



High-level meet in New Delhi

## Keep J&K anti-terror ops in mission mode: Amit Shah to security agencies

- Says due to sustained efforts, terror eco-system crippled in J&K
- Appreciates security agencies
- Says Modi govt committed to establish lasting peace, completely eliminate terrorism

## KNO DESK

Srinagar, Jan 08: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting on Jammu and Kashmir in New Delhi to review the security situation, directing security agencies to continue counter-terror operations targeting terrorist infrastructure and terror financing



in a mission mode.

As already reported by news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) yesterday, the meeting was attended by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Union Home Secretary, Director (IB), Chief Secretary, Director General Police of Jammu and Kashmir, Heads of CAPFs and other senior officers.

This was the first high-level

meeting of 2026 chaired by Amit Shah to review the security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking during the meeting, Amit Shah said that under the leadership of PM Modi the government is committed to establish lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir and completely eliminate terrorism.

Reiterating the zero tolerance policy against terrorism, he said

that due to sustained and coordinated efforts of the Modi Government, the terror eco-system in Jammu and Kashmir has been crippled.

He appreciated the efforts of the security agencies for strengthening security scenario of Jammu and Kashmir. "Counter Terror (CT) Operations targeting terrorist infrastructure and terror financing in a mission mode should be continued," he said.

The Home Minister directed all security agencies to remain alert and continue to work in synergy to ensure that the gains achieved after abrogation of Article 370 are sustained and they achieve the goal of 'terror free J&K' at the earliest. He assured that all the resources will be made available in this endeavour.

The meeting took place a couple weeks ahead of the 76th Republic Day celebrations across the country, including Jammu and Kashmir. | More on P6

## Republic Day: LG to preside, take salute at main function

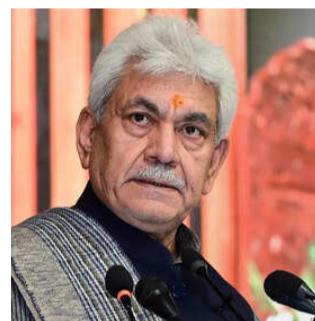
## KNO Correspondent

Jammu, Jan 08: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will preside over and take the salute at the main Republic Day function of 2026 at Maulana Azad Stadium, Jammu.

In a circular, a copy of which is in possession of the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the General Administration Department stated that the main Republic Day function of 2026 will be held at Maulana Azad Stadium, Jammu, where the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor will preside and take the salute.

The government has directed all officers and officials stationed in Jammu to attend the function as part of their official duty.

"All officers and officials of



the Government and Public Sector Undertakings stationed in Jammu are required to attend the function as part of their official duty. All Heads of Departments and Chief Executives of Public Sector Undertakings shall ensure their own participation as well as that of their subordinate employees in | More on P6

## CM Omar assures relocation of SMVD Medical College students

**'It's our legal responsibility to accommodate them'**

## Yogesh

Jammu, Jan 08: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday reiterated the government's commitment to accommodate 50 students affected by the decision of the National Medical Commission's (NMC) to withdraw permission for the MBBS course at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) in Reasi district.

Talking to reporters here, CM Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the students, who secured admission through merit in the NEET examination, would be adjusted



in other government medical colleges nearer to their homes via supernumerary seats—additional positions created beyond the approved intake.

"It is our legal responsibility to accommodate them. We will adjust them by creating

supernumerary seats in colleges close to their homes so that their education does not suffer," he stated, adding that the process would be straightforward and expedited," he added.

The NMC's Medical Assessment and Rating Board revoked the Letter of Permission on January 6, citing non-compliance with minimum standards, including deficiencies in infrastructure, faculty, and clinical material. The order also mandated the UT administration to relocate the admitted students as supernumerary seats.

CM Omar emphasized that the current | More on P6

## CM Omar launches JK e-Pathshala tele education channel

**'Major digital initiative for students to improve learning outcomes'**

## KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 08: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday launched JK e-Pathshala—Direct to Home Channel-53, a dedicated educational television channel aimed at supporting school education, particularly for students in far-flung and remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir, marking a major technological intervention in the education sector.

The launch ceremony was attended by Minister for Education Sakina Ito, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dullo (via video conferencing), Commissioner Secretary School Education Ram Niwas Sharma, Project



Director Samagra Shiksha Bhawan Rakwal, Director School Education Javid Naseem Choudhary, Special Director General BISAG-N Vinay Thakur, besides teachers, students and other senior concerned.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also launched two

newly established digital studios, announced 14 districts of Jammu and Kashmir as fully literate, and dedicated 1010 works completed under Samagra Shiksha during the year 2025-26 to the people.

Addressing the gathering after the launch at Convention

Center here, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that JK e-Pathshala represents a new beginning in the use of technology for strengthening school education.

Reflecting on the transformation in teaching methods, the Chief Minister recalled his own school days and said that even an overhead projector was once considered a major technological breakthrough. "In our time, we felt we had entered the 21st century just by sitting in a class with an overhead projector. Today, we are witnessing a real technological revolution in education," he remarked.

Congratulating the School Education Department for the initiative, | More on P6

## Cold wave tightens grip across Kashmir, fog in Jammu

Temp plummets to -5°C in Sgr, -8.6°C in Pahalgam, -9.2°C in Gulmarg, -9.8°C in Sonamarg

## Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 08: A severe cold wave gripped Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, with several locations across both Union Territories recording the lowest temperatures of the season on Thursday.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.1 degrees Celsius, down from minus 1.6 degrees a day earlier. The temperature at Srinagar Airport plunged to minus 6.8 degrees Celsius from minus 2.2 degrees,

Sinthan, Mughal roads closed, SSG open for limited vehicles

marking one of the steepest overnight declines.

## South

Kashmir districts

witnessed a similar trend.

Temperature in Qazigund fell to

minus 5.4 degrees Celsius from

0.1 degrees, while Anantnag

recorded minus 6.3 degrees

compared to minus 0.7 degrees

on Wednesday. Shopian settled

at minus 7.8 degrees, down

from minus 4.3 degrees, and

Pulwama recorded minus 6.8

degrees against minus 5.1 de-

grees earlier.

Pahalgam, the famed tourist

resort, recorded a low of mi-

nus 8.6 degrees Celsius, com-

pared to minus 7.2 degrees the

previous day. Gulmarg saw its minimum fall to minus 9.2 de-

grees from minus 7.6 degrees.

Sonamarg recorded minus 9.8

degrees, marginally higher than Wednesday's minus 10.1

degrees.

In North Kashmir, Kupwara re-

corded minus 5.1 degrees Celsius,

down from minus 3.6 degrees,

while Baramulla recorded minus

5.3 degrees compared to minus

3.0 degrees earlier.

The Jammu region also expe-

rienced a dip in night tempera-

tures at several places. Jammu

city recorded a minimum of 7.1

degrees Celsius, down from 8.7

degrees on | More on P6

## Meet the stone-balancer of Kashmir

**'From gravity-defying stone stacks to miniature masterpieces, Kulgam-based artist blends art, ecology & inner balance to counter modern stress, screen addiction'**

## Jahangeer Ganaie

Kulgam, Jan 08: In an age dominated by digital noise, endless notifications and shrinking attention spans, Mudasir Rehman Dar is asking people to slow down—not with words, but with stones.

A renowned contemporary social artist from Kulpora in Kulgam district, Dar is widely recognised as the first artist from Kashmir to discover, introduce and establish rock and stone balancing as a performing art in the Valley.

His gravity-defying stone



structures, often created in open landscapes and riverbeds, leave onlookers astonished. Yet, Dar insists his art is not about illusion or spectacle, but about stillness, patience and reconnecting with nature.

"At first glance, people think it's magic," Dar told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO). "But there's no magic. It's just gravity, patience and complete focus."

Using only naturally found stones collected from rivers and landscapes across Kashmir, Dar creates delicate vertical formations without glue, magnets,

wires or any mechanical support. Each stone rests on another at precise balance points, discovered through intuition and intense concentration.

The process is slow and meditative, demanding complete mental presence. For Dar, stone balancing is not merely an art form but a language of harmony.

"Every balanced stone reminds us how fragile equilibrium is—in nature and in human life," he explains. "One small disturbance and everything collapses."

He believes the practice

offers a natural antidote to modern stress and anxiety. "Today, people are trapped in overthinking and screen addiction. Rock balancing forces the mind to slow down. You cannot rush it," he adds.

Mudasir regularly conducts stone balancing sessions with schoolchildren and young people, turning the art into an engaging outdoor activity. What begins as a playful challenge soon becomes a meaningful experience.

"If you challenge them and say, 'You can't even balance a rock?' curiosity | More on P6

## Vijay Merchant Trophy win

**CM felicitates victorious J&K U-16 cricket team**



## KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 08: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday interacted with the victorious Jammu and Kashmir under-16 cricket team after they clinched

the Vijay Merchant Trophy (Plate Group) title, marking a historic achievement for Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Minister met each player individually and enquired about | More on P6

## Strengthen capacity of SHGs, encourage women entrepreneurs: CS

Chairs 9th Executive Council meeting of JKRLM

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 08: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Thursday chaired the 9th Executive Council Meeting of the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM) to undertake a comprehensive review of its performance under the UMEED (National Rural Livelihood Mission – NRLM) framework and to chart out a roadmap for strengthening rural livelihoods and women-led development across the UT.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD); Managing Director, JKRLM; Director General (Resources); Director General (Budget); Chief Operating Officer, HIMAYAT; Convenor, UTLB, and other senior officers of the department.

During the deliberations, the Chief Secretary underscored the critical importance of enhancing credit linkages and strengthening the capacity of Self Help Groups (SHGs) so that they are able to transform into sustainable rural enterprises, reiterating that enterprise development remains the core objective behind the formation of SHGs.

He stressed the need for making Community Managed Training Centres (CMTCs) functional in every district, ensuring delivery of high-quality training to SHG members through resource persons from OMPLIS. He emphasised that these centres should emerge as vibrant learning spaces where women feel encouraged to spend time



acquiring new skills and upgrading existing ones.

Highlighting the role of financial inclusion at the grassroots level, the Chief Secretary directed that the income of Banking Correspondents (BCs) be enhanced substantially. He called for onboarding Common Service Centres (CSCs) and J&K Bank to increase transaction volumes, thereby improving the earnings and sustainability of BCs.

The Chief Secretary also directed the department to fully leverage the Lal Ded Street Shakti Scheme and Mission YUVA, urging that women entrepreneurs be encouraged to move beyond the 'Lakhpatti' benchmark. He set an ambitious target of doubling the number of 'Millionaire Didis' from the existing 50 to 100 within the next six months.

Earlier, Secretary RDD, Aijaz Asad, informed that the UMEED programme is currently being implemented across 285 blocks in all 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir, covering almost the entire rural geography of the UT. He stated that 7,84,053 rural households have been mobilised into 96,000 Self Help Groups,

which have further been federated into 7,453 Village Organisations (VOs) and 650 Cluster Level Federations (CLFs).

He added that to strengthen community institutions, capitalisation support of 528.86 Cr has been provided to community-based organisations. Further, since 2013-14,

2,912.66 Cr in bank credit has been accessed by 67,269 SHGs, significantly deepening financial inclusion and livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Presenting the achievements of JKRLM, Managing Director, JKRLM, Subhra Sharma, informed that under the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), 8,231 rural enterprises have been supported in 14 blocks, with 18.71 Cr disbursed as Community Investment Fund (CIF).

She further apprised that farm-based livelihoods interventions have been implemented across all blocks, benefiting 5,15,706 Mahila Kisan through adoption of agro-ecological practices and improved livestock management.

During the current financial year, under CIF, against

a physical target of 2,990 SHGs, an achievement of 3,459 SHGs has been recorded, with financial assistance of 2,249 Cr disbursed. Under the Revolving Fund (RF), 1,688 SHGs were supported against a target of 3,026, with 2.53 Cr released.

Cumulatively, 78,508 SHGs have received Revolving Fund support amounting to 117 Cr, while 65,000 SHGs have been provided CIF support totalling 402.83 Cr, as reflected on the official portal.

Under the Lal Ded Street Shakti Scheme, against a target of 5,000 cases for FY 2025-26, 2,356 cases involving 25.59 Cr have been sponsored so far. Of these, 709 cases have already been sanctioned with financial approval of 8.50 Cr, providing focused entrepreneurial support to women.

Regarding doorstep banking services, the meeting was informed that 710 SHG members are currently engaged as Banking Correspondents, of which 553 are associated with J&K Bank, significantly strengthening rural banking outreach.

The Lakhpatti Didi Mission has shown remarkable progress. Against a target of 2.33 lakh potential Lakhpatti Didis, 2.60 lakh women have been identified, and 2.01 lakh women have already been transformed into Lakhpatti Didis through a combination of skill development, financial assistance and market linkages. Highlighting other key interventions, it was informed that 17,511 SHG members have received skill training through ITIs, NIFT, ICICI Foundation,

Honda Foundation and the Central University of Jammu. In addition, 7 SARAS Melas and 4 exhibitions have been organised across districts to promote SHG products.

It was further informed that 90 SHG products have been onboarded on major e-commerce platforms including Amazon, Flipkart and Meesho. To strengthen market access, 9 District Haats and 8 UMEED Women Haats have been developed, while retail outlets have also been established at airports to showcase and sell SHG products.

In the financial inclusion domain, 337 Bank Mitras and 710 Banking Correspondents have been engaged from among SHG members. Further, 1.79 lakh members have been enrolled under PMJJBY and PMSBY insurance schemes, 476 PLD cases have been disbursed under the Lal Ded Scheme, and 1,56,843 members have been converged with Agriculture, Horticulture and allied departments. Outlining the roadmap ahead, it was stated that JKRLM will focus on enterprise scaling and diversification, cluster-based growth, capacity building in high-end handicrafts and food processing, financial literacy across all 285 blocks, and strengthening start-up ecosystems through SVEP and MKSP.

The Mission also plans exposure visits to best livelihood models in states such as Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala and Telangana, besides establishing mini common facility centres and processing units in 176 clusters across different districts of J&K.

## Eye on revenue, SMC Commissioner takes stock of municipal assets

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, January 8: In a bid to reinforce financial sustainability and enhance the delivery of civic services, the Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, on Thursday conducted an on-ground inspection of municipal assets, with a focus on strengthening the Corporation's revenue framework.

The Commissioner, as per an official statement, was accompanied by the Joint Commissioner, Chief Revenue Officer, and other senior officials of SMC.

The inspection included municipal assets such as the Chinar Complex at Batmaloo and the Haba Khatoon Complex at Parimpura.

During the visit, the Commissioner assessed the structural condition, functional status, and existing utilisation of the assets as part of the ongoing municipal asset documentation and revenue optimisation exercise. He also reviewed the scope for their systematic, transparent, and regulation-compliant utilisation through well-defined monetisation strategies.

Emphasising that a robust financial base is vital for effective urban governance, the Commissioner observed that reliable municipal revenues are essential for sustaining sanitation services, upgrading infrastructure, and ensuring uninterrupted civic amenities. He directed the concerned

officers to complete an updated and comprehensive inventory of municipal assets, identify assets with untapped potential, and initiate timely, lawful measures for revenue generation. The Commissioner further underscored the importance of regular monitoring, planned maintenance of assets, protection of municipal assets from encroachment, and



plugging revenue leakages.

Senior officers briefed him on the progress of the asset mapping and revenue enhancement drive, aimed at augmenting SMC's fiscal capacity and strengthening citizen-centric municipal services across Srinagar.

### GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL DIVISION SRINAGAR

(Erstwhile Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division Srinagar)

Contact No: 0194-2496089, Email Id: exen-mechospgr@jk.gov.in

#### GIST of e-tender

NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2025-26/130/e-tendering, Dated: -06.01.2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited in two cover system, technical and financial, on percentage basis from eligible registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:

Name of the Work	Estimated Cost (Lakhs)	Cost of Tender Doc. (Rs)	Earnest Money (Rs)	Time of completion
1	2	3	4	5
Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning System at Convocation Centre, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar.	932.55	10,000	2% of the estimated cost	09 months

• Administrative Approval: Accorded vide No.: KU-DVS-2025-242, Dated: 18.11.2025

• Technical Sanction: Accorded vide No.: MHED/KTS/163, Dated: 03.01.2026

• Position of funds: Available with the intending department (University of Kashmir)

1. Downloading of Bids:- The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) from 07.01.2026 (17:00 hrs.) and can be downloaded from 08-01-2026 (18:00 hrs.).

2. Pre-bid meeting shall be held in the office of Chief Engineer, Mechanical and Hospitals Department Kashmir on 14-01-2026 (12:00 hrs)

3. Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above website from 19-01-2026 (18:00 hrs) to 29.01.2026 (14:00 hrs) in two (02) covers.

4. Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 30.01.2026 at 14.00 (hrs.)

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
M&HD, Srinagar

No:M&HDS/TS/ 7648-53

Date: -06.01.2026

DIPK-9835/25

DATED: 08-01-2026

### KASHMIR THUNDER



IS AVAILABLE  
AT ALL LEADING  
STALLS

## DC Srinagar inaugurates public sanitation facility at DC office

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, January 8:- Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Thursday inaugurated a newly constructed Public Toilet complex at the DC Office premises. The facility has been developed by the District Administration Srinagar to enhance public sanitation and improve civic amenities within the Amar Niwas complex with a focus on cleanliness, hygiene and public welfare. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, said the public convenience facility has been constructed by R&B department under District Capex budget. He said the facility includes separate washrooms for males and females and will cater to both office employees and visiting citizens ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated that the District

Administration Srinagar remains committed to upgrading infrastructure and amenities to enhance comfort, accessibility and service delivery for both staff and the public visiting the DC Office complex, in line with growing requirements.

On the occasion, visitors, stamp vendors and employees working in the offices housed in Amar Niwas Complex expressed their gratitude for developing the facility and making it functional in a short span of time.

Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz-ul-Aziz; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadiil Fareed; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; SDM East, Zubair Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar; Executive Engineer R&B, Tehsildar South, citizens, stamp vendors and staff were present on the occasion.

## DC Kulgam chairs DLTC meeting to finalise scale of finance for agriculture, allied sectors

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, Thursday chaired a meeting of the District Level Technical Committee (DLTC) at the Mini Secretariat, Kulgam, to finalize the Scale of Finance for the year 2026-27 for agriculture and allied sectors, including Agriculture, Horticulture, Floriculture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Sheep Husbandry, Sericulture etc.

During the meeting, the chair was briefed on the agenda, followed by detailed deliberations with the Chief Planning Officer, General Manager, ACC Bank, Lead District Manager, sectoral officers and representatives of various banks on input costs for crops and allied activities such as fodder, fertilizers, pesticides, labour, manure and maintenance of dairy animals.

Subsequently, the committee, as per an official statement, finalized the proposed Scale of Finance for short-term agricultural loans, which will be forwarded to the State Level Technical



Committee for approval.

Once approved, the Scale of Finance will form a key basis for the preparation of the District Potential Credit Plan and will guide banks in fixing

crop loan and Kisan Credit Card limits for the financial year 2026-27.

The meeting was attended by Joint Director Planning, Malik Suhail, along with other concerned officers.

### UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI PHE MECHANICAL DIVISION SRINAGAR

Email. [xen-phemsd@jk.gov.in](mailto:xen-phemsd@jk.gov.in)

#### GIST

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Fresh e-NIT No: JSMDS/e-NIT-29 of 01/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of UT of J&K, Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Mechanical Division Srinagar, e-Tenders are invited from registered Electrical Firms/License holders for execution of the following work.

S. No.	Name of the work	Estimate cost (in Rs)	Cost of tender document in (Rs)	EMD in (Rs)	Time of completion	Head Of Account
01	Repair works for 20 HP Open-Well Submersible Motor at WSS LD Stage 2 <sup>nd</sup> .	27,944/-	50/-	560/-	20 days	2210 (M&R)

Administrative Approval Accorded vide Order No: 87 MCS of 2025 dated 08.05.2025.

• Technical Sanction No. 86/Tend/NP of 01/2026

1. Period of downloading of bidding documents From 08-01-2026 (10:00 AM) to 17-01-2026 (upto 04:00 P.M)

2. Period of submitting of bids (online) From 08-01-2026 (03:00 P.M) to 17-01-2026 (upto 04:00 P.M)

3. Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online) 19-01-2026 (02:00 P.M) in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Mechanical Division Srinagar

4. Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online) After evaluation of technical bid(s)

The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, and specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in)

No: JSMDS/CC/4164-67

Dated: 07-01-2026

DIPK-9825/25

DATED: 08-01-2026

## 1,257 riders identified as repeat helmet violators

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 08: As part of a major data-driven traffic review, the Regional Transport Office (RTO) Kashmir has revealed that at least 1,257 two-wheeler riders across Jammu and Kashmir have been booked for repeated offences of not wearing helmets.

Officials said that over 1,000 of these violators were reported from the Kashmir division alone, highlighting a rising trend of non-compliance with road safety rules despite repeated awareness drives and enforcement measures.

According to official data, the RTO Kashmir jurisdiction Srinagar, accounts for 1,051



such vehicles, making it the region with the highest number of repeated traffic violations related to helmet use.

The data says, Budgam recorded 52, Jammu 54, Baramulla 19, Pulwama 17 and Samba 19. Smaller numbers were reported from other districts including Anantnag, Kupwara, Ganderbal and Bandipora.

The figures emerge from a notice issued by the RTO Kashmir on Thursday, directing all two-wheeler owners in the Valley to clear their pending challans within seven days or face strict legal action under the Motor Vehicles Act, including suspension of registration certificates, driving licences and vehicle seizure.

"It has come to the notice of the

undersigned that several two-wheeler vehicles registered in the districts falling under Kashmir Division are being plied on public roads in violation of the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, particularly by riders and pillion riders not wearing helmets," the notice reads.

The data further shows that Srinagar city leads the list of repeat offenders, with several riders recorded five to eight times for not wearing helmets.

Officials said the trend indicates a growing disregard for road safety norms despite repeated awareness drives. "The data reflects not just non-compliance but habitual violation, particularly in urban zones," an official told KNO.

## Separating Jammu from Kashmir not BJP's ideology: Ashok Koul

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 08: Amid the ongoing controversy over the de-recognition of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Medical College, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) general secretary (organisation) Ashok Koul on Thursday said that separating Jammu from Kashmir is not the ideology of the BJP, asserting that such remarks reflect individual opinions rather than the party's official stance.

Speaking to reporters here, Koul said, "The BJP believes in the unity and integrity of Jammu and Kashmir as one entity. This is not the thought of the Bharatiya Janata Party—this is the thought of an individual. The BJP stands for Jammu and Kashmir as a whole, not separately," he said.

His remarks came after a political row erupted over the National Medical Commission's (NMC) decision to withdraw recognition from



Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Medical College. The move led to widespread concern among students whose admissions were affected, prompting the Chief Minister to request the Education Minister to ensure their adjustment in other colleges.

Koul said the BJP fully supports accommodating the affected students in medical colleges across Jammu and Kashmir. "We do not want to play with the future of the students. They should be admitted to all medical colleges within Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Clarifying that the decision to cancel the college's recognition was not politically motivated, Koul said the NMC acted after finding serious irregularities during inspection. "The Medical Council inspected the college and found there were no rooms, no doctors, no patients. They saw all that on the ground," he said.

Koul added that

objections were raised by several quarters, prompting a special team to inspect the college again. "That team found deficiencies and irregularities. There was no political or religious consideration in that decision—it was purely based on the findings of the Medical Council," he said.

He said the college had earlier been given registration with certain assurances about infrastructure, which were later found unfulfilled. "They must have said that we will do this or that, but when the inspection was done, there was no infrastructure. If students have no environment to study, what is the point of studying there?" he said.

The BJP leader also reiterated that the party remains committed to ensuring the welfare of students and maintaining the academic standards of medical education in Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)

## 3rd landslide in 20 days hits Baramulla-Uri highway

KNO

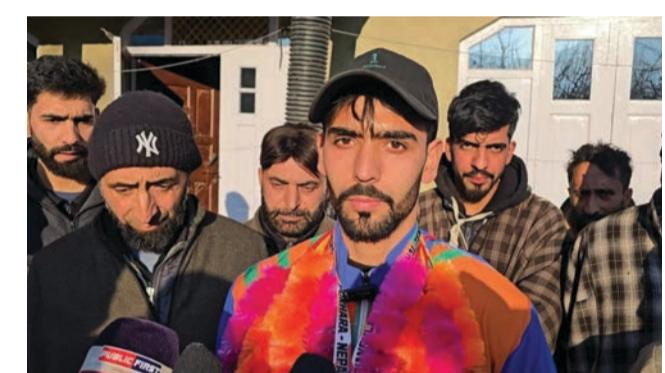
Baramulla, Jan 08: The Baramulla-Uri National Highway remained closed on Thursday after another landslide struck the stretch—the third such incident reported in the last 20 days, causing severe inconvenience to commuters.

Officials said that a fresh landslide hit the highway in the morning, forcing authorities to immediately halt traffic movement on the route as a precautionary measure. Only emergency vehicles were allowed to pass, while all routine traffic was stopped to avoid any further incident, they said.

An official stated that road clearance operations were launched soon after the incident, with personnel and machinery mobilised to remove debris and stabilise the affected area. "The highway is expected to be made motorable again from the evening hours, subject to completion of the clearance work and assessment of slope safety," he said. The closure of the main Baramulla-Uri National Highway compelled authorities to divert vehicles through the dilapidated Khadniyar-Gantmulla road, causing immense hardship to commuters.

Locals and passengers, however, complained that the alternate route is in poor condition, with potholes and narrow stretches, making travel risky and time-consuming, especially for passenger vehicles and load carriers. The fresh landslide marks the third such incident in just 20 days on the Baramulla-Uri National Highway, following two earlier slides that also triggered full traffic halts and diversions through alternate routes, with officials attributing both to ongoing construction activity and hill-cutting—(KNO)

## Kulgam fast bowler strikes gold in tri-series



UMAISAR GULL GANIE

Kulgam, Jan 08: A young fast bowler from South Kashmir has made J&K proud by clinching a gold medal in the India-Bangladesh-Nepal tri-series held in Nepal.

Syed Muntazir, a fast bowler hailing from the far-flung Khurbatpora village of Damhal Hanjipora in Kulgam, was part of the Indian team that emerged victorious in the tennis ball cricket tri-series featuring Bangladesh and Nepal.

The tournament marked Muntazir's first international appearance, where India went on to clinch the title, with the Kulgam youth playing a key role in the tournament.

Syed Muntazir said, "First of all, I thank Almighty Allah who

enabled me to reach this level. Recently, I played an international tri-series in which India emerged victorious. Three teams—India, Bangladesh and Nepal—participated in the tournament."

He said India's first match was a semi-final against Bangladesh, in which he got an opportunity to play and was adjudged Man of the Match. "Earlier, I played four national-level tournaments. In one of them, the Kashmir team won a gold medal and I was the captain of that side," he said.

Muntazir said the tri-series was played with a tennis ball, noting that tennis-ball cricket has gained huge popularity in recent years. "Earlier, most players preferred hard-ball cricket, but over the last two

## Wular Lake preservation top priority: Minister Rana

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Jan 08: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Wednesday reaffirmed that preservation and conservation of Wular Lake remains a top priority of the Omar Abdullah-led government.

Chairing a review meeting at the Civil Secretariat, the Minister directed the officers to frame and implement comprehensive measures to address the challenges confronting the lake while ensuring sustainable and judicious use of its resources.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary Forests, Ecology and Environment, Sheetal Nanda; Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir, Irfan Rasool Wani; CEO WUCMA, Manzoor Qadri; Chief Engineer PWD Kashmir, Narinder Kumar; Superintending Engineers and concerned Divisional Forest Officers.

The Minister underscored the vital role of water bodies in maintaining the ecological balance, stating that Wular Lake contributes significantly to water purification, flood control and biodiversity conservation.

He reiterated the government's commitment to the lake's long-term ecological health.

Reviewing the progress of beautification



and landscape development works around the lake, Rana stressed the need for timely tendering and execution. He directed that no allocated funds should lapse and warned against any lackadaisical approach in implementation.

Considering adverse climatic conditions, the Minister called for enhanced efforts to improve the water quality and strengthen waste and solid waste management in the lake and its catchment areas. He emphasized coordinated action among the concerned departments and local bodies to prevent pollution and degradation of the ecosystem.

The Minister directed the officers to assess the eco-tourism potential of Wular Lake and upgrade related infrastructure to promote responsible tourism. He also called for exploring sustainable revenue-generation options and conducting surveys on migratory birds, fish species and other natural resources

supporting the local livelihoods.

Wular Lake a safe haven for the migratory birds, Rana stressed the need for strict vigilance against poaching. He instructed the officials to undertake detailed studies on bird migration and take concrete steps to enhance the eco-tourism while safeguarding biodiversity.

The meeting also reviewed desiltation and dredging operations aimed at improving the lake's hydrology.

The Minister emphasized enhancing water retention capacity to strengthen the lake's role in flood moderation and water conservation.

Calling for stringent enforcement of environmental laws, Rana directed firm action against the encroachments and pollution. Issues related to staffing and administrative challenges were also discussed, with the Minister assuring that genuine concerns of field agencies would be addressed.

## Diet plays decisive role in fertility: Doctors

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 08: Amid growing concerns over infertility among couples, medical experts in Kashmir say that diet and nutrition play a decisive role in determining fertility outcomes for both men and women, influencing hormonal balance, reproductive health, and the quality of sperm and eggs.

Doctors say that changing food habits, increased consumption of processed foods, sedentary lifestyles, and nutritional deficiencies are increasingly contributing to fertility-related problems, often going unnoticed until couples seek medical help.

Dr Shaheena Khan, a gynaecologist at the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK), said nutrition is one of the most important yet neglected pillars of reproductive health.

"Diet has a direct impact on fertility as it affects hormonal balance, ovulation, sperm production, and the overall health of reproductive organs in both men and women," she said.

She highlighted the strong link between body weight and fertility, noting that both obesity and being underweight can disrupt normal reproductive functions. "Excess body fat can lead to hormonal imbalance and irregular ovulation, while

being underweight may suppress ovulation altogether. Maintaining a healthy weight through a balanced diet is essential for conception," she explained. Dr Shaheena further said that diets rich in fruits and vegetables provide essential antioxidants such as vitamins C and E, zinc, and selenium, which help reduce oxidative stress—a major factor that damages sperm and eggs.

"Iron is particularly important for women as it supports ovulation and reduces the risk of ovulatory infertility, while vitamin D plays a key role in reproductive hormone production. Deficiency of vitamin D has increasingly been linked with infertility in both genders," she added.

Another gynaecologist, Dr Javid Reshie, said fertility is not just influenced by medical conditions but also by everyday lifestyle and dietary choices. "Excessive intake of alcohol and

caffeine can adversely affect fertility, while trans fats commonly found in processed and fast foods impair insulin sensitivity and ovulation," he said.

He pointed out that declining sperm quality among men is becoming a growing concern. "A diet rich in antioxidants, zinc, omega-3 fatty acids, and healthy fats can significantly improve sperm count, motility, and morphology. Men should avoid processed meats, sugary foods, and excessive soy products, as these can negatively affect testosterone levels," he said.

For women, Dr Reshie said, dietary choices are especially important for those suffering from conditions like polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). "A low-glycemic-index diet helps regulate insulin levels and improves ovulation in women with PCOS, thereby increasing their chances of conception," he added.

Both doctors stressed that fertility should be approached as a shared responsibility between partners and that pre-conception nutrition is crucial even before couples plan pregnancy.

"Increasing infertility cases are not always due to major diseases. In many instances, simple dietary corrections and healthy lifestyle changes can restore reproductive balance," he said.

They advised people to adopt a nutrient-rich diet comprising fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, dairy, nuts, seeds, and healthy fats, while limiting processed foods, sugary drinks, and trans fats.

"For long-term reproductive well-being and to prevent infertility, people must prioritise healthy eating habits, regular physical activity, and timely medical consultation. Fertility begins with nutrition," the doctors said. According to doctors, nutrition plays a vital role in reproductive health for both sexes. Fertility isn't only a woman's issue—up to 50% of infertility cases involve male factors too, and diet influences sperm health just as much as it affects ovulation and hormonal balance in women, they said.

The doctors added that a balanced eating pattern helps protect reproductive cells, maintain hormonal balance, and improve overall fertility potential—(KNO)

## Fire destroys 3 houses at Pandaan

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 08: Fire destroyed three residential houses at Pandaan on Thursday, while three people sustained injuries in fire-fighting operations.

Witnesses said, "Smoke and flames spread rapidly through the narrow lanes, forcing residents to flee with whatever they could carry."

"The fire spread so fast, it was like it had a life of its own. We grabbed our children and ran out," said a resident.

"Some neighbors tried to pull out furniture, but the blaze didn't allow them," he added.

Another resident said, "People were shouting, crying and running in all directions. It was terrifying to see our homes, built over generations, reduced to ash in minutes."

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

## Northern Railway extends Katra special train operations

KNO

Jammu, Jan 08: Northern Railway, Jammu Division, on Thursday announced the extension of services of Special Reserved Train No. 04081/04082 between New Delhi and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra, citing heavy passenger demand and convenience of travellers.

An official said that train No. 04081 from New Delhi to Katra will operate on January 9 and 10, while Train No. 04082 from Katra to New Delhi will run on January 10 and 11.

Earlier, the services were scheduled to run between December 27 and January 4 for train 04081, and December 28 to January 5 for train 04082. Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singh, said the extension follows the success of the earlier operations, with nearly 100 percent occupancy recorded during previous trips.

He added that the timing of the train is convenient for passengers and requested travellers to check the schedule on Dial 139 or the NTES portal before starting their journey.

The Northern Railway said the move aims to manage the passenger rush during the peak season and provide a cost-effective and convenient travel option—(KNO)



EDITORIAL

## Friday Brief: Cultivating A Spirit Of Social Service

Islamic ethos stresses social work, not as a voluntary hobby, but as a fundamental expression of faith and a divinely mandated responsibility. The Quran and Hadith do not relegate worship to rituals performed in isolation; they inextricably link devotion to God with service to His creation. This establishes a framework where the true measure of belief is found in active compassion and tangible betterment of society. The Quran repeatedly emphasises justice, charity, and kindness as pillars of righteousness. It commands believers to stand firmly for justice (Quran 4:135), to care for the orphan and the needy

(Quran 93:9-10), and to spend their wealth for the welfare of others (Quran 2:254). This spending - Infaq - is portrayed not as a loss, but as a spiritual investment purified for one's own soul. The prophetic tradition powerfully reinforces this. The Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people" (Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat). In another narration, he defined a true believer as one from whom people are safe from harm in their lives and property. Faith, therefore, is inherently social. This spirit is cultivated by internalising key Islamic principles. The practice of Zakat institutionalises

this duty, ensuring wealth circulation, while Sadaqah encourages voluntary, ongoing generosity. The Prophetic model is our ultimate guide. He was described as a "mercy to the worlds", and his life was a continuous act of social work—feeding the hungry, freeing slaves, consoling the bereaved, and establishing a society based on mutual care. He (PBUH) taught that removing a harmful object from the road is an act of charity, and a smile for a brother is a charity. This elevates everyday kindness to the status of worship. To cultivate this spirit today, Muslims must move beyond charity to advocacy and systemic engagement. It

means establishing soup kitchens and advocating for economic justice; visiting the sick and working for equitable healthcare; mentoring youth and creating educational opportunities. It requires time, wealth, and sincere intention (Niyah) dedicated solely to God's pleasure. In a world fractured by indifference, the Islamic mandate for social work offers a powerful antidote. It calls for a faith that is lived, active, and deeply embedded in the welfare of all. By answering this call, believers do not just serve society; they fulfil the very covenant of their faith, building a world that reflects the mercy and justice of their Creator.

# Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat: A Pledge Towards Child Marriage-Free India

Press Information Bureau

Despite being legally prohibited, child marriage remains a pervasive social challenge in India, impacting millions of young girls and boys across the country. It exposes young girls to serious health risks, especially from early pregnancies, increases vulnerability to domestic violence, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender inequality. In India, despite progress, 23% of women aged 20-24 were married before they turned 18 (National Family Health Survey-5, 2019-21)[1]. This makes child marriage both a persistent threat and a heinous crime. While states like West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar[2] are some of the states with highest incidences of child marriages, there have been sporadic instances of child marriage across the entire country.

**What Is Child Marriage**

Child marriage, defined under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act is any union where the female/girl party is under 18 years and a male below 21 years of age, perpetuates cycles of poverty, gender inequality, and health risks, particularly in rural and tribal areas. Furthermore, child marriage directly amounts to child rape under Indian law.

As per the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, any sexual act by a man with his wife who is below 18 years of age amounts to rape. The Supreme Court of India has further clarified that when the husband of a child bride commits penetrative sexual assault on her, it amounts to aggravated penetrative sexual assault, an offence punishable under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

**India's Fight Against Child Marriage**

Efforts to curb child marriage in India began as early as the 19th century with social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule leading campaigns against the practice, resulting in the Age of Consent Act, 1891 and later the Child Marriage Restraint Act (Sarda Act) of 1929, which set the minimum marriage age at 14 for girls and 18 for boys. Post-independence, the government raised these limits through the 1948 amendment (15 for girls)[3], 1978 amendment (18 years for girls and 21 years for boys) and finally the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (18 for women, 21 for men). Alongside legal measures, several awareness campaigns gained momentum nationwide, such as the central government's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015 onwards), all aimed at changing social mindsets, promoting girls' education, and empowering communities to report and resist child marriages.

**Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA)**

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006[4] replaced the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (Sarda Act), with the aim to prohibit rather than merely restrain child marriages while providing stronger protection and relief for victims.

The Act clearly states that a "child" is a male under 21 years or female under 18 years. Child marriage involves either party being a child.

Child marriages are prohibited and voidable[5] at the option of the child party (petition to District Court within 2 years of



## CHILD MARRIAGE FREE BHARAT

बाल विवाह मुक्त भारत

attaining majority). They are void ab initio in cases of trafficking, force, deceit, or immoral purposes.

**Punishments:** Cognizable and non-bailable offences include up to 2 years rigorous imprisonment and/or 1 lakh fine for adult males marrying children, solemnizing/performing/abetting/promoting/attending such marriages (including parents/guardians). Women offenders face no imprisonment.

States appoint Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) to prevent marriages, gather evidence, raise awareness, and report data. Magistrates issue injunctions to stop impending marriages (violation makes marriage void).

**Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat (BVMB)**

Launched on November 27, 2024, the Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat (BVMB), also known as Child Marriage Free India, represents a bold national commitment by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) to eradicate child marriages across the country. This mission is deeply aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3, which aims to eliminate all harmful practices, including child, early, and forced marriages, by 2030[6]. Rooted in India's constitutional mandate under Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) and supported by landmark legislation like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat addresses a pervasive social issue that disproportionately affects young children, especially girls in a majority of the cases, and particularly from the marginalised communities.

In a landmark judgement delivered on 18th October 2024 in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1234 of 2017 – Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action & Another vs. Union of India & Others. – the Hon'ble Supreme Court[7] issued a comprehensive framework and detailed directions to all States and Union Territories to effectively prevent and eliminate child marriage across the country. The Court prohibited child betrothals as they undermine autonomy and often lead to forced marriages, urging legislative amendments for an explicit ban. To strengthen enforcement under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, States and Union Territories were directed to appoint full-time dedicated Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) at district/sub-district levels—unburdened by other duties—and establish Special Child Marriage Prohibition Units for coordination, monitoring, and grievance redressal.

State governments play a pivotal role in implementing these measures, as outlined by MWCD. Chief Secretaries have been directed to form district-level task forces comprising CMPOs, NGOs, and PRIs for weekly monitoring and geo-tagged progress reports via the BVMB portal. The campaign emphasises multi-sectoral convergence, linking with education, health, and rural development ministries.

reporting, were emphasised upon.

**Maintaining databases of at-risk areas.**

This judgment decisively shifts focus from punishment to prevention, protection, and empowerment, making the framework more robust and child-centric.

The initiative, Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat, is a sincere attempt to build on prior efforts like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme but introduces a more integrated, technology-driven approach to prevention and response towards child marriages.

**The 100-Day Campaign: A Momentum-Building Drive Against Child Marriage**

On December 4, 2025, a high-intensity 100-day special drive has been rolled out across all States and Union Territories, dedicating each month to a specific outreach.

Furthermore, to foster healthy competition and celebrate excellence, the campaign introduces two prestigious honours:

**Child Marriage-Free Village Certificate:** Awarded to villages/panchayats that formally pledge to end child marriage and maintain zero reported cases over a sustained period.

**Bal Vivah Mukt Yodha Award:** The top 10 performing districts—evaluated on reporting efficiency, prevention success, and overall reduction in child marriage cases—will be conferred this national title.

These districts will be prominently featured on the official Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat portal, receive a formal commendation certificate, and be publicly recognised at the national level for their outstanding leadership and commitment.

The nationwide campaign officially commenced on December 4, 2025 with a major launch event in New Delhi at Vigyan Bhawan, accompanied by a synchronised national pledge-taking ceremony. This unified commitment will reaffirm India's determination to become a completely child marriage-free nation.

State governments play a pivotal role in implementing these measures, as outlined by MWCD. Chief Secretaries have been directed to form district-level task forces comprising CMPOs, NGOs, and PRIs for weekly monitoring and geo-tagged progress reports via the BVMB portal. The campaign emphasises multi-sectoral convergence, linking with education, health, and rural development ministries.

**Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Portal**

This flagship initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development offers a centralized, publicly accessible platform that lists all appointed Child Marriage Prohibition Officers across India, enables real-time reporting of child marriage cases, and tracks awareness campaigns and

actions undertaken to engage stakeholders and citizens in creating a child-marriage-free India.

**Nationwide Awareness Campaigns: A Glimpse**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has committed to fully funding the campaign, giving priority to 257 high-burden districts identified through NFHS- V data (districts where the prevalence of child marriage is at or above the national average)[8].

Campaign to Prevent Child Marriage is currently in full swing; states and Union Territories across the country are participating with unprecedented energy and coordination. Millions of students across schools and educational institutions, along with other key stakeholders including Gram Panchayats have taken the anti-child-marriage pledge.

**Towards A Child Marriage-Free India: Progress So Far**

Since its launch, the Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat (BVMB) mission has made substantial strides in curbing child marriages across India, achieving key enforcement and awareness milestones that align with national child protection goals. A cornerstone of this progress is the nationwide deployment of dedicated Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs), as mandated under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006. These officers, empowered through state-level directives have conducted proactive interventions, including door-to-door awareness drives and rapid-response teams linked to the national Child Helpline (1098). A standout enforcement highlight was the 2025 Akshaya Tritiya directive issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), which targeted culturally sensitive high-risk periods for mass weddings. This led to heightened monitoring, resulting in the prevention of hundreds of child marriage cases through judicial injunctions, community counselling, and FIR filings. Integrated with schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, these efforts have boosted conviction rates under PCMA while fostering "no-child-marriage zones" in several villages.

On the international front, BVMB has garnered strong global endorsement, particularly from UNICEF, which has provided technical support for data-driven interventions and capacity-building workshops for CMPOs and One Stop Centres (OSCs). Aligned with SDG 5.3 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), these achievements position India as a leader in South Asia for scalable, multi-sectoral anti-child marriage strategies, with ongoing convergence across

**Key Takeaways**

- The Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat campaign aims to reduce the prevalence of child marriage by 10% by 2026 and make India child marriage free by 2030.
- Balod district in Chhattisgarh achieved a milestone by becoming India's first child marriage-free district in 2025.
- On September 17, 2025, the district administration of Surajpur, Chhattisgarh, declared 75 village panchayats as "Child

health, education, and rural development ministries.

**Chhattisgarh: A Beacon of Hope Toward Child Marriage Free India**

Balod district in Chhattisgarh has achieved a historic milestone by becoming India's first child marriage-free district. For two consecutive years, not a single child marriage has been reported across its 436 Gram Panchayats and 9 urban local bodies. This remarkable feat is the result of sustained government interventions, active community participation, and widespread awareness drives. Riding on Balod's success, Chhattisgarh now aims to make the entire state completely free from child marriage by 2028-29[9].

In another remarkable instance in the same state, Surajpur district set a powerful example in social reform and community awareness. On September 17, 2025, coinciding with the launch of Poshan Maah 2025, the district administration proudly declared 75 village panchayats as "Child Marriage-Free Panchayats."

These panchayats earned the honour after recording zero child marriage cases for two consecutive years[10]. This achievement stands as a moment of immense pride for Chhattisgarh and serves as an inspiring model for the rest of India.

**Conclusion**

India's journey to eradicate child marriage stems from 19th-century reforms and the Sarda Act of 1929 and continues to the robust Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, and the landmark 2024 Supreme Court judgment. It has yielded remarkable progress, with prevalence dropping significantly over the decades. The Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat campaign, launched in November 2024 and bolstered by the ongoing 100-day intensive awareness drive (running until March 2026), represents a pivotal escalation in this fight. Through dedicated Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, the BVMB portal's tech-enabled reporting, and grassroots successes, the initiative drives prevention, protection, and empowerment, seamlessly integrating with Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

As millions participate in pledges, crucial efforts not only challenge deep-rooted social norms but also align with Sustainable Development Goal 5.3 and the vision of a Viksit Bharat. Sustained collective action, from government, communities, NGOs, and citizens, holds the promise of breaking cycles of inequality, ensuring every child's right to education, health, and autonomy. With unwavering commitment, India can achieve a truly child marriage-free future, empowering generations of girls and boys to thrive.

9th edition Indus Food 2026

## JKTPO spotlights J&K's culinary brilliance

KT News Desk

NOIDA, JANUARY 08: The Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), under the aegis of the Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, is proudly showcasing the region's diverse Food, Agriculture and Horticulture products at the prestigious 9th Edition of Indus Food 2026, Asia's largest export-focused food and beverage (F&B) exhibition, being held from 08-10 January 2026 at the India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida under Raising and Accelerating MSME Programme (RAMP) intervention of Ministry of MSME.

The event, as per an official statement issued on Thursday organised by the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI), aims to further consolidate India's position as a trusted and competitive partner in global food supply chains by bringing together leading Indian food producers, international buyers, policymakers, industry leaders and global institutions on a single platform to facilitate trade collaborations, bilateral engagements and long-term partnerships.

The mega event was inaugurated by Union Minister of



Food Processing Industries, Chirag Paswan, reflecting the Government's strong commitment towards strengthening India's food processing ecosystem, enhancing export competitiveness and expanding global market access for Indian food products.

The Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion, located at Hall No. 8A, presents a vibrant platform for MSMEs, FPOs and women entrepreneurs to showcase their premium offerings.

The platform not only provided exposure and experience but also facilitated substantial business opportunities for entrepreneurs from Jammu & Kashmir. The region's exceptional products and culinary traditions stood out,

multifloral honey, along with organic honey, essential oils, herbs, grounded spices, pulses, dry fruits, dehydrated fruits and vegetables – reflecting the region's authenticity, quality and excellence.

The exhibition is expected to witness participation from over 120 countries, including thousands of verified global buyers and several high-level international trade delegations.

Visitors, buyers and trade delegates are warmly invited to visit the Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion at Hall No. 8A and explore the best of J&K's vibrant agro sector and experience the richness of the region's premium food, agriculture and horticulture products.

contributing to the success of Indus Food 2026 as a significant avenue for promoting India's diverse food industry on the global stage.

Speaking on the occasion, the Managing Director, JKTPO, Sh. Sudershan Kumar stated: "The Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion at Indus Food 2026 reflects our region's growing strength in agri-based value chains, quality production and export readiness. Our entrepreneurs are receiving encouraging responses from global buyers, opening new avenues for market access and long-term partnerships. JKTPO remains committed to enabling MSMEs, FPOs and women entrepreneurs to integrate with global markets and build a strong brand identity for J&K products worldwide."

The event served as a testament to the region's commitment to promoting its unique offerings and fostering meaningful connections within the global food and beverage community.

The platform not only provided exposure and experience but also facilitated substantial business opportunities for entrepreneurs from Jammu & Kashmir. The region's exceptional products and culinary traditions stood out,

## DC Budgam inspects playfield development works in Khag

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, visited Khag to inspect the local playground in panchayat khag and reviewed the proposed development works of the playfield, which is being developed at an estimated cost of Rs 7.90 lakh.

During the visit, the DC took detailed assessment of the existing facilities and interacted with local residents, youth, and children of the area.

The visit, as per an official statement, was marked by a cordial and encouraging atmosphere, as the Deputy Commissioner was seen playing with little children at the playground, conveying a strong message on the importance of sports, physical fitness, and outdoor activities in daily life.

The DC emphasized that the development of sports infrastructure at the grassroots level plays a vital role in promoting a healthy lifestyle, discipline, teamwork, and positive values among young minds.

He stated that well-planned and properly maintained playfields not only serve as recreational spaces but also act as platforms for identifying and nurturing sporting talent in rural and semi-urban areas.

While reviewing the project, the DC stressed the need for quality execution of the development works and directed the concerned executing agencies to adhere strictly to approved



plans and specifications.

He laid emphasis on the timely completion of the project within the sanctioned cost so that the facility can be made available for public use without delay.

The DC also underscored the importance of community participation in the upkeep and effective utilization of such public assets.

He said that collective ownership and responsible use significantly contribute to their sustainability and long-term impact.

The DC further informed that another Playfield at Posher Panchayat is being developed at an estimated cost of Rs 3.00 lakh, adding that district administration is focused on strengthening sports and recreational infrastructure across different

panchayats of the district.

The DC stated that the development of these playfields forms part of the district administration's ongoing efforts to provide safe, inclusive, and accessible recreational spaces for children and youth, thereby encouraging positive engagement and overall community well-being.

The visit of the DC was appreciated by the local community, who expressed optimism that the upgraded playfields at Khag and Posher will emerge as valuable community assets and hubs for sporting and recreational activities.

CPO Budgam, Tehsildar Khag, BDO Khag, and other senior officers of the district administration accompanied the DC during his visit.

## DC Baramulla Flags off Students for Bharat Darshan Tour



KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 08: A batch of 20 students were flagged off for the Bharat Darshan Tour 2026, organized by BSF 112 Naga Battalion by Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, in the presence of Commanding Officer, BSF 112 Naga Battalion, Nakul Vaid at railway station Baramulla.

During the event, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, interacted with the students, encouraged them to make the most of the educational tour, and emphasized the importance of learning through travel and experience. He also appreciated the BSF for organizing the tour, highlighting its role in promoting national integration and providing students with valuable exposure to India's cultural, historical, and geographical diversity. He

wished the students a safe and enriching journey.

Speaking on the occasion, Commanding Officer, BSF 112 Naga Battalion said that the Bharat Darshan Tour aims to foster a sense of unity, patriotism, and mutual understanding among the youth. He reaffirmed the BSF's commitment towards youth engagement and nation-building initiatives.

The students, accompanied by escort teachers and BSF officers, were enthusiastic and excited as they embarked on the tour. The Principal, Boys Degree College Baramulla, lauded the BSF for providing students with this valuable learning opportunity beyond the classroom.

Officers of the district administration, Police and BSF Officers and parents were present on the occasion and extended their best wishes to the students for a safe, memorable, and enriching tour.

## DC Kulgam Chairs NCORD meeting

### 113 drug peddlers arrested, 88 FIRs registered over the past few months

KT News Desk

KULGAM, JANUARY 08: The monthly meeting of the District-Level Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) Committee was Thursday held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, to review measures for curbing substance abuse and narcotic trafficking in the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by SSP Kulgam, Anayat Ali Choudhary; ADC Kulgam, Viqar Ahmed Giri; ACR, Riyaz Ahmad Shah; CEO, Tehsildars, and other members of the NCORD Committee.

During the meeting, the DC reviewed the implementation of decisions taken in previous NCORD meetings and assessed the actions initiated by enforcement agencies to combat the drug menace.

It was informed that 113 drug peddlers have been arrested and 88 FIRs registered over the past few months.

The DC also reviewed the activities carried out under



the second phase of the IEC (Information, Education and Communication) Campaign aimed at strengthening awareness and community participation in the fight against drug abuse.

The DC informed that the district has achieved 100% installation of CCTV cameras under the NCORD initiative.

Additionally, 88 inspections were conducted across pharmacies during the month of December, resulting in four medical shops being disallowed/suspended for violations related to maintenance of sale and purchase records.

With regard to the NASHA Mukt Gram Panchayat initiative, it was informed that 9 new Gram Panchayats have been declared NASHA Mukt.

The DC directed all stakeholders to launch a continue second phase of the IEC campaign to further raise awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and strengthen community participation in prevention efforts.

He emphasized close inter-departmental coordination to ensure effective eradication of the drug menace from the district.

While reviewing the status of cancellation of driving licenses involved in NDPS and bovine smuggling cases, the DC directed the concerned authorities to expedite the cancellation of such driving licenses and ensure suspension of Registration Certificates (RCs) of all vehicles involved in these illegal activities.

## DDC Shopian reviews implementation of social security, pension schemes



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 08: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta, Thursday chaired a comprehensive review meeting here at the Mini-Secretariat to assess the implementation, coverage and progress of various Social Security, Pension and Insurance Schemes being executed across the schemes.

Highlighting the importance of transparency and accountability, the DDC instructed officers to ensure regular monitoring and timely submission of updated progress reports.

He called for close coordination among departments to enhance efficiency and improve service delivery. He directed to adopt a proactive, people-centric approach to ensure that the intended benefits reach all deserving sections of society without delay.

During the meeting, The DDC, as per an official statement, undertook a detailed review of beneficiary coverage, pendency of cases, verification status and inter-departmental coordination.

He laid special emphasis on achieving saturation of all eligible beneficiaries and ensuring seamless, time-bound delivery of benefits under welfare schemes.

The meeting was attended by ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone; DCEO, CAO, District Coordinator, CSC, BDOs and other concerned.

## SWD Srinagar organises 'Father-Daughter Selfie' initiative

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 08: Social Welfare Department (SWD), SANKALP- Hub for Empowerment of Women- Mission Shakti Srinagar, Thursday conducted 'Father-Daughter Selfie' initiative under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign at UPHC Batamaloo.

The 'Father-Daughter Selfie' Initiative, implemented under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, aims to foster gender equality by encouraging families to publicly celebrate and value their daughters. The initiative seeks to generate awareness about the importance of educating and empowering the girl child, while also strengthening the emotional bond between fathers and daughters. It also highlights the effective use of digital platforms as tools for social change and positive messaging.

As part of the programme, hygiene kits were distributed among girl children to promote personal hygiene and help prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The initiative emphasized the importance of adopting good hygiene practices from an early age to support better health, improved immunity and overall well-being of children.

## DC Baramulla reviews progress of ADP, ABP, CSR projects



KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, Thursday convened a meeting of all concerned officers at DC Office Complex here to review the progress achieved under different indicators of Aspirational District Programme (ADP), Aspirational Block Programme (ABP) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The meeting held threadbare discussion and reviewed the progress achieved under various indicators including health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion, and basic infrastructure.

During the meeting,

## DLSA Srinagar organises drug awareness programme

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 08: On the eve of the upcoming National Youth Day, scheduled to be observed on 12 January 2026, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Srinagar organized an awareness programme under the DAWN (Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation, For a Drug-Free India) Scheme.

The programme, as per an official statement issued on Thursday is part of a week-long initiative aimed at promoting youth-centric outreach and community awareness in accordance with the directions of the National Legal Services Authority.

During the drive, Para Legal Volunteers of DLSA Srinagar, actively engaged with the general public to spread awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and the importance of leading a healthy and responsible life. Through sustained interaction and sensitization



efforts, the Para Legal Volunteers highlighted preventive measures, legal safeguards, and the support systems available for individuals affected by substance abuse.

District Legal Services Authority, Srinagar informed that the awareness activities under the DAWN Scheme will continue up to 12 January 2026, culminating on National Youth Day.

The ongoing programme seeks to reinforce the message of youth empowerment, resilience, and informed decision-making, while reaffirming the commitment of DLSA Srinagar towards building a drug-free and socially aware community.

## Income Tax department holds tax awareness programme in Bandipora



KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 08: The Income Tax Department, Circle Srinagar, organised a Tax Awareness Program at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, emphasised timely response to income tax notices and highlighted that tax compliance is essential for development and growth.

Joint Commissioner of Income Tax (OSD), Srinagar, Shakeel Ahmad Ganai, as per an official statement, termed the initiative a first-of-its-kind outreach in the district and said it aimed at amicable settlement of grievances and better understanding of income tax provisions.

On the occasion, Income Tax Officer (ITO) made a detailed presentation, giving general awareness about the functioning of the Income Tax Department, available taxpayer services and the importance of timely and correct compliance.

While addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, emphasised timely response to income tax notices and highlighted that tax compliance is essential for development and growth. She noted that the people of the district are cooperative and stressed expanding such programmes to include all associations in future.

The program witnessed participation from representatives of trade bodies, business associations, mining community and other stakeholders, marking an important step towards strengthening tax awareness and cooperative compliance in the district.

## Northern Rly Jammu Div extends special reserved train services



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 08: In response to high passenger demand and to facilitate traveler convenience, Northern Railway, Jammu Division, has decided to extend the operation of Special Reserved Train No. 04081/04082. This extension aims to better manage passenger rush during the peak season and offer additional travel options.

Details of the extended train services are as follows:

- Train No. 04081 - New Delhi to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra

Earlier schedule: 27 December 2025 to 4 January 2026  
Extended schedule: 9 and 10 January 2026 (two trips)

- Train No. 04082 - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to New Delhi  
Earlier schedule: 28 December 2025 to 5 January 2026

Extended schedule: 10 and 11 January 2026 (two trips)

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singh, stated, "The operation period of this special reserved train has been extended once again, following its successful previous runs. The train has proven to be a cost-effective and convenient option for passengers, with occupancy nearing 100% during previous trips. We encourage passengers to check the updated train schedule on Dial 139 and NTES before their journey."

## Trump withdraws US from dozens of international, UN entities

REUTERS

Washington, Jan 08: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that the United States would withdraw from dozens of international and UN entities, including a key climate treaty and a UN body that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment, because they "operate contrary to US national interests."

Among the 35 non-UN groups and 31 UN entities Trump listed in a memo to senior administration officials is the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – described by many as the "bedrock" climate treaty which is parent agreement to the 2015 Paris climate deal.

The United States skipped the annual UN international climate summit last year for the first time in three decades.

"The United States will be the first country to walk away from the UNFCCC," said Manish Bapna, president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"Every other nation is a member, in part because they recognize that even beyond the moral imperative of addressing climate change, having a seat at



the table in those negotiations represents an ability to shape massive economic policy and opportunity," said Bapna.

The US will also quit UN Women, which works for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the international body's agency focused on family planning as well as maternal and child health in more than 150 countries. The US cut its funding for the UNFPA last year.

"For United Nations entities, withdrawal means ceasing participation in or funding to those entities to the extent permitted by law," reads the memo. Trump has already largely slashed voluntary funding to most UN agencies.

A spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

TRUMP OF WARY MULTILATERAL

### ORGANISATIONS

Trump's move reflects his long-standing wariness of multilateral institutions, particularly the United Nations. He has repeatedly questioned the effectiveness, cost and accountability of international bodies, arguing they often fail to serve US interests.

Since beginning his second term a year ago, Trump has sought to slash US funding for the United Nations, stopped US engagement with the UN

Human Rights Council, extended a half to funding for the Palestinian relief agency UNRWA and quit the UN cultural agency UNESCO. He has also announced plans to quit the World Health Organization and the Paris climate agreement.

Other entities on the US list are the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the International Energy Forum, the UN Register of Conventional Arms and the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

The White House said the dozens of entities that Washington was seeking to depart as soon as possible promote "radical climate policies, global governance, and ideological programs that conflict with US sovereignty and economic strength."

It said the move is part of a review of all international intergovernmental organizations, conventions and treaties.

"These withdrawals will end American taxpayer funding and involvement in entities that advance globalist agendas over US priorities, or that address important issues inefficiently or ineffectively such that US taxpayer dollars are best allocated in other ways to serve the relevant missions," the White House said in a statement.

## Iran 'does not desire a war but we are ready for it,' says foreign minister

AP

Beirut, Jan 08: Iran does not want war with Israel or the United States, but is ready to fight back if attacked again, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Thursday.

Speaking in Beirut, Araghchi told reporters that Iran is also ready for negotiations with the US over its nuclear program as long as the talks are based on mutual respect rather than "dictation" by Washington.

The minister's comments came as many fear that close US ally Israel will target Iran again as it did during the 12-day war in June, during which Israel killed senior military officials and nuclear scientists and the US bombed Iranian nuclear enrichment sites.

"America and Israel have tested their attack on Iran and this attack and strategy faced extreme failure," Araghchi said at the start of a two-day visit to Lebanon. "If they repeat it, they will face the same results."

"We are ready for any choice. We don't desire a war but we are ready for it," Araghchi said.

US President Donald Trump reimposed a "maximum



pressure" campaign on Iran in February in an effort to block its development of nuclear weapons. The campaign included US-led strikes on three critical Iranian enrichment facilities in June.

Araghchi said Tehran is ready for negotiations, adding: "But I say that the negotiations should be based on mutual respect and mutual interests."

"We believe that once the Americans reach the outcome that constructive and positive negotiations rather than ordering dictation are the framework, then at that time the results of these negotiations become fruitful," he said.

Iran had been enriching uranium up to 60% purity – a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels – after Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with

world powers in 2018. Tehran long has maintained its atomic program is peaceful, though the West and the IAEA, the UN's nuclear watchdog, say Iran had an organised nuclear weapons program until 2003.

Trump last month warned Iran that the US could carry out further military strikes if the country attempts to reconstitute its nuclear program as he held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida.

Araghchi's visit to Beirut came as the Lebanese military said it had concluded the first phase of a plan to disarm factions, such as Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Iran's foreign minister headed an economic delegation for talks with Lebanese officials on regional and international affairs.

"Iran desires having comprehensive relations with Lebanon, including economic partnerships," Araghchi said.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah war began Oct. 8, 2023, a day after Hamas attacked southern Israel, when Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel in solidarity with Hamas.

## Govt unveils District-Led Textiles Transformation Plan to create global export champions

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 08: The government unveiled the District-Led Textiles Transformation (DLTT) Plan on Thursday, a strategic initiative designed to catalyse inclusive and sustainable growth across India's textile landscape.

The Textiles Ministry launched the initiative at the National Textile Ministers Conference in Guwahati.

"By shifting to a sector-specific, district-level approach, the Ministry aims to transform 100 high-potential districts into Global Export Champions and elevate 100 Aspirational Districts into self-reliant hubs," the Textile Ministry said.

The ministry analysed all districts using a data-driven scoring methodology based on three key parameters - Export Performance, MSME Ecosystem Workforce Presence.

This was then designed into a two-pronged strategy where districts were categorized into Champion Districts and Aspirational Districts. The plan follows a tailored implementation framework based on a district's category.

The initiative also emphasises Purvodaya convergence in the east and northeast zones. These regions are prioritised for tribal belt development, connectivity improvement, and Geographical Indication (GI) tagging to position unique cultural handicrafts for premium global markets.

Through the strategic convergence of government resources and collaborative partnerships with industry and academia, the programme aims to strengthen textile clusters and systematically scale successful models to maximise impact across districts, the ministry stated.

## Macron accuses US of 'turning away' from allies

AFP



Paris, Jan 08: French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday that the United States was "breaking free from international rules" and "gradually turning away" from some of its allies.

Macron delivered his annual speech to French ambassadors at the Elysee Palace as European powers scrambling to come up with a coordinated response to US assertive foreign policy in the Western hemisphere following Washington's capture of Venezuela's leader Nicolas Maduro and Donald Trump's decision on Greenland.

"The United States is an established power, but one that is gradually turning away from some of its allies and breaking free from international rules that it was still promoting recently," Macron told ambassadors at the Elysee Palace.

"Multilateral institutions are functioning less and less effectively," Macron added. "We are living in a world of great powers with a real temptation to divide up the world."

Macron said Europe must protect its interests and urged the "consolidation" of European regulation of the tech sector.

He stressed the importance of safeguarding academic independence and hailed "the possibility of having a controlled information space where opinions can be exchanged completely freely, but where choices are not made by the algorithms of a few."

Brussels has adopted a powerful legal arsenal aimed at reining in tech giants – namely through its Digital Markets Act (DMA) which covers competition and the Digital Services Act (DSA) on content moderation.

Washington has denounced the tech rules as an attempt to "coerce" American social media platforms into censoring viewpoints they oppose.

"The DSA and DMA are two regulations that must be defended," Macron said.

## CONT'D. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Keep J&K anti-terror

The meeting also comes at a time when security forces have launched aggressive counter-terror operations in mountains and remote areas of the Jammu region to hunt down terrorists.

An official said that seniors officers apprised the chair about the coordinated strategy to eliminate terrorists hiding in difficult, inaccessible areas of J&K while ensuring zero infiltration on the LoC and the IB.

During the past few months, security forces have engaged terrorists in several encounters in the upper reaches of Kishtwar, Doda, Udhampur and other districts of the region as the infiltration attempts by the terrorists have been foiled on the LoC and the IB during this period.

He also said that the meeting deliberated on the current momentum and coordination among various security agencies, and ground-level operations with special focus on making 2026 a decisive year in the complete elimination of terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

### Life not just

including 898 girls, from across the country are participating in the nearly month-long camp, which was inaugurated on Monday by Vice-President C P Radhakrishnan. It will culminate with the NCC PM Rally on January 28. (KNO)

### New Delhi set

last held on October 22, 2025, in New Delhi. The Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) had submitted a 29-page draft proposal to the Ministry of Home Affairs, seeking statehood, Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh, and amnesty for people arrested after the September 24 protests.

Apart from four deaths, nearly 100 others including police and paramilitary personnel were injured on September 24 when protesters went on a rampage, vandalising buildings and setting a BJP office and a police vehicle on fire. The clashes erupted over demands for statehood and constitutional safeguards on the 15th day of a hunger strike led by activist Sonam Wangchuk, who has been booked under the NSA and lodged in Jodhpur jail. (KNO)

### CM Omar assures

batch's merit-based selection must be protected, noting discussions with Health Minister Sakina Ito to ensure seamless continuation of their studies.

"These students have passed the NEET examination in a lawful manner. They have merit," he said.

However, the Chief Minister expressed concern over the long-term impact of the closure, questioning the loss of future opportunities for Jammu region aspirants.

He pointed out that while the first batch had around 40 students from Kashmiri, an expansion to 400-500 seats could have benefited 250-300 local students from Jammu.

CM Omar remarked that while people across the country compete fiercely for medical colleges, Jammu witnessed efforts to close one.

"We are perhaps the only place where we received a fully built medical college and yet got it shut down due to protests," he said. (KNO)

### Republic Day:

the function," the circular reads. (KNO)

### CM Omar launches

the Chief Minister said that if used effectively, technology can truly change the lives of children. However, he made it clear that digital platforms are meant to supplement classroom teaching, not replace teachers.

"This channel is not to replace the classroom or the teacher. A teacher and a classroom can never be replaced. Technology is meant to fill gaps and support learning," he said, adding that the personal bond between a teacher and a student can never be created by any device or screen.

Sharing a personal anecdote, the Chief Minister recalled how a strict and dedicated teacher had helped him overcome his fear of science. "Good teachers help even the weakest students cross the limits of their abilities. No technology can compete with a good teacher," he said.

The Chief Minister stressed the need to continuously upgrade teachers' skills and encourage them to use technology as a support

tool. He also underlined the importance of quality and regularly updated content on JK e-Pathshala and sought regular feedback from students and teachers to ensure the channel remains relevant and effective.

Highlighting the unique geographical and climatic challenges of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in its remote districts, the Chief Minister said that the channel would be especially beneficial for students living in isolated areas. "Our students can study in school and then continue learning at home through these channels," he said.

He also spoke about responsible use of digital screens, encouraging students to use mobile devices for educational and knowledge-based content while discouraging excessive gaming and non-productive activities.

Emphasising the importance of reading habits, the Chief Minister urged parents and teachers to instil in children the habit of reading books, newspapers and magazines. "If we open the world of books for our children, we open a whole new world for them," he said.

The Chief Minister expressed hope that JK e-Pathshala would be the beginning of a larger digital education ecosystem in J&K. He said that in the future, dedicated channels for each class could be introduced to ensure adequate learning time for every grade.

"No matter how advanced technology becomes, physical teachers will never be replaced," he asserted, calling upon all stakeholders to work together for building a brighter future for the children of Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, Minister for Education Sakina Ito, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani and Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo also addressed the gathering and described the launch of JK e-Pathshala as a historic and revolutionary step in strengthening the education sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

Cold wave

Wednesday, while Jammu Airport settled at 7.7 degrees from 9.3 degrees.

Udhampur saw a significant fall to 2.0 degrees from 6.6 degrees. Rajouri slipped below freezing to minus 1.0 degree compared to 1.0 degree the previous day.

Bhaderwah recorded minus 3.4 degrees Celsius, slightly lower than Wednesday's minus

2.6 degrees, while Katra dropped to 4.1 degrees from 6.4 degrees.

In Ladakh, extremely cold conditions persisted. Leh recorded minus 14.6 degrees Celsius, down from minus 13.4 degrees on Wednesday. Drass remained the coldest place, recording minus 24.7 degrees, while Hanle recorded minus 16.9 degrees and Nyoma minus 20.1 degrees.

Meteorological officials said the prevailing cold wave is likely to continue, while foggy conditions in the Jammu region disrupted traffic at several places today.

Meanwhile, the Kishtwar-Sinthan-Anantrag road and Mughal Road remain closed due to snow accumulation. On the Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri road, vehicles from Kargil towards Srinagar will be allowed between 1100 and 1500 hours after clearance, with motorists advised to carry anti-skid chains. Commuters were urged to follow lane discipline and confirm road status from traffic control units before travel. (KNO)

### Meet the stone-balancer

"Kicks in," he says with a smile. "They try harder."

The result is simple yet powerful: children step outside, handle natural objects, and momentarily disconnect from mobile phones and screens.

"They touch stones, feel the earth and reconnect with the environment," Dar says. "That connection is missing today."

Beyond rock balancing, Mudasir enjoys global admiration for his mastery of micro and miniature art. He has created what are widely cited as the world's tiniest paintings of Islamic holy sites, executed with astonishing precision on pencil leads, ring stones and natural rocks.

These miniature

## Indian AI models should be distinct, promote indigenous content: PM Modi

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 08: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the world's trust in India is its biggest strength and emphasised the need to ensure that Indian Artificial Intelligence (AI) models are ethical, unbiased, transparent, and based on data privacy principles.

He also said the Indian AI models should be distinct and should promote local and indigenous content and regional languages.

Chairing a roundtable with Indian AI startups ahead of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Modi suggested that the startups should work towards global leadership from this country, and noted that India can promote affordable and inclusive AI, and frugal innovation globally, an official statement said.

The prime minister said startups and artificial intelligence entrepreneurs are the co-architects of the country's future. As many as 12 Indian AI startups that have qualified for the 'AI for ALL: Global Impact Challenge' summit to be held next month attended the roundtable and presented their ideas and work.

Later, in a post on 'X', Modi said he talked about AI with youngsters from the Indian startup world. "It was a memorable and insightful



interaction, in which they shared their vision and work on how India is transforming the world of AI. It is commendable how these startups are working on diverse fields such as e-commerce, marketing, engineering simulations, material research, healthcare, medical research and more," he said.

The prime minister said they discussed how AI can be leveraged to further societal good.

"Reiterated our government's support to all those working on AI so that we can strengthen the spirit of 'Made in India, Made for the World'.

Stressed on making AI affordable, inclusive and transparent," he added.

During the meeting, Modi

highlighted the importance of artificial intelligence in bringing about transformation in society. He noted that India will host the India AI Impact summit next month, through which the country will play a major role in the technology sector.

The prime minister highlighted that India is making efforts to bring about a transformation by leveraging AI, and the country has immense capacity for both innovation and large-scale implementation.

India should present a unique AI model to the world that reflects the spirit of 'Made in India, Made for the World', Modi said. These startups are working in a diverse set of areas, including Indian language

foundation models, multilingual LLMs, speech-to-text, text-to-audio and text-to-video; 3D content using generative AI for e-commerce, marketing, and personalised content creation; engineering simulations, material research and advanced analytics for data-driven decision-making across industries; and healthcare diagnostics and medical research.

The AI startups commend India's strong commitment to advancing the artificial intelligence ecosystem in the country. They highlighted the rapid growth and vast future potential of the AI sector, observing that the centre of gravity of artificial intelligence innovation and deployment is beginning to shift towards India.

The leaders said India now offers a robust and enabling environment for AI development, firmly placing the country on the global AI map.

The meeting was attended by CEOs, heads and representatives of Indian AI startups, including Avataar, BharatGen, Fractal, Gan, Genloop, Ghani, Intellihealth, Sarvam, Shodh AI, Soket AI, Tech Mahindra and Zenteq. Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw and Minister of State Jitin Prasada were also present in the meeting.

Turkman Gate violence

## Delhi court sends 5 accused to 13 days' judicial custody

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 08: A Delhi court on Thursday remanded five men arrested in connection with a stone-pelting incident near the Faiz-e-Elahe Masjid at Turkman Gate here in 13 days of judicial custody.

The five accused -- Mohammad Arib, Kashif, Adnan, Mohammad Kaif and Sameer -- were produced before Judicial Magistrate Pooja Suhag.

The court sent all five to 13 days of judicial custody. The matter has further been listed for hearing the bail pleas of all the five accused on Friday.

The Delhi Police lodged an FIR against the five accused at the Chandni Mahal police station on Wednesday under sections 221 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 132 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of duty), 121 (voluntarily causing hurt to deter public



servant from duty), 191 (rioting), 223(A) (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 3(5) (joint liability) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS), along with provisions of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984.

The total number of arrests made in the matter now stands at 11, including the apprehension of a juvenile. On Thursday, six more persons -- Afaan, Adil, Shahnaz, Hamza, Atharr and Ubed, all residents of the Turkman Gate area

-- were arrested.

An anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahe mosque in the Ramlila Maidan area on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday triggered violence as many people pelted stones at police personnel, injuring five of them, including the area's station house officer.

Trouble brewed when a social media post claimed that the mosque, located opposite the Turkman Gate, was being demolished during the anti-encroachment drive and people started gathering there, police sources said.

## Exhibition showcasing missiles, tanks marks 78th Army Day in Jaipur

PTI

Jaipur, Jan 08: An exhibition showcasing the Indian Army's military equipment and history was inaugurated here on Thursday to mark the 78th Army Day.

The five-day event held at Bhawan Niketan College Ground on Sikar Road featured an array of military equipment, including missiles, drones, tanks, and weapons used in Operation Sindoora against terror camps in Pakistan.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma inaugurated the exhibition and took a tour of the display, where Army officers provided detailed information about the showcased weapons.

The exhibition aims to familiarise the public with the Indian Army's role, valour and sacrifices.

A large number of visitors thronged the venue from the morning to view more than a hundred military exhibits, including advanced artillery systems, drones and tanks.



Among the key displays was a anti-aircraft gun, a light cannon used to target low-flying aircraft. According to the Army officers, this gun was used to shoot down drones during Operation Sindoora.

A 23MM Twin Barrel Gun was also part of the exhibition, and it was instrumental in shooting down approximately 10 drones during Operation Sindoora, they said.

Another major highlight was the BrahMos missile, a supersonic cruise missile weighing 3000 kilograms and with a range of up to 450 kilometres.

The exhibition also displayed a Pakistani tank, which was captured by the Indian Army during the 1965 war.

Another notable exhibit was a 1961 Mercedes-Benz that once belonged to Pakistan's Eastern Army Commander, General A K Niazi. The car was brought to India as a trophy after Niazi's surrender in Dhaka on December 16, 1971, marking a significant victory in the Indo-Pak war.

Visitors also had the chance to learn about the bravery, sacrifice, and victories of the Indian Army, spanning from the 1947 wars to 2025.

The exhibition detailed important battles fought by the Indian Army, key rescue operations, India's contributions to UN peacekeeping missions and joint military exercises held in 2025.

## Markets log losses for 4th day

### Sensex tanks 780 points on renewed trade uncertainties

PTI

Mumbai, Jan 08: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fell sharply by nearly 1 per cent on Thursday, continuing their weak momentum for the fourth straight session, due to renewed concerns over potential US tariff hikes amid widespread selling pressure in global markets.

Deep losses in metal, oil & gas, and commodity stocks amid unabated foreign fund outflows added to the pressure, analysts said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 780.18 points, or 0.92 per cent, to settle at 84,180.96. During the day, it plummeted 851.04 points, or 1 per cent, to 84,110.10.

A total of 3,158 stocks declined while 1,039 advanced and 170 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty tumbled 263.90 points or 1.01 per cent to 25,876.85.

"Market sentiment deteriorated amid heightened geopolitical tensions and global trade-related concerns, which weighed on overall risk appetite. Continued foreign institutional selling, coupled with weakness in the rupee, further added to the negative bias. With global cues remaining mixed and the earnings season approaching, trading activity remained cautious and largely stock-specific," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Reliance Industries, Tata Steel, and Trent were among the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Eterna, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, and Bharat Electronics were the gainers.

"Indian equity markets extended losses for a fourth consecutive session on Thursday, recording their largest decline in over four months," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst, Lemon Markets Desk, said.

In the past four days, the BSE benchmark has tacked 1,581.05 points or 1.84 per cent, and the Nifty dropped 451.7 points or 1.71 per cent.

US President Donald Trump has backed a sanctions bill that could impose 500 per cent tariffs on countries buying Russian oil, giving the White House leverage against countries like China and India to stop them from purchasing cheap oil from Moscow.



## NGT seeks water quality data of Yamuna river from Delhi PCC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 08: The National Green Tribunal has directed the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to provide water quality data of the Yamuna river between the Wazirabad Barrage and Asgharpur village stretch.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member A Senthil Vel said the Delhi government had submitted its report about liquid waste management.

It noted that according to the report, "discharge of treated, partially treated, untreated sewage through various drains falling into the Yamuna is the main cause of water pollution in the river, particularly in the stretch between Wazirabad Barrage and Asgharpur village."

The tribunal also noted that there was an 88 million gallons per day (MGD) gap in sewage treatment.

In its December 22 order, the tribunal said, "The water quality data of the Yamuna river stretch between Wazirabad Barrage and Asgharpur Village in compliance with prescribed standards may be disclosed by DPCC in the next report."

It directed Delhi's chief secretary to file a detailed, tabulated further progress report, including the issues of sewage generation, sewer connectivity, drain-wise discharge, sewage treatment plant performance, action plans to prevent sewage discharge into storm water drains, and sludge management.

## Study estimates 49 lakh cases of typhoid fever in India in 2023

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 08: A study has estimated 49 lakh cases of typhoid fever and 7,850 deaths in India in 2023, with Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka together accounting for nearly 30 per cent of the national burden.

Findings published in The Lancet Regional Health South-East Asia also show that six lakh of the 7.3 lakh hospitalisations across the country were attributable to fluoroquinolone-resistance -- a type of antibiotic, or antimicrobial, resistance.

Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection that spreads through contaminated food and water. Symptoms can start one to three weeks following exposure and include high fever, headaches, abdominal pain and fatigue. Treatment involves antibiotics and supportive care.

Researchers, including those from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Christian Medical College in Vellore, India, found that the states of Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka also had the highest rates of fluoroquinolone-resistant cases and deaths among the ten highest-burden states, the team said.

The researchers reviewed studies published up to July 2025 that carried data on typhoid fever incidence, mortality and antibiotic resistance.

The authors also found that children aged 5-9 exhibit the highest number of typhoid fever and antibiotic resistance cases, while children aged 6



Maharashtra, and Karnataka together accounted for 29 per cent of the national burden and had the highest rates of fluoroquinolone-resistant cases and deaths among the ten highest-burden states," they said.

"Fluoroquinolone-resistance drives a large share of typhoid-related hospitalisations and deaths, especially in children under five and in high-burden states of India," the team said.

The researchers reviewed studies published up to July 2025 that carried data on typhoid fever incidence, mortality and antibiotic resistance. A persistently high

fluoroquinolone-resistance was found (more than 60 per cent), steadily increasing from 1989 to 2024 and peaking at 94 per cent in 2017.

Resistance to third-generation cephalosporin and azithromycin -- both common and effective first-line antibiotics used for treating typhoid fever -- remained consistently low and multidrug resistance steadily declined over the last three decades, the team said.

The authors also found that children aged 5-9 exhibit the highest number of typhoid fever and antibiotic resistance cases, while children aged 6

months to four years experience the highest number of hospitalisations and deaths.

Delhi, Maharashtra, and Karnataka were identified as priority states for introducing the typhoid conjugate vaccine -- a single-dose providing long-lasting protection.

The team added that relying solely on routine immunisation programme, which targets the typhoid conjugate vaccine around nine months, would be insufficient for an immediate control of typhoid fever in India, as it could take decades to reach older people, who also bear a significant disease burden.

## Congress needs Gandhi's name, but no concern for his principles: Thakur

PTI

Bilaspur (HP), Jan 08: Former Union minister and sitting MP from Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat Anurag Thakur on Thursday lashed out at members of the Gandhi family and said they adopted Mahatma Gandhi's surname but failed to embrace his ideals.

Talking to media persons here, he said that the Congress is opposing the name of Ram and the work for the poor.

"The Congress needs Gandhi's name but has no concern for his principles or the welfare of the poor," he said and added that the Congress party and governments are opposing the name of Ram and the schemes for the poor.

Vikas Bharat-G RAM G (Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act replacing the existing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was passed by the Parliament in December 2025.

Opposing the Congress's 'Save MGNREGA' campaign, Thakur said that Congress is the



and during the farming season, the G RAM G work will be suspended to allow people to focus on agriculture. Moreover, power has been given to the panchayats, not to the state or central governments, he added.

## Russia slams Western peacekeeping plan for Ukraine

AFP

Moscow, Jan 08: Russia on Thursday slammed a plan for European peacekeepers to be deployed to Ukraine as "dangerous" and dubbed Kyiv and its allies an "axis of war," dousing hopes the plan could be a step toward ending the almost four-year-war.

US President Donald Trump has been pushing the warring sides to strike a deal to halt the conflict, running shuttle diplomacy between Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia's Vladimir Putin in a bid to get an agreement across the line.

An initial 28-point plan which largely adhered to Moscow's demands was criticized by Kyiv and Europe, and now Russia has slammed the attempts to beef-up protections for Ukraine should an elusive deal be reached.

Ukraine's allies said they had agreed key security guarantees for Kyiv at a summit in Paris earlier this week, including a peacekeeping force.

But in its first comments since the summit, Moscow said the statements were far away from anything the Kremlin could accept to end its assault.



The new militarist declarations of the so-called Coalition of the Willing and the Kyiv regime together form a genuine "axis of war," Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharchova said in a statement.

She called the plans drafted by Kyiv's allies "dangerous" and "destructive."

The remarks come as Russian strikes plunged hundreds of thousands in Ukraine into darkness, leaving families without heat in below-freezing

temperatures — attacks that Zelensky said showed Russia was still set on war.

- Legitimate military targets -

European leaders and US envoys announced earlier this week that post-war guarantees for Ukraine would include a US-led monitoring mechanism and a European multinational force to be deployed when the fighting stops.

But Moscow has repeatedly warned that it would not accept any NATO members

sending peacekeeping troops to Ukraine.

"All such units and facilities will be considered legitimate military targets for the Russian Armed Forces," Zakharchova said Thursday, repeating a threat previously uttered by Putin.

Zelensky also said Thursday

that a bilateral agreement between Kyiv and Washington for US security guarantees was "essentially ready for finalization at the highest level with the President of the United States" following talks between envoys in Paris this week.

Kyiv says legally-binding assurances that its allies would come to its defense are essential to convince Russia not to re-attack if a ceasefire is reached.

But specific details on the guarantees, the European force, and how it would engage have not been made public.

Zelensky said earlier this week he was yet to receive an "unequivocal" answer of what they would do if Russia does attack again after a deal.

Zelensky has also said that the most difficult questions in any settlement — territorial control of the eastern Donbas region and the fate of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power

plant — were still unresolved.

- Russian strikes cut heating -

Ukraine was meanwhile scrambling to restore heating and water to hundreds of thousands of households after a new barrage targeted energy facilities in its Dniproptrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions.

"This is truly a national level emergency," Borys Filatov, mayor of Dniproptrovsk's capital Dnipro, said on Telegram.

He announced power was "gradually returning to the hospitals" after the blackouts forced them to run on generators. The city authorities also extended school holidays for children.

About 600,000 households in the region remained cut off from power in Dniproptrovsk, Ukrainian energy company DTEK said.

In a post on social media, Zelensky said the attacks "clearly don't indicate that Moscow is reconsidering its priorities."

In addition to the unrelenting pummelling of Dniproptrovsk, Russia pressed on with its ground assault on the region, claiming to have taken another village there.

It is not one of the five Ukrainian regions that Moscow claims to have annexed.

## Trump invites Colombia's Petro to White House after earlier threat of military action



REUTERS

capture of the president of neighboring Venezuela, who was flown to the US to face drug and weapons charges.

"It was a great honor to speak with the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, who called to explain the situation of drugs and other disagreements that we have had. I appreciated his call and tone, and look forward to meeting him in the near future," Trump wrote on social media.

Trump added "arrangements are being made" for a meeting in Washington between himself and Petro, Colombia's first leftist president, but gave no specific date for a meeting.

"We have spoken by phone for

## China to probe Meta's acquisition of artificial intelligence startup Manus

AP

of Manus is consistent with Chinese laws and regulations.

Any enterprises engaging in outward investment, technology export, data transfer and cross-border mergers and acquisitions must comply with Chinese laws, He said.

Meta and Manus did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

"Security has become the top concern for Chinese policymakers," said Gary Ng, a senior economist for Asia Pacific at investment bank Natixis. "Any tech transfer that could give the US an edge in competitiveness will be heavily scrutinised."

While the company behind Manus is Singapore-based Butterly Effect Pte, its roots can be traced back to Beijing-registered entities which were founded in China a few years ago.

## Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue opening to be attended by Ajit Doval

PTI



New Delhi, Jan 08: National Security Advisor Ajit Doval will be in attendance at its opening ceremony when the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports' Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBYLD) gets underway on January 10 with varied themes, featuring over 2,000 participants from all across the country.

The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports aimed at giving India's youth a "meaningful role in shaping the vision of a Viksit Bharat".

The themes for this year include Youth in Democracy and Government, Women-Led Development, Making India the Start-Up Capital of the World, Cultural Diplomacy and Global Influence and Innovation with Tradition among others.

## ISPL Season 3: It's Majhi Mumbai vs Srinagar Ke Veer in opener at Surat

PTI



Surat, Jan 08: The Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) will return for its third season starting here on Friday with eight celebrity-owned teams set to fight it out for a Rs 5.92 crore prize pool in the month-long tennis-ball T10 cricket tournament.

Set to run till February 6, the third season will feature eight franchises competing across 44 matches, "showcasing raw talent, fearless cricket and electrifying entertainment".

The season-opener will see defending champions Majhi Mumbai take on Srinagar Ke Veer in a marquee clash. Ahead of the first match, fans will be treated to a spectacular opening ceremony starting at 5pm.

Majhi Mumbai (co-owned by Amitabh Bachchan), Tiigers of Kolkata (Sourav Ganguly, Saif Ali Khan and Karena Kapoor Khan), Srinagar Ke Veer (Akshay Kumar), Chennai Singams (Suriya), Bengaluru Strikers (Hrithik Roshan) and Falcon Risers Hyderabad (Ram Charan), alongside new entrants Delhi Superheros (Salman

Singhans), Izazahmad Khanusuya (Ahmedabad Lions), Ram Charan and Khizra Bandukwala (Falcon Risers Hyderabad), Sanjay Dangi (Bengaluru Strikers) and Aksha Kamboj (Tiigers of Kolkata), and Arpita Khan Sharma (Delhi Superheros), and Rupali Ganguly.

Speaking ahead of the season, Samat, who is also the League Commissioner, said: "ISPL has grown rapidly by staying true to its vision of creating a professional and aspirational platform for grassroots cricket talent.

"Season 3 marks a significant step forward in terms of scale, competition and overall experience. We have placed strong emphasis on fan engagement and match-day atmosphere, and we urge fans to come to the stadiums to experience the energy of ISPL live."

Apart from a prize pool of Rs 5.92 crore, ISPL Season 3 will also recognise individual excellence with the Most Valuable Player of the season winning a brand-new Porsche 911. Abhishek Kumar Dalhor, on the back of his ISPL performances, was selected as a net bowler by Kolkata Knight Riders for IPL 2025.

## We want to be the best in world, WPL is going to help: Smriti Mandhana

PTI



Navi Mumbai, Jan 08: Royal Challengers Bengaluru skipper Smriti Mandhana on Thursday said the Indian women's cricket team is aiming to be the best across formats and the WPL is going to have a major role in this mission after being a key contributor to their maiden ODI World Cup triumph.

Mandhana's RCB will take on defending champions Mumbai Indians led by India captain Harmanpreet Kaur, in the Women's Premier League (WPL) opener here at the DY Patil Stadium on Friday. This is the same venue where the national team created history by winning its first global title last November.

"Winning the T20 World Cup would be great," Mandhana said in a pre-match press meet conference with Harmanpreet when asked what kind of change in Indian cricket they would want to see hereon.

"We all know that we won the (ODI) World Cup, yes, but there are a lot of things in the team that we need to work on. We really want to say that we are the best team in the world. We still have a lot of things to improve on and I am sure WPL is going to bridge that gap for us," she added.

Mandhana said the Indian team wants to dominate across formats and WPL is helping them in doing so.

"Whenever we play for India, we always discuss how we want to be the best team in the world. Not for one or two tournaments, but for the whole year. Every

as well," she said.

"She (Harmanpreet) will second that. But again, it depends on where she will fit (those players). The doors are never closed and if you actually have a good WPL, especially in the T20 format, you always have a chance especially with the T20 World Cup coming up," Mandhana added.

Mandhana said RCB were aware before the auction that Australian legend Elyse Perry will not be available for this WPL.

"We knew that she's not going to be available pre-auction. We had a call with her that she wanted some break for herself so the auction strategy also was around that," Mandhana said.

"Knowing it before the auction is a little better. Last season, we got to know about a lot of our injuries post-auction which is very hard."

"No one can fill in her shoes for sure. She's a legend of the game. But we have a very young team. I see a lot of buzz around the group. They're all really gelling up together," she added.

**DHURANDHAR (A)**  
HINDI - 02:15 PM, 06:15 PM

**IKKIS (U/A 13+)**  
HINDI - 06:00 PM

**PRABHAS'S THE RAJASAAB (U/A 16+)**  
HINDI - 02:40 PM, 06:20 PM

**AVATAR : FIRE AND ASH (UA 16+)**  
3D HINDI - 02:00 PM

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