



Under PM Modi's leadership, India witnessing sports revolution: LG Sinha

Attends opening ceremony of 2nd Khelo India Beach Games in Diu

Says youth from Kashmir to Kanyakumari redefining sports excellence

KNO Correspondent

Jammu, Jan 05: Asserting that the Khelo India initiative has emerged as a turning point in the history of Indian sports, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that its impact is now clearly visible across the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the grand opening ceremony of the 2nd edition of the 'Khelo India Beach Games' at the iconic Blue Flag certified Ghoghla Beach in Diu, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) while recalling the first Khelo India Beach Games said, "Prime Minister Modi had then envisioned the games as a catalyst for transforming India's sporting landscape. Today, that vision has become a reality. Under the PM Modi's leadership we are witnessing a true sports revolution," he said.

LG Sinha observed that the power and talent of young athletes—from Kashmir to Kanyakumari—are leading the nation forward. He said that in the coming days, many new role models will emerge from sports, inspiring teamwork and showcasing the strength of India's youth to the entire world.

Congratulating Administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Praful Patel for promoting beach games, the Lieutenant Governor said that today the world knows about Ghoghla Beach because of these initiatives.

"We are committed to empower youth through the power of sports. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, India's youth are



redefining sports excellence and scripting a new history from playgrounds to podiums. The young sportspersons are not confined to traditional sports but they are conquering new grounds with sweat, dreams and victory," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Highlighting the performance of Jammu and Kashmir athletes, LG Sinha said that J&K players won nine medals in the 2025 edition and expressed hope that they would once again make the Union Territory proud. He also announced that the mascot for Khelo India Beach Games 2026 has been named "Pearl."

Referring to Prime Minister Modi's vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" articulated in 2014, the Lieutenant Governor said that the slogan has been transformed into reality through inclusive development, including in the field of sports. He praised Praful Patel for his

role in developing sports infrastructure across the country.

LG Sinha also recalled Rabindranath Tagore's vision of India, stating that Prime Minister Modi has worked tirelessly to realise that vision.

He said sports will play a pivotal role in building a Viksit Bharat and called upon the youth to take a pledge to make India a global leader.

"Today, Bharat is establishing its supremacy in almost every field of sports, strengthening the spirit of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat," the Lieutenant Governor added.

LG Sinha highlighted that the spectacular Khelo India Beach Games event reflects the Government of India's commitment to nurture a strong sporting culture and India's Youth Surge in Coastal Sports.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the Jammu & Kashmir is proud to be an active participant in this | [More on P6](#)



Farmers cleaning turnip during carrot harvest season. Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

PRAGATI transforming J&K, driving timely execution of projects: CS

Projects worth Rs 4.12 lakh crore under monitoring; 57 of 59 issues resolved

Six high-impact projects completed; 46 projects worth Rs 3.43 lakh crore under implementation

KNO Desk

Jammu, Jan 05: Highlighting the transformative impact of the PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) platform in expediting major developmental projects across Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Secretary



Atal Duloo on Monday said that 61 projects worth Rs 4.12 lakh crore are currently being monitored on the Project Monitoring Group (PMG) portal.

Addressing a news conference here, the Chief Secretary,

according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) underscored the significance of PRAGATI@50.

"Technology-driven governance mechanism has successfully unlocked several projects that had | [More on P6](#)

RED FORT BLAST

Delhi court sends Yasir Dar to 11-day judicial custody

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: A court here on Monday sent Yasir Ahmed Dar, an accused in the Red Fort blast case, to 11-day judicial custody.

Principal District and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandna sent Dar to the judicial custody till January 16 after he was physically produced in the court.

On December 26 last year, the court had extended Dar's NIA custody for 10 days.

The National Investigating Agency had on December 18 arrested Dar, the ninth accused in the case.

According to NIA, Dar, a resident of Jammu and Kashmir, was a close associate of Umar-un-Nabi, the suicide bomber who was driving | [More on P6](#)

EAC to decide on extension of env'l clearance for 850-MW Ratle project

EC granted for 10-year period in 2012

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 05: The Expert Appraisal Committee of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change will consider the Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited's request for an extension of its Environmental Clearance for the 850-MW Ratle hydroelectric project in Jammu & Kashmir.

Documents accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) lay bare that the panel will decide on the extension of the clearance during its meeting scheduled for the 9th of this month.

The mega project was granted environmental clearance in 2012, and the clearance was transferred to RHPCL in 2021.

As per MoEF&CC norms, the validity of EC for river valley and hydroelectric projects is 10 years. That means the clearance granted in 2012 was valid up to December 2022.

The Ratle hydroelectric project is a run-of-river scheme proposed on the Chenab River in Kishtwar district, with an installed capacity of 850 MW.

Initially, construction of the project was undertaken by the Jammu and Kashmir State Power Development Corporation through M/s GVK Limited. However, work was halted in 2014.

The plan for execution was revived by the Union Power Ministry in | [More on P6](#)

Power Min orders Pakal Dul, Kiru by Dec 2026; Kwar by March 2028

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 05: In a significant development, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal on Monday set December 2026 as the deadline for commissioning the 1000-MW Pakal Dul and 624-MW Kiru hydroelectric projects, and March 2028 as the deadline for the 540-MW Kwar project.

The Union Minister, who was on a two-day visit to Jammu & Kashmir, issued directions to ensure timely commissioning of these projects.

As per an official handout with news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Minister inspected all three projects of Chenab Valley Power Projects Limited (CVPP)—Pakal Dul (1000 MW), Kiru (624 MW), and Kwar (540 MW)—and held a review



meeting with project heads and contractors.

"The CMD, NHPC, briefed the Minister in detail on various aspects of the three under-construction projects, following which Shri Manohar Lal issued directions to commission the

Pakal Dul and Kiru projects by December 2026 and the Kwar project by March 2028," the handout stated.

The Minister also interacted with local residents and workers at various work sites, patiently listening | [More on P6](#)

J&K reels under severe low voltage issues

Power demand hovering around 3200 MWs

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Jan 05: Amid peak winter, Jammu and Kashmir valley is reeling under 'severe low voltage issues, official said.

The official further said that the heating load is also picking up during early morning and night hours. "The demand may further increase in the coming days."

It also said that the severe voltage in Jammu and Kashmir is in violation of N-1.

N-1 in power systems is a security criterion ensuring that the grid continues to operate reliably without interruption, even if a single critical component like a generator, line, or transformer fails

"As expected, with the increase in winter, demand of J&K control area is on a higher side and it is hovering around 3200MW," reads an official document available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

It also reads that "It has been observed that the 400kV as well as 220kV Bus voltages at various stations in Kashmir valley are remaining critically low also reaching 347kV and 178kV—well below the Indian Electricity Grid Code (IEGC) band that is 380kV & 198kV respectively due to low hydro generation and heavy Megavolt-Amperes Reactive (MVAR) drawl from the Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) nodes."

An official said that J&K SLDC was requested to take appropriate measures | [More on P6](#)

Delay in trial not trump card for automatic grant of bail under UAPA: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: The Supreme Court on Monday said the ground of delay in trial would not operate as a trump card for an automatic grant of bail for offences punishable under the stringent Unlawful (Activities) Prevention Act (UAPA).

The top court's observation came while refusing bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case.

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria said



there cannot be a mechanical invocation of prolonged incarceration as a ground for bail in cases involving

serious offences under special enactments.

"In prosecutions alleging offences which implicate the

sovereignty, integrity or security of the State, delay does not operate as a trump card that automatically displaces statutory restraint. Rather, delay serves as a trigger for heightened judicial scrutiny," the bench said.

It said the outcome of such scrutiny must be determined by a proportional and contextual balancing of legally-relevant considerations.

The bench said the considerations include the gravity and statutory character of the offence alleged, the role attributed to the | [More on P6](#)

Sub-zero nights continue across Kashmir, Ladakh remains colder

Gulmarg coldest at minus 8.8°C

Min temps to drop 2-3°C below normal till Jan 10

MeT says light snowfall likely over higher reaches

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 05: Sub-zero night temperatures continued across most parts of Kashmir,



while Ladakh recorded severe cold conditions, according to data released on Monday.

According to details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir

News Observer (KNO), Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 3.6 degrees Celsius, while the city's airport also | [More on P6](#)

Teachers true architects of building progressive, enlightened society: Sakeena Itoo

Urges reforms to strengthen teacher-student relationship

KT NEWS DESK

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 05: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday addressed the One Day Convention of Teachers here, underscoring the pivotal role of teachers in shaping a progressive and enlightened society.

Director School Education Jammu, Naseem Javaid Choudhary; ACR Udhampur, Joint Director School Education Udhampur/Reasi, DSWO Udhampur, CMO Udhampur, CEO Udhampur, other senior officers of Education department and large number of teachers were also present on the occasion.

Speaking to a large gathering of educators, the Minister, as per an official statement, lauded teachers as the true architects of building progressive society, stating that their contribution goes far beyond classrooms and textbooks. "Teachers play a decisive role in nurturing responsible citizens and strengthening moral and intellectual fabric of society", she stated.

The Education Minister called upon teachers to adapt to evolving educational challenges and adopt innovative teaching methods to meet the aspirations of the younger generation. She stressed that continuous professional development and value-based education are essential to keep pace with changing times.

Lauding teachers for their contribution to education sector, Minister Sakeena said that under



the visionary leadership of then Chief Minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah, the revolutionary step of introducing Rehbar-e-Taleem (ReT) scheme was initiated which changed the dynamics of school education sector in J&K. She added that due to ReT scheme, students of far-flung areas, who couldn't afford to move to cities for educational purposes, received education in their respective areas.

She highlighted that the teachers need to be acknowledged for their contribution to the society, adding that the large number of IAS, IPS and JKAS officers have studied from government schools

for which their teachers need to be acknowledged.

Emphasising the need to reform and strengthen the teacher-student relationship, Sakeena Itoo said that mutual respect, trust and understanding must form the foundation of all educational institutions. She highlighted that some positive reforms need to be initiated for improving student-teacher relationship in educational institutions.

Reiterating the government's commitment to improving the education sector, Sakeena Itoo assured that sustained efforts are being made by the Government

under the leadership of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah to upgrade infrastructure, enhance teaching standards and promote holistic learning across educational institutions of J&K.

Addressing the gathering, Director School Education Jammu said the Government has worked tirelessly from last one year for the development of education sector, particularly the change of Academic session, timely updation of seniority lists, conduct of DPCs and other related issues have been solved and some are under active consideration of the Government. He highlighted that various

reformative steps for the betterment of education sector are under process of the government, which will significantly improve the educational standards across Jammu and Kashmir.

On the occasion, various teachers spoke and lauded the efforts of Government, especially Education Minister for various pathbreaking initiatives in education sector. They expressed gratitude to Minister for various decisions like change in academic session, regularisation of CPWs, posting of Principals and other teachers in various schools which was long pending issue, availability of textbooks in schools, timely updation of seniority lists as well as regular conduct of DPCs at all levels.

The Teachers, on the occasion, also put forth some demands before the Minister like provision of leave salary to teachers at the time of retirement, restoration of Old Pension Scheme (OPS), withdrawal of teachers from non teaching assignments in other departments like Census, Surveys and others as well as timely disbursement of dues for Mid Day Meal scheme.

On the sidelines of the Convention, the Minister distributed sewing machines among women beneficiaries of Social Welfare department. She also distributed bicycles among school children for their outstanding performance in various National sports championships and academic activities.

Tanvir Sadiq hails performance of JK athletes at National Dragon Boat Championship



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, 05 Jan: The Jammu & Kashmir National Conference Chief spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq on Monday congratulated the athletes from Jammu & Kashmir for their outstanding performance at the 12th National Dragon Boat Championship, where the Union Territory secured the Overall Second Runners-Up Trophy.

A contingent of 30 athletes, including 22 girls and 8 boys, brought laurels to the region by winning an impressive 2 Gold, 10 Silver and 18 Bronze medals. Tanvir Sadiq lauded the athletes, coaches and support staff for their dedication and perseverance, stating that their success is a matter of immense pride for the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

As per a statement issued, he said that such achievements clearly highlight the immense sporting potential of the youth of the region and are a testament to

months of hard work and rigorous training. "These young athletes have not only earned national recognition but have also inspired a new generation to take up sports with passion and commitment," he added.

Tanvir Sadiq further stated that the Omar Abdullah-led government remains firmly committed to the promotion of sports and youth development across Jammu & Kashmir. He emphasized that sustained efforts are being made to strengthen sports infrastructure, expand access to training facilities, and ensure institutional support for athletes to excel at national and international platforms.

Extending heartfelt congratulations to all medal winners and their mentors, Tanvir Sadiq wished the team continued success and expressed confidence that athletes from Jammu & Kashmir will continue to make the Union Territory proud on the national stage.

EPFO Srinagar holds PPO distribution ceremony

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 05: Employee's Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), Regional Office Srinagar organised a Pension Payment Order (PPO) distribution ceremony Monday at the Conference Hall of RO Srinagar, Batamalo.

During the programme, Pension Payment Orders, as per an official statement, were distributed to already retired employees of EPFO Regional Office Kashmir by Vinay Kumar, Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, Srinagar.

Speaking on the occasion, Vinay Kumar appreciated the efforts of the district on the occasion and prayed for peace and harmony of the people.

system will ensure timely and hassle free disbursement of pensions, while also enhancing transparency and convenience for pensioners.

During the occasion, Social Security Assistant, Yasir Gowhar Mir, was presented the Best Employee of the Month award for December 2025 in recognition of his outstanding contribution towards generation of PPOs and successful operationalisation of the CPPC system in respect of staff pensioners of EPFO Regional Office Srinagar.

The ceremony was attended by officers and staff of EPFO Regional Office Srinagar along with retired employees, who expressed satisfaction over the improved pension processing system.

Satish Sharma attends Prakash Purab celebrations of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 05: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Information Technology, Youth Services and Sports, and Science & Technology Satish Sharma on Monday took part in the celebrations commemorating the Prakash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji by attending the main function at Chand Buwi Kour Gurdwara, besides paying obeisance at several other Gurdwaras in the city.

On the sacred occasion, the minister, as per an official statement, offered his prayers and paid glowing tributes to the tenth Sikh Guru, remembering his extraordinary life devoted to the ideals of truth, justice, courage and service to humanity. He highlighted that Guru Gobind Singh Ji's message of fearlessness, equality and unwavering commitment to righteousness continues to illuminate the path for millions across the world.

Satish Sharma highlighted that Guru Gobind Singh Ji not only shaped a strong spiritual



and moral foundation for society but also empowered people to stand against injustice and tyranny. He called upon people from all sections of society, particularly the youth, to draw inspiration from the Guru's teachings and incorporate the values of discipline, integrity, compassion and selfless service into their daily lives.

The Minister also acknowledged the immense contribution of the Sikh community to the nation, stating that their legacy of sacrifice, patriotism and service is deeply woven into the fabric of India. He appreciated the role of Sikh institutions

and Gurdwaras in promoting harmony, social welfare and community service through initiatives like Langar and humanitarian outreach.

During his visits to Chand Buwi Kour Gurdwara and other Gurdwaras, Satish Sharma interacted with members of the Sikh community and religious leaders, conveying his warm greetings of Prakash Purab. He reiterated the commitment of the Government to uphold the principles of inclusiveness, mutual respect and communal harmony, inspired by the teachings of great spiritual leaders like Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

ADC Shopian visits Gurudwara Sahib Bongam on Guru Purub

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, JANUARY, 5: On the occasion of Guru Purub, the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Shopian, Dr Zakir Hussain Faaz, Monday visited Gurudwara Sahib, Bongam, Shopian on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Shopian. During the visit, The ADC, as per an official statement, inspected the arrangements made for the observance of the holy occasion and reviewed facilities including cleanliness, drinking water, power supply, security and overall management. He interacted



with the Gurudwara management and concerned and stressed the need for ensuring proper facilities and a smooth experience for the devotees.

The district administration has put in place necessary arrangements to ensure the peaceful

and smooth observance of Guru Gobind Singh Ji's birth anniversary, maintaining harmony and public convenience.

The ADC extended greetings to the people of the district on the occasion and prayed for peace and harmony of the people.

Prabhari officer reviews development progress in aspirational block Khawas

KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, JANUARY 05: Prabhari Officer for the Aspirational Block Khawas, (Director MORTH, Government of India) Harleen Kaur Monday chaired a comprehensive review meeting here at Dak Bungalow Rajouri to assess the progress achieved in the saturation of developmental indicators in the Aspirational Block Khawas.

District Development Commissioner, Abhishek Sharma, as per an official statement, welcomed the Prabhari Officer and presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation highlighting sector-wise progress, achievements, challenges and gap analysis of the Aspirational Block.

The meeting included a detailed review of the saturation of indicators pertaining to health, nutrition, education, agriculture and allied sectors,



basic infrastructure and overall socioeconomic development in the Block.

The Prabhari Officer emphasized the need for effective quarantine of TB patients, quality engagement with anganwadi workers and focused motivation of students through exposure visits to reduce dropout rates.

Stress was also laid on introducing audio-visual smart classes, screening of motivational educational films in schools and branding of local products

to enhance livelihoods.

She also underscored the importance of assessing and improving per capita income as a critical indicator of holistic development.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of ongoing works being executed by the BRO on the Rajouri-Poonch National Highway.

Several short videos showcasing on-ground impact of the government schemes in Block Khawas were screened during the meeting,

reflecting tangible improvements in service delivery and beneficiary outreach.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Prabhari Officer inspected stalls set up by different departments which showcased schemes, services and benefits being extended to the people of Block Khawas.

She appreciated the efforts of the district administration Rajouri, particularly in conducting effective gap analysis and adopting a focused, outcome-oriented approach for the development of the Aspirational Block.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Rajouri Malikzada; ADC Kotranka Dilmir, Sheraz ul Haq; PO ICDS, Harpal Singh; ACD, Auqil Naveed; Executive Engineer PDD, Abdul Rasheed; Executive Engineer PHE Sudesh Kumar; CEO Moham-madd Hafeez; CAO, BDO, CDDO and other district and sectoral officers.

DHJ takes stock of horticulture activities in Poonch

KT NEWS DESK

POONCH, JANUARY 05: Director Horticulture Jammu (DHJ), Gul Syed conducted an extensive two-day tour programme of Poonch District to take stock of departmental activities in the region.

During the visit, the Director, as per an official statement, attended an awareness camp organized at Tehsil Mendhar under the MIDH Scheme 2025-26. About 200 individuals participated reflecting keen interest of local farmers in horticultural development initiatives in the district.

The programme was conducted in the presence of Chief Horticulture Officer Uttam Lal; District Horticulture Officer Ajay Gupta; DL-SMS, Abdul Hamid Kohli; Assistant Director (Jammu), Sunil Gupta; DL-SMS, Sayed Mudsir

Shah; MCC Niaz Ahmed along with other officers and officials.

The Director interacted with farmers, reviewed the implementation of ongoing schemes and emphasized the adoption of modern horticultural practices to enhance productivity and farmers' income.

Later, the Director inspected Government Fruit Plants Nursery Mendhar. He also inspected a high-density apple orchard at Gursai. He assessed the progress of high-density plantations and advised field staff and farmers to follow best management practices to ensure better yields.

The tour reinforced the department's commitment towards strengthening horticulture development and promoting farmer-centric initiatives in Poonch District.

The dormant watchdog of food Supplies

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 05: The Enforcement Wing of the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Department, once instrumental in conducting market inspections, controlling prices and preventing black-marketing, appears largely dormant, with no major enforcement activity reported in recent years, even as the government completes a year in office.

In March last year, following directives from Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, the department announced the "reactivation" of its Enforcement Wing and the formation of market-check teams across the Valley to ensure the display of official price lists and curb overpricing of essential commodities.

The then Director FCS&CA had said,

"Nobody will be spared. We will take legal action against those involved in overpricing and violating the norms."

The reactivation came in response to rising consumer complaints about erratic pricing and lack of market discipline. A public notice issued by the FCS&CA Department had urged all retail shop owners to clearly display prices and warned that failure to do so would be treated as an unfair trade practice, inviting legal action.

However, on-ground activity has been sparse, with few market checks conducted beyond sporadic operations.

During Ramadan, Diwali and other festive periods, a few inspections were reported in select districts, but residents say these were neither sustained nor comprehensive across the Valley.

The government has repeatedly



assured consumers of continued enforcement efforts. In a statement issued over three months ago,

Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Satish Sharma reiterated the administration's

"zero-tolerance policy towards food adulteration" and assured that the enforcement campaign would continue.

Yet, residents and consumer activists argue that these assurances have not translated into consistent action.

A recent report also highlighted adulterated food and lax checks underscored public anxiety over weak enforcement, with local civil society groups decrying the lapse.

Repeated attempts by KNO to obtain an updated official comment on the current status of the Enforcement Wing, ongoing market checks, or steps being taken to strengthen enforcement went unanswered. Officials from the FCS&CA Department remained unresponsive to multiple calls and messages.

Residents said the Enforcement

Wing's limited activity and lack of strong punitive powers have allowed price manipulation and quality compromises to persist. "Earlier, we used to see officials visiting markets, checking weights and prices, but now nobody comes. Shopkeepers fix rates as they please, and common people have nowhere to complain," said Bilal Ahmad, a resident of Nowhatta, Srinagar.

Another resident, Mubashir, said they only hear about fines or inspections in the news, but see no difference on the ground. "Vegetables, chicken and mutton rates change from shop to shop without any control," he said.

With government statements stressing intent but little visible enforcement on the ground, consumers say they are left waiting for meaningful action—(KNO)

State vs UT governance poles apart: Sakina Itoo

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Udhampur, Jan 05: Stating that the difference between functioning in a State and a UT is "like the difference between earth and sky," Minister for Health and Medical Education, Education and Social Welfare, Sakina Itoo, on Monday said that despite administrative limitations the elected government is making every possible effort to streamline governance across departments.

Talking to reporters here, Itoo said, "I have worked as a Minister of State and as a Cabinet Minister during the State era, and now I am working as a Minister in a Union Territory. The difference in powers is huge — it is like the difference between earth and sky."

"Despite these challenges," the Minister said, "The present elected government has made sincere efforts to streamline governance across departments."

"Every ministry has done a commendable job despite limitations. We are continuing our work with dedication because we are an elected government, not a selected one,"



she added. Reiterating the government's commitment to strengthening the education sector, Itoo said that sustained efforts are underway to improve infrastructure, teaching quality and overall learning outcomes across Jammu and Kashmir.

"Under the leadership of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, the government is making continuous efforts to upgrade educational infrastructure, enhance teaching standards and promote holistic learning in schools and higher educational institutions," she said. She emphasized that education remains a priority area for the government, with reforms aimed at ensuring access, quality and inclusivity. Speaking about the Social Welfare

Department, Itoo recalled the pivotal role of former Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah, stating that it was during his tenure in 1996 that Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) projects were introduced in Jammu and Kashmir.

"From 2008 to 2014, I personally worked to get hundreds of posts sanctioned in the Social Welfare Department. Unfortunately, from 2015 onwards, almost nothing was done in this sector until last year," she said.

The Minister said that after the formation of the present dispensation, efforts were renewed to address stagnation in the department.

"Since last year, we have once again worked to streamline the Social Welfare Department. Pending posts have now been advertised, and corrective measures are being taken to strengthen service delivery," she added.

Itoo said, "Our aim is to deliver to the people despite limited powers. We are accountable to the people who elected us, and we will continue to raise public issues and work for development."—(KNO)

Fare confusion rides on

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 05: Confusion over passenger fare revisions in Jammu and Kashmir continues, with commuters reporting higher fares even as the government maintains that "no official order" has been issued.

Last week, it was stated that an 18 per cent hike in passenger fares had been "approved" following deliberations by the Fare Revision Committee (FRC), chaired by Principal Secretary Finance Santosh D. Vaidya, with rates reportedly set to take effect from January 1, 2026. However, no formal notification has been issued so far, leaving both transporters and passengers in a state of uncertainty. While some commuters report paying more on Srinagar and south Kashmir routes, transporters from the Kashmir valley say they have not yet implemented the hike officially.

"Meetings with the Jammu wing are scheduled for the next two days to decide the next steps, as we are approaching the government and Transport Minister," a senior transporter said.

The transporters said they had planned to implement the hike earlier, but due to holidays last week, meetings could not take place.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

GMC Jammu issues advisory on cold-weather risks

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Jammu, Jan 05: In view of the intensifying winter conditions across Jammu and Kashmir, Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu has issued a detailed public advisory warning about the serious health and safety risks associated with extreme cold and outlining preparedness and preventive measures for individuals, families and communities.

The advisory highlights that prolonged exposure to low temperatures can lead to life-threatening conditions such as hypothermia, frostbite, and carbon monoxide poisoning. It added that cold-related

disruptions like power outages, frozen water pipes, and dead vehicle batteries can further endanger lives.

Major Health Risks Identified

According to GMC Jammu, hypothermia—a condition in which the body temperature drops below 95°F (35°C)—is among the most dangerous consequences of extreme cold and can prove fatal if not addressed promptly. The advisory notes that frostbite, which causes damage to body tissues due to freezing, can occur rapidly, especially in exposed body parts like fingers, toes, ears and the nose.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Pattan gridlock worsens, commuters suffer

WARIS FAYAZ

Baramulla, Jan 05: The vital Pattan stretch on Srinagar–Baramulla highway has become synonymous with daily traffic chaos, with commuters, traders and residents enduring long tailbacks amid slow progress on the key 11-kilometre bypass project.

Commuters said that they often get stuck for 30 to 45 minutes in the gridlock. They said patients, students and office-goers travelling on the vital Srinagar–Baramulla corridor are the most affected.

They said a town-to-town journey that should take minutes often stretches close to an hour.

Authorities said the Rs 432 crore 11-km Pattan bypass project from Pattan to Tapper is under execution and will eventually decongest the township. They said earth-filling

and formation work on major portions of the alignment are almost complete, while bottlenecks have already been cleared to keep the project on track.

Officials indicated that if the current pace is maintained, the bypass is expected to be completed around July, giving commuters an alternative corridor and easing pressure on the town centre. Earlier, the project was scheduled to be completed in 2025.

Amid mounting public anger, Baramulla MP Engineer Abdul Rashid has formally taken up the issue of delayed Pattan bypass works with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari.

In his representation, the MP flagged "slow execution" and its impact on commuters, traders, patients and students, terming the bypass and associated works lifelines for North Kashmir.

However, in a written reply, the minister has acknowledged the concerns and assured that the matter is being "looked into for action", raising hopes that the work speed will now be increased.

It is noteworthy that the traffic snarls peak during morning office rush and evenings, stranding ambulances and office-goers for 30-45 minutes in what locals call a routine nightmare, even as police remain stretched, manually clearing gridlocks.

Social media overflows with videos of massive jams, calling Pattan town a "Jamnagar", amplifying calls for a dedicated traffic plan, more personnel and coordination with local bodies until the bypass opens. "Police try hard, but without road space and bypass, jams are inevitable—speed up the real solutions," a commuter said—(KNO)

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT KUNZER

Subject:-Engagement of Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers)in Anganwadi Centres.

ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE

Advertisement no.-: 01 CDPO-Kunz of 2026

Dated:- 01-01-2026

Applications on prescribed proforma (Annexure-I) are hereby invited from the eligible female candidates of the Panch wards/Municipal Wards shown against the below mentioned Panchayat Halqas/Municipal Wards, for the engagement of Sanginis (AWWs) for the Anganwadi Centres of POSHAN Project Kunzer on "Honorarium basis". The applications along with required documents shall be deposited in the Office of undersigned i.e. the Child Development Project Officer Kunzer by or before 15 of January, 2026 against proper receipt.

S. NO	NAME OF THE DISTRICT	NAME OF THE PROJECT	NAME OF PANCHAYAT/ MUNICIPALITY WARD	VACANCY OF SANGINIS (ANGANWADI WORKERS)	
				NO. OF PANCH WARD/ MC. WARD	NAME OF AWC
1	BARAMULLA	Kunzer	Turkbatpora	Ward No. 2	Turkbatpora-A
2	BARAMULLA	Kunzer	Hardaboora-B	Ward No. 2	Hardaboora-A

Criteria for Selection of Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) Shall remain as envisaged in the Govt. Order NO 103 JK(SWD) OF 2023 Dated 28.04.2023 i.e.

- ❖ Women candidates in the age group of 18-37 years shall be considered for the post.
 - ❖ The candidate should be a domicile of the UT of MK.
 - ❖ The candidate should be a resident of the Electoral Ward where AWC is located.
 - ❖ Minimum Education qualification should be 10+2 pass and maximum graduation.
 - ❖ Weightage shall be given on the basis of marks obtained in 10+2 and selection shall be granted purely on academic merit basis & there shall not be any interview.
 - ❖ In case eligible candidate is available within the family of retired AWW the said candidate shall qualify for additional two percent points.
 - ❖ Candidates with qualification higher than graduation shall not be considered.
 - ❖ In case of tie in merit of the eligible candidate, candidate with higher age will be preferred
- Self-attested copies of documents to be attached with the application form:
- + Panch Ward Certificate /Electoral Card/present /continuous, ward residence certificate issued by BDO.
 - ❖ Domicile Certificate issued by Tehsildar concerned.
 - ❖ Date of Birth Certificate.
 - ❖ Academic Qualification Certificates with Marks card of 10+2.
 - ❖ If candidate belong to family of retired AWW, Copy of document proof.
 - ❖ Non employment Certificate from a Gazetted Officer.
 - ❖ Self-Addressed envelope with postage stamp of Rs 5/-.

All Documents submitted are correct, without any mismatch, scanning, duplicate or fallacious in nature. If found incorrect or in any of the above stated situation the candidature of deponent may be cancelled and liable to action under law. Maximum qualification is Graduation for vacancy of Sanginis (AWWs) and this is as per facts and onus of proving it to be true lies with the deponent.

The deponent has read the HR policy no. 222-JK(SWD) of 2022 dated: 30.11.2022 and is well versed with all salient features of the policy and shall be applicable to the deponent in case of selection as Sangini (AWW)

Note: Prescribed Application Proforma can also be had from the undersigned office "F Cost".

DIPK-9695/25

Child Dev. Project Officer Poshan Kunzer

No:-CDPO/POSHAN/Adv/2026/504-522

Date:- 01 01-2026

DATED: 05-01-2026

Annexure-1

S.NO:_____

APPLICATION FORM FOR ENGAGEMENT OF SANGINI (ANGANWADI WORKER)

1. Name of the District: - Baramulla
2. Name of the ICDS Project:_____
3. Name of the Anganwadi Centre for which engagement sought_____
4. Panch Ward Certificate /Electoral Card/present /continuous, ward residence certificate issued by BDO. Panchayat Halqa/MC Ward_____
5. Name of the Candidate (In Block Letters)_____
6. Fathers Name (In Block Letters)_____
7. Marital Status: - Married /Un Married_____
8. Husbands Name (if married)_____
9. Place of Permanent Residence _____
- Mohalla _____ Village _____
- Panch Ward Constituency _____
- Name of the Panchayat Halqa _____
- House No _____ (As per latest Panchayat Ward Electoral)
- Block:_____
- 10 . Address for Correspondence Mobile No _____
- 11 Date of Birth _____
- 12 Age as on 01-01-2026 _____
13. Academic Qualification _____

D	D	M	M	Y	Y	Y	Y
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S.No	Examination passed	Board/School	Year of passing	Marks Obtained	Max. Marks	%age
1	10+2					
2	Graduation					

1. Do candidate belong to family of retired AWW (Yes/No).

2.Documents attached.

- ❖ Panch Ward Certificate /present /continuous, ward residence certificate issued by BDO duly countersigned by ACR/SDM.
- ❖ Domicile Certificate issued by Tehsildar concerned.
- ❖ Date of Birth Certificate.
- ❖ Academic Qualification Certificates with Marks card of 10+2.
- ❖ If candidate belong to family of retired AWW/AWH, then copy of the e-ration card.
- ❖ Non employment Certificate from a Gazetted Officer.
- ❖ Self-Addressed envelope with postage stamp of Rs 5/-.

Signature of Candidate

I.....UNDERTAKING
D/o,W/o.....R/o

do hereby certify that the contents of the application given above are correct and true to the best of my knowledge. In case any of the above contents is found incorrect, the selection committee shall have the right to reject my application and similarly revoke my engagement order.

Child Dev. Project Officer Poshan Kunzer

EDITORIAL

Mission YUVA Is Engineering A New Economic Destiny For J&K

The launch and promising trajectory of Mission YUVA in Jammu & Kashmir represent a paradigm shift in economic policy, from seeking job placements to fostering a culture of self-reliance and enterprise. This government scheme is a meticulously engineered ecosystem designed to unlock the latent entrepreneurial potential of the region's youth. By aiming to create over 1.37 lakh enterprises and 4.25 lakh jobs by 2028, Mission YUVA has set an ambitious but data-driven course to fundamentally reshape J&K's economic landscape. What sets this mission apart is its holistic, four-pillar framework addressing the complete

entrepreneurial journey. It wisely begins with 'Culture', actively working to dismantle the fear of failure through thousands of grassroots awareness camps, making entrepreneurship a respected and aspirational choice. The 'Capital' pillar innovates with the Nano Enterprise model, providing subsidised credit for small, viable businesses, thereby reducing risk and making finance accessible beyond urban centres. The focus on 'Capacity' ensures entrepreneurs are not just funded but future-ready, equipped with digital and financial literacy through blended learning. Finally, the 'Connectivity' pillar integrates these new businesses with national

markets via platforms like ONDC, ensuring their longevity and growth. The robust institutional backbone, from the Chief Secretary's oversight to district-level Business Help Desks, provides the necessary hand-holding, transforming a complex process into a guided journey. The digital spine of the mission, through its dedicated app and portal, ensures transparency, tracks outcomes, and builds citizen trust. The early results are profoundly encouraging: over 1.59 lakh registrations and thousands of sanctioned and disbursed loans demonstrate that the model is resonating on the ground. By specifically empowering first-generation entrepreneurs, women, and

youth from remote areas, Mission YUVA is fostering inclusive growth where it is needed most. This mission is a cornerstone for the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' in J&K. It moves beyond rhetoric to create a tangible, sustainable pathway for the youth to become architects of their own destiny and job creators for their communities. If sustained with the same rigour, Mission YUVA has the potential to transform J&K from a region seeking employment into a vibrant hub of innovation and enterprise. This is a blueprint for empowerment that deserves full-throated support and recognition.

Tactile Triumphs: Braille, Rights And Inclusion In India

Press Information Bureau

Observed every year on 4th January, World Braille Day foregrounds Braille not merely as a reading system, but as a gateway to education, dignity and equal participation for persons with visual disabilities. This significance is mirrored in India's efforts to adopt and standardise Braille for inclusive learning. The Braille script was introduced in India in 1887. But, in 1951, a single national standard, Bharati Braille, was adopted with the common codes for Indian languages. According to the 2011 Census, there are 50,32,463 persons with visual impairment in India, who face significant barriers in accessing healthcare, education, and employment. Recognising the needs of this population, Braille in India is embedded in a rights-based ecosystem anchored in initiatives, acts and policies like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and others. These efforts position Braille as both a literacy tool and a public accessibility norm.

What is Braille and How Does It Work?

Braille is a tactile writing and reading system used by people who are blind or have low vision. It is based on a six-dot cell, arranged in two columns of three dots each. Different combinations of raised dots represent letters, numerals, punctuation marks and symbols, enabling users to read through touch.

Braille (named after its inventor in 19th century France, Louis Braille) is not a language but a code that allows multiple languages to be read and written in tactile form.

Significance of Braille

Braille plays a vital role in ensuring literacy, independence, and empowerment for persons with visual impairment. It is central to inclusive education and equal participation in social and economic life.

India, as a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), is committed to ensuring access to information and education in accessible formats, including Braille.

Government of India: Policy and Programme Ecosystem Supporting Braille

The Government of India has established a comprehensive ecosystem to promote the development, dissemination, and use of Braille as a vital tool for inclusion and empowerment of persons with visual impairment. Rooted in constitutional commitments to equality, dignity, and social justice, these initiatives span education, social welfare, skill development, and digital accessibility.

1) Legal foundation: Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act)

India's Braille ecosystem is anchored in a rights-based legal framework through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The Act mandates inclusive education for persons with disabilities, making Braille access and literacy a core requirement.

Inclusive education as a duty of educational institutions: The Act requires educational institutions funded/recognised by government to ensure inclusive education and accessible infrastructure (buildings/campus/facilities), reasonable accommodation, and appropriate support.

Braille and communication modes in schooling: For students who are blind (or deafblind), the Act stresses education in the most appropriate languages and modes/means of communication and explicitly supports Braille and related formats.

Free learning material and assistive devices (up to 18 years): The Act includes measures such as providing books/learning materials and assistive devices free of cost for students with benchmark disabilities.

2) Bharati Braille: India's Standardised Braille Script

The Government of India recognises Bharati Braille as the unified script for multiple Indian languages. Under the aegis of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), a Standard Bharati Braille Code (with Unicode mapping) has been published on 04 January 2025 with official adoption of a consistent Braille system across Indian languages for education and accessibility. The same has been adopted after public consultation on the draft, which was published on 03 December 2024.

How Bharati Braille Works

1. Unified Braille System for Indian Languages

Bharati Braille is the standardised tactile writing system used for most Indian languages.

It was developed to harmonise multiple disparate Braille scripts that existed across languages into a single, consistent code.



This ensures that visually impaired readers can learn and use a common Braille system across multiple Indian languages

It employs the standard six-dot Braille cell.

2. Standardisation and Unicode Mapping

The Government (through NIEPVD/DEPwD) has released the Standard Bharati Braille Codes that includes Unicode mappings, enabling digital compatibility.

This means each Braille cell pattern is mapped to a specific Unicode code point, facilitating digital reading-writing, screen reader support, Braille displays and software applications.

Unicode mapping is vital for accessible digital content in Bharati Braille.

3. Consistent Representation Across Languages

The Standard Bharati Braille Codes provide rules to represent vowels, consonants, numerals and punctuation in different Indian scripts such as Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, etc., using a common tactile framework.

This helps learners with visual impairment transition between languages while reading Braille without having to relearn different Braille codes.

4. Basis for Teaching, Publishing and Digital Accessibility

Bharati Braille serves as the foundation for Braille education, transcription, publishing and accessible material production in India.

The standards are used by publishers, Braille presses, and accessibility implementers to produce textbooks, learning materials and digital Braille content that are consistent and reliable.

The standard supports national initiatives for inclusive education and literacy.

Recent Initiatives:

The National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD) has conducted a Project on Validation of the revised Bharati Braille for technological integration and prepared the Draft Bharati Braille 2.1 after validating Liblouis tables. This draft has been developed through validation workshops and consultations through focal group discussions conducted across different regions of the country. The draft is being uploaded on the NIEPVD website on 04 January 2026 (World Braille Day) for a period of 15 days, inviting comments and feedback from all stakeholders, including educators, Braille experts, persons with visual disabilities, publishers, researchers, and technology developers.

NIEPVD is also conducting training on Bharati Braille in the regional language. Recently, the Institute has organised training on Tamil, Malayalam and Odia Braille.

3) Accessible India Campaign: Strengthening Inclusive Access in Infrastructure, Mobility, and Information and Communication Technologies

The Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat

Abhiyan) is India's national initiative, launched in 2015, by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), to create a barrier-free, inclusive environment for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), including persons with visual impairment. The campaign adopts a holistic approach to accessibility by addressing the built environments (buildings, transport), the information & communication ecosystem (websites, media), and transportation systems universally accessible. It focuses on retrofitting buildings and public spaces with Braille signage (covering 2,000+ railway stations), improving infrastructure at railways, metro stations and airports, and implementing national website accessibility guidelines.

4) NEP 2020's Braille integration

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly recognises that inclusion needs practical learning supports—assistive devices and accessible teaching-learning materials, including Braille.

NEP prioritises participation of children with disabilities, and states that language-appropriate teaching and learning materials—including textbooks in accessible formats such as large print and Braille—should be made available to support integration into classrooms.

The NCERT develops school curricula and textbooks aligned with NEP 2020, and is responsible for producing and enabling Braille and accessible-format textbooks for school education.

5) Higher education and institutional accessibility to Braille

As students with visual disabilities move into higher education, Braille and other accessible formats need to be integrated into mainstream academic systems. Government-supported digital libraries and institutional mandates are enabling universities to shift from ad-hoc accommodations to structured, campus-wide accessibility practices. The DALM Project supports the students with visual impairment pursuing higher education through provision of free Braille Books through its implementing agencies.

Sugamya Pustakalaya

It is a comprehensive digital library for persons with visual and other print disabilities, with accessible books in multiple languages and links to global sources. It was initiated as a collaborative effort of NIEPVD (National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities), along with Tata Consultancy Services and a non-profit organisation called the Daisy Forum of India. The portal offers availability of books and learning materials in digital Braille format. Institutions involved are required to:

Search for accessible-format books

Convert if not available

Upload to Sugamya Pustakalaya to avoid duplication

Provide memberships to students/faculty with print disabilities.

This is significant because it embeds "Braille/accessible formats" into institutional workflows, not just disability offices.

6) Programmes that fund and operationalise Braille learning materials

The Government of India has created dedicated funding mechanisms to translate Braille access into real, scalable learning materials. These programmes focus on mass production, free distribution and institutional capacity-building to ensure that students with visual disabilities are not excluded due to lack of accessible content.

DALM (Project on Financial Support for Development of Accessible Learning Materials)

The DALM Project (earlier known as the "Braille Press Project"), implemented under the SIPDA (Scheme for Implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act), provides free Braille textbooks and course materials to persons with visual impairment across India, covering both school and higher education. Since its inception in 2014, the project has distributed accessible-format school textbooks and other learning materials to 1,69,782 students.

7) Capacity building that sustains Braille (training, special education)

Government bodies and statutory regulators play a critical role in standardising training, accrediting institutions and maintaining professional quality across the country. NIEPVD, Dehradun, is conducting various training programmes for the promotion of Braille literacy and Braille development activities.

Rehabilitation Council of India

The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) is a statutory body of the Government of India established under the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992. It came into existence on 22 June 1993 when the Act was enacted by Parliament. An amendment in 2000 broadened its scope. Its objectives are:

Regulate and standardise rehabilitation education and training for professionals working with persons with disabilities across India.

Prescribe and enforce minimum educational and training standards to ensure quality and uniformity in rehabilitation services.

Recognise and monitor institutions and courses, including domestic and foreign qualifications, in the field of rehabilitation and special education.

Maintain the Central Rehabilitation Register (CRR) for registration and regulation of qualified rehabilitation professionals and personnel.

Promote research, data collection, and continuing professional development in rehabilitation and special education.

Core Institutions and Delivery Ecosystems

Braille Library Service, Delhi Public Library – Provides Braille books and periodicals.

Operates under the Delhi Public Library (DPL), an autonomous organisation of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Provides Braille books, magazines and periodicals for persons with visual disabilities.

Functions as a national-level public Braille library service, supporting reading, education and lifelong learning.

Braille Resource Centre, Bangalore University – Academic Braille resource support.

Functions as an academic support centre offering:

Braille transcription support

Accessible study materials

Academic assistance for visually impaired students

Supports inclusive higher education in line with UGC accessibility guidelines.

Braille presses and resource centres

Strengthen manpower development by recognising and registering vocational, national and apex disability institutions and their personnel under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

Conclusion: Toward a Barrier-Free Future

World Braille Day underscores a simple but powerful truth: access to information determines access to opportunity. India's evolving Braille ecosystem is rooted in law, strengthened by institutional mechanisms and aligned with the United Nations' rights-based vision. By standardising Braille and investing in accessible learning materials, India is further strengthening the foundations of inclusive education. Integrating tactile information across public services and building professional capacity are further helping transform constitutional principles into meaningful, lived accessibility. As these efforts further expand, Braille is increasingly recognised not just as a niche accommodation, but as a vital bridge to equality, participation and dignity for persons with visual disabilities.

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Design Linked Incentive Scheme Catalyzing India’s Semiconductor Design Ecosystem

Press Information Bureau

India is rapidly advancing its semiconductor ambitions, recognizing semiconductor chips as critical enablers of healthcare, transport, communications, defence, space, and emerging digital infrastructure. With accelerating digitalization and automation, global demand for semiconductor chips is rising sharply. In response, the Government of India, through the Semicon India Programme and the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), is strengthening the domestic semiconductor ecosystem and supply chain. However, semiconductor manufacturing remains concentrated in a limited number of geographies, making global supply chains highly fragile and vulnerable to disruptions. This underscores the urgent need to diversify the global manufacturing base, with India increasingly emerging as a strategic and reliable player in the global semiconductor landscape.

Did You Know: Fabless chip design is the key enabler of semiconductor value chain

In the electronics value chain, fabless semiconductor companies hold the highest strategic value because they design the chips that drive product intelligence, efficiency, and security. While fabs manufacture silicon and EMS firms assemble devices, more than half of a semiconductor's value comes from design and IP, not physical production. Fabless semiconductor design models generate high value addition with relatively modest capital expenditure, as design and IP contribute disproportionately to product economic value.

Without strong fabless capability, a nation remains dependent on imported core technologies even if electronics are manufactured locally. Building a robust fabless ecosystem therefore enables India to own the most critical layer of the value chain, retain intellectual property, reduce imports, attract manufacturing, and establish long-term technological leadership.

DLI Scheme
The Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme is a key instrument in advancing India's ambition to develop a strong fabless capability. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under the Semicon India Programme to catalyze a strong, self-reliant chip design ecosystem by providing financial incentives and access to advanced design infrastructure for domestic startups and MSMEs.

ELIGIBILITY UNDER THE DLI SCHEME
Start-ups and MSMEs are eligible for financial incentives and design infrastructure support for semiconductor product design & deployment and other domestic companies are eligible for financial incentives for developing semiconductor designs.

MSMEs: Defined according to the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises notification, 1 June 2020.

Startups: Defined as per the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) notification, 19 February 2019.

Domestic companies: Defined as those which are owned by resident Indian citizens, as per the Foreign Direct Investment

(FDI) Policy Circular, 2017 or extant norms.

The DLI Scheme supports semiconductor design across the full lifecycle—from design and development to deployment—covering Integrated Circuits (ICs), chipsets, Systems-on-Chip (SoCs), systems and IP cores. By promoting indigenous semiconductor content and intellectual property in electronic products, the scheme aims to reduce import dependence, strengthen supply chain resilience, and enhance domestic value addition.

Financial Incentives and Design Infrastructure Support under DLI
FINANCIAL INCENTIVES
Product Design Linked Incentive
Deployment Linked Incentive
Reimbursement of up to 50% of eligible expenditure.

The reimbursement is capped at 15 crore per application.

The support is available to entities involved in semiconductor design for: Integrated Circuits (ICs) Chipsets Systems on Chips (SoCs) Systems & IP Cores Semiconductor-linked designs.

Incentives of 6% to 4% of net sales turnover are provided for five years.

The incentive is capped at 30 crore per application.

The minimum cumulative net sales required over Years 1–5 is 1 crore for startups/ MSMEs and 5 crore for other domestic companies.

The design must be successfully deployed in electronic products.

DESIGN INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT
C-DAC has established the ChipIN Centre under the DLI Scheme to facilitate the design infrastructure support to approved companies:.

National EDA (Electronic Design Automation) Tool Grid: Remote access to the centralized facility of advance EDA tools for chip design activities will be provided to start-ups and MSMEs.

IP Core repository: Flexible access to the repository of IP Cores for SoC design activities.

MPW Prototyping support: Fiscal support for fabricating the design in MPW manner at semiconductor foundries.

Post-silicon validation support: Fiscal support for testing and validation of the fabricated ASIC and silicon bring-up activities.

Programme Highlights & Key Achievements of DLI

Since its launch in December 2021, the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme has been instrumental in shaping a stronger and more self-reliant semiconductor design ecosystem in India. By extending financial incentives, access to advanced design tools, and prototyping support to companies, startups, and academic institutions, the scheme enables innovators to progress seamlessly from ideas to actual silicon chips. This ecosystem-driven approach has been anchored by the creation of shared national infrastructure for chip design.

A key pillar of this infrastructure is the ChipIN Centre, which has democratized access to advanced EDA tools for chip design for about 1 lakh engineers and students across 400 organizations nationwide—making it the world's largest user base of

a centralized chip design facility. This includes support to around 305 academic institutions under the Chips to Start-up (C2S) Programme and 95 startups under the DLI Scheme, significantly reducing entry barriers for early-stage innovators.

Complementing this effort, India's shared EDA Grid—a national platform offering high-end chip design software—has recorded 54,03,005 hours of cumulative usage by 95 supported start-ups as of 2nd January 2026, reflecting strong adoption by startups, MSMEs, and researchers across all States.

These enabling measures have translated into tangible outcomes for the domestic startup ecosystem. Supported companies under the DLI Scheme have moved from innovation to execution, with ten patents filed, 16 chip-design tape-outs completed, and six semiconductor chips successfully fabricated—marking critical milestones from concept to silicon. In parallel, over 1,000 specialised engineers have been trained or engaged through DLI-supported projects, strengthening India's design talent base. Beneficiaries have also developed more than 140 reusable semiconductor IP cores, which serve as critical enablers for advanced chip development.

Building on these successes, the DLI Scheme is now driving the transition from design validation to productization, enabling start-ups and MSMEs to move toward volume manufacturing, system integration, and market deployment. This evolving ecosystem not only strengthens India's domestic semiconductor capabilities but also positions the country as a credible player in global chip design and innovation.

Key Institutional Frameworks for Semiconductor Design

India's semiconductor ecosystem is being strengthened through a coordinated institutional framework that combines policy leadership, investment support, capacity building, and indigenous technology development. Key programmes and agencies provide end-to-end backing—from incentivizing chip design and manufacturing to developing skilled talent and fostering open-source microprocessor architectures—ensuring India's progression toward a self-reliant and globally competitive semiconductor design ecosystem.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY): MeitY leads national semiconductor initiatives, provides policy direction, and anchors schemes. It also coordinates institutional and industry partnerships to strengthen India's chip design and manufacturing ecosystem. MeitY has announced the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme; aims to offset the existing disabilities in India's domestic semiconductor design industry. It seeks to help Indian companies move up the semiconductor value chain.

Semicon India Programme (SIM): With an outlay of 76,000 crore, the programme supports investments in semiconductor and display manufacturing as well as the design ecosystem. The DLI Scheme operates under this programme, ensuring end-to-end backing for design, fabrication and

productisation. C-DAC, a premier R&D organization of the MeitY, is responsible for implementation of the DLI Scheme as Nodal Agency.

Chips to Startup (C2S) Programme: C2S is an umbrella capacity building programme initiated at academic organizations spread across the country to generate 85 thousand number of industry-ready manpower at B.Tech, M.Tech, and PhD levels specialized in semiconductor chip design.

Microprocessor Development Programme: The Microprocessor Development Programme, initiated at C-DAC, IIT Madras and IIT Bombay has resulted into design, development and fabrication of open-source architecture-based family of microprocessors viz. VEGA12, SHAKTI13 and AJIT microprocessors as a step towards self-reliance.

Together, these institutional initiatives create a robust foundation for India's semiconductor ambitions, enabling startups, MSMEs, and academic institutions to innovate and scale. By bridging the gap from research to productization, they are driving self-reliance, enhancing global competitiveness, and positioning India as a strategic player in the global semiconductor landscape.

Success Stories of India's Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme

Under the DLI scheme, 24 chip-design projects have been sanctioned across areas such as video surveillance, drone detection, energy meters, microprocessors, satellite communications, and broadband and IoT SoCs. Additionally, 95 companies have received access to industry-grade EDA tools, significantly reducing design and infrastructure costs for Indian chip design startups. Among the beneficiaries, following companies stands out as leading examples of how the DLI Scheme is nurturing world-class semiconductor innovation:

Vervesemi Microelectronics, with a strong portfolio of 110+ semiconductor IPs, 25 integrated circuit (IC) product variants, 10 granted patents, and 5 trade secrets is developing motor-control chips for a wide range of applications, including consumer appliances such as fans, coolers, mixer grinders, air conditioners, washing machines, and drones, as well as automotive applications like e-scooters and e-rickshaws. These chips support a unique class of BLDC motors. Vervesemi has completed pilot-lot sampling for two chips, with a third chip expected from the foundry later this year and has several global customers already engaged in product development using the existing chips.

InCore Semiconductors is focused on the design and development of indigenous RISC-V microprocessor IPs and SoC design automation tools, with the ultimate goal of building India's most powerful embedded processor, Dolomite, targeted at entry-level smartphones and edge-AI applications. InCore's portfolio of processor IP cores is silicon-proven across multiple customer chips, fabricated at technology nodes ranging from 180 nm to 16 nm, and aims to reduce India's dependence on imported CPU IP while enabling strategic and commercial applications.

Netrasemi is focused on designing AI-capable SoCs for CCTV secure surveillance, smart sensors, robotics and drones, and mobility applications. The company has successfully taped out India's first indigenously designed AI SoC in an advanced 12 nm process node, integrating in-house AI/ ML accelerators, vision processing, and video engines. Netrasemi is also backed by the largest private venture capital funding to date for an Indian semiconductor company and has a series of design tape-outs lined up next year, ranging from low-end to high-complexity surveillance SoCs.

Aheesa Digital Innovations is developing Vihaan, an indigenous fiber-broadband solution used to connect homes and businesses to high-speed fiber networks. Vihaan is built around an indigenous VEGA processor-based Gigabit Passive Optical Network (GPON) Optical Network Terminal (ONT) and Network SoC, which integrates fiber termination, data processing, and network management functions into a single chip. This enables reliable, secure, and cost-effective broadband connectivity. They are on track to introduce reference platforms for customer exploration in 2026.

AAGYAVISION is designing advanced radar-on-chip that operate reliably in all weather conditions, driving advancements in safety, security, smart infrastructure, edge computing, and emerging 6G sensor networks as well as critical application like drone detection.

The success stories illustrate how the DLI Scheme is converting indigenous chip design capabilities into silicon-proven, market-ready products. By supporting advanced design, prototyping, and commercialization, the scheme is strengthening India's technological self-reliance and its position in the global semiconductor design ecosystem.

Conclusion
The Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme is critical to anchoring India in the most strategic and value-intensive segment of the global semiconductor value chain—chip design. By reducing dependence on imported semiconductor IPs and chips, strengthening resilience against geopolitical and supply-chain disruptions, and ensuring assured access to critical technologies for defence, telecom, AI and mobility, DLI lays the foundation for strategic autonomy and long-term economic growth. The scheme also enables high-value growth by translating deep-tech innovation into globally competitive products, fostering startups and MSMEs, and building a highly skilled engineering workforce.

These outcomes are already evident, with DLI-supported firms achieving multiple chip tape-outs, silicon-proven designs, patents, reusable IPs, trained talent and operational design infrastructure, demonstrating tangible on-ground impact. As the ecosystem enters the productization phase, silicon-validated designs are moving toward volume manufacturing, system integration and market deployment, positioning Indian companies as credible global suppliers while strengthening domestic supply chains and reinforcing India's self-reliant semiconductor ecosystem.

The Trump Doctrine In Venezuela

The US military operation to arrest Nicolás Maduro underscores President Donald Trump's view of the Western Hemisphere as a region where US interests take precedence. Russia and China will welcome this as a sign that Trump shares their vision of a world divided into spheres of influence.

Richard Haass

Nicolás Maduro is now the former president of Venezuela, a prisoner in US custody. His ouster at the hands of US Special Forces is, however, best understood as the end of the beginning rather than the beginning of the end.

To be sure, few in Venezuela, or anywhere, will mourn Maduro's removal. He was an autocrat who stole an election, repressed his people, ran his country's economy into the ground despite possessing enormous oil reserves, and trafficked in narcotics.

But that does not mean that this military operation was either warranted or wise. In fact, it was of questionable legality. It was also of questionable strategic value: Maduro hardly posed an imminent threat to the United States. Make no mistake: this was a military operation of choice, not of necessity.

There are some superficial similarities between this operation and the one launched by President George H.W. Bush in 1989 to remove Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega from power. But there was a stronger legal case against Noriega, one involving not just drugs but also the killing of a US serviceman. And there were legitimate concerns about the threat to other US military personnel stationed in Panama and the security of the Panama Canal itself.

The choice to target Venezuela is revealing of President Donald Trump's motive. The main priority, Trump suggested during his press conference after the operation, was American access to Venezuela's oil reserves,



the world's largest. Secondary objectives included ending Venezuela's involvement in the drug trade, helping those who left the country to return home, and tightening the squeeze on Cuba, which is heavily dependent on subsidized Venezuelan oil to bolster its struggling, sanctioned economy.

But it would be premature in the extreme to declare the operation a success. It is one thing to remove an individual from power. It is another, fundamentally different and more



difficult task, to remove a regime and replace it with something more benign and enduring. With regard to Venezuela, former Secretary of State Colin Powell's "Pottery Barn rule" applies: we broke it, so now we own it.

Trump has declared that the US would "run Venezuela." Details are scarce, and whether this will require an occupying army is unclear. One thing is clear, at least for now: the Trump administration prefers to work with remnants of the existing regime (it seems

to have reached an understanding with Maduro's vice president, who is now heading up the government) rather than empower the opposition. This aligns with a policy motivated by the prospect of commercial gain, not by a desire to promote democracy and safeguard human rights.

One can assume away all potential problems, but the main one – a breakdown in order – should be forthrightly acknowledged. Pro-regime elements will be active, and the opposition is anything but united and may well resist being shut out. Such unknowns could raise difficult policy choices for the US in terms of what it would be prepared to do to shape developments if they were to spin out of control.

The operation captures the essence of Trump's foreign policy. It was unilateral to its core. It paid little heed to legality or international opinion. It emphasized the Western Hemisphere rather than Europe, the Indo-Pacific, or the Middle East. The goal was commercial benefit, in this case access to oil reserves, and to strengthen homeland security, reflecting concerns over drugs and immigration. Military force was used, but in bounded ways.

The biggest downside of the Venezuela operation could be the precedent it sets, affirming the right of great powers to intervene in their backyards against leaders they deem to be illegitimate or a threat. One can only imagine Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is calling for the "de-Nazification" of Ukraine and the removal of President Volodymyr Zelensky, nodding in agreement. Trump's military operation in Venezuela makes a negotiated end to the Russia-Ukraine war even

more remote than it already was.

A similar reaction is likely in China, which views Taiwan as a breakaway province and its government as illegitimate. This is not to say that President Xi Jinping will suddenly act on his ambitions for Taiwan, but events in Venezuela could increase his confidence that he would succeed if he were to invade, besiege, or otherwise coerce the island. The operation to oust Maduro makes clear that the recently released US National Security Strategy should be taken seriously, and that the Trump administration sees the Western Hemisphere as a region where US interests take precedence. Russia and China will welcome this as a sign that Trump shares their vision of a world divided into spheres of influence, where the governments in Moscow and Beijing have the upper hand in Europe and the Indo-Pacific, respectively. A global order that has endured for 80 years is on the verge of being replaced by three regional orders that are likely to be anything but orderly – or free.

Richard Haass, President Emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, senior counselor at Centerview Partners, and Distinguished University Scholar at New York University, previously served as Director of Policy Planning for the US State Department (2001-03), and was President George W. Bush's special envoy to Northern Ireland and Coordinator for the Future of Afghanistan. He is the author of The Bill of Obligations: The Ten Habits of Good Citizens (Penguin Press, 2023) and the weekly Substack newsletter Home & Away.

Source: Project Syndicate

Sr DCM Jammu to receive ‘Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar’ 2025

Result of sincerity, hard work of entire Jammu Division: Uchit Singhal

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 05: For his outstanding work and dedication in the railways during the year 2025, Uchit Singhal, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu, will be awarded the 'Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar (AVRSP) 2025' by the Railway Minister, Ashwini Vaishnav. This award is being given to him for bringing unprecedented improvements and innovations in commercial and passenger services in the Jammu Division during the year 2025.

After the formation of the Jammu Division in 2025, Uchit Singhal assumed charge as Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu, on March 23, 2025. Under his hard work and leadership, significant improvements were made in passenger amenities and operational efficiency in the Jammu Division. His significant contributions to the achievements of the Jammu Division include the successful operation of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link



(USBRL) line, upgradation of passenger facilities, and revenue generation, which have revitalized railway services.

The 'Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar (AVRSP) 2025' ceremony will be held on January 9 at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in Delhi. Approximately 100 outstanding employees

from various railway zones and departments across the country will be felicitated. This will be a moment of pride for the Jammu Division, reflecting the crucial role of railway employees in nation-building.

Expressing his happiness, Uchit Singhal said, "This is a result of the sincerity and

hard work of the entire Jammu Division. It recognizes the dedicated efforts made at the highest level for the comfort, safety, and convenience of the passengers. This has been made possible by the exceptional contributions of all the employees of the division who have rendered their best services to the division."

US expands list of countries whose citizens must pay up to USD 15,000 bonds to apply for visas

PTI

Washington, Jan 05: The Trump administration has added seven countries, including five in Africa, to the list of nations whose passport holders are required to post bonds of up to USD 15,000 to apply to enter the United States.

Thirteen countries, all but two of them in Africa, are now on the list, which makes the process of obtaining a US visa unaffordable for many.

The State Department last week quietly added Bhutan, Botswana, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia and Turkmenistan to the list. Those designations took effect on January 1, according to a notice posted on the travel.state.gov website.

It's the latest effort by the Trump administration to tighten requirements for entry to the US, including requiring citizens from all countries that require visas to sit for in-person interviews and disclose years of social media histories as well as detailed accounts of their and their families'



previous travel and living arrangements.

US officials have defended the bonds, which can range from USD 5,000 up to USD 15,000, maintaining they are effective in ensuring that citizens of targeted countries do not overstay their visas.

Payment of the bond does not guarantee a visa will be granted, but the amount will be

refunded if the visa is denied or when a visa holder demonstrates they have complied with the terms of visa.

The new countries covered by the requirement join Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Gambia, Malawi and Zambia, which were all placed on the list in August and October of last year.

DELHI RIOTS CASE

'Act of terror' under UAPA not confined only to final execution: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: The Supreme Court on Monday ruled that an "act of terror" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is not confined only to the final execution but extends to those who contribute to the commission of such acts through planning, coordination, mobilisation or other forms of concerted action.

Section 15 of the UAPA defines a terrorist act as an act done "with intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, security, economic security or sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror or likely to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India."

However, the provision qualifies that striking terror is by use of "bombs, dynamite or other explosive substances or

inflammable substances or fire-arms or any other means."

While refusing bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, a bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and NV Anjaria, in its judgment spanning 142 pages, referred to Section 15(1)(a) of the 1967 Act to note the residuary phrase of "by another means".

The top court said the statutory intent was not to limit the definition of terror to the use of weapons, asserting that emphasis is not solely on the instrumentality but the design, intent and effect of the act.

"Confining Section 15 to only conventional modes of violence will be to unduly narrow its ambit contrary to plain language," it said.

"The means by which such acts may be committed or not confined to the use of bombs, explosives, firearms, or other



conventional weapons alone. "Parliament has consciously

employed the expression court by 'any other means of whatever

nature' which expression cannot be rendered otiose. The statutory emphasis is thus not solely on the instrumentality employed but the design, intent and effect of the act," the court said.

The apex court said a 'terrorist act' under the UAPA extended to the disruption of essential supplies leading to economic insecurity and destabilisation of civic life even if violence was not committed in the process.

Criminal liability is not confined only to the final execution, but extends to those who contribute to the commission of such acts through planning, coordination, mobilisation, or other forms of concerted action, the court said.

"The prosecution case, as placed before this Court, does not proceed on the footing that the protests merely inconvenienced commuters or strained

policing resources. It proceeds on the footing that a deliberate method of agitation was conceived and executed, namely sustained and replicated 'chakka jams' at strategically selected arterial locations, with the object of choking movement across the National Capital, disrupting essential services, and overwhelming the administrative capacity of the State," it said.

The top court said offences covered under the UAPA go beyond the ordinary offences and affect the security and integrity of the nation.

A terrorist act is not an isolated, solitary and final act; it was the culmination of "organised, sustained and conspiratorial activities unfolding over time," it added.

The apex court said not every disruption of traffic, not every blockade, and not every

law-and-order incident engages the statutory framework of the UAPA.

"The statute is attracted only where the conduct alleged, taken cumulatively, is capable of being understood as threatening the unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty of the nation, or as creating a climate of fear and paralysis transcending ordinary disorder," it said.

The February 2020 riots in northeast Delhi left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured.

The violence erupted during widespread protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens.

The accused moved the apex court, challenging the Delhi High Court's September 2, 2025, order denying them bail in the larger conspiracy case of the riots.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Under PM Modi's

national sporting movement.

These games will build confidence and leadership that will spur rise of Gen Z athletes in global tournaments, he further said

The Lieutenant Governor called upon the athletes to act as brand ambassadors for 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and share the warm hospitality and priceless culture of Diu with their respective regions.

"Khelo India Beach Games are not just about winning medals; they are a platform to project India's 'soft power' and showcase our coastal tourism potential to the world," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the Beach Games also remind us of our shared responsibility towards environmental sustainability and the preservation of our coastal ecosystems.

"Sports unite people beyond caste, religion, and region. Let us make these games a success through the power of unity and work towards making India a world-class sporting power," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated Praful Patel, and the people of the Union Territory for successfully hosting the India's first-ever multi-sport Beach Games in 2024 and the inaugural edition of the Khelo India Beach Games in 2025. He also extended his best wishes to all the athletes.

The 2026 edition follows the historic success of the inaugural games. Over the next five days, more than 1,300 athletes from 31 states and UTs will be participating in eight disciplines (6 competitive and 2 demonstration) including Beach Soccer, Beach Volleyball, Beach Sepak Takraw, Beach Kabaddi, Beach Pencak Silat, & Open water Swimming as Competitive and Beach Mallakhamb & Beach Tug of war as Demonstration.

Eminent sports personalities, senior officials, prominent citizens from different walks of life, sports enthusiasts and youth in large number attended the opening ceremony. (KNO)

PRAGATI transforming

remained stalled for decades due to inter-departmental bottlenecks and procedural delays," he said.

Referring to the Project Monitoring Group (PMG) portal, the Chief Secretary said, "Projects worth Rs 500 crore or more undertaken by the Government of India are monitored through this platform under the Cabinet Secretariat, with active involvement of the concerned

Ministries."

He said, "In Jammu & Kashmir, 61 projects worth Rs 4.12 lakh crore rupees are currently being monitored on the PMG portal, covering connectivity, energy and social infrastructure sectors. Of these, 15 projects worth 69,000 crore rupees have been completed, while 46 projects worth Rs 3.43 lakh crore are under implementation at various stages."

He specifically pointed out that 15 major projects in J&K are under direct monitoring of the Prime Minister through the PRAGATI platform, enabling swift resolution of issues related to land acquisition, financial and physical constraints, and ensuring timely and fair compensation to affected families.

Highlighting the high effectiveness of the mechanism, the Chief Secretary revealed that out of 59 issues pertaining to J&K taken up in earlier PRAGATI meetings, 57 have already been resolved on merit, placing the Union Territory among the top performers nationally, supplemented by robust district-level follow-up by the administration.

On the tangible outcomes achieved, he said that six high-impact projects worth approximately Rs 53,000 crore have been completed in Jammu & Kashmir under PRAGATI monitoring. These include the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link, Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project along with its transmission line, AIIMS Jammu, the challenging Banihal stretch of NH-44, and the Alsteng-Kargil-Khaltse-Leh transmission line.

He informed that nine additional projects being monitored under PRAGATI are progressing at a satisfactory pace. These include the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway Corridor, AIIMS Awantipora, Pakul Dul Hydroelectric Project, 4G mobile connectivity under USOF, and several other energy and connectivity projects across different parts of the UT.

Chief Secretary Dulloo highlighted the transformative impact of the PRAGATI platform in expediting major developmental projects across J&K, stating that it has emerged as a powerful instrument for resolving long-pending issues and ensuring timely execution of big-ticket initiatives.

Citing the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project as a prime example, the Chief Secretary said that despite being initiated in 1995, the project witnessed minimal progress for nearly 25 years. However, after being taken up under PRAGATI for close monitoring, the project gained substantial momentum due to enhanced inter-departmental

coordination and direct intervention at the highest level by the Prime Minister himself.

The Chief Secretary reaffirmed the government's commitment to fully implement the directions issued through the PRAGATI mechanism at the Union Territory level. He emphasized that by leveraging this platform, J&K is poised to sustain the current momentum, ensuring that all developmental initiatives are outcome-oriented and completed within approved deadlines for each of them.

The press conference was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Information, M. Raju; Director Information, Nitish Rajora; Director, PIB Jammu, Neha Jalali; Joint Director Information Headquarters, Zahoor Ahmad Raina; Joint Director Information Jammu, Deepak Dubey, and other senior officers of the Directorate of Information & Public Relations (DIPR). (KNO)

Delhi court sends

the explosive-laden car that detonated outside the Red Fort on November 10.

Dar allegedly played an active role in the conspiracy behind the blast that claimed 15 lives and left many others injured, the NIA said. It said Dar was in close contact with the other accused persons in the case, including Umar-un-Nabi and Mufti Irfan.

EAC to decide

2018 in consultation with the Government of J&K.

In February 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between NHPC (51%) and JKSPDC (49%) for the formation of a new joint venture-Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (RHPCL)-to execute the project.

The Union Cabinet accorded the investment sanction of Rs 5281 .94 crore for the project in 2021. (KNO)

Power Min orders

to their issues. After reviewing the works, he appreciated the personnel and workers for operating under challenging conditions and wished them well.

The Power Minister concluded his two-day visit to J&K today. On the first day of his visit, Lal had reviewed the Salal, Sawalkot, and Ratle projects.

Late yesterday, the Minister arrived at NHPC's Dulhasti Power Station in Kishtwar, where he was received by Sanjay Kumar Singh, Director (Projects), and Ramesh Mukhiya, Managing

Director, Chenab Valley Power Projects Limited (CVPP), along with other officials of NHPC and CVPP. (KNO)

J&K reels under

to maintain the 400kV & 220kV voltages within IEGC band in J&K control area to avoid any untoward incident. "For the installation of Capacitor Banks in the leftover Grid Substations without reactive devices, a source of funds shall be explored."

The official documents further reveal that in this backdrop NRPC has asked the authorities of J&K to obtain a detailed input, primitive for additional bus transfer from the field units of these old 220kV Substations. "Accordingly, final details shall be communicated to the Commission."

The commission had also asked the JKTPCL to expedite measures to improve the severe low-voltage issue in J&K grid. (KNO)

Sub-zero nights

registered the same temperature. Qazigund recorded a low of minus 2.0 degrees Celsius, Pahalgam minus 4.8 degrees, and Kupwara minus 1.8 degrees.

Gulmarg, the ski resort town in north Kashmir, was the coldest place in the Valley at minus 8.8 degrees Celsius. Kokernag recorded a minimum of minus 1.2 degrees, Pampore minus 2.5 degrees, Awantipora minus 3.2 degrees, Budgam minus 3.5 degrees, and Anantnag minus 3.2 degrees.

Other areas recorded similar conditions, with Pulwama at minus 4.2 degrees, Shopian at minus 5.6 degrees, Baramulla at minus 0.7 degrees, Bandipora at minus 1.3 degrees, and Zethan Rafiabad at minus 3.5 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a minimum temperature of 8.7 degrees Celsius, while Jammu Airport recorded 11.1 degrees. Banihal recorded a low of minus 1.3 degrees, Batote 2.1 degrees, Katra 5.6 degrees, and Bhaderwah minus 2.1 degrees.

Kathua recorded a minimum of 8.4 degrees, Udhampur 6.0 degrees, Ramban 2.7 degrees, Rajouri 1.6 degrees, Kishtwar 2.3 degrees, Reasi 8.3 degrees, and Doda 2.7 degrees.

Ladakh continued to experience colder conditions, with Leh recording a minimum temperature of minus 9.6 degrees Celsius, Kargil minus 8.4 degrees, and Nubra Valley minus 7.5 degrees.

According to the weather advisory, there is a possibility of light snowfall over isolated higher reaches of north and central Kashmir on

January 5 and 6.

From January 7 to January 18, the weather is expected to remain partly cloudy, while January 19 and 20 are likely to witness generally cloudy conditions.

The advisory further said that minimum temperatures are expected to fall by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius below normal levels till January 10. Thereafter, temperatures are likely to rise gradually by 1 to 2 degrees Celsius. (KNO)

Delay in trial not

accused within the alleged design or conspiracy, the strength of the prima facie case as it emerges at the limited threshold contemplated under the special statute and the extent to which continued incarceration has become demonstrably disproportionate so as to offend the guarantee of personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The court said a delay in the trial cannot be the sole factor to grant bail in UAPA offences and "claims to liberty must be examined in the totality of circumstances, particularly where allegations implicate organised criminality or matters of public interest".

It rejected the petitioners' submission referring to the K A Najeeb case while seeking bail.

In the Najeeb case, the top court granted bail to an accused under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, due to prolonged incarceration.

"To read Najeeb as mandating bail solely on account of prolonged incarceration, irrespective of the statutory context or the nature of the allegations, would be to attribute to the decision a consequence it neither intended nor supports.

"Such a construction would also lead to an interpretive absurdity, whereby a special statute enacted by Parliament to address offences implicating the sovereignty, integrity and security of the State would stand effectively neutralised by the mere passage of time, even at a pre-trial stage. Such an outcome cannot be countenanced in constitutional adjudication," the bench said.

The February 2020 riots in northeast Delhi left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured.

The violence erupted during widespread protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The accused moved the apex court, challenging the Delhi High Court's September 2, 2025 order denying them bail in the larger conspiracy case of the riots.

With Op Sindoor, armed forces demonstrated India's resoluteness to world: VP at NCC Camp

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Monday said the armed forces made India proud with Operation Sindoor as they demonstrated to the world the country's resoluteness while successfully carrying out the military action.

In his address at the National Cadet Corps' Republic Day Camp at Delhi Cantonment, he also hailed the role of the NCC during the operation.

"The NCC made a commendable contribution during Operation Sindoor when nearly 72,000 NCC cadets turned into 'NCC warriors' by volunteering services for civil defence measures," he said.

These cadets helped in emergency drills, blood donation camps and other civil defence-related activities, according to officials.

Operation Sindoor was carried out by the Indian armed forces in the early hours of May 7, 2025, eliminating at least 100 terrorists, in response to the horrific Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 innocent civilians.

"Last year, our armed forces made the country proud as they demonstrated to the world India's resoluteness by successfully carrying out Operation Sindoor," the Vice President said.

"Operation Sindoor was a



powerful symbol of the unwavering commitment of the Indian armed forces to protect the nation's honour, sovereignty and its citizens," he asserted.

Vice President Radhakrishnan on Monday formally inaugurated the NCC's Republic Day Camp, which will culminate with a PM Rally on January 28.

A total of 2,406 NCC cadets, including 898 girls, from across the country are participating in the nearly month-long camp.

In his address, the Vice President described the cadets as "not just participants in a Republic Day

Camp, but ambassadors of a new India" who will contribute to the making of an 'Aatmanirbhar' and strong India, a Viksit Bharat by 2047. "In each one of you, I see a strong foundation of a Viksit Bharat, a foundation of a developed, inclusive and confident country, I see in you," he said.

He said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a transformative journey towards building a developed nation has begun. And, at its centre lies 'Atmanirbharta', a spirit of self-reliance powered by skilled, disciplined and value-driven

youths, Radhakrishnan said.

"In today's rapidly changing global environment, India needs youth who can be courageous yet compassionate, technically skilled yet rooted in good values, facing challenges with resilience, seizing opportunities with confidence," he said. He told the NCC cadets that they inspire a lot of hope and confidence among the citizens with their spirit of serving the nation with unity and discipline.

In his address, the Vice President praised the Corps and said through its "relentless campaigns and initiatives", the NCC is moving again into a new era of youth development and the nation's progress.

He described the NCC Republic Day Camp as a powerful symbol of India's faith in its youth and its collective commitment to building a strong and united nation.

Highlighting the NCC's motto of 'Unity and Discipline', the VP said the organisation continues to shape confident and values-driven youth who form the backbone of the vision of Viksit Bharat.

He said the NCC's Republic Day Camp reflects constitutional values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, as cadets from diverse states and Union Territories live and train together, embodying the spirit of national unity. He praised the cadets for excelling in adventure activities, international youth

exchange programmes, environmental initiatives and disaster relief efforts, including the service rendered during the Wayanad floods in Kerala.

Welcoming the modernisation of NCC training, including the introduction of cyber and drone training and the setting up of a Remote Pilot Training Academy, the Vice President said such initiatives would prepare youth to meet emerging technological and security challenges.

He urged the cadets participating in the camp to uphold the highest ideals of service, discipline and patriotism. Earlier, on his arrival at the camp, the Vice President was accorded a guard of honour by the NCC cadets.

He also visited the NCC Hall of Fame and was briefed on the NCC's legacy, achievements and evolution.

Radhakrishnan visited exhibition stalls highlighting initiatives such as the YUVA Apdha Mitra Scheme and drone training, and appreciated the organisation's efforts in disaster preparedness and adoption of emerging technologies. A cultural programme was also presented by the cadets. The Vice President later interacted with them, commending their discipline, enthusiasm and spirit of national pride.

NCC's Director General, Lt Gen Virendra Vats, and other senior officials were present on the occasion.

Hathras gangrape case

Court seeks Rahul Gandhi's response on defamation complaint

PTI

Hathras (UP), Jan 05: An MP-MLA court on Monday sought Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's response on a defamation complaint filed against him by three men who were acquitted in the September 2020 Hathras gangrape case, according to their lawyer.

The complaint alleged that Gandhi made defamatory remarks on December 12, 2024, against the three men despite their acquittal on rape charges.

The case refers to the alleged gangrape of a 19-year-old Dalit woman that led to her death in September 2020. She was later cremated in the middle of the night outside the village by the police allegedly against the wishes of her family.

On Monday, Judge Deepak Nath Saraswati received the report sought earlier from the circle officer as part of the inquiry into the complaint, said Munna Singh Pundir, the lawyer representing

the three men.

"Based on the report, the court has issued a notice to Rahul Gandhi, giving him an opportunity to file his objections in the matter," Pundir said, adding that the next date of hearing has been fixed for February 7, 2026.

Pundir alleged that Gandhi, during his visit to Boolgarhi village on December 12, 2024, said that the accused were roaming free while the victim's family was confined to their home.

The lawyer said that Ravi, Ram Kumar alias Ramu and Lovkush, who were acquitted of rape charges in the case, found the statement defamatory as they had been cleared following a CBI investigation and a trial that lasted over two-and-a-half years, during which they remained in jail.

Pundhir claimed that while one accused named Sandeep was originally named in the case, the three others were falsely implicated at the insistence of the complainant's family.

Trai imposes penalty worth Rs 150 cr on telecom operators for failure to curb spam calls, messages

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: The telecom regulator Trai has imposed a penalty of Rs 150 crore on telecom operators for their failure to curb spam calls and messages, according to an official source.

The Rs 150 crore penalty imposed for three years beginning 2020, however, has been challenged by telecom operators.

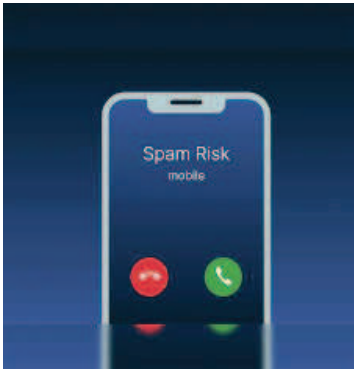
"Financial disincentives of more than Rs 150 crore have been imposed on the telecom service providers for wrong closure of customer complaints and not taking action on telecom connections of spammers in accordance with regulations," the source said.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) imposes penalties on telecom operators who fail to comply with regulations that impose financial disincentives.

The regulations provide for a financial disincentive of up to Rs 50 lakh per month per licensed Service Area for a telecom operator.

"It is important to note that the financial disincentives are imposed on TSPs (telecom service providers) not because someone has sent through their network, but because they fail to take appropriate action, in accordance with the Regulations, on the telecom resources of spammers.

"While action on the consumer complaints is the key to controlling spam, during audit of complaints, Trai has observed many cases of wrong closures of customer complaints by the TSPs," the source said.



Trai has disconnected over 21 lakh spammers and blacklisted more than 1 lakh entities in the last year.

About 18.8 lakh spammers' connections were disconnected, and more than 1,150 entities were blacklisted in September 2024, consequent to the direction issued by Trai on August 13, 2024.

Although the regulatory framework provides for taking action against unregistered senders by the telecom service providers, which ranges from suspension of connections to disconnection of all the connections for one year and complete blacklisting of the sender across all telecom service providers in the country, the trigger for action comes from customer complaints only, the source said.

Trai has rolled out a DND app, which enables users to register complaints in just 4-6 clicks.

"While registered telemarketers have been subject to strict regulations, the majority of spam now

originates from unregistered individuals using 10-digit mobile numbers.

"Consumer complaints are the key mechanism to trigger action against spam since a sender is identified as a spammer on the basis of the number of complaints received against them in a given time. Blocking numbers on phones alone does not stop spam, as spammers frequently change their numbers. Complaints enable action across all operators," the source said.

Trai has tightened rules to curb pesky calls and sms. Consumers can make complaints against unregistered senders without registering their DND preferences.

The regulator also has a complaint window extended from 3 to 7 days, meaning a subscriber can register a complaint against pesky callers within 7 days of receiving a call or SMS.

Trai has also tightened the criteria for taking action against spammers. Now, five complaints against the sender in the last 10 days are sufficient to trigger action against them.

The regulator has mandated the use of 1,600 series numbers as a prefix by entities in the banking, financial services, and insurance sectors for transactional and service calls, and by government entities for calls to citizens.

The rule mandates sending promotional SMS with the suffix P, transactional SMS with the suffix T, service SMS with the suffix S, and government messages with the suffix G.

No promotional calls allowed from regular 10-digit mobile numbers, the source said.

Nehru, Leftist historians distorted history by portraying Ghazni as 'mere plunderer': BJP

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: The BJP on Monday attacked the Congress on 1,000 years of Somnath temple's first destruction by Mahmud of Ghazni, saying this day is important to "remember and understand" how Jawaharlal Nehru and Leftist historians distorted history by portraying the Muslim invader as a "mere plunderer" and that he was not a "religious fanatic".

BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said that priests of the temple and the king of that time had pleaded Mahmud of Ghazni to spare the 'Shivling' in lieu of lakhs of gold coins but he rejected the offer and broke it, saying he wanted to be known as a "murtibhanjak (iconoclast)" instead of a "despicable person" who engaged in trade with "idol worshippers".

"A historian, who had accompanied Mahmud Ghazni, has mentioned this episode in his writings. This demolishes all the theories that the Leftist historians and others gave, distorting the history," the BJP Rajya Sabha MP told a press conference at the party headquarters here.

They projected Mahmud Ghazani as the person who was not a religious fanatic and that he came to India



with the sole objective of "making money", he charged.

"In our history, it is taught that whatever Mahmud Ghazni did at Somnath temple was only for earning wealth and that he had nothing to do with his religious feelings," he charged.

Trivedi alleged that the book, 'The Discovery of India', authored by the first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, is the source of all the distortions made in the history relating to Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion and attack on the Somnath temple.

"Nehru stated in his book that Mahmud Ghazni was far more a warrior than a man of faith. Like many other conquerors, he used to exploit the name of religion for his conquest. India was to him just a place from where he could earn treasures and materials," he said, reading from the first prime minister's book. "Nehru also

wrote that Mahmud Ghazni was such a lover of art that after seeing the beauty and architecture of the buildings from Mathura to Delhi, he said overwhelmingly that they must have been built by 'jinns', not human beings," the BJP leader said.

That is why it is important to remember the day today to understand how a very "disgusting joke" had been played with India's "respect and identity", Trivedi added.

The BJP leader said that the Somnath temple was reconstructed due to the efforts taken by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel despite Nehru's "vehement opposition" to the move.

At the Somnath temple's inaugural ceremony, India's first president Rajendra Prasad had said that its reconstruction will be complete on the day when India will progress on the path of development and prosperity, he recalled. "Under the

leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi today, we are moving towards its completion with India becoming the fourth largest economy in the world, fourth biggest stock exchange, third biggest automobile manufacturer, second biggest mobile handset manufacturer and the number one country in the world in digital transactions," he said.

Underlining that India is the fastest-growing economy in the world for the last two years, Trivedi hit out at the Congress and other opposition parties for attacking the Modi government over US President Donald Trump's remarks after Operation Sindoor.

"Trump had also said that the conflict between India and Pakistan is 1,000 years old and that Kashmir is linked to that. It's indeed a 1,000-year-old fight. Pakistan's missiles are named after Ghazni, Babar and Ghor. But did they ask why?" he said. "For those intellectual sons of Macaulay and Marx whose minds are completely filled with 'M-factor', the meaning of which I am confident you can figure out with your intelligence... So, the answer to that too is an 'M-factor', which means Modi," Trivedi added in a tongue-in-cheek remark.

Gold rises Rs 960 to Rs 1.4 lakh/10g amid strong global trends

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: Gold prices climbed Rs 960 to Rs 1,40,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, tracking strong global trends amid heightened geopolitical tensions, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,39,440 per 10 grams on Friday.

Silver prices also extended their sharp rally, climbing by Rs 2,600 to Rs 2,44,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from Friday's close of Rs 2,41,400 per kg.

Traders said both gold and silver were driven by safe-haven demand as geopolitical risks have intensified.

"Gold and silver



silver advanced on Monday, buoyed by geopolitical risks that continue to underpin safe-haven demand and act as a tailwind for bullion, particularly following heightened US actions against Venezuela," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He noted that US President Donald Trump's confrontational rhetoric

on Colombia and Mexico has also raised concerns over potential regional instability in Latin America, further increasing demand for traditional safe-haven assets.

In the international market, spot gold rose by USD 87.74, or 2.03 per cent, to USD 4,418.24 per ounce.

"Spot gold is trading around the USD 4,420 level, buoyed by the geopolitical risk escalation

as the US captured and removed the Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro," Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

Spot silver also increased by USD 2.35, or 3.24 per cent, to USD 75.02 per ounce. "Silver prices are trading higher due to strong industrial and investment demand, ongoing supply concerns, and global geopolitical tensions," Satish Dondapati, VP & Fund Manager, Kotak Mutual Fund, said.

Dondapati added that recent price swings in the white metal were mainly caused by higher margin requirements announced by the CME group and China's silver export restrictions that came into effect from January 1.

Renisha Chainani, Head - Research at Augment, said silver's ascent

has been structurally supported by governmental measures across the global supply chain.

In November, the US designated silver as a key mineral due to its extensive use in electrical circuits, batteries, solar cells, and anti-bacterial medical tools.

Washington's move to include silver on its critical minerals list has enhanced its strategic relevance, encouraging long-term investment and policy-backed demand, she said.

Chainani noted that silver prices rallied from around USD 45 per ounce in October to a peak of USD 82.7 in December 2025, and added that the uptrend could extend further towards USD 88.60, USD 99 and USD 107 in the coming few months of 2026.

AIIMS study finds underweight, obese people experience moderate to severe body image concerns

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 05: A study found that nearly half of the underweight and obese individuals among the 1,000 young adults surveyed for body weight issues experienced moderate to severe concerns, including feeling self-consciousness and lacking confidence.

Over a third of the participants (37.5 per cent) felt judged by others, while around a fourth (24.5 per cent) often experienced anxiety related to their weight, researchers from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, said.

The findings published in the Journal of Education and Health Promotion also indicated that feeling self-conscious was significantly associated with obesity, while lack of confidence was most severe among



the underweight participants.

"Nearly half of the underweight (47.1 per cent) and obese (49.6 per cent) young adults experienced moderate to severe body image concerns, compared to their normal weight (35.8 per cent) and overweight (35.5 per cent) counterparts, who predominantly reported mild levels of concern," the authors wrote. They said body weight is a well-established factor influencing psychological well-being in young adults,

and the study offers a more nuanced perspective by identifying aspects affected by body image concerns.

The impact of body image concerns on psychological well-being of the participants varied across the weight categories studied -- underweight, normal, overweight and obese -- with self-consciousness noted among participants with obesity and low confidence among those who were underweight.

US strike on Venezuela to embolden China’s territorial claims, Taiwan attack unlikely, analysts say

REUTERS

Shanghai/Beijing, Jan 05: The US attack on Venezuela will embolden China to strengthen its territorial claims over areas such as Taiwan and parts of the South China Sea but will not hasten any potential invasion of Taiwan, analysts said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping’s considerations about Taiwan and his timeline are separate from the situation in Latin America, influenced more by China’s domestic situation than by US actions, they said.

Still, analysts said, President Donald Trump’s audacious attack on Saturday, capturing Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, hands China an unexpected opportunity that Beijing will likely use in the near term to amplify criticism of Washington and bolster its own standing on the international stage.

Further out, Beijing could leverage Trump’s move to defend its stance against the US on territorial issues including Taiwan, Tibet and islands in the East and South China seas.

‘CHEAP AMMUNITION’ FOR A CHINA PUSHBACK

“Washington’s consistent, long-standing arguments are always that the Chinese actions are violating international law but they are now damaging that,” said William Yang, an analyst at International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based NGO.

“It’s really creating a lot of openings and cheap ammunition for the Chinese to push back against the US in the future.”

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own province — an assertion the island’s



government rejects — and claims almost all of the South China Sea, a position that puts it at odds with several Southeast Asian nations that also claim parts of the vital trade route.

China’s foreign ministry and Taiwan Affairs Office, and Taiwan’s presidential office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Beijing condemned Trump’s strike on Venezuela, saying it violated international law and threatened peace and security in Latin America. It has demanded the US release Maduro and his wife, who are being detained in New York awaiting trial.

Hours before his capture, Maduro met with a high-level Chinese delegation in Caracas, according to photos he posted on his Instagram page.

The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the whereabouts of the delegation, which included China’s special representative for Latin American and Caribbean affairs, Qiu Xiaogi.

On Sunday China’s official Xinhua news agency called the US attack “naked hegemonic

behavior.” “The US invasion has made everyone see more and more the fact that the so-called ‘rules-based international order’ in the mouth of the United States is actually just a ‘predatory order based on US interests,’” state-run Xinhua news agency said.

‘CHINA ISN’T THE US, TAIWAN ISN’T VENEZUELA’

Taiwan, in particular, has been facing growing pressure from Beijing. China last week encircled the island in its most extensive war games to date, showcasing Beijing’s ability to cut off the island from outside support in a conflict.

But analysts said they did not expect China to capitalize on the Venezuelan situation to escalate that into an attack anytime soon.

“Taking over Taiwan depends on China’s developing but still insufficient capability rather than what Trump did in a distant continent,” said Shi Yinhong, professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing.

Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics at the Asia Society, said China sees Taiwan as an internal affair and so was unlikely

to cite US actions against Venezuela as precedent for any cross-strait military strikes.

“Beijing will want a clear contrast with Washington to trumpet its claims to stand for peace, development and moral leadership,” Thomas said. “Xi does not care about Venezuela more than he cares about China. He’ll be hoping that it turns into a quagmire for the United States.”

Wang Ting-yu, a senior lawmaker from Taiwan’s ruling party who sits on the parliament’s foreign affairs and defense committee, rejected the idea that China might follow the US example and strike Taiwan.

“China has never lacked hostility toward Taiwan, but it genuinely lacks the feasible means,” Wang posted on Facebook. “China is not the United States, and Taiwan is certainly not Venezuela. If China could actually pull it off, it would have done so long ago!”

Still, the situation amplifies risks for Taiwan and could press Taipei to seek more favor from the Trump administration, some observers said.

On China’s Weibo social media platform, discussions of the US attack trended heavily on Sunday, with several users saying Beijing should learn from what Trump did. Lev Nachman, a political science professor at National Taiwan University, said he expected Taiwan’s government to express lightly worded support for American action on Venezuela. Taiwan has not yet made any statement.

“What I do think Trump’s actions could do is to help Xi Jinping’s narrative in the future to create more justification for action against Taiwan,” he said.

North Korea says latest missile tests involve hypersonic weapons system

AP

Seoul, Jan 05: North Korea said Monday that leader Kim Jong Un observed test-flights of hypersonic missiles and underscored the need to bolster the country’s nuclear war deterrent, as the country dials up weapons displays ahead of its major political conference.

North Korea reported on the drill a day after its neighbors said they detected multiple ballistic missile launches and accused the North of carrying out provocations. The tests came just hours before South Korean President Lee Jae Myung departed for China for a summit with President Xi Jinping.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Sunday’s drill involving a hypersonic weapon system was meant to examine its readiness, enhance missile troops’ firepower operational skills and evaluate operational capabilities of the country’s war deterrent.

“Through today’s launching drill, we can confirm that a very important technology task for national defense has been carried out,” Kim said, according to KCNA. “We must continuously upgrade the military means, especially offensive weapon systems.”

The possession of a functioning hypersonic weapon would give North Korea an ability to penetrate the US and South Korea’s missile defense shields. In past years, North Korea has



performed a series of tests to acquire it, but many foreign experts question whether the tested missiles have achieved their desired speed and maneuverability during flights.

In recent weeks, North Korea test-fired what it called long-range strategic cruise missiles and new anti-air missiles and released photos showing apparent progress in the construction of its first nuclear-powered submarine.

Observers say North Korea aims to demonstrate or review its achievements on the weapons development sector ahead of the ruling Workers’ Party congress, the first of its kind in five years. Keen attention is on whether Kim would use the congress to set a new approach on relations with the US and resume long-dormant talks.

North Korea’s nuclear program is expected to be discussed when Lee and Xi meet for a summit later Monday. Lee’s office earlier said he would call for

China, North Korea’s major ally and economic pipeline take “a constructive role” in efforts to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The latest launches followed Saturday’s audacious US military operation that ousted Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro from power and brought him to the US to face narco-terrorism conspiracy charges. North Korea slammed the operation, saying it again shows “the rogue and brutal nature of the US”

Many experts say the US operation likely leave Kim pushing to further expand his nuclear weapons capabilities that he thinks guarantees the survival of his government and state sovereignty in the face of US-led hostilities.

During Sunday’s launch drill, Kim defended his push for a stronger nuclear program. “Why it is necessary is exemplified by the recent geopolitical crisis and complicated international events,” he said.

UK to seize phones, SIM cards in new crackdown on illegal migration

PTI

London, Jan 05: Mobile phones and hidden SIM cards can be seized from migrants arriving illegally in the UK on small boats across the English Channel under new powers enforced from Monday.

Law enforcement agencies can now seize electronic devices like mobile phones and SIM cards from illegal migrants without needing to arrest them. This is intended to help them gather intelligence to track down and arrest people smugglers.

The UK Home Office said the “game changing” new criminal offences will help authorities intercept organised criminals faster and enable police to arrest people smugglers fuelling illegal migration.

“We promised to restore order and control to our borders which means taking on the people smuggling networks behind this deadly trade,” said Alex Norris, UK’s minister for border security and asylum.

“That is exactly why we are implementing robust new laws with powerful offences to



intercept, disrupt and dismantle these vile gangs faster than ever before and cut off their supply chains. “These operational measures sit alongside sweeping reforms to the system, to make it less attractive for migrants to come here illegally and remove and deport people faster,” he said.

Phone seizures began at a short-term holding facility of migrants at Manston in Kent, south-east England, with technology on site enabled to download material from the seized devices.

Spectacular switch: Indian racer Atiqa Mir secures landmark top-5 finish on junior class debut



PTI

Abu Dhabi, Jan 05: The 11-year-old racing prodigy Atiqa Mir made a spectacular switch from mini to the much tougher junior S125 category as she became the first Indian to secure a top five finish globally on debut during round seven of the IAME UAE Karting Championship at the fabled Yas Marina Circuit.

Atiqa, the first Indian to be supported by Formula 1 Academy, could have spent another season dominating championships in the mini category (age 8-12) but she has been thrown in at deep end with the move up to the junior S125 category (age 12-14) in the new year.

The karts are 30kg heavier (115kg in mini to 145kg in junior) and have three times the horse power (10 bhp with top speed 105 kmph to 29bhp with top speed of 126 kmph). In a clear sign of her rare talent, the

Akcel GP backed Atiqa thrived in the unfamiliar territory rather than getting overawed by the occasion. By finishing fifth out of 35 drivers in a male dominated grid, Atiqa also became the first female to register a top five finish in the history of IAME UAE Championship on debut.

With only a few days of testing to get used to the junior kart, Atiqa once again proved that her fitness and dedication are second to none in a grueling 21-lap race at the historic Formula 1 Circuit here.

She qualified 18th due to an issue with her kart but that didn’t deter her in the races.

In the heat race, she climbed up six places, and in the pre-final she went up eight places to finish fourth, displaying mature race craft and overtaking drivers with much more experience (in the category as well as age).

Starting the final fourth and on the trickier outside lane,

Atiqa held her ground and got in the mix of the leading group. She put in some stunning lap times to keep up with the leading pack.

The pace in front was so fast that they came up to lap the back markers but one of them blocked Atiqa and she lost time due to that. If that was not the case, she could have finished two places higher and on the podium. In the end, she lost out on the podium by only four tenths of a second.

“That was a good debut weekend in Junior, it went better than I expected. The karts are so fast compared to the Mini and I absolutely love it. My race could have been much better if the backmarkers had not come in the way,” said Atiqa, who aims to reach Formula 1 one day.

“But nonetheless I’m happy with my speed this weekend. I hope to keep learning and improving myself in this new category.” Atiqa’s father Asif Mir said the decision to fastrack her daughter to the junior category was vindicated with the performance over the weekend.

“We decided to move Atiqa up to Juniors in a late call in December. I felt she could learn more in the higher category and improve her skill even though she is barely eligible being so young and going up against drivers who are 2-3 years older than her,” said Asif, who is also India’s first national karting champion.

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