asia's largest drag lift, installed by the J&K Cable Car Corporation, enhancing the skiing experience for professionals and beginners alike.

"The new drag lift has become a special attraction for children and young learners. Those with intermediate or professional skills can practice at Kondori and Afarwat slopes, which offer some of the best terrains in India," he added.

The department, as part of its winter initiatives, is organising an integrated skiing training course with the Winter Games Association of J&K. It will be conducted across Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Doodhpathri and Gulmarg.

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Srinagar's first inclusive 'State-of-the-Art School' by 2027

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 29: In a first, Srinagar will have its first 'State of the Art School' by 2027 for the students with special needs. Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo said that the social welfare department of Jammu and Kashmir is executing some important projects in district Srinagar.

"State of the Art School is an important project for the specially-abled-students particularly to those who are visually impaired and those with hearing disabilities," he said.

Labroo said that all the concerned departments are working together in coordination so that the specially-abled-students will get the 'Abhinandan State of the Art School' in Srinagar at earliest. "We are ensuring quality work without any delay for this school." "The construction of the school will be completed by the year 2027. We will try to complete this project before the scheduled timeline because this school is meant not only for the students of Srinagar but for the whole Kashmir valley for these special students," he said—(KNO)

Thousands throng Mata Vaishno Devi ahead of New Year

YOGESH

Jammu, Dec 29: Ahead of New Year, thousands of pilgrims thronged holy shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi atop the Trikuta hills in Jammu's Reasi district.

Groups of families and friends, wrapped in warm clothing to brace against chilly winds, trekked from the base camp in Katra despite mixed weather conditions featuring intermittent sunshine, clouds, and icy breezes. The devotees' enthusiasm remained undeterred by the cold.

Reports indicated that daily arrivals at Katra surged to between 20,000 and 26,000 pilgrims, underscoring the traditional New Year rush. Authorities expected further increase, with an additional 70,000 visitors projected by the end of 2025.

To manage the influx, Indian Railways operated special reserved trains (Nos. 04081/04082) between New Delhi and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra from December 27, 2025, to January 1, 2026, providing comfortable and safe travel options for



devotees.

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, in coordination with police and administration, deployed comprehensive security arrangements to ensure pilgrim safety.

These included a multi-tier security grid, over 550 CCTV cameras for round-the-clock surveillance along the yatra track and key areas, RFID-based crowd management and access control, document

verification, and a joint control room manned by shrine board officials, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and central armed paramilitary forces for immediate response to alerts. Helicopter services from Katra to the helipad near the shrine continued operations despite fluctuating weather, while battery-operated cars facilitated movement on key routes.

Continued on
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Decades of demand, Bangdar road construction starts



JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pulwama, Dec 29: After years of persistent demands and decades of hardship, residents of the Bangdar area in Tral have finally received a long-awaited relief as construction work on the much-needed link road has commenced.

For generations, the absence of a proper motorable road had remained one of the biggest challenges for the people of Bangdar. Poor connectivity not only isolated the area from the rest of Tral but also made everyday life extremely difficult.

Access to hospitals, schools, markets and emergency services was a constant struggle, particularly during winters and adverse weather conditions.

"This road has been our dream for decades," said an elderly resident of the area. "We lived in complete isolation. In medical emergencies, patients were often carried on foot or on makeshift stretchers for kilometres. Many lives were put at risk simply because there was no road."

Locals said the lack of connectivity deeply affected education as well, with students forced to walk long distances daily. "Our children had no option but to trek on rough paths to reach their schools. During rains and snowfall, it became nearly impossible. This road will finally give our children a safer and easier future," another resident said.

Elderly people and women bore the brunt of the situation the most, residents said. Women of the area

expressed hope that the road would ease their daily hardships and improve access to healthcare and markets. "Something as simple as going to the market or visiting a doctor was a major task for us. With this road, we will finally feel connected to the outside world," said a local woman.

The commencement of the project has brought a renewed sense of optimism among the villagers, who gathered to witness the beginning of the work.

Many expressed gratitude to the PMGSY department and the government for addressing their long-pending demand.

"We are thankful that our voices have finally been heard," said another local resident. "Now our only request is that the authorities ensure quality work and complete the road within the stipulated time so that we can start benefiting from it at the earliest."

Residents believe that once completed, the link road will not only improve mobility but also open new avenues for socio-economic development in the area. Better connectivity is expected to enhance access to education and healthcare, boost local trade, and improve the overall quality of life in Bangdar.

The start of construction has been widely seen as a turning point for the area, ending years of neglect and ushering in hope for a more connected and secure future for the people of Bangdar in Tral—(KNO)

Police seize 20 vehicles involved in illegal mining

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 29: In order to curb the illegal extraction and transportation of minerals, Jammu and Kashmir Po-lice have seized 17 vehicles and 03 JCBs in separate operations in Baramulla and Ganderbal.

According to a statement, Baramulla, a joint raid con-ducted by Police Post Old Town in coordination with the Geology & Mining Department, three JCB machines involved in the illegal extraction of stones were seized. The seized JCBs bear the following chassis numbers: 1384197A2010, HAR3DXXTA01488983, and HAR3DXSSC01846152. In addition, one dumper bear-ing registration number JK05J7048, which was found carrying illegally extracted

sand, was also seized, the police in a statement said.

All seizures were made after due verification, and legal action under the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act) has been initiated against the violators.

In Ganderbal, Police teams seized 16 vehicles—including 12 Tipperes and 04 Tractors involved in the il-legal extraction and transportation of minor minerals within the jurisdictions of PS Ganderbal, PS Kheerba-wani, PS Lar and PP Nagbal. These vehicles were found transporting illegally extracted material from Nallah Sindh without the mandatory permissions.

Continued on
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SSP Kulgam reviews security of Navyug Tunnel

KNO

Srinagar, Dec 29: SSP Kulgam Anayat Ali Chowdhary-IPS reviewed a joint security meeting regarding the Navyug Tunnel, in order to strengthen the existing security, safety, and traffic management arrangements.

According to a statement, the meeting was attended by the Commanding Officer, 163 Battalion CRPF, Additional Superintendent of Police, NHW Qazigund, SDPO Qazigund, SDPO Banihal, representatives

of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), representatives of Qazigund Expressway Private Limited, and all jurisdictional officers.

During the meeting, recent road accidents inside and around the tunnel were also discussed. It was emphasized that over-speeding poses a serious risk to human life, and commuters were advised to strictly adhere to the permissible speed limit of 50 km/h inside the tunnel to prevent accidents and save lives.

SSP Kulgam issued directions for enhanced

inter-agency coordination, round-the-clock surveillance, strict access control, and robust emergency response mechanisms. Emphasis was laid on adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), contingency preparedness, and effective communication among all stakeholders to ensure the security, safety, and uninterrupted functioning of the Navyug Tunnel.

All concerned agencies were directed to remain vigilant and work in close coordination in the interest of public safety—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

PM's Timely Call On Antibiotic Resistance

Prime Minister Narendra Modi cautioned against the indiscriminate use of antibiotics in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address, which is a timely and crucial intervention in a silent public health crisis. By highlighting the alarming findings of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) report, which details how antibiotics are failing against common infections like pneumonia and UTIs, the Prime Minister has rightly shifted national attention to the grave threat of Antimicrobial

Resistance (AMR). This is a clear and present danger, and his unambiguous message, "Medicines require guidance, and antibiotics require doctors," deserves widespread support and urgent action. The Prime Minister's concern underscores a critical failure in our healthcare culture: the pervasive habit of self-medication and the demand for quick-fix pills. This practice, often driven by convenience or misinformation, is rendering our most vital medical tools obsolete. When antibiotics are

misused or overused, bacteria evolve to survive them, creating "superbugs" that no available drug can treat. This erodes the foundation of modern medicine, making routine surgeries, cancer treatments, and childbirth exponentially riskier. Hailing this statement is essential, but it must be the starting gun for a concerted national campaign. Awareness is the first step. The government, in partnership with medical bodies and media, must launch a sustained public information drive to explain AMR in

simple terms, just as the Prime Minister has begun. Second, the regulation must be tightened. Strict enforcement of laws against over-the-counter antibiotic sales without prescription is non-negotiable. Pharmacists and chemists must be empowered and obligated to act as the first line of defence. Third, the medical community must be reinforced. Doctors need support to resist patient pressure for unnecessary prescriptions and to adhere strictly to treatment guidelines. The fight against AMR

is a collective responsibility. It requires a behavioural shift from every citizen, to never self-prescribe, to complete the full course of medication, and to understand that antibiotics are not cure-alls. The Prime Minister has sounded the alarm. It is now incumbent upon all stakeholders - the public, healthcare providers, pharmacists, and policymakers - to translate this vital warning into a concrete, life-saving movement. Our health, and that of future generations, depends on it.

2025: A Defining Year for India's Growth
India's Goldilocks Moment: High Growth, Low Inflation

- India's real GDP grew 8.2% in Q2 FY 2025-26, up from 7.8% in Q1 and 7.4% in Q4 of FY 2024-25.
- In November 2025, the unemployment rate reduced to 4.7% vs. 5.2% in October 2025, making it the lowest level since April 2025 (5.1%).
- CPI inflation progressively softened to 0.71% in November 2025 from 4.26% in January 2025
- Merchandise exports expanded to US\$ 38.13 billion in November, 2025 compared to US\$ 36.43 billion in January 2025.

Press Information Bureau

Growth, Stability, Confidence: The Tripod Stand of Indian Economy

India is among the world's fastest-growing major economies and is well-positioned to sustain this momentum. With the ambition of attaining high middle-income status by 2047 - the centenary year of its independence - the country is building on strong foundations of economic growth, structural reforms, and social progress.

With GDP valued at USD 4.18 trillion, India has surpassed Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy and is poised to displace Germany from the third rank in the next 2.5 to 3 years with projected GDP of USD 7.3 trillion by 2030. The growth momentum further surprised on the upside, with GDP expanding to a six-quarter high in Q2 of 2025-26, reflecting India's resilience amid persistent global trade uncertainties. Domestic drivers-led by robust private consumption-played a central role in supporting this expansion.

High-frequency indicators point to sustained economic activity: inflation remains below the lower tolerance threshold, unemployment is on a declining trajectory, and export performance continues to improve. Furthermore, financial conditions have stayed benign, with strong credit flows to the commercial sector, while demand conditions remain firm, supported by a further strengthening of urban consumption.

Growth Momentum Strengthening

India's real GDP grew 8.2% in Q2 FY 2025-26, up from 7.8% in the previous quarter and 7.4% in Q4 of 2024-25, led by resilient domestic demand amidst global trade and policy uncertainties. Real gross value added (GVA) expanded by 8.1%, catalysed by buoyant industrial and services sectors.

The RBI revised India's GDP growth forecast for FY 2025-26 upwards to 7.3% from the earlier estimate of 6.8%. India's domestic growth is on an upward trajectory owing to multiple factors such as - robust domestic demand, income tax and goods and services tax (GST) rationalisation, softer crude oil prices, front-loading of Government capital expenditure (CAPEX), along with facilitative monetary and financial conditions, supported by benign inflation.

Looking ahead, domestic drivers - favourable agricultural prospects, the sustained effects of GST rationalisation, benign inflation, and the strong balance sheets of corporates and financial institutions - coupled with supportive monetary and financial conditions, are expected to continue bolstering the economic activity. External factors such as services exports are projected to remain robust, while the swift conclusion of current trade and investment negotiations offers additional upside potential. Ongoing reforms are likely to further enable growth prospects. Present macro-economic situation presents a rare "goldilocks period" of high growth and low inflation.

Falling Unemployment Rates

Employment is the critical bridge between growth and prosperity. In India, where ~26% of the population is aged 10-24, this demographic moment presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity. As one of the world's youngest nations, India's growth story is

being shaped by its ability to generate quality employment that productively absorbs its expanding workforce and delivers inclusive, sustainable growth.

Tracking employment trends is central to effective policymaking. To this end, the National Statistics Office launched the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) in 2017-18, offering timely insights into key labour indicators such as Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR), and Unemployment Rate (UR). Notably, the 2025 PLFS shows a sharp decline in unemployment alongside marked improvements in participation and worker population ratios, signalling strengthening employment conditions.

Unemployment on a Downward Trajectory

Unemployment rate (UR) is the proportion of the labour force that does not have employment and is seeking and/or available for work.

Declining unemployment trends have persisted in India, indicating stronger workforce absorption into productive employment.

Unemployment closely mirrors the pace of economic activity - two sides of the same coin. As growth accelerates, higher production of goods and services creates greater demand for labour, leading to more job opportunities and lower unemployment. In this context, India's declining unemployment reflects the strength of its economic momentum. With growth set to remain robust, India's improving employment outcomes underscore the virtuous cycle between sustained growth and job creation.

In November 2025, the UR for persons aged 15 and above (following CWS) reduced to 4.8% vs. 5.4% in October 2025, making it the lowest level since April 2025 (5.1%). The decline is largely driven by a sharp fall in UR among women. UR among urban women declined from 9.7% to 9.3% while for rural women, it declined from 4.0% to 3.4%.

Overall, Rural UR fell to a new low of 3.9%, while the urban UR decreased to 6.5%.

Rising Labour Force and Worker Participation

With unemployment levels at record lows, the other two major indicators - LFPR & WPR (following CWS) also show promise of a strengthening and inclusive labour market.

LFPR is the percentage of persons in labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population. A rising LFPR signals improving labour market engagement, as more people are entering the workforce. The overall LFPR for persons aged 15 & above rose to a seven-month high of 55.8% in November 2025 (54.2% in June 2025).

WPR is the percentage of employed persons in the population. An increasing WPR is a key indicator of how many people are actually working and not unemployed. The overall WPR for persons aged 15 & above improved

to 53.2% in November 2025, up from 52.5% in October and 51.2% in June 2025.

These trends indicate strengthening labour market conditions, supported by gains in rural employment, rising female participation, and a gradual recovery in urban labour demand.

Inflation Eases Significantly in 2025

Consumer price index (CPI) is the change in the price of a basket of goods and services that are typically purchased by specific groups of households. In 2025, India experienced an overall benign inflation environment. CPI inflation at the starting of the year was 4.26% in January and progressively softened through mid-year, before easing further to multi-year lows in the second half of the year. In June, CPI inflation was reported at 2.10%, well within the RBI's medium-term inflation target of 4% Consumer Price Index (CPI), with a tolerance band of +/- 2%. Headline CPI tracked a downward trajectory and reached historic lows around 0.25% in October. The faster than anticipated decline in inflation was led by correction in food prices¹⁵, contrary to the usual trend witnessed during the months of September-October. By November, CPI inflation edged up to 0.71%, underscoring sustained price stability across broad consumption baskets.

RBI has also lowered its CPI inflation forecast for FY 2025-26 to 2.0%, down from 2.6%.

CPI inflation for FY 2025-26 is projected at 2%, comfortably within the RBI's target range of 2-6%. The quarterly inflation path for FY26 indicates 0.6% in Q3 followed by 2.9% in Q4. For FY27, it is projected at 3.9% in Q1 and 4.0% in Q2.

In the backdrop of evolving macroeconomic and financial developments, RBI has reduced the policy repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25% with a neutral stance. It signals growth-inflation balance, owing to a benign inflation outlook on both headline and core level, that continues to provide the policy space to support the growth momentum. The overall inflation path in 2025 reaffirmed the effectiveness of India's inflation-targeting framework, with CPI outcomes remaining comfortably within the RBI's prescribed band throughout most of the year.

Wholesale price dynamics in 2025 also mirrored this trend of moderated inflation. The WPI inflation which is a measure of average wholesale price movement for the economy, started the year positively at 2.31% in January, supported by higher prices of manufacture of food products, food articles, other manufacturing, non-food articles and manufacture of textiles etc. From April's low inflation of 0.85%, WPI inflation oscillated between mild positive readings, culminating in a provisional -0.32% annual WPI inflation rate in November 2025. These developments underscore the overall softening of price pressures at both

retail and wholesale levels, contributing to a conducive macroeconomic environment for policy calibration and growth.

Trade Performance Improves

In January 2025, India's foreign trade started the year on a solid footing with total exports (merchandise and services combined) estimated at US\$ 74.97 billion, registering a growth of 9.72% over January 2024. By June 2025, cumulative exports (April-June 2025) reached US\$ 210.31 billion (up 5.94%), while non-petroleum exports also maintained a positive momentum. These early and mid-year trends demonstrated steady export expansion and diversified external demand. By November 2025, the year's trade trajectory reflected sustained external sector engagement.

India's merchandise export performance in 2025 strengthened across major product groups and global markets. In the beginning, with exports valued at US\$ 36.43 billion in January 2025, Indian exporters built on diversified demand conditions to sustain outward shipments throughout the year. Supported by strong contributions from sectors such as engineering goods, electronic goods, pharmaceuticals, gems & jewellery, and petroleum products, merchandise exports maintained a positive momentum, reflecting competitiveness of Indian manufacturing and trade linkages with global value chains. By November 2025, merchandise export value rose to US\$ 38.13 billion, illustrating a consistent uptrend in external sector performance even during global trade disruptions.

The merchandise commodities which contributed to the resilient export growth in 2025 were cashew, marine products, other cereals, electronic goods, engineering goods and petroleum products, experiencing more than 10% growth in 11 years.

Merchandise Export Growth in 2025 (In USD Million)

In 2025, the merchandise export growth for various commodities was notable. In January 2025, the export value of cashews was USD 34.93 million, which increased to USD 57.42 million by November 2025, representing a growth of 64.39%. Marine products saw a significant rise from USD 540.75 million in January to USD 877.65 million in November, marking a 62.30% increase. Other cereals grew from USD 28.36 million to USD 37.53 million, an increase of 32.33%. Electronic goods expanded from USD 4,105.46 million to USD 4,813.66 million, showing a growth of 17.25%. Engineering goods increased from USD 9,418.06 million to USD 11,012.20 million, with a growth of 16.93%. Coffee exports rose from USD 115.73 million to USD 134.83 million, an increase of 16.50%. Petroleum

products grew from USD 3,561.76 million to USD 3,931.52 million, representing a 10.38% growth. Ceramic products and glassware saw an increase from USD 326.43 million to USD 355.17 million, which is an 8.80% rise. Spices experienced a modest growth from USD 343.01 million to USD 358.46 million, a 4.50% increase. Lastly, exports of fruits and vegetables grew slightly from USD 303.16 million to USD 314.47 million, indicating a 3.73% growth.

By strengthening trade partnerships with the United Kingdom, Oman, and New Zealand in 2025, India broadened its global export footprint and enhanced access to emerging markets for its exports. Since January, 2025 India boosted its trade with China, Hong Kong, Brazil, Italy, France, Australia, United Arab Emirates, Belgium, Germany and many others, while focusing on trade diversification.

Services exports remained a major pillar of resilience, expanding by 8.65% to an estimated USD 270.06 billion in April-November 2025 from USD 248.56 Billion in April-November 2024, underscoring India's growing global competitiveness in computer services and business services. Overall, the export sector continues to reinforce India's economic stability and growth outlook.

External Sector Shows Resilience

As on November 28, 2025, India's foreign exchange reserves stood at US\$ 686.2 billion, providing a robust import cover of over 11 months.

India's external sector remains resilient. With robust services exports and strong remittances, the current account deficit (CAD) moderated from 2.2% of GDP in Q2: FY 2024-25 to 1.3% in Q2:2025-26. Additionally, inward remittances increased by 10.7% (y-o-y) in Q2:2025-26. The positive outlook of services exports coupled with rising inward remittances are expected to keep CAD modest during 2025-26.

On the external financing side, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) captured great momentum during the first half of the year. For the time frame April to September 2025-26 vis-à-vis the same period a year ago; while Gross FDI grew by 19.4% to US\$ 51.8 billion from US\$ 43.4 billion, Net FDI increased by 127.6% to US\$ 7.7 billion from US\$ 3.4 billion. The significant increase is attributed to a decline in repatriation, despite a rise in outward FDI.

Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) to India recorded net outflows of US\$ 0.7 billion in 2025-26 so far (April-December 03), due to outflows in the equity segment.

Besides, flows under external commercial borrowings and non-resident deposit accounts moderated to US\$ 6.2 billion during April-October 2025-26 from US\$ 8.1 billion a year ago. Non-resident deposits recorded net inflows of US\$ 6.1 billion in April-September 2025-26, lower than US\$ 10.2 billion in the same period last year.

Broad-Based Momentum Reinforces India's Growth Story

India's growth outlook remains buoyant, with global and domestic institutions upgrading their assessments on the back of strong economic fundamentals. Reflecting broad-based momentum across key sectors, the Reserve Bank of India revised its GDP growth projection for FY 2025-26 upward from 6.8% to 7.3%.

International agencies have echoed this optimism: the World Bank projects 6.5% growth in 2026; Moody's expects India to remain the fastest-growing G20 economy with growth of 6.4% in 2026 and 6.5% in 2027; the IMF has raised its projections to 6.6% for 2025 and 6.2% for 2026; the OECD forecasts 6.7% growth in 2025 and 6.2% in 2026; S&P anticipates growth of 6.5% in the current fiscal and 6.7% in the next; the Asian Development Bank has lifted its 2025 forecast to 7.2%; and Fitch has raised its FY26 projection to 7.4% on stronger consumer demand.

Together, sustained international confidence along with robust domestic demand, falling unemployment, and easing inflation, position the country well to advance steadily towards its 2047 development goals.

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

Satish Sharma lauds role of Bharat Scouts & Guides in nation building

KT News Desk

JAMMU, DECEMBER 29: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, IT, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, Science and Technology, Satish Sharma, Monday said that the Bharat Scouts and Guides, Jammu and Kashmir UT branch has been playing a pivotal role in shaping the character, courage and commitment of the youth for more than a century.

The Minister, as per an official statement, was speaking at the function organised by the Bharat Scouts and Guides.

DG Youth Services and Sports, Anuradha Gupta, Secretary in the Agriculture Department, Rajinder Singh Tara, Rtd Wing Commander Manoj Joshi, other office bearers of the organisation and a gathering of Scouts, Guides, Rovers, rangers and unit leaders were present on the occasion.

The Minister conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes of Chief Minister Omar



Abdullah and the Jammu and Kashmir government. He said that the J&K UT Branch of Bharat Scouts and Guides continues to grow from strength to strength, producing disciplined, responsible and socially aware citizens who are always ready

to serve the nation.

The Minister described the Scout and Guide movement as not merely an extra-curricular activity but a way of life, guided by the Scout Promise and Law which instil in young people the values of duty to

God and the country, service to others, physical fitness, mental alertness and moral integrity.

Highlighting the crucial role played by Scouts and Guides during emergencies, Satish Sharma said that in times of

natural calamities and crisis, they are always among the first responders. He recalled the exemplary services rendered by J&K Scouts and Guides during the devastating floods and other emergencies, when they worked tirelessly alongside the Armed Forces, NDRF and civil administration in relief distribution, running community kitchens and bringing hope to thousands of affected families.

"The spirit of 'Service before Self' displayed by the Scouts and Guides reflects the finest values of our society and strengthens the nation in times of adversity," the Minister said.

Satish Sharma assured continued support of the government towards organisations that work for the holistic development of youth and contribute to build a resilient, disciplined and service-oriented society.

The Minister also announced a contribution of Rs 11 lakh out of his CDF for Bharat Scouts and Guides.

Mission Vatsalya, SWD facilitates repatriation of trafficked Bangladeshi minor

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 29: Mission Vatsalya, under the Social Welfare Department (SWD), has facilitated the repatriation of a 16-year-old Bangladeshi minor who had been trafficked into Kashmir for child labour.

This landmark case, as per an official statement, marks the first such cross-border repatriation undertaken since the establishment of Mission Vatsalya in 2018.

The minor (name withheld), currently aged sixteen, was illegally brought into Srinagar through the Kolkata border by unidentified individuals and forced into child labour. Showing remarkable courage, the child later managed to escape and reached Budgam, where he was traced by the local police. The police produced the child before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Budgam, on 19 November 2023, in compliance with Section 31 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

After due consideration, CWC Budgam ordered the child's placement in a Child Care Institution (CCI) to ensure his safety, shelter, and well-being, and initiated a detailed inquiry into his background.

The matter was subsequently taken up with the Directorate of Mission Vatsalya, UT of J&K. Director, Mission Vatsalya, Nazim Zai Khan, directed the concerned authorities to expedite the repatriation process



and personally supervised the proceedings.

On December 25, the minor was formally repatriated by officials of the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Budgam, with police escort from Police Station Budgam, and was safely reunited with his family in Bangladesh.

Reiterating the department's unwavering commitment, Director Mission Vatsalya stated that the department remains dedicated to safeguarding the rights, welfare, and best interests of every child. He emphasized the effective implementation of the principles enshrined in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, particularly (xiii) Repatriation and Restoration, which affirms that every child in the juvenile justice system has the right to be reunited with their family at the earliest and restored to their original socio-economic and cultural status, unless such restoration is not in the child's best interest.

KVK Budgam holds awareness programme on secondary agriculture livelihoods



KT News Desk

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 29: SKUAST-Kashmir, Krishi Vigyan Kendra - Budgam organised an Entrepreneurs Awareness Programme (EAP) on Livelihood Opportunities in Secondary Agriculture for rural youth at its campus Monday.

The programme, as per an official statement, approved through the Directorate of Planning and Monitoring of SKUAST-K, was aimed to create an enabling environment for enterprises to emerge and flourish thereby generating a skilled agri and allied sectors workforce in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Bhinish Shakeel, Senior Scientist and Training Coordinator, presented a brief overview of role of KVK in skill training for entrepreneurship development through secondary agriculture. She urged the trainees to introspect their available resources and build

their knowledge and skill sets through such trainings to establish newer livelihoods through diversification of these traditional agricultural occupations.

Dr. Shabeer Ahmad, SMS Plant Pathology briefed the trainees about livelihood options in secondary agriculture. Trainees were further enlightened by Sana Aftab, a budding entrepreneur, in hand-made cold-process soap making shared her experience of utilising local flora, medicinal and aromatic plants for cosmetic purpose.

The programme witnessed participation of scientists of KVK and over 60 participants who expressed keen interest in the programme.

The programme underlines SKUAST-Ks commitment to foster a culture of agripreneurship, among the rural youth, through information dissemination under the Directorate of Extension, giving impetus to agriculture and allied sectors in the valley.

DC Kupwara reviews preparations for Republic Day celebrations

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 29: To ensure smooth and hassle-free conduct of the ensuing Republic Day celebrations, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Monday convened a meeting of all concerned officers and reviewed the preparedness for the National event.

While addressing the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, emphasised the need for seamless coordination among departments and adherence to a fixed timeline to ensure that all arrangements are put in place well in advance. He stressed that collective efforts must be made to ensure the smooth conduct of the Republic Day.

The DC directed all departments to put up Tableaux during the Republic Day parade to showcase government schemes and achievements of their respective departments, with an aim to make the function more attractive and informative for the public. He also laid stress on maintaining proper protocol, particularly with regard to seating arrangements, and instructed the Police Department to ensure due respect to the National Flag and make foolproof security arrangements.

The Deputy Commissioner



further directed that Republic Day celebrations be held at Sub-Divisional, Tehsil and Block levels with the same fervour and enthusiasm.

It was informed that the main Republic Day function will be held at the District Police Lines (DPL), Kupwara, where the National Flag will be hoisted and the VIP will take salute at the March Past comprising contingents of JKP, JKAP, CRPF, IRP, BSF, PPF, Home Guards, NCC cadets and school children.

The DC conducted a segment-wise review of arrangements including power supply, water, sanitation, and seating, and directed the concerned departments to ensure timely completion of these arrangements.

Other aspects reviewed included refreshments, deployment of magistrates, cultural programmes, barricading, availability of commentators, installation of DJ/Professional Sound System, hoardings, and fire tenders.

The Deputy Commissioner also instructed all officers to ensure their mandatory presence along with subordinate staff during the Republic Day functions.

The meeting was attended by SSP Kupwara Syed Tahir Al Geelani; ADDC Kupwara, ADC Kupwara, ACR, and officers from line departments, Police, CRPF and BSF. ADC Handwara, SDM Lolab, DIO DIPR Kupwara, Tehsildars, and other concerned officers participated in the meeting virtually.

Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan

District Admin Bandipora conducts IEC Awareness Programme



KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 29: Under the ongoing Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA), a meaningful IEC awareness event was conducted at Dak banglow irrigation colony Sumbal. The programme, as per an official statement, focused on sensitizing students about the ill effects of drug abuse and encouraging a healthier, drug-free lifestyle.

The event witnessed the presence of key officials

from the Health Department, Education Department, Police Department, Social welfare Department, DYSO Department and MC Sumbal, along with enthusiastic participation from students, parents, citizens and ULB staff.

On the occasion, participants pledged to stand against substance abuse and promote awareness within the community. The event marked a strong collective step towards building a responsible and addiction-free society.

Anantnag reviews implementation of Registration of Births & Deaths act

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 29: To review the implementation of Registration of Birth & Deaths (RBD) Act 1969, a meeting of the District Level Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee (IDCC) on Registration of Births & Deaths (Civil Registration System) was held Monday at Anantnag.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, Chief Medical Officer (District Registrar, Births & Deaths), District Statistics & Evaluation Officer (Additional District Registrar) and all the Registrars/Representatives of Registrars of Births & Deaths (BDOs, Executive Officers of Municipalities and Medical Superintendents/Officers of designated Government Hospitals) of the district.

On the occasion, DSEO (Additional District Registrar) presented a detailed presentation on the RBD Act, 1969 before the committee.

While reviewing the status of implementation of RBD Act, 1969 which makes the registration of births and deaths mandatory, the importance of timelines for registration of such events was underscored.



It was given out that in February 2025, Government Hospitals were designated as Registration Units thereby facilitating the general public to get their registration certificates from these institutions.

During the meeting, it was decided that District Registrar (CMO) and Additional District Registrar (DSEO) shall monitor the registration process of the hospitals, which started the registration of births and deaths from May 2025. The registration units will be inspected periodically to oversee

the implementation of the Act and put a check on the surge of delayed registrations besides avoiding duplication in registrations.

All the Registrars were urged to undertake necessary steps for timely registration within their jurisdiction and ensure complete registration of events without delay. They were advised to ensure registration of new births and deaths within the prescribed timeline through mass awareness at the grass-root during Gram Sabhas, public meetings and other community

MSME DFO organises PM Vishwakarma orientation programme in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 29: Ministry of MSME, Government of India, through Branch MSME DFO Srinagar, in collaboration with the District Administration Shopian, Monday organised a PM Vishwakarma Marketing and Entrepreneurship Orientation Programme at Mini-Secretariat, Shopian.

The programme was presided over by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr Nasir Ahmed Lone.

Addressing the gathering, the ADDC, as per an official statement, emphasised the importance of empowering local artisans by equipping them with modern marketing and entrepreneurial skills to help their products reach wider markets. He stated that the programme aimed to sensitise artisans, craftsmen and aspiring entrepreneurs about effective marketing strategies, entrepreneurship development and the various benefits available under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme.

Experts from the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) briefed



participants on key aspects of advertising, trade promotion, branding and market linkages under the PM Vishwakarma programme. The experts shared practical strategies to enhance product visibility, build strong brand identities and adopt modern marketing tools to improve sales and market outreach.

Assistant Director MSME, Saheel Alagaband, highlighted the importance of innovation,

quality enhancement and entrepreneurship-oriented training for traditional artisans.

The orientation programme primarily aimed to create awareness among traditional artisans and craftsmen about the objectives and benefits of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme with particular focus on equipping artisan entrepreneurs with market-oriented skills to ensure their ventures become competitive and sustainable.

The programme witnessed active participation from Principal Government Polytechnic College Shopian, Manzoor Ahmed Kumar, Superintendent ITI Shopian, Fida Hussain; Functional Manager DIC Shopian, Ishaq Hassan, artisans, officials from various line departments and representatives of MSME.

Participants actively interacted with officials, who addressed their queries on the spot.

US pledges \$2 bn for UN aid, with ‘adapt, shrink or die’ warning

AFP

Geneva, Dec 29: Washington on Monday pledged an initial \$2 billion for United Nations humanitarian aid in 2026 — far less than it has provided in recent years — warning individual UN agencies to “adapt, shrink or die.”

With its pledge, announced at the US mission in Geneva alongside the United Nations’ aid chief Tom Fletcher, the United States is pursuing a dramatic overhaul of how it funds UN humanitarian work.

Instead of handing funds to individual agencies, the United States will funnel its contributions through the UN aid agency OCHA, headed by Fletcher, which earlier this year launched a so-called Humanitarian Reset

to improve efficiency and accountability.

The US funds will then be distributed to more than a dozen selected countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Sudan.

“It is an initial anchor commitment,” Jeremy Lewin, the senior US official for foreign assistance, humanitarian affairs and religious freedom, told reporters.

“There are other countries that we will add, as we continue to get more funding into this mechanism.”

He challenged other countries to match or beat US funding for UN aid.

“This new model will better share the burden of UN humanitarian work with other developed countries and will require the UN to cut bloat, remove

duplication, and commit to powerful new impact, accountability and oversight mechanisms,” US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on X.

According to UN data, the United States remained the top humanitarian aid donor in the world in 2025, but that amount fell significantly to \$2.7 billion, down from around \$11 billion in 2023 and 2024, and from over \$14 billion in 2022.

Other key donor countries have also been tightening their belts, triggering major upheaval in the global aid sector.

“Individual UN agencies will need to adapt, shrink, or die,” a State Department statement said.

Hard priority choices Fletcher, who is British, said the US pledge was an



“extraordinary” commitment.

“The US has long been the world’s humanitarian superpower,” he said in a statement.

“Hundreds of millions of people are alive today because of American generosity

would be able to see how their money was delivering life-saving impacts.

“The US is also placing a significant and encouraging vote of trust and confidence in the Humanitarian Reset, through which we are making humanitarian action faster, smarter and closer to the people on the front lines of emergencies,” he said.

“We’re cutting red tape, eliminating duplication and prioritising hard.”

When Fletcher launched the UN’s annual Global Humanitarian Appeal for 2026 earlier this month, he requested \$23 billion to provide assistance to 87 million of the world’s neediest people, with a heavy focus on dire conflicts like those in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Haiti and Myanmar.

The amount and number of people covered by the appeal has been dramatically reduced over recent years, as the UN strives to adapt to a new reality after President Donald Trump slashed US foreign aid spending.

The United Nations has stressed that the smaller appeal does not mean needs have shrunk.

It estimates that some 240 million people — in conflict zones, suffering from epidemics, or victims of natural disasters and climate change — are in need of emergency aid.

In 2025, the UN’s appeal for more than \$45 billion was only funded to the \$12 billion mark, the lowest in a decade.

That only allowed it to help 98 million people, 25 million fewer than the year before.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

How LG Sinha, CM Omar,

stemming from the party’s failure to fulfill electoral commitments and his anti-BJP stance on religious issues, has enhanced his stature in the eyes of the public. He delivered the biggest electoral setback to the National Conference since Omar Abdullah’s defeat in the 2002 polls from Ganderbal. His decision to stay away from campaigning for the NC in Budgam by-election resulted in the party’s defeat.

Chanakya of J&K politics - Sunil Sharma

Leader of Opposition in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Sunil Kumar Sharma proved to be the Chanakya of J&K politics in 2025. Sharma engineered the biggest instance of cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha polls held in October this year, with eight MLAs who were expected to vote for the NC-led alliance ended up voting for the BJP to help it win one of the four Rajya Sabha seats.

Sharma also displayed his tactician skills in the recent Assembly by-elections for Budgam and Nagrota, with the ruling party in J&K losing both seats.

Acknowledging his skills, the BJP high command deployed Sharma in Brahmaputra plains of Assam where elections are scheduled in 2026.

Biggest critic - Sajad Lone

Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone was the biggest critic of Omar Abdullah-led government in 2025 and left no opportunity to target it. His party may have just one member in the House but he was more vociferous than other opposition parties in criticising the government within and outside the Assembly.

His videos in chaste Kashmiri have enabled him to reach out to a wide audience with his “UTTI” and “TUTTI” catchphrase becoming popular in Kashmir: (KNO)

J&K Tourism continues

footfall have remained “very strong”, though marginally lower than the all-time high of around 2.36 crore tourist visits reported in 2024, which included about 65,000 foreign tourists.

Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat told Parliament earlier this year that the Union Territory had recorded 2.35 crore domestic tourists and 65,452 foreign tourists in 2024, while during January-June 2025, J&K received 95.9 lakh domestic tourists and 19,570 foreign tourists, pointing to an early-season slowdown compared to the previous year.

As per details, the Kashmir region welcomed over 10.47 lakh domestic and 21,361 foreign tourists during 2025, with about 10.68 lakh total visitors recorded across the year, reflecting a stable but not record-breaking season.

Month-wise data shows that the Valley hosted around 1.48 lakh domestic and 3,385 foreign tourists in January, 1.43 lakh domestic and 4,116 foreign in February, and 1.74 lakh domestic and 2,006 foreign tourists in March, with April registering about 1.75 lakh domestic and 4,145 foreign arrivals, before numbers fluctuated in subsequent months following security incidents and travel advisories.

May saw a sharp decline with 18,246 domestic tourists and 607 international visitors. June recorded 57,458 domestic tourists and 844 foreign arrivals. July saw 98,424 domestic tourists and 1,172 foreign visitors. August recorded 62,430 domestic tourists and 1,399 international arrivals.

September saw 31,878 domestic tourists and 1,302 foreign visitors. October recorded 58,853 domestic tourists and 1,017 international arrivals. November saw 55,904 domestic tourists and 849 foreign visitors. December, till the 15th, recorded 22,829 domestic tourists and 519 international visitors.

In the Jammu region, the data states that more than 1.47 crore tourists visited in 2025, including roughly 12,000 international visitors, with the bulk of the footfall driven by pilgrimages to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Shiv Khori and other religious destinations.

A total of 14,732,552 tourists, including 12,889 foreigners, visited the Jammu region up to December 26, 2025, the data available revealed. Around 6,368,233 tourists visited the holy cave shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, it states.

Religious circuits such as the Amarnath Yatra and Vaishno Devi continue to anchor J&K’s tourism economy, with planners noting that pilgrim inflows, clubbed with leisure and adventure tourism in destinations like Gulmarg, Sonamarg and Pahalgam, remain critical to sustaining overall numbers and allied sectors such as transport, hospitality and handicrafts.

Officials acknowledged that while the first quarter of 2025 showed strong tourist

momentum. However, security-related incidents, including an attack in Pahalgam, triggered cancellations and bookings slowdown, leading to a decline compared to last year’s record inflow, even as the UT still clocked over 95.9 lakh domestic visits and nearly 20,000 foreign visits in just the first half of the year.

The government has, however, projected confidence in the sector’s resilience, highlighting continued infrastructure expansion, promotion campaigns, and niche offerings in adventure, eco and rural tourism, while stakeholders have urged for sustained security, stable travel advisories and targeted support to small tourism operators hit by mid-season shocks.

It is noteworthy that Jammu and Kashmir registered over 2.36 crore visitors, with 2,30,12,707 domestic visitors and 65,452 foreign tourist visits in 2024, taking the total footfall to 2,30,78,159.

Following the April 22, 2025, terror attack in Pahalgam’s Baisaran Valley that killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists, authorities ordered the closure of 48 out of 87 tourist destinations across the Valley on April 29, citing heightened security threats from sleeper cells and potential copycat strikes.

Vulnerable spots, including trekking routes, meadows, and offbeat areas like Drang, Doodhpathri, Aru Valley, higher Gulmarg reaches, Yanner Rafting Point, Akkad Park, and Padshahi Park, were shut indefinitely, with gates locked and access restricted by checkpoints.

However, major hubs like Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Dal Lake and Pahalgam town stayed open, while phased reopenings began in June, with 7-12 spots like Bijbehara Garden and Dagan Top unlocked by September for festivals, though Baisaran remained closed.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah himself repeatedly advocated for aggressive tourism promotion following the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians.

The chief minister also held a Cabinet meeting in Pahalgam on May 26, 2025—the first since the attack, calling tourism a “conflict-neutral” lifeline for thousands of families and praising locals’ resilience against fear, while on July 9 in Kolkata, he noted tourism “bouncing back” with Amarnath Yatra underway, increased flights and safety steps implemented, assuring, “Listen to those who returned from Pahalgam recently.”

Notably, the 17th Annual Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Convention, led by President Ajeet Bajaj, took place in Srinagar from December 17-20, 2025, marking a major push for Kashmir’s adventure tourism revival post-Pahalgam attack.

ATOAI President Ajeet Bajaj positioned Kashmir as India’s “adventure capital,” urging partnerships with local operators and the Ministry of Tourism to accelerate revival through safety protocols, trained guides and sustainable trails like proposed Himalayan routes. (KNO)

Tourism ‘back on

to show steady recovery.

“Tourism in Kashmir is back on track,” he said. “Our bookings for November and December have improved, and though not in large numbers yet, the industry is moving back to normal.”

The Director said the department has drawn up an extensive promotion calendar, including roadshows across major Indian cities and international tourism exhibitions in Germany and Malaysia, aimed at attracting visitors from Europe and East Asia.

“We want to expose the hidden treasures of the Valley to the world. Our focus is on dreaming bigger and achieving higher targets so that the tourism industry here continues to flourish,” he said.

Highlighting the contribution of local communities, Sajad said the tourism industry in Kashmir has been “groomed for decades” and that efforts are now being intensified to ensure stakeholders benefit from their long-standing work.

“Our industry has been nurtured for centuries. It’s time the people who built this legacy reap the harvest of their efforts,” he said.

The Director added that the upgradation of destinations and infrastructure remains a top priority. The department has initiated a plan to renovate government-owned assets that remained unattended for years.

“We are repairing and refurbishing our tourist facilities and changing furniture, upgrading exteriors and improving amenities. Once refurbished, these will be outsourced to youth to create dignified employment avenues,” Sajad said. He stressed that 2026 will focus

on three key areas: infrastructure development, employment generation and destination grooming.

“We are committed to making our service sector more efficient and raising satisfaction levels among tourists. I anticipate that the coming year will be a very good one for Kashmir’s tourism industry,” he said. (KNO)

MeT predicts

Authorities have also cautioned that flight cancellations are likely during the December 31-January 1 period, depending on prevailing weather conditions.

The weather is expected to remain cold and cloudy during the peak snowfall period. Improvement is likely from the afternoon of January 1, with no major weather activity expected thereafter till January 12, the IMD said.

Meanwhile, the latest weather data displayed below-normal minimum temperatures at several places in the Kashmir Valley.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, while Pahalgam and Gulmarg recorded minus 5.2 degrees Celsius and minus 5.9 degrees Celsius respectively.

Furthermore, the day temperatures remained above normal at most places.

Authorities have advised commuters, tourists and transport operators to stay updated with weather advisories and plan travel accordingly, particularly along high-altitude passes connecting Kashmir with Ladakh.

The administration has asked concerned departments to remain alert in view of the forecast and ensure preparedness for any weather-related disruptions.

FRESH WESTERN DISTURBANCE TO HIT J&K

Meanwhile, an independent weather forecaster, Kashmir Weather’s Faizan Arif, said a fresh western disturbance is likely to affect Jammu and Kashmir from December 30, bringing light to moderate snowfall mainly over the Kashmir Valley.

He said snowfall activity is expected to peak between the afternoon of December 30 and the morning of December 31.

Arif added that while snowfall over the plains remains uncertain, a slight chance cannot be ruled out if precipitation continues during the night.

He said mostly cloudy conditions with light to moderate rain or snow are likely on December 31 and January 1, followed by a return to dry weather from January 2 to January 5.

Meanwhile, the Kishtwar-Sinthan-Anantnag and Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumari roads remain closed due to fresh snow accumulation. (KNO)

Longer power

face power shedding of 5-6 hours,” sources said.

It also said that in case of those feeders having losses 20-40 percent, the consumers may face power curtailment of 3 hours. “Earlier, there was a restriction of only two hours. However, there is an extra one hour curtailment in the pipeline.”

Sources further informed that there will be no power curtailment to those areas wherein feeders are having less than 20 percent AT&C losses.

About the power distribution, sources said that the DISCOM on an average was delivering 1700 Megawatts of Power. “During the peak hours, we are meeting a demand of 1900-1950 MWs of power in the Kashmir region.”

Pertinently, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah last week had said that nearly 48 percent households in Srinagar enjoy uninterrupted electricity supply following a successful Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) trial with zero power cuts.

The Chief Minister, in a post on X had congratulated KPDCI on making another 83 areas in Srinagar 24-hour power zones following a successful RDSS trial with zero power cuts.

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

Lieutenant Governor

lines, setting up of border security posts, development of horticulture nursery and installation of avalanche warning systems.

The Board was apprised about various conservation and habitat improvement activities of the department. This includes measures taken in handling of human-wild animal conflict, establishment of rescue centres and habitat restoration works of wetlands.

The Lieutenant Governor called for

prioritizing sustainable management of biodiversity and conservation of wildlife habitats.

He emphasised on promotional activities, particularly among school children, for major projects like Jambu Zoo, Hokersar and Gharana Wetland. He also asked to provide public transport to these destinations to promote eco-tourism.

The efforts made by department in operationalization of Hangul Breeding Centre at Tral were also presented during the meeting. The Board noted with satisfaction the increasing trend of population of Hangul from 127 in 2008 to 323 in 2025 census.

The meeting also discussed the damage to agricultural crops by Wild Boar, Blue Bull and monkeys. The Board desired to explore the possibility of compensating farmers’ losses caused by wild animals.

Documentaries showing restoration works in Hokersar and Gharana Wetland Conservation Reserves and operationalization of Hangul Breeding Centre were screened.

Various publications of the department included Wildlife Calendar 2026; a coffee table book on wildlife of J&K-a journey through protected wilderness; a book titled “The Bounty of Pir Panjal-a journey through its flora and fauna” and a report on first time discovery of Hedgehog in J&K were also released.

LG Sinha interacts

during the interaction.

The programme includes visits to the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, Salal Hydroelectric Power Project, Bari Brahmana SIDCO Industrial Area, India -Pakistan border and a city tour of Jammu.

The visit is intended to provide the Officer Trainees with first-hand exposure to the administrative, developmental, and cultural landscape of the region, thereby contributing to their professional training and sensitisation to governance in diverse administrative

JKPSC submits

the functioning of the Commission.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission for upholding the highest standards of integrity and ensuring a fair, merit-based, speedy and transparent selection process.

Arun Kumar Choudhary, Chairman JKPSC briefed the Lieutenant Governor on technological interventions including the upcoming SMS notification initiative designed to provide aspirants with updates at various stages of the selection process.

The report provides details of the selections made, Departmental Promotion Committee meetings held, promotions effected and the recruitment rules of the departments approved, among other important matters.

India rejects

Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson had termed the “persecution of minorities in India” as a matter of deep concern.

“Recent condemnable incidents of vandalism during Christmas, as well as state-sponsored campaigns targeting Muslims - including the demolition of their homes and repeated lynchings - have deepened fear and alienation among Muslims,” it said.

It said the international community should take note of these developments and take appropriate steps to help protect the fundamental rights of vulnerable communities in India. (KNO)

Year Ender: CBK

143 cases in 2025, including 32 carried forward and 111 newly registered. Of these, 113 cases were disposed of or reverted, while 30 remain pending.

Officials said internal vigilance drives were intensified this year to ensure accountability within the ranks.

JK SAMADHAN PLATFORM

Under the citizen grievance redressal initiative JK Samadhan, the branch managed 114 cases during 2025, including 106 new cases and 08 from the previous year. Of these, 103 were disposed of, leaving 11 pending for final action.

HEADQUARTERS SCRUTINY

The scrutiny section of CBK evaluated 268 cases, including 01 carried forward and 267 new cases. Of these, 263 were disposed of, including: 136 charge-sheeted; 22 marked not applicable; 19 transferred; 01 cancelled and 85 reverted.

Only 5 cases remain under scrutiny. The scrutiny section plays a crucial role in reviewing and ensuring procedural compliance in investigations before final submission.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

The data shows that 3,120 public complaints

were handled during 2025, including 472 references, 1,029 from Jammu Division and 1,307 from Kashmir Division, with an opening balance of 312.

Out of these, 3,070 complaints were disposed of, while only 50 remain pending with 15 from Jammu and 35 from Kashmir.

Officials said the branch strengthened its complaint monitoring system, enabling quicker responses and higher disposal efficiency.

VERIFICATION CASES

The verification wing processed 2,821 cases in total, disposing of 1,009, while 1,812 remain under process. These verifications include financial checks, background probes and internal review cases, which often precede formal registration of FIRs.

PERFORMANCE DRIVERS AND OUTLOOK

Officials told KNO that the record disposal in 2025 stemmed from “focused monitoring, systematic clearance of old pendency and timely filing of charge sheets.” They said the department has implemented a structured follow-up system to ensure that investigations progress without delay.

“The effort to reduce backlog and enhance transparency will continue through 2026, with particular emphasis on verification pendency and internal vigilance efficiency,” a senior official said. (KNO)

Child labour persists

well-being of these children.

A teacher from the Pahalgam area of Anantnag district expressed deep concern over the growing involvement of school-going children in tourism-related activities.

“When children see their peers earning money by taking tourists on horse rides or assisting them at tourist spots, they too get tempted to follow the same path, which directly affects school attendance,” the teacher said, speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

“When other students see a child roaming with horses and ferrying tourists instead of attending classes, it creates a wrong precedent. Slowly, it leads to absenteeism and eventually dropouts. The government must take this issue very seriously,” he added.

The teacher squarely blamed parents for allowing their underage children to engage in such activities during school hours. “Children below 14 years should be in classrooms, not at tourist spots. Parents permitting this are unknowingly harming not only their own children but also influencing others negatively, which impacts the overall attendance and academic environment in schools,” he added.

The issue recently gained wider attention after a video went viral on social media, purportedly showing a minor taking tourists to the famous Betaab Valley. In the video, the child is seen calling his ‘boss’—believed to be his father—at the end of the trip to ask how much money he should collect from the tourists, to which the response comes as Rs 1,500. The video sparked outrage among netizens and renewed debate on the persistence of child labour in Kashmir’s tourism sector.

The teacher stressed that awareness campaigns at tourist destinations are crucial. “First, people must be made aware that employing or engaging children in such work is illegal and harmful. If awareness fails, then strict action must follow against those who violate the law,” he said.

Echoing similar concerns, Waqar Fayaz, Chairman of Noorkash Foundation J&K, a well-known NGO working on social issues in the Valley, said that while the government has taken steps to curb child labour through various departments and agencies, the efforts need to be intensified.

“The government is working to stop child labour, but strict vigilance is the need of the hour, especially at tourist spots, hotels, restaurants and factories where such practices often go unnoticed,” Fayaz said. He added that tourism-related child labour is particularly worrying because it becomes more visible during peak seasons, yet enforcement often remains lax.

Meanwhile, an official from the Labour Department, Jammu and Kashmir, told KNO that the department is aware of such incidents and is actively monitoring the situation. “These issues are being tracked, and we will further intensify vigilance to ensure that child labour is completely eradicated from society,” the official said, adding that action would be taken wherever violations are found.

Social activists, teachers and other people have urged the administration to adopt a multi-pronged approach involving strict enforcement of laws, regular inspections, community awareness, and support for families so that economic compulsions do not push children out of schools and into labour. (KNO)

Unnao rape case

People trying to take political advantage, says SC on allegations against HC judges

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 29: After expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar's lawyers said that allegations were made against the Delhi High Court judges who suspended his life sentence in the Unnao rape case, the Supreme Court on Monday observed that some people are trying to take "political advantage".

The high court had suspended the jail term of Sengar, who was serving life imprisonment in the Unnao rape case, saying he had already served seven years and five months in prison.

"We understand it. We are not sitting in ivory towers. We understand that people are trying to take political advantage and there are people who are trying to take advantage," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, who was heading a three-judge vacation bench, said.

Senior advocate N Hariharan, appearing for Sengar, pointed out that some people were making allegations against the high court judges who dealt with the case.

He said such persons should refrain from making statements or allegations against the judges.

"They are doing that on national television," Hariharan said.

Another lawyer, who also appeared for Sengar, said photographs of the high court judges were also being circulated.

Hariharan said there is a video circulating levelling allegations against the judges and this was a cause of concern.



The bench observed that such people are simply forgetting that Sengar was convicted by the judiciary only.

"Very frankly, these judges are one of the finest we have," the bench, also comprising Justices J K Maheshwari and Augustine George Masih, said during the hearing.

Later, asked about the issue of allegations being made against the judges, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the CBI in the matter, unequivocally and categorically said both the high court judges are "brilliant judges with unimpeachable integrity" and any attempt to malign them must be strongly condemned.

They are among the finest judges of the country, the top law officer said.

He said there are always some elements that attempt to browbeat honest judges and such devious forces must not be encouraged.

The apex court stayed the Delhi High

Court's order suspending the life sentence of Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case, and said he shall not be released from custody.

The apex court also issued notice to Sengar seeking his response within four weeks on the CBI's plea challenging the high court order.

Sengar's sentence was 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.

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.

Never forget mother tongue: President Murmu urges people

PTI

Jamshedpur (Jharkhand), Dec 29: President Droupadi Murmu on Monday urged people to never forget their respective mother tongues, and called for collective efforts towards the betterment of society.

She was addressing the 22nd Santali 'Parsi Maha' (language day) and centenary celebrations of the Ol Chiki script of the Santali language at Dishom Jaherthan courtyard in Karandih on the outskirts of Jamshedpur city in East Singhbhum district.

The President started her speech by singing a prayer to 'Jaher Aayo' (tribal mother deity) in the Santali language.

"There is no harm in learning every language,



but never forget your own mother tongue. When you speak with your own people, always try to converse in your mother tongue," Murmu urged people, while delivering her speech in the Santali language.

She said Ol Chiki is now on digital platform and it should be used for the promotion of the language.

Appreciating Tata Steel for its contribution to promoting Ol Chiki, she said

collective efforts are needed for the betterment of society.

The Centre has released Rs 24,000 crore for the development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), she said.

The President also felicitated 12 distinguished Santali individuals for their contributions to the development of Santali literature.

Murmu was the chief

guest at the function, which was also attended by Governor Santosh Gangwar, Chief Minister Hemant Soren and TMC MP from Jhargram (West Bengal) and Padmashree recipient Kalipada Soren.

The programme marked 100 years of the Ol Chiki movement launched in 1925 by Pandit Raghunath Murmu.

She also paid tributes to Pandit Raghunath Murmu, the creator of the Ol Chiki script, by garlanding his bust.

President Murmu will also attend the 15th convocation ceremony of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Jamshedpur.

The President arrived in Jharkhand on Sunday night on a three-day visit.

Elect a govt that will drive out infiltrators: Shah to people of Assam

PTI

Guwahati, Dec 29: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday exhorted the people of Assam to elect a government in next year's assembly polls which will work against infiltration and in favour of development of the state. He claimed that Assam has made progress over the last 10 years of BJP regime in the state and 11 years of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre. Speaking after inaugurating a 5,000-seat auditorium here, Shah said, "In elections in March-April next year, elect a government that doesn't allow infiltration and works for the progress of Assam." "Much progress has been

achieved in the last 10 years in Assam under the BJP governments. Bless the BJP with another 5 years and every infiltrator will be identified and sent back," he said.

The Union minister took a swipe at the Congress, blaming it for the state's infiltration problem.

"For the sake of vote bank, the Congress encouraged infiltration which has threatened the identity of Assam today," he alleged.

Shah asserted that the BJP-led government is now working for 'cultural and economic renaissance' of the state, and the 'Jyoti-Bishnu Antarjatik Kala Mandir' inaugurated by him at the event is a symbol of the state's growth.

'Misconstrued': Lalit Modi apologises for 'biggest fugitives' remark

PTI

London, Dec 29: IPL founder Lalit Modi on Monday apologised for calling himself and Vijay Mallya the "two biggest fugitives" of India in a video posted on social media and said that his statement was "misconstrued".

In the now-deleted video from Mallya's 70th birthday celebrations in London, Lalit Modi joked about the pair's status as the "two biggest fugitives" of India.

Issuing an apology, Lalit Modi said in an X post, "I apologise if I have hurt anyone feelings, especially the Indian Government, whom I have the highest respect and regard for." "The statement was misconstrued and was never intended to be as played out," the founding commissioner of the Indian Premier League (IPL) added.

He concluded the post by offering "deepest" apologies.

The apology came days after India said it is committed to bringing back from abroad economic fugitives including Lalit Modi and Mallya to face the law in the country. Both Lalit Modi and Mallya face legal challenges in India around allegations of financial impropriety, which they both have denied.

Lalit Modi is wanted by Indian probe agencies for his alleged involvement in money laundering and violating the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA).

RBI to issue instructions to prevent mis-selling of financial products

PTI

Mumbai, Dec 29: The Reserve Bank will issue comprehensive norms to regulated entities on advertising, marketing and sales to prevent mis-selling of financial products and services to consumers.

Mis-selling of financial products and services by regulated entities (REs) has significant consequences for both customers and the financial sector, the central bank said in its Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2024-25, released on Monday. It is proposed to review the extant instructions on conduct-related matters associated with the engagement of recovery agents and recovery of loans, and issue harmonised instructions in this regard, it added.

About digital frauds, the report said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continues to work with stakeholders, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, to develop and operationalise measures to curb digital and cyber-enabled fraud and strengthen customer protection. "REs need to put in place robust internal controls, ensure sufficient grievance redress officers at all levels, and



enhance digital financial literacy to address digital frauds," the report said. Recent initiatives by the Reserve Bank include the development of MuleHunter.ai to facilitate system-wide learning to identify and flag potential mule accounts implemented in 23 banks as of December 17, 2025, it added. Another initiative of the RBI is a digital payments intelligence platform (DPIIP) to leverage AI to flag risky transactions and share intelligence for fraud detection and prevention.

The RBI further said instructions related to limited liability of customers in unauthorised electronic banking transactions, issued in 2017, are being reviewed in view of major shifts in the banking landscape, including the emergence of new payment channels, higher volumes of digital transactions, and evolving fraud patterns.

Study links sleep apnoea with 40 pc higher chance of mental health problems

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 29: A study of older adults in Canada has linked sleep apnoea with a 40 per cent higher chance of mental health conditions, including anxiety and mood disorders.

Obstructive sleep apnoea is a common disorder in which muscles in the throat relax and narrow the airways during sleep, impacting breathing and oxygen levels in the blood. This results in a poor quality of sleep and fatigue or sleepiness during the day.

The long-term ageing study, published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open, also suggested that the increased risk of mental health disorders linked to sleep apnoea is likely consistent over time.

Researchers, including those from Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, looked at over 30,000 older adults aged 45-85, who were followed for an average of about three years, and around 7,500 of them had sleep apnoea.

"In this national (Canada) cohort study of 30,097 individuals, those at high risk of OSA (obstructive sleep apnoea) had approximately 40 per cent higher odds of mental health conditions at both baseline and



follow-up," the authors wrote.

"Over time, high risk of OSA remained associated with a 44 per cent increased odds of reporting new mental health conditions," they said.

They added, "In this national longitudinal cohort study, middle-aged and older adults at high risk of OSA had consistently worse mental health outcomes."

Women, people with lower income and those with poorer health and life satisfaction were factors associated with a higher chance of new mental

health conditions.

The findings highlight the importance of a systematic mental health screening for older adults at risk of sleep apnoea, the researchers said.

Studies have shown that sleep apnoea is related with an increased risk of cognitive impairment and dementia.

Future studies should therefore look at whether integrating screening and prevention measures improves both mental and cognitive health outcomes, the team said.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL & HOSPITALS DIVISION BARAMULLA

e-mail, id, xenmhdbla@gmail.com

TENDER NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

NIT No:	M&HDB/TS/2025-26/86/3919-24
Date:	27-12-2025

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Executive Engineer, Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla, invites online e-bids in Two Cover system on percentage wise basis from Authorized service providers of OEMs / Registered / Listed Contractors for the below mentioned works:

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest Money Deposit	Time of Completion
01.	Providing & Installing of Water Proof Semi-Pandal, sitting arrangement, flooring and related accessories for (05) days in connection with Celebration of Republic Day-2026.	2.01	200/-	4020/-	03 days before the Republic Day-2026

Note: -

- AAA: - Administrative Approval accorded by Chief Engineer M&HD Kashmir vide No. M&HED/K/Acctt/ of 2025-26/108 Dated: 30-08-2025
- Technical Sanction: - Technical Sanction Accorded by Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla vide No. M&HDB/TS/56 of 12/2025 Dated: - 27-12-2025.
- Executing Agency: - Executive Engineer, Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla.

1.	Date of issue of Tender Notice	27-12-2025
2.	Period of downloading of the bidding document	From 27-12-2025 to 05-01-2026
3.	Bid Submission Start Date	From 27-12-2025 (18:15 HRS)
4.	Bid Submission End Date	05-01-2026 (18:55 HRS)
5.	Date of Opening of Cover 1 st	06-01-2026 (13:00 HRS)

The bidders are required to submit their offers in two (02) covers.

Cover-I shall contain: Scanned copies of following documents:

01.	Tender Fee	Rs. 200.00 (Rupees Two hundred only) in shape of e-Challan / e-receipt / online Bank transfer acknowledgement including m-Pay Delight+, to be uploaded with each online bid pledged to Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla. Tender ID to be written also on the voucher. Bank: J&K Bank. Branch: T.P Baramulla. IFSC Code: JAKA0TEHSIL Account No.: 0213010200000051.
02.	EMD	Scanned copy of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in the shape of CDR/FDR equivalent to 02% of value of the advertised cost pledged to Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla. EMD of successful bidder shall be released on receipt of 03% to 10% Performance Guarantee from (L1) and execution of agreement with the Department. EMD of un-successful bidders shall be also released as per rules provided in J&K PWD Engineering Manual 2020.
03.	Terms & Conditions	Scanned copy of the Annexure- "A" & "B" duly accepted by the bidder.
04.	Tax Clearance	Registration Certificate of Sales Tax Department quoting GST Number.
05.	GST	Scanned copies of PAN Card / GST Registration / Latest GST clearance certificate or acknowledgement of latest returns.
06.	Undertaking	Undertaking as per format at Annexure "C" that the bidder has not been blacklisted or debarred by any Govt./Semi Govt. Department.
07.	Contractor Registration	Scanned copy of valid Contractor Registration on JKPWDOMS of PWD J&K.
08.	Eligibility / Work Experience Certificate	The prospective bidder should have sufficient experience in deliverance of the said service at short notice for which he has to furnish / upload documentary proof

Note: -

- The successful bidder has to furnish EMD document physically to the Divisional office alongwith fee receipt within three days from the date of opening price bid, without which his bid shall not be accepted for further processing of contract in his favour.
- No EMD exemption shall be given to bidders.
- Bidders / Firms shall refrain from uploading irrelevant documents.
- Contractor/ Firm shall upload the contact / communication details separately on single page.
- Cover II shall contain the price bid as per BOQ which shall be inclusive of all taxes under GST. The price bid is to be uploaded only.
- The complete bidding process shall be online.
- The Financial bid of only qualifying bidders shall be opened online in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla after evaluation of the technical bid.
- Bidders are advised not to make any change in BOQ (Bill of Quantities) content. In no case they should attempt to create similar BOQ manually. The BOQ downloaded should be used for filling the item rate inclusive of all taxes and it should be saved with the same name as it contains.
- The cost of tender document is non-refundable and the tender shall in no case be accepted if submitted by any firm other than the purchaser.
- Any tender found to have been submitted by the firm by furnishing false information to the Department shall be cancelled and the firm shall be penalized as and when it comes to the notice of the Department even during the currency of the contract. The tenders should be addressed to the Executive Engineer, Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla.
- The Department shall not be responsible for delay in submission of bids due to any reasons, whatsoever.
- The Department reserves the right to reject or accept any or all bids in part or in full without assigning any reason thereof.
- The successful bidder has to carry out the installation jobs based on allotment order issued by the Department at the rates allotted under this contract from the date of issue of Allotment Order.

No: - M&HDB/TS/e-tender-86/3919-24
Dated: - 27-12-2024

DIPK-9440/25
Dated: 29-12-2025

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Mechanical & Hospitals Division
Baramulla

Top diplomats of China, Cambodia, Thailand meet as Beijing seeks stronger role in dispute

AP

Hong Kong, Dec 29: Foreign ministers from Cambodia and Thailand convened with their Chinese counterpart on Monday as the Beijing government, building on its expanding presence in global diplomacy, sought to play a stronger mediating role in the violent border dispute between the two Southeast Asian countries.

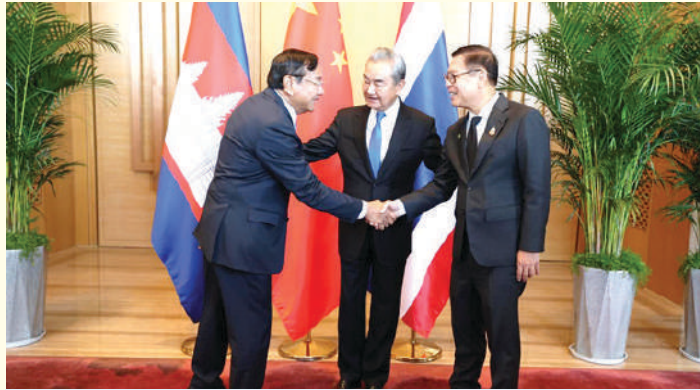
The trilateral meeting, held in a southwestern Chinese province north of the contested border, came two days after Thailand and Cambodia signed a fresh ceasefire agreement to end weeks of fighting that killed more than 100 people and forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands on both sides of the border.

"We haven't resolved everything, but I think we are making progress in the right direction and we have to keep up the momentum," Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow told reporters after the meeting in Yunnan province. He said chief priorities are to ensure a sustained ceasefire and continue rebuilding trust.

It was noteworthy that the meeting was held in Yunnan, nearer to the dispute and to Southeast Asia, rather than in Beijing, the Chinese capital and seat of government about 2,500 kilometers (1,300 miles) northeast.

The meetings represented China's latest efforts to strengthen its role as an international mediator and, in particular, its influence in Asian regional crises. As China grows into an economic and political force globally, Beijing has spent the past decade and more working in various ways to increase its voice as a third party in diplomatic matters.

Hopes for peace expressed
During the meeting Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang



China's military to conduct live fire exercises around Taiwan today

REUTERS

BEIJING: China's military will conduct live fire exercises around Taiwan on Tuesday, state news agency Xinhua reported on Monday, with a graphic demarcating five zones surrounding the island that will be under sea and air space restrictions. A spokesperson for China's Eastern Theatre said the drills are called "Just Mission 2025" and will focus on naval and air-force combat readiness and controlling key ports and other areas.

Yi called for joint efforts to promote regional peace, stability and development — language typical for China in such situations.

"Allowing the flames of war to be reignited is absolutely not what the people of the two countries want and not what China, as your friend, wants to see. Therefore, we should resolutely look ahead and move forward," Wang said.

Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said he believed the latest ceasefire would last and would create an environment for both nations to resume previously agreed-upon ways to settle differences, according to a Chinese interpreter. Sihasak also expressed hopes for peace with neighboring countries. After the meeting,

Chinese official news agency Xinhua quoted Wang as saying the three nations reached a consensus to move forward with the ceasefire without reversal, maintain dialogue and restore ties between the two Southeast Asian countries step by step.

A statement released by Xinhua, the Cambodian state news agency Agence Kampuchea Presse and the Thai Foreign Ministry said the three sides had in-depth exchanges on maintaining the ceasefire. The next key step was to work toward resuming normal exchanges, it said. China said it was ready to provide immediate humanitarian assistance for displaced residents, the statement said. The countries also agreed to take

more robust measures to combat transnational crimes, including telecom and online scams, the statement said.

Sihasak and Prak Sokhonn had also held separate meetings with Wang on Sunday, the first day of the two-day gathering.

Disputes persist
The two Southeast Asian countries originally reached a ceasefire in July. It was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through under pressure from US President Donald Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges unless Thailand and Cambodia agreed. The preliminary pact was followed by a more detailed October agreement.

But Thailand and Cambodia carried on a bitter propaganda war, with minor, cross-border violence continuing. The tensions erupted into heavy fighting in early December. The Saturday agreement calls for Thailand, after the ceasefire has held for 72 hours, to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers who have been held prisoner since the earlier fighting in July. Their release has been a major demand of the Cambodian side.

The agreement also calls on both sides to adhere to international agreements against deploying land mines, a major concern of Thailand.

Sihasak said Thailand would start repatriating the 18 Cambodian soldiers if the ceasefire could be maintained for 72 hours with no additional incidents. Thailand would also ask Cambodia to facilitate the return of remaining Thais in the Cambodian border city of Poipet, he said. Also Monday, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet issued a statement to all Cambodian combatants along the Thai border. "Even though we can still fight," he said, "as a small country we still have nothing to gain from prolonging the fighting for a long time."

Over 3,000 migrants died in 2025 trying to reach Spain: aid group

AFP

Madrid, Dec 29: More than 3,000 migrants died while trying to reach Spain this year, a report released by a Spanish migration rights group said on Monday, a sharp decline from 2024 as the number of attempted crossings fell.

Caminando Fronteras (Walking Borders) said most of the 3,090 deaths recorded until December 15 took place on the Atlantic migration route from Africa to Spain's Canary Islands, considered one of the world's most dangerous.

While there has been a "significant" decrease in migrant arrivals in the Canaries, "a new, more distant and more dangerous" route to the archipelago has emerged with departures from Guinea, it said.

The group compiles its figures from families of migrants and official statistics of those rescued. It included 437 children



and 192 women among the dead.

Caminando Fronteras also noted there had been a rise in the number of boats leaving from Algeria, mainly to the holiday islands of Ibiza and Formentera in the Mediterranean.

Traditionally used by Algerians, the route is seeing a surge of migrants from Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan in 2025, the group said.

The number of deaths on this route had doubled this year to 1,037 when compared to 2024,

it added.

At least 10,457 migrants died or disappeared while trying to reach Spain by sea in 2024, according to Caminando Fronteras, the highest number recorded since it began tracking data in 2007.

Spain's interior ministry says 35,935 migrants reached Spain until December 15 this year, a 40-percent decrease from the same period last year.

Nearly half of them came through the Atlantic migration route from the coast of West Africa to the Canary Islands.

Vandalism, arson during Gen Z protests 'planned conspiracy': Ex-Nepal home minister



PTI

Kathmandu, Dec 29: Nepal's former home minister Ramesh Lekhak on Monday claimed that the vandalism and arson on the second day of the Gen Z protests was the result of "a planned conspiracy against democracy and the nation."

On September 8 and 9, the youth-led Gen Z protest against corruption, nepotism, and a social media ban escalated into violence, leading to the ouster of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's coalition government.

A total of 77 people, including 22 youths, were killed during the Gen Z movement.

Lekhak, who appeared on Monday before a high-level probe commission investigating the Gen Z protests, said that he accepted full moral responsibility for the deaths and other losses of September 8.

However, he claimed that the

vandalism and arson on September 9 across the country were not a spontaneous escalation but the result of "a planned conspiracy against democracy and the nation."

The Nepali Congress leader said he had stepped down immediately after the September 8 tragedy because, as the political head of the Home Ministry, he felt a deep personal and institutional responsibility.

However, Lekhak drew a sharp distinction between the peaceful Gen Z protest of September 8—which, according to him, was later infiltrated and hijacked—and resulted in extensive arson and attacks the next day.

"The violent incidents of September 9 were against national integrity, dignity and democracy. No patriotic Nepali could even imagine torching Singha Durbar secretariat, the Supreme Court, Parliament, and the President's Office," he said.

It was "a planned conspiracy" and "a deliberate attack on the nation and democracy" he added.

The inquiry commission, led by former judge Gauri Bahadur Karki, summoned Lekhak, who was the home minister during the Gen Z-led protests.

In his explanation, Lekhak claimed that as the then-home minister, he had convened a meeting of the Central Security Committee on September 7, where all security agencies agreed to maintain law and order by avoiding excessive use of force and casualties.

PM Modi congratulates Humpy, Erigaisi on World Rapid bronze medals

PTI

New Delhi, Dec 29: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday commended Indian chess stalwart Koneru Humpy and young Arjun Erigaisi for winning the bronze medals in the Women's and Open categories of the FIDE World Rapid Championships in Doha, lauding their dedication and hard work. Humpy,



who had entered the event as the defending champion, was done in by the international chess federation's (FIDE) tie-break rules on Sunday (December 28) despite being the joint leader on 8.5 points with two other Grandmasters after the final round.

"Congratulations to Koneru Humpy, who finished strongly at the 2025 FIDE World Rapid Chess Championship

in Doha, securing the Bronze medal in the women's section. Her dedication towards the game is commendable. Best wishes for the endeavours ahead. humpy, koneru," wrote PM Modi on 'X'.

The Prime Minister often makes it a point to acknowledge the achievements of India's athletes and para athletes, personally meeting many of them across sports disciplines.

ICC rates pitch used in fourth Ashes Test unsatisfactory

Hands one demerit point to MCG



PTI

Dubai, Dec 29: The ICC on Monday rated the pitch used in Melbourne for the fourth Ashes Test between England and Australia as unsatisfactory and handed the venue one demerit point after it was deemed to be "too much in favour of the bowlers" in match referee Jeff Crowe's assessment report. Twenty wickets fell on the opening day of the Test which England eventually won by four wickets inside two days.

"The pitch at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the venue for the fourth Ashes Test, has been deemed 'Unsatisfactory' with the venue handed one demerit point under the ICC Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process," read a statement from the ICC. Accumulation of six demerit points leads to a 12-month ban on the venue.

Crowe delivered the verdict, explaining the decision behind the assessment of the pitch. "The MCG pitch was too much in favour of the bowlers. With 20 wickets falling on the first day, 16 on the second day and no batter even reaching a half-century, the pitch was 'Unsatisfactory' as per the guidelines and the venue gets one demerit point," he stated.

Ronaldo determined to reach 1000 goals before end of career



AP

Dubai, Dec 29: Cristiano Ronaldo has expressed his determination to score 1,000 goals by the end of his career.

And the 40-year-old Portuguese superstar is in no doubt he'll get there.

"I will reach that number for sure, if no injuries," Ronaldo said late on Sunday at the Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai, where he was named as the best player in the Middle East.

Ronaldo moved onto 956 career goals by scoring twice for Al-Nassr in the Saudi Pro League on Saturday. His tally includes men's international record of 143 goals for Portugal, which Ronaldo is set to lead into next year's World Cup in the United States,

Canada, and Mexico.

By the time the World Cup begins, Ronaldo — a five-time world player of the year — will be aged 41.

"I am still very motivated to carry on," the former Real Madrid, Manchester United, and Juventus striker said on stage after receiving his award. "It doesn't matter (where) I play — Middle East, in Europe — I always enjoy playing football, to win trophies, to score goals, and I want to carry on."

"You know what my goal is: I want to win more trophies, and I want to reach the number that you will all know."

The World Cup is one of the few trophies missing from Ronaldo's collection. He won the European Championship with Portugal in 2016.

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Movies
Watch List

TUESDAY, 30TH DECEMBER

DHURANDHAR (A)
HINDI - 11:00 AM, 02:10 PM, 04:40 PM, 06:15 PM

TU MERI MAIN TERA MAIN TERA TU MERI
(U/A 16+) HINDI - 11:15 AM, 06:50 PM

AVATAR : FIRE AND ASH (UA 16+)
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3D HINDI - 03:00 PM

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