



Use power of art for positive change: LG Sinha to youth

'Artists, thinkers, painters, sculptors conscience of society, they inspire public participation in democracy, nation's dev journey'

KNO Desk

Jammu, Jan 12: Urging young generation to use the power of art for positive change, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Monday described art as mirror and a guide for society.

Addressing the Golden Jubilee celebration of Kesar Art Circle at Kala Kendra here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Art is both a mirror and a guide for society. Youth must embrace art as a medium to preserve their cultural identity, ensuring they remain rooted while contributing to the vision of a Viksas Bharat."

He said, "From spiritual, cultural roots to new creative horizons, it is our collective responsibility to reimagine Jammu Kashmir as an art hub. In this endeavour, I hope to see



the contribution of painters and writers to build the artistic future of the Union Territory of Jammu Kashmir."

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that preservation of our sacred heritage is the foundation to create the future.

"Transforming Jammu Kashmir's cultural and spiritual

soul into a global art hub is a shared responsibility. I believe art is a bridge to connect diverse cultures and to revive our ancient spiritual and cultural legacy," he said.

LG Sinha highlighted the vital role of artists, thinkers, painters, sculptors as the "conscience of society," inspiring public

participation in democracy and the nation's development journey.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that art forms like painting and sculpture are not mere entertainment and luxuries but vibrant forces that determine how a society thinks and moves forward. Throughout human civilization, art has given voice to emotions that transcend language, fostering empathy and social cohesion, he said. He called upon the young generation to use the power of art for positive change.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor inaugurated a painting exhibition and also felicitated various artists.

The Lieutenant Governor felicitated Bhushan Kesar, renowned painter and Founder Kesar Art Circle. He lauded Bhushan | [More on P6](#)

Budget 2026-27 to be presented by CM on Feb 6

» Two-month long session to begin with LG's address on Feb 2 » House to break for one month recess for Ramdhan

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 12: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah will present Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory's second budget in the Legislative Assembly on February 6.

According to the tentative calendar issued by the Legislative Assembly Secretariat, a copy of which is in possession of news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the annual financial statement for 2026-27 and the supplementary statement of expenditure for 2025-26 will be presented in the House on February 6.

The budget will be presented by the Chief Minister, who is also the Minister in-charge of Finance, almost one month and a day earlier than the last budget presented by him. The budget for 2025-26 was presented by Omar Abdullah on March 7, 2024.

The two-month-and-twenty-day-long budget session, comprising 22 sittings, will begin



on February 2 with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's address to the House, which will be his third since the formation of the elected government in October 2024.

The LG's address will be followed by discussion for three days, scheduled for February 3, 4 and 5. The Chief Minister will

wind up the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on February 5.

On the next day, February 6, J&K's Finance Minister, who happens to be CM Omar Abdullah, will present the annual financial statement for 2026-27 and the supplementary statement of expenditure for 2025-26. | [More on P6](#)

Nearly 10% of adolescents in J&K are pre-diabetic

Reasons: Bad dietary habits, sedentary lifestyle, screen time, low physical activity, obesity

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jan 12: The burden of diabetes is no longer limited to adults; it is increasingly affecting children and teenagers as well.

According to the 'Children in India 2025' report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, accessed by the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO), 9.7 out of every 10-19-year-old adolescents in Jammu and Kashmir are in a pre-diabetic stage.

Doctors say this is very concerning and requires urgent lifestyle changes and public health measures. They said that about 10 per cent of young

people in this age group are pre-diabetic, which puts them at high risk of developing full-blown diabetes if no action is taken quickly.

Dr Khursheed Ahmad Mir from DSHK said most of these cases are linked to the excessive consumption of sugary drinks, fast food, and processed foods. "The shift towards convenience foods has replaced traditional diets, leading to poor metabolism even at a young age," he said.

Dr Mir further said that increased screen time and decreased outdoor play have led to a rise in physical inactivity. "This reduces insulin sensitivity, meaning | [More on P6](#)

When Jammu got IIT, IIM no one termed it discrimination with Kashmir: CM Omar

Allow govt to take decision on National Law University's location

Sajid Raina

Jammu, Jan 12: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said that when Jammu got IIT and IIM no one termed it as a discrimination with Kashmir but when proposal about establishing National Law University (NLU) in the Valley is being finalized, questions are being raised.

Talking to reporters here, CM Omar, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "When IIT and IIM were sanctioned for Jammu, no one talked about equality or raised objections that one should go to Jammu



and one to Kashmir."

"Now, when it comes to the National Law University, people start talking about discrimination. Let the government take a decision first."

He said the matter should be left to the government and assured that a decision would be taken after due consideration.

Big decisions in Budget, no bias against Jammu

"There is no final decision yet on where the NLU will be located," he added.

The Chief Minister said the government would continue with the budget framework adopted last year, focus on implementing ongoing schemes and introduce new initiatives in the coming financial year, even as the Union Territory faces serious fiscal constraints.

He said January and February are not suitable months for taking major policy or financial decisions as any allocations made now would lapse by the end of March.

CM Omar said the administration has | [More on P6](#)

JKBOSE to announce Class 10, 12 results tomorrow

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Jan 12: Education Minister Sakina Itoo Monday said that the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) will announce the result of annual regular exams of class 10th and 12th on January 14.

The minister according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said that the government has decided to announce the results of both the classes on the same day.

"The results process was completed in the first week of January but it got delayed because of the delay in appointment of chairman for JKBOSE," he said.

Over 94,000 students had appeared in the annual regular

exams of 10th standard that commenced on November-03 in the Kashmir division.

Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (BOSE) had set-up 994 examination centers across the Kashmir region.

BOSE had said that 68,804 students enrolled for the annual regular exams of 10th are from ten districts of Kashmir division and 25,224 students are from eight districts of winter zone areas of Jammu division.

Besides, the board had also informed that at least 660 from Kargil and 95 from Leh district were also enrolled for the examinations.

Earlier, BOSE Secretary had said that nearly 95,000 students were enrolled to appear for 10th class | [More on P6](#)

Chief Secretary releases DIPR Calendar-2026 & Official Diary

KT News Desk



Information & Public Relations in effectively documenting and disseminating information related to government policies, programmes and achievements.

Commissioner Secretary, Information and General Administration Department, M. Raju, and Director, Information & Public Relations, Nitish Rajora, were also present on the occasion.

Among others present were Special | [More on P6](#)

and developmental progress of Jammu and Kashmir.

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Intense cold grips Kashmir, fog disrupts life in Jammu

Met forecasts dry weather till Jan 15, snow likely later

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 12: An intense cold wave continued to affect Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on Monday, disrupting normal life and business activity, even as minimum temperatures across most parts of the region showed a marginal improvement compared to the previous day.

According to the details available with the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.4 degrees Celsius, a significant rise from minus 5.2 degrees Celsius a day



earlier. Similar improvement was recorded in other areas, with Qazigund at minus 3.6 degrees compared to minus 5.8 degrees yesterday, and

Pahalgam recording minus 3.4 degrees, up from minus 7.6 degrees.

Pulwama, however, remained one | [More on P6](#)

Army foils multiple drone intrusions along LoC

Sajid Raina

Jammu, Jan 12: The Army intercepted several drones suspected to be from Pakistan along International Border and the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu region on Monday.

An official while talking to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Late Sunday evening, soldiers detected a drone near the Naushera sector in Rajouri district. Counter-unmanned aerial systems were immediately activated, forcing the drone to retreat across the LoC. No casualties or damage were reported."

The official said that five separate drone sightings were recorded along the LoC and the International | [More on P6](#)

CM Omar Abdullah reviews Jammu's development

- Directs early completion of projects
- Calls for permanent flood restoration works
- Inaugurates projects worth ₹19.05 cr
- Lays foundation of works worth ₹13.48 cr
- Flags off sewerage machines, ambulance



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 12: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday chaired a high-level meeting to review the overall

development scenario of Jammu district, with a focus on expediting key infrastructure projects, improving irrigation facilities, strengthening flood restoration works

and ensuring optimal utilisation of funds.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javed

Ahmad Rana, Javid Ahmed Dar and Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chairman District Development Council Jammu Bharat Bhushan, Member of Parliament Jammu Jugal Kishore Sharma and all Members of the Legislative Assembly from the district.

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Deheraj Gupta, Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar, Inspector General of Police Jammu B.S. Tuti, Deputy Commissioner Jammu Rakesh Minhas, heads of | [More on P6](#)

Avoid night travel on Jammu-Srinagar highway: Traffic Police

Urge adherence to lane discipline, say advisory issued for passengers' safety

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar/Jammu, Jan 12: Authorities on Monday advised passengers and Light Motor Vehicle (LMV) operators to avoid travelling during night hours on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and to plan their journeys during the daytime.

The Traffic Police, in its advisory, said that night movement of Heavy Motor Vehicles (HMVs) between the Nashri Tunnel and Navyug Tunnel often causes inconvenience to commuters, and should be avoided.

Motorists have been urged to strictly follow lane discipline and warned that overtaking and wrong-lane driving lead to traffic congestion, according to the advisory accessed by the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Subject to fair weather and road conditions, LMVs, passenger vehicles, police said private cars and HMVs (goods carriers) will be allowed from both sides on the National Highway, and Traffic Control Units coordinating and monitoring road status. | [More on P6](#)

CS reviews availability, functionality of girls' toilet facilities in govt schools across J&K

'Ensure functional girls' toilets by Feb 15'

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 12: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Monday reviewed the status of availability and functionality of toilet facilities for girl students in government schools across J&K.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Department (PWD), Secretary, School Education Department, the Directors of School Education, Chief Engineers, and other senior officers concerned.

During the review, the Chief Secretary, as per an official statement, assessed the infrastructure created under various schemes aimed at ensuring adequate sanitation facilities for girl students, emphasizing that access to clean and functional toilets is a critical factor in promoting attendance, retention and dignity of students in schools.

The Chief Secretary took a detailed assessment of the number of toilets constructed, those under execution and their present functional



status. He stressed that mere creation of infrastructure is not sufficient and underlined the need to ensure that all existing toilets are fully functional, with assured water supply and other allied utilities.

Directing strict adherence to timelines, the Chief Secretary instructed that all ongoing works related to construction and upgradation of girls' toilets must be completed by 15th February. He further asked the School Education Department to ensure that toilets already constructed are made operational in

every respect well before the stipulated deadline.

To ensure effective implementation at the ground level, the Chief Secretary ordered the constitution of zone-level committees, comprising officers from both the School Education Department and the Roads & Buildings (R&B) Department. These committees will conduct joint inspections of schools to identify gaps, assess repair and improvement requirements, and oversee execution of necessary works to make the facilities fully functional.

The Chief Secretary underscored that access to clean and functional sanitation facilities is essential for creating a safe, inclusive and girl-friendly learning environment and called for close inter-departmental coordination and continuous monitoring to ensure timely completion and sustained maintenance of the facilities.

During the meeting, Additional Chief Secretary, PWD, Shri Anil Kumar Singh, informed that the department is committed to completing all assigned works within the prescribed timeframe. He added that in

locations where conventional construction is not feasible within the deadline, prefabricated toilet structures will be installed to ensure availability of facilities well before the stipulated date. Giving a detailed presentation, Secretary, School Education Department, Ram Niwas Sharma, informed that out of a total of 18,724 government schools across the Union Territory, 18,023 schools (99.25%) have toilet facilities. He further stated that 17,403 schools (92.29%) have separate toilets for girls, while just 1,321 schools (7.71%) are presently without such facilities. It was also informed that construction of 265 girls' toilets is currently under execution, while the remaining 1,056 schools without separate toilet facilities for girl students are being taken up in a time-bound manner. These works will be completed before the start of the academic session in winter-zone areas and by 15th February in summer-zone schools across the Union Territory.

Deputy CM extends Lohri greetings, meets public delegations



KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, January 12: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Monday extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Lohri festival.

Highlighting the cultural significance of the festival, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, said that Lohri is a celebration of the bounties of nature and signifies the transition of seasons towards spring.

Wishing people peace, prosperity and happiness, the Deputy Chief Minister expressed hope that the festival would usher in a new era of peace, harmony and prosperity across Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier in the day, the Deputy Chief Minister met various public and individual delegations at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu. He reiterated that the

government remains fully committed to the inclusive and holistic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

During the interactions, the delegations from different districts including industrialists, business representatives, students, job aspirants, aspiring entrepreneurs, civil society organisations and individuals apprised the Deputy Chief Minister of their concerns, demands and pressing issues.

The Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the importance of prompt service delivery while ensuring maximum coverage of beneficiaries under various welfare and developmental schemes.

He issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned officers for speedy resolution of issues raised during the interactions. He assured the delegations that all their genuine issues would be taken up with the concerned departments for early and effective resolution.

Mission Vatsalya Bandipora celebrates National Youth Day

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 12: Mission Vatsalya Bandipora Monday celebrated National Youth Day with great enthusiasm and fervour at the Officers' Academy of Science and Social Sciences, Bandipora, marking the birth anniversary of the great philosopher and youth icon Swami Vivekananda Ji.

The event, as per an official statement, witnessed the participation of a large gathering

of students, teachers, academicians, intellectuals, media persons, and officials from various child protection institutions.

Officials from District Child Protection Unit, Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Juvenile Justice Board, Child Helpline and Child Helpdesk Bandipora were present, reflecting strong inter-departmental coordination for youth and child welfare.

Chairperson CWC

Bandipora, in her address, emphasized the timeless teachings of Swami Vivekananda, urging youth to adopt values of discipline, self-confidence, and service to society. She stressed that the youth are the strongest pillar of the nation and play a decisive role in shaping its future.

Protection Officer, DCPU Bandipora, spoke on the responsibilities of young people in nation-building and encouraged students

to channelize their energy positively through education, innovation, and social responsibility. He also highlighted the role of Mission Vatsalya in safeguarding the rights and well-being of children and adolescents.

Coordinator CHL addressed the gathering and highlighted Swami Vivekananda Ji's vision of empowered, educated, and morally strong youth. He underlined that today's youth must balance

modern education with ethical values to contribute meaningfully to society and the nation.

To actively engage students, several activities were organized, including a quiz programme and a painting competition, which saw enthusiastic participation from students. The activities aimed at promoting awareness about youth empowerment, national values, and the legacy of Swami Vivekananda Ji.

Chairperson CWC

Div Com Kashmir directs fast-tracking of inundation model for Kashmir flood zoning

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, JANUARY 12: Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Monday directed the concerned agencies to expedite the development of inundation model for flood zoning in Kashmir especially regarding floods with a recurrence interval of once in twenty-five years.

Highlighting the significance of availability of the model, the Divisional Commissioner, as per an official statement emphasised that it is critical for enabling the administration to undertake effective planning and response measures to minimize the impact of major floods occurring in a



25-year cycle. He instructed the consultant engaged by the Jammu and Kashmir Economic Reconstruction

Agency (JKERA) to define a clear timeline for the completion of the model, ensuring high levels of accuracy and reliability.

During the meeting, it was informed that the consultancy is presently working on a hydrological model for major floods with a recurrence interval of once in hundred years.

Meanwhile, the Divisional Commissioner directed the Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) Department to obtain digitized maps of Anchar Lake and Wular Lake from the Chief Conservator of Forests to facilitate the identification and delineation of river basins. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, the Chief Executive Officer, JKERA, Assistant Commissioner Central, Executive Engineers of I&FC, officers from JKWRRA and representatives from Kashmir University.

Div Com Kashmir reviews digitisation of Jamabandis

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, JANUARY 11: Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Monday chaired a review meeting with all Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of Kashmir division to assess the progress of various important administrative matters across the division.

He reviewed progress of digitization of Jamabandis, migrant inventory, online service delivery, redressal of public and migrant grievances and monitoring of private coaching centres in the districts. Besides, he reviewed status of pending cases under SRO-43 related to families of terror victims and mutation of defence land.

Addressing the meeting, the Div Com, as per an official statement, directed the DCs to expedite the processing of pending SRO-43 cases to ensure timely appointments for eligible family members of terror victims. He also emphasized close coordination with concerned agencies to resolve any clarifications at the earliest.

Regarding land transfer cases to security agencies, Garg

instructed the DCs to complete mutations in a time-bound manner. He further directed them to prioritize the disposal of public and migrant grievances, received through both online and offline modes.

In view of the ongoing drug de-addiction campaign, the Div Com stressed regular monitoring and inspections of coaching centres and called for extensive IEC (Information, Education and Communication) activities. He reiterated that inspections of coaching centres should be conducted regularly by district administrations.

The Div Com also instructed DCs to hold monthly NCORD meetings to review progress on drug de-addiction initiatives.

Also, he directed the Deputy Commissioners to simultaneously process all revenue-related matters, including the digitization of Jamabandis, to ensure efficiency and transparency in service delivery.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioners briefed the Divisional Commissioner on the status of pending and ongoing cases in their respective jurisdictions.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir UT OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PW(R&B) DIVISION CHRARI-SHARIEF

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
Single cover system

Dated: 10/01/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

SN	Nome of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs) Incl. GST	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rupees)	Time of completion	M.H OF Account	Class Of Contactor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Construction of Teacher Quarter at Higher Secondary School Hardu Dalwan (Civil part)	34.80	1100/-	69600/-	06 Months	PAB 2025-26	A/B
2	Construction of ACR at Primary School Alimpura (Civil part)	19.93	800/-	39860/-	04 Months	PAB 2025-26	B/C
3	Construction of ACR at Higher Secondary School Hardu Dalwan (Civil part)	17.11	800/-	34220/-	04 Months	PAB 2025-26	B/C

Position of AAA: - Accorded

Position of TS: - Sanctioned

Position of funds: - Committed/Available

Project Authority: Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K

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

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	10.01.2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	12.01.2026
3	Bid submission Start Date	12.01.2026
4	Bid Submission End Date	27.01.2026 upto 11.30 AM.
5	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids	28.01.2026 at 4.00 PM. in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chrasharief

Note: -The Bidders are advised to read all conditions laid down in the NIT carefully before uploading softcopy.

Any short fall found in the soft copy will render the Bid rejected.

As per Circular issued by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir Civil Sectorial Finance department vide No. OM No.A/24(2017)-651 dttd.07-06-2018 which reads as under:-

a) Furnishing of Hard Copies of bids immediately after submission of e-tenders is dispensed with. The same should be obtained only from the Bidder who's declared 1st Lowest (L-1) after opening of financial bids.

b) The Cost of tender document should be collected by introducing Treasury Challan (Receipt).

2. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan (deposited in MH: 0059) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chrasharief (Tender Inviting Authority) and Earnest money / Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Chrasharief (Tender Receiving Authority). The Bank Guarantee should be valid for 45 days beyond bid validity.

19. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form).

DIPK-9962/25

DATED: 12-01-2026

Executive Engineer
PW(R&B) Division Chrasharief

From Iran, a Whisper of Relief

Audio Clip Reassures Kashmiri families amid unrest

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 12: Families across Kashmir are feeling worried and unsure after days of silence from students studying in Iran. Due to civil unrest and internet shutdowns, parents have been unable to contact their children.

However, a short audio message from a Kashmiri girl studying in Iran has briefly eased some fears, as she assured her family she is safe.

The message was shared through a friend travelling to Afghanistan and has become a small hope for many families waiting for updates.

"Don't worry, I am fine. I spoke to brother ji and others as well," she says in the message, which was recorded on her phone and forwarded through a friend who was travelling



to Afghanistan.

The audio reached the girl's family after her

friend arrived there.

The clip, circulating quietly among parents'

groups, has become the only lifeline of hope for dozens of families unable to reach their children. Many said phone lines and messaging apps have remained down for nearly four days amid the unrest.

Amid rising panic, the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar, urging them to ensure the safety, security, and welfare of Indian students stranded in Iran.

"Parents are extremely distressed and unable to connect with their children. We have been receiving continuous distress calls from families across the Valley," said Nasir Khuehami, National Convenor of JKSA. "Nearly 2,000 Kashmiri students are pursuing medical education across provinces, including Tehran, Urumiyeh, Arak, Mazandaran,

Kish, Ahvaz, Esfahan, Shiraz, Golestan and Kerman."

He said the Association has sought round-the-clock communication lines between the Indian Embassy in Tehran and students, as well as an emergency evacuation plan if the security situation deteriorates.

The JKSA said it has urged the government to act swiftly if conditions worsen.

Meanwhile, Dr Mohammad Momin Khan, Vice President of the All India Medical Students Association (AIMSA) and FAIMA Doctors Association, said all Indian students in Iran are safe.

He said all exams and classes have been suspended till January 24.

Khan said he was unable to respond to every call and message, but assured that all students are safe.

CS reviews 'Vande Mataram' Phase-II preparations

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 12: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Monday reviewed the preparations for Phase-II of the Commemoration of 150 Years of 'Vande Mataram', the National Song of India, scheduled to be observed across the J&K from January 19 to January 26, 2026, coinciding with the Republic Day celebrations together with the national celebrations held on this occasion.

The review meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Culture Department; Commissioner Secretary, Tourism; Secretary, School Education; Director, School Education, and other senior officers of the concerned departments. Deputy Commissioners from all districts participated in the meeting through video conferencing.

During the review, the Chief Secretary highly appreciated the exemplary performance of all districts during Phase-I, which enabled Jammu & Kashmir to emerge as the top-performing region in the country, surpassing even the largest States in terms of scale, participation and overall impact of the celebrations.

He lauded the coordinated efforts of district administrations, along with the School and Higher Education Departments, for successfully organizing large-scale patriotic and cultural



programmes that effectively showcased the historical, cultural and emotional significance of Vande Mataram as a powerful symbol of India's freedom struggle and national unity.

Encouraging the Deputy Commissioners to sustain the momentum, the Chief Secretary urged them to ensure equally stellar performance during Phase-II, beginning January 19.

He emphasized that the second phase should further deepen public engagement, particularly among youth, students and community groups, and strengthen the spirit of national pride, unity and patriotism across the Union Territory.

While reviewing the Action

Plan for Phase-II, the Chief Secretary underscored the importance of effective publicity, documentation and outreach.

He directed that a robust and structured publicity campaign be undertaken through the Directorate of Information & Public Relations (DIPR).

Special emphasis was laid on uploading maximum photographs and videos on the dedicated Government of India portal www.vandemataram150.in, along with enhanced outreach through official social media platforms using a common hashtag to maximize visibility at the national level.

Earlier, Principal Secretary, Culture Department, Brij Mohan

Sharma, briefed the meeting about the successful conduct of Phase-I celebrations (November 7-14, 2025), in which a mammoth participation of around 1.22 Cr participants was witnessed followed by UP with a participation of 19.35 lakhs and then other states.

Moreover he added that the celebrations here also included grand inaugural and valedictory events at Abhinav Theatre and M.A. Stadium, Jammu, respectively.

These events witnessed participation of over 20,000 students, artists and citizens, featuring mass singing of Vande Mataram, vibrant patriotic cultural performances and

extensive youth participation.

He further informed that the key activities planned during Phase-II include Vande Mataram Torch Relays across all districts to symbolize unity and national pride; mass singing of Vande Mataram at educational institutions, government offices, Panchayat Ghars and community centres; and integration of the Vande Mataram theme in all Republic Day programmes at the UT, district, tehsil and institutional levels.

Additionally, a range of special programmes such as essay writing, poster-making and debate competitions, Vande Mataram exhibitions, and youth marathons will be organized to ensure maximum public participation and awareness, especially among young citizens.

Reiterating his directions to all district administrations and concerned stakeholders, the Chief Secretary stressed that the commemoration of 150 years of Vande Mataram should be observed not merely as a series of events but as a people's movement to reconnect citizens with the ideals of freedom, unity and national pride.

He called upon all departments to work with dedication and commitment to make Phase-II celebrations impactful, inclusive and memorable.

J&K girls shine at Khelo India Asmita

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Jan 12: In a debut at the Khelo India Asmita Cycling League, Jammu and Kashmir's women cycling team from Baramulla district lit up the national stage with their remarkable performances. Ulfat Mushtaq of Raifabad Sopore led the charge, with her 10th place in the gruelling 30 km time trial and followed it with an 11th place finish in the 60 km mass start. Similarly, Mehak Mushtaq of Palhallan Patti, while showing incredible grit, secured 12th in the 30 km time trial. Energetic Mehak battled back from a crash to claim 13th in a 60 km mass start.

Among the junior athletes, Sofia Hilal and Sobia Manzoor – both hailing from Sopore with their impressive performance, clinched 7th and 8th positions respectively, while Hoor-i-Ein Lone of Tujeer Sopore rounded out the proud contingent with a solid 16th place.

The maiden participation of the young athletes from Jammu and Kashmir in the league held at Kurukshetra, Haryana, was historic, filling the entire region with pride.

Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council (JKSC) congratulated the athletes, wishing them continued success and more history-making moments ahead—(KNO)

Categorize bills by paying capacity: MP Ruhullah to CM Omar

RAJA SYED RATHER

Kangan, Jan 12: Calling upon Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to categorize the electricity bills according to the paying capacities of the people, Member Parliament and senior National Conference leader, Aga Ruhullah, on Monday expressed concern over hike in the power tariff.

Talking to reporters here, Ruhullah said, "Most of the people here belong to the BPL category and live below the poverty line. The electricity fee is increased and increased equally for each category. The rates applied to the normal category are also applied to the BPL category and the fee is increased repeatedly."

"The power tariff has increased from Rs 1800 to Rs 2200 and now it has been raised to Rs 2700. Wherever there is scope for increase, it should be increased." However, he was quick to add, "The BPL category faces lot of difficulties in running their families. It is the responsibility of the government, the Chief Minister is

also responsible, as he is also the minister of this department, it is his responsibility to categorize and bill the fees etc. according to the category."

He said, "I also want to tell the government through you that we many promises through our manifesto, including that we will provide relief to the people. We can at

least provide relief to the BPL category with regard to electricity."

MP Ruhullah said he had come to Kangan to inspect some road projects that were given under PMGSY and were approved by the Government of India. "Funding has come and we are inaugurating four roads under PMGSY in Kangan. I would like to thank our officers who worked for their DPR etc. for these projects, helped us and we were able to make this funding possible. Hopefully, the work on these roads will be completed within the deadline and through this, the work will be completed and facilities will be provided to these populations—(KNO)

Govt appoints G H Sheikh as interim JKBOSE Chairman

DSEJ to hold additional charge of Director JKSCERT

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 12: The government Monday assigned Ghulam Hassan Sheikh, Secretary, J&K Board of School Education (JKBOSE) with the additional charge to act as interim chairman for the Board.

A government order reads: "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 12 of Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education Act, 1975 (Act No. XXVIII of 1975), the Government orders that Gulam Hassan Sheikh, JKAS, Secretary, J&K Board of School Education, shall discharge the functions of Chairman, J&K Board of School Education, in addition to his own duties, as an interim arrangement, till further orders."

In another separate order, the government has ordered that the Director, School Education Jammu (DSEJ) shall hold the charge of the post of Director, Jammu and Kashmir, State Council of Educational Research and Training (JKSCERT).

"In the interest of

administration, it is ordered that Naseem Javid Chowdhary, JKAS, Director, School Education, Jammu, shall hold the charge of the post of Director JKSCERT in addition to his own duties, till further orders," it reads.

Pertinently, JKBOSE has had no proper chairman for the past more than a year and is functioning with an interim arrangement. The post of JKBOSE chairman has been lying vacant since the day tenure of Parikshat Singh Manhas expired more than a year back.

Dr Manhas was appointed as Chairman in February 2023 and his tenure was expiring on January 24, 2025. However, the government had extended his term as JKBOSE Chairman and Director SCERT for a period of one month from the date of expiry of his previous term.

Since then, the board was functioning with an interim arrangement and the officer who was holding the charge of JKBOSE attained superannuation on December 31, 2025—(KNO)

Separating Jammu from Kashmir akin to decapitation: Dr Farooq



YOGESH

Jammu, Jan 12: National Conference (NC) president and former Chief Minister, Dr Farooq Abdul Ghafoor on Monday strongly rejected the idea of dividing Jammu and Kashmir.

"These regions are one and cannot be separated. Any split would be like cutting off the head from the body, with Jammu as the head and Kashmir as the torso," Dr Abdul Ghafoor said during a visit to the Narwal Fruit Mandi here on Monday.

His remarks directly countered a "controversial" demand by BJP MLA Sham Lal Sharma for separate statehood to the Jammu region, citing alleged discrimination.

However, the BJP's Jammu and Kashmir president, Sat Sharma, has distanced himself from the proposal, clarifying that it does not reflect the party's official stand.

Dr Abdullah went further, claiming that even the people of Ladakh – carved out as a separate Union Territory following

the 2019 revocation of Article 370 by the BJP-led central government – now wish to rejoin the fold of Jammu and Kashmir.

Accompanied by senior NC leaders, including Jammu provincial president Rattan Lal Gupta and chairman of the Scheduled Caste Cell Vijay Lochan, the former CM engaged with office-bearers of the Narwal Fruit Mandi Association.

He listened attentively to their concerns, ranging from infrastructure upgrades to better facilities, and assured them that the NC-led government in the UT is committed to addressing these issues promptly.

Highlighting the administration's efforts over the past year, Abdullah emphasised initiatives aimed at the betterment of all people in Jammu and Kashmir.

"There is no need to worry... all the promises made to the people will be fulfilled," he said, reaffirming the party's focus on equitable development and unity across regions—(KNO)

Suspected human remains reopen wounds of Gandbal boat tragedy

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 12: Two years after the Gandbal Srinagar boat tragedy that claimed eight lives and left an entire locality in mourning, grief returned to the banks of the Jhelum on Sunday.

Locals stumbled upon what appeared to be "a human foot emerging from the sand" near the same stretch of river, a chilling discovery that has once again reignited memories of the 2024 tragedy.

The "human foot" spotted by residents engaged in sand collection

triggered shock and sorrow in Gandbal Srinagar, a riverside settlement still haunted by the April 2024 disaster.

Authorities were immediately alerted, and by Monday morning, the Indian Navy's elite MARCOS (Marine Commandos) joined a renewed search operation along the Jhelum to trace the source of the remains.

"We were clearing sand when one of us noticed something that looked like a human foot," a sand collector, one of the first to spot the remains said. "It was half-buried, pale and stiff. For a moment,

everything around us froze. All we could think of was that night."

Officials said the suspected human remains have been sent for forensic examination to confirm their origin and its identification.

"The MARCOS and SDRF are jointly scanning the river stretch and adjoining banks," an official said, adding that the search continued through Monday evening while visibility remained good and would resume Tuesday morning.

For many in Gandbal, the find has

reopened old wounds, particularly for the family of Showkat Ahmad Sheikh, the 40-year-old mason who went missing when the overloaded boat ferrying children and women capsized midstream on April 16, 2024.

"We never saw his body," said Rafiqa Begum, a resident of Gandbal, her voice trembling. "We performed his funeral without a grave. When we heard about the foot, we prayed it might finally give us an answer."

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

Why Empowering Youth Is Key To A Viksit Bharat

The vibrant discussions at the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue signal a vital national shift in recognising the youth not merely as beneficiaries of development but as its primary architects. The focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, and skill development is the correct strategic lens through which to view India's journey to a developed nation by 2047. Empowering young leaders is an essential economic and social imperative. For regions like

Jammu & Kashmir, this focus holds transformative potential. The alignment of local strengths, including handicrafts, tourism, agri-based industries, and IT, with national missions such as 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Vocal for Local', can unlock unprecedented growth. However, ideas and passion alone are insufficient. They require a supportive ecosystem that translates dialogue into tangible outcomes. This means moving beyond inspiration to implementation:

simplifying regulatory processes for MSMEs, enhancing access to venture capital and mentorship, and creating market linkages for startups. The government's role is to act as an enabler, building the infrastructure, both digital and physical, that allows young innovators to thrive. The parallel emphasis on sports infrastructure, as seen in the discussions on new cricket stadia, is equally astute. Sports are a powerful tool for youth engagement, discipline, and national pride.

Developing world-class facilities does more than nurture athletic talent; it promotes a culture of excellence, provides constructive avenues for energy, and can position regions as hubs for sporting tourism and events. The true success of such dialogues will be measured by their on-ground impact. The ideas generated must be systematically incubated and scaled. This requires sustained collaboration between central and state authorities, the private sector, and educational

institutions to create a seamless pipeline from innovation to enterprise. By investing decisively in the capabilities and creativity of its young population, India is investing in its most dynamic asset. For J&K and the nation, the path to a Viksit Bharat will be paved by the energy of its youth, provided they are given the tools, trust, and terrain to build. The dialogue has set the vision; the relentless work of empowerment must now begin.

==== YEAR ENDER ====

Justice Reimagined: 2025 Sees Digital Push, Wider Access, And Faster Courts

With 157 judges appointed, 3.6 lakh cases cleared, 92 lakh cases e-filed, 579 crore pages digitised, and legal advice to over 1.12 crore citizens, technology reshapes India's justice delivery landscape.

1. Appointment and transfer of Judges:

157 judges were appointed in the High Courts - Allahabad (40), Andhra Pradesh (03), Bombay (21), Calcutta (04), Delhi (09), Gauhati (06).

Gujarat (07), Himachal Pradesh (02), J&K and Ladakh (02), Karnataka (04), Madhya Pradesh (15), Patna (04), Punjab & Haryana (14), Rajasthan (15), Telangana (08), and Uttarakhand (03).

47 additional judges made permanent judges in High Courts -

Andhra Pradesh (04), Bombay (09), Calcutta (03), Chhattisgarh (02), Gauhati (04), J&K and Ladakh (03), Karnataka (02), Kerala (03), Madras (08), Meghalaya (01), P&H (04), Telangana (03), Tripura (01).

Tenure of 13 additional judges of High Courts was extended -

Bombay (02), Calcutta (07), Chhattisgarh (03), Gauhati (01).

12 Chief Justices in various High Courts were appointed - Bombay, Gauhati, Jharkhand, J&K and Ladakh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Orissa, Patna.

44 High Court judges were transferred from one High Court to another.

2. Tele-Law: Reaching the Unreached

During the FY 2025-2026 the Tele-Law has been expanded to cover 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats across 776 districts (including 112 aspirational districts and 500 aspirational blocks) in 36 states and UTs. About 275 lawyers have been engaged to provide pre-litigation advice. As on 31st December 2025, 1.12 crore + beneficiaries have been provided with pre-litigation advice and consultation.

District Level Workshop and Training - From January to December 2025 638 District Level workshops and training were organized. During the period these workshops were attended by 37,514 participants including Village Level Entrepreneur (VLEs), government officials and other ground level functionaries of the other Ministries/Departments; During the period 280 awareness sessions were conducted on the implementation of Tele-Law through CSCs, Tele-Law Citizens' Mobile App, Tele-Law help line number 14454, and human assistance from the VLEs and 500 Nyaya Sahayaks across aspirational blocks.

Awareness drives by VLEs: Initiatives were undertaken by Tele-Law VLEs to conduct special awareness camps in pockets of their region where awareness on Tele-Law is limited or zero awareness. VLEs made special efforts by using various mode of transport such as e-rickshaw, Mobile vans, Auto-rickshaw, Motorcycle, Bicycle etc. to spread awareness on Tele-Law.

Strengthen data analytics- Intensive data inputs and data drivers have been analyzed to strengthen and capture the advice delivered through Tele-Law e-platform.

Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman, national campaign to inculcate constitutional values and spirit among the citizens was bolstered through various indigenous sub campaigns-Sabko Nyaya Har Ghar Nyaya, Nav Bharat Nav Sankalp and Vidhi Jagriti Abhiyan. Episodes highlighting information on socio-legal issues were broadcasted through Doordarshan and aired through Akashwani. Campaign reached out to 70.70 lakh people in the country. Various competition cum awareness generation activity were undertaken with support from MeITY for example reading of panch paran pledge, DISHA awareness activities by Law Schools in villages adopted by them etc. The campaign was concluded in January 2025.

3. LAP (Legal Aid to Poor):

i). Celebration of Legal Services Day on 8th and 9th November 2025

On November 8, 2025, Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the 20th National Conference on "Strengthening Legal Aid Delivery Mechanisms" to commemorate 30 years of NALSA and advance the concept of "Ease of Justice." Key initiatives highlighted include the launch of a Community Mediation Training Module to resolve local disputes, the translation of over 80,000 Supreme Court judgments into 18 regional languages to ensure linguistic accessibility, and emphasis on the ongoing repeal of obsolete colonial laws in favor of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. With the Legal Aid Defence Council System already resolving 8 lakh criminal cases in three years, the Prime Minister called upon young legal professionals to act as "community anchors" in ensuring that free, simplified, and accessible justice reaches every citizen regardless of their

background.

ii). National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) launched the "Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana" Scheme to strengthen Legal Aid to Defence Personnel and families

On July 26, 2025, the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) launched the "Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana" in Srinagar, an initiative introduced by Justice Surya Kant to provide dedicated legal aid to military and paramilitary personnel and their families. Operating under the theme of reaffirming justice for defense personnel and tribals, the scheme integrates legal service clinics directly into District, State and Central Sainik Boards to ensure that legal guidance is accessible at the same locations where personnel seek welfare services. This strategic mission aims to protect the rights of those who protect the nation's borders, leveraging Sainik Boards as nodal centers to provide seamless support and simplify the process for soldiers and their families to resolve legal grievances at home.

iii). Schemes on Human-Wildlife Conflict and Support for Dependents of Prisoners & Victims of Crime along with e-book on Compendium on Human Wildlife Conflict launched at Southern Regional Conference in Kerala

On August 30th 2025, National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), in collaboration with the Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KeLSA), inaugurated the Southern Regional Conference on "Human-Wildlife Conflict & Co-existence: Legal and Policy Perspectives" at the Kerala Legislative Assembly Hall, Thiruvananthapuram.

The two-day conference has brought together Hon'ble Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts, senior officials from forest and disaster management departments, legal services institutions, and experts to deliberate on legal, policy, and community-based responses to the growing challenge of human-wildlife conflict. As part of the inaugural programme, NALSA launched below major initiatives, along with dedicated videos to enhance public outreach.

(A) NALSA Scheme for Victims of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC), 2025

NALSA Scheme for Victims of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC), 2025 focuses on addressing the legal and economic vulnerabilities of communities in forest-fringe areas by providing free legal aid, awareness, and assistance in securing timely compensation for victims of human-wildlife encounters. Rooted in the constitutional principles of Article 21 (Right to Life) and Article 48A (Protection of Environment), the scheme treats ecological preservation as a necessity for human sustenance. A major highlight of the program is the launch of first-of-its-kind digital compendium—an e-book that centralizes national and state-level guidelines, judicial pronouncements, and policy frameworks—to serve as a comprehensive resource for navigating the legal complexities of human-wildlife coexistence. An e-book on Compendium on Human Wildlife Conflict, a first-of-its-kind digital resource compiling national and state-level schemes, guidelines, circulars, advisories, directives, judicial pronouncements and policy frameworks was also launched.

(B) NALSA's Supporting Potential and Resilience of the Unseen, Held-back and Affected (SPRUHA) Scheme, 2025:

NALSA's SPRUHA Scheme establishes a "cradle-to-re-integration" support system designed to assist the dependents of incarcerated persons and victims of crime who often face significant legal and economic vulnerabilities. By providing a combination of free legal aid and professional counselling, the scheme helps families navigate the complexities of the justice system while simultaneously addressing the social stigma associated with imprisonment. Beyond legal support, the program focuses on long-term stability by ensuring educational continuity for children, offering vocational training for families, and facilitating the successful social and economic reintegration of individuals to maintain family cohesion during and after incarceration.

4. eCourts Mission Mode Project:

The eCourts Mission Mode Project was launched to improve access to justice through the use of technology and has been implemented in three phases. Phase-I, launched in 2011 with an outlay of Rs 935 crore, focused on basic computerization of courts and establishment of local network connectivity. Phase-II began in 2015 with an outlay of Rs 1,670 crore and expanded the project towards citizen-centric digital services, under which 18,735 District and Subordinate Courts have been computerized. On 13.09.2023, the Cabinet approved Phase-III with a budgetary outlay of Rs

7,210 crore for a four-year period. Phase-III aims at creating digital and paperless courts through digitization of legacy and current case records, expansion of video conferencing to courts, jails and selected hospitals, adoption of AI and OCR, extension of virtual courts beyond traffic offences, and universal saturation of eSewa Kendras.

Over the years, the eCourts project has developed a digital ecosystem throughout the lifecycle of a case. The e-Filing portal allows lawyers and litigants to file cases electronically on a 24x7 basis without physical visits to courts. They can also make online payments of court fees, fines etc using the e-Payment portal under the jurisdiction of 24 High Courts. Approximately 92.08 lakh cases have been filed electronically, and the e-Payments system has processed 49.2 lakh transactions amounting to Rs 1,215.98 crore towards court fees and 4.86 lakh transactions worth Rs 61.97 crore towards fines.

All the cases filed in the courts are managed end-to-end digitally through the Case Information System (CIS), now upgraded to CIS 4.0. Each case is assigned a unique CNR number, enabling litigants to track case status seamlessly. This digitization of the case records makes the online availability of information on case status, cause lists and judgments etc through multilingual e-Courts portal. In addition, the case related information is delivered to the litigants and lawyers through multiple service delivery channels including SMS push and pull, emails, Judicial Service Centres, information kiosks, the e-Courts mobile app with 3.38 crore downloads. The courts currently issue over 4 lakh SMS and 6 lakh emails daily, record nearly 35 lakh daily hits on the e-Courts portal, and have sent more than 14 crore SMS to litigants and advocates.

The CIS also consumes seamlessly the data from various Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) initiatives such as Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks & Systems of the police, e-Prison, e-Forensic etc rendering the criminal justice system more efficient.

The National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes (NSTEP) has been developed for process serving and issue of summons. NSTEP is currently functional in 28 States/UTs, has generated 6.21 crore e-processes, of which 1.61 crore have been successfully delivered.

Courts are increasingly adopting virtual and hybrid modes of functioning. Video conferencing facilities support hearings across courts, jails and other institutions, with over 3.91 crore virtual hearings conducted since the Covid lockdown period, positioning India as a global leader in virtual hearings. Live streaming of court proceedings has been implemented in 11 High Courts and the Constitutional Benches of the Supreme Court. 29 virtual courts in 21 States and UTs have been set up to try traffic offences, having adjudicated more than 8.9 crore cases and realized more than Rs 895 crore in fines. The Delhi High Court has established 34 Digital Courts to hear cheque bounce cases under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Large-scale digitization of court records has been undertaken covering 3108 crore pages in Phase - III. Currently, 224.66 crore pages in High Courts and 354.87 crore pages in District Courts, amounting to over 579 crore pages of judicial records have been digitized. Digital Courts 2.1 enables judges to access pleadings, evidence and case records entirely in digital form, with pilot implementation already underway. In addition, the JustIS app facilitates the judges in online case management.

The National Judicial Data Grid enables lawyers and litigants to access case information and more than 34.23 crore orders and judgments. A dedicated "Judgment & Order Search" portal has been inaugurated which hosts 1.69 crore judgments and allows easy retrieval of judicial decisions. Advanced technologies such as AI-based tools, analytics and OCR are now being integrated for case analysis, decision support, and efficient record management.

Citizen access and inclusivity have been strengthened through 1,987 eSewa Kendras established across the country to facilitate citizen centric services, helping bridge the digital divide. Network infrastructure across courts has been strengthened through WAN connectivity to 2,977 out of 2,992 court complexes, achieving 99.5 % coverage with bandwidth ranging from 10 Mbps to 100 Mbps. All Courts portals are now hosted on NIC's Cloud infrastructure, and 730 District Court websites have been migrated to the S3WAAS platform. In addition, solar power systems have been installed in 1,471 out of 1,530 targeted court complexes to ensure uninterrupted ICT operations.

The e-Committee of the Supreme Court of India

has conducted 910 training programmes and trained 3,22,740 stakeholders, including judges, court staff, advocates and technical personnel, with specialized programmes for visually challenged officers and training in cybersecurity and digital forensics.

The project has also received national recognition, including the National Award for e-Governance for three consecutive years. From its inception in 2011 to the ongoing Phase III, the eCourts Mission Mode Project has progressed in a structured and chronological manner from basic computerization to a mature, citizen-centric and technology-driven justice delivery system, significantly enhancing efficiency, transparency and access to justice across the country.

5. Scheme of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSC):

A Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for the establishment of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), including exclusive POCSO (ePOCSO) Courts was launched by the Union of India in October, 2019. These courts are dedicated to the time-bound trial and disposal of pending cases related to rape and crimes under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. This Scheme for establishment of 790 courts has been extended twice with the latest extension up to 31st March 2026. The total financial outlay of the scheme is Rs.1,952.23 cr. with Rs.1,207.24 cr. as Central Share to be incurred from Nirbhaya Fund on the CSS pattern.

The Department of Justice has released a total amount of Rs. 1,108.97 crore up to 24.12.2025 since the inception of the Scheme, including Rs. 74.42 crore during the FY 2025-26, out of a budget allocation of Rs. 200.00 crore, to 30 States and Union Territories for the operationalization of FTSCs.

Achievements of the Scheme

774 FTSCs including 398 exclusive POCSO Courts, have been operationalized in 29 States/UTs.

These courts have disposed of 3,61,055 cases since the inception of the Scheme, as on 30.11.2025.

Against a target of disposal of 165 rape and POCSO cases per year per court or 13.75 cases per month per court, FTSCs disposed of an average 74.1 cases per month per court, compared to 3.18 cases per month per court by regular courts during 2025 (January–November).

6. National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms:

The National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms was set up in August 2011. National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms focuses on improvement of administration of justice and justice delivery and legal reforms in the entire country and to address the diverse needs of all sections of stakeholders. Its objectives are two-fold:

i. Increasing access by reducing delays and arrears in the system, and

ii. Enhancing accountability through structural changes and by setting performance standards and capacities

Initiatives under National Mission

1. Implementation of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for District and Subordinate Courts.

One of the major initiatives of the National Mission relates to Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for District and Subordinate Courts. CSS for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for District and Subordinate Courts aims to increase the availability of suitable number of Court Halls, Residential Units for Judges / Judicial Officers of District and Subordinate Courts, leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for better justice delivery, filling up of vacant positions of Judges in High Courts and Supreme Court, reduction in pendency through follow up by Arrears Committees at District, High Court and Supreme Court level, emphasis on Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) and initiatives to fast track special type of cases. As on 31st December 2025, there are 92,118 cases pending in the Supreme Court. The pendency in respect of High Courts and District & Subordinate Courts, as on 31st December 2025 stands at 63,70,904 and 4,43,45,599 respectively.

Reforms under B-Ready Framework: The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business framework was officially discontinued in September 2021 and replaced by the Business Ready (B-READY) framework, formally launched in 2023, with the first report released in 2024, focusing on regulatory frameworks, public service delivery, operational efficiency, sustainability, and inclusion. India is among the economies participating in the B-READY assessment, with its report expected in the third phase in September 2026; firm surveys commenced in January 2025 and expert consultations in September 2025. DIPIT is the Nodal Department for coordinating with the World Bank, and India's performance is assessed across ten areas, including Dispute Resolution. For Dispute Resolution, DIPIT and the Department of Justice are the Nodal and Supportive Departments respectively, while the Department of Legal Affairs (DLA), Ministry of Law & Justice, administers the Commercial Courts Act, 2015 at the central level. In this context, the Department has been participating in Inter-Ministerial consultations and the meetings of the B-READY Taskforce convened by DIPIT and DLA respectively for finalization of questionnaires and action plans to improve India's performance under the B-READY framework.

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Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue: Unlocking Youth Leadership For Viksit Bharat

‘It’s a movement to channel the ideas, energy, and leadership of crores of young Indians into shaping the nation’s future’

Dr Mansukh Mandaviya

India's growth story will be written by those who are shaping its ideas today. Across the country, young Indians are thinking deeply about how India can grow faster, govern better and become developed by 2047. Their ideas are emerging from campuses and communities, start-ups and sports fields, classrooms and village meetings. The real question is no longer whether the youth have something to contribute, but whether their ideas are given a credible platform to influence the nation's direction. The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBYLD) is designed to provide that very platform.

India today is home to the largest youth population in the world. It is therefore but natural that the direction of the nation's future will be shaped not merely by policies or institutions, but by the imagination, conviction and courage of its young citizens. This vast reservoir of Yuva Shakti is far more than a demographic advantage; it is India's greatest national asset, capable of driving innovation, strengthening democracy and propelling the country towards inclusive and sustainable development.

The aspirations of India's young generation are guided by a strong sense of purpose and possibility. Today's youth are not driven solely by personal advancement; they are equally motivated by a desire to shoulder responsibility and make a meaningful impact. They seek avenues where their creativity can translate into solutions, their energy into leadership and their ambition into service.

During my time as Youth Affairs and Sports Minister, I have had the opportunity to engage with young Indians in varied settings, on university campuses, in rural districts, at sports arenas and during youth-led



COLOURS OF VIKSIT BHARAT



community initiatives. What consistently stands out is the seriousness with which young people think about the nation's future. I recall meeting a group of rural youth volunteers who had organised informal learning centres in their villages. With limited resources but strong conviction, they were addressing gaps in education and skill development through locally designed solutions. Their ideas were practical, rooted in ground realities and driven by a clear sense of responsibility. Experiences like these reaffirm a simple truth: when young people are trusted and given space, they do not merely participate, they lead.

Inspired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's call from the Red Fort to bring one lakh youth without political backgrounds into public life, the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue was launched in January 2025 reimagining the National Youth Festival in an entirely new format. The

response was unprecedented. Over 30 lakh young people engaged through the Viksit Bharat Challenge, more than two lakh essays were submitted, and thousands of youth presented their ideas at the state level. The journey culminated at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, where 3,000 youth leaders interacted in a free-flowing dialogue with the Prime Minister, who spent several hours listening to their ideas and inspiring them to lead.

Beyond the numbers, it was the nature of engagement that made the Dialogue truly historic. It recognised, both in letter and spirit, that the voices of India's youth matter in shaping the India of 2047. Young participants were encouraged to think critically about national challenges, propose solutions and align personal ambition with collective purpose, bridging the gap between aspiration and action.

The strength of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue lies not only in its scale,

but in its design. Diversity of thought, language, culture and lived experience is embedded into the very structure of the initiative. Youth from urban and rural India, students and professionals, innovators and grassroots leaders come together on a common platform. Multiple stages of engagement ensure that ideas are refined through dialogue and exchange, not filtered out by geography, language or background. In doing so, the Dialogue ensures that every young person who participates has both a voice and a platform to amplify it.

India's youth have always been at the heart of the nation's defining moments, from the freedom struggle to the building of the institutions of an independent India. At every turning point, young Indians have stepped forward with courage, conviction and a willingness to lead. Today, the nation once again looks to its youth not just for participation, but for leadership and dynamism in co-creating India's growth story. The vision of Viksit Bharat at 2047 goes beyond economic progress alone; it calls for social harmony, environmental responsibility, technological stewardship and inclusive growth. These complex challenges require fresh thinking, adaptability and an ability to embrace the new: qualities that reside strongly in India's Yuva Shakti.

Building on the resounding success of a landmark first edition, VBYLD 2026, scheduled from 9-10 January 2026, signals a decisive leap from a national youth convening to a platform with global resonance. With new initiatives such as Design for Bharat and Tech for Viksit Bharat, and the inclusion of the international Indian youth diaspora, the dialogue expands beyond borders. Yet, at its heart, the mission remains unchanged: to empower young Indians to think boldly.

create fearlessly, and lead with conviction.

The scale of this edition underscores the depth of that ambition. More than 50 lakh young people participated in the Viksit Bharat Quiz, the first stage of selection for VBYLD 2026, making it one of the largest youth engagement exercises of its kind. Over four intensive days, participants from every corner of the country will engage with leading national and global voices, drawing upon practical insights, ideas, and visions that transcend disciplines and geographies.

What truly sets VBYLD 2026 apart, however, is that it gives our Yuva Shakti an opportunity not only to speak, but to be heard. The platform enables young Indians to articulate their ideas, aspirations, and solutions directly to the Prime Minister of India. On 12 January, observed nationwide as National Youth Day in commemoration of Swami Vivekananda, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will personally interact with the youth at Bharat Mandapam, listening to how they imagine, and intend to shape, the future of Bharat.

As India advances towards the centenary of its independence, it demands the engagement of young individuals who possess the courage to imagine boldly and the resolve to translate ideas into meaningful action. More than a platform for dialogue, the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue is a movement that calls upon young Indians to lead from the front, confront national challenges, and channel their ambitions towards building a Viksit Bharat.

A Viksit Bharat will be built by those who have the confidence to lead and the commitment to serve. India's youth are ready. The nation must be ready to walk with them.

The author is Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment

What Our New Words Say About Our Anxiety In Today's World

Trending words show how the digital age impacts our lives

Valerie Fridland

What do “rage bait,” “parasocial,” and “slop” all have in common?

They are all words that speak to ways the internet and AI have infiltrated our lives—and their use has spiked dramatically over the last year. But more importantly, these words reveal a deeper concern about the potential for emotional exploitation in the digital age, the darker side of our embrace of technology.

The words of a year

At the dawn of the new year, dictionaries, publishers, and learned societies look back at that year's “it” words, meaning those which exploded in posts and news feeds, drove search engine and dictionary look-ups, and newly rolled off the lips of those in tech, business, media, and politics.

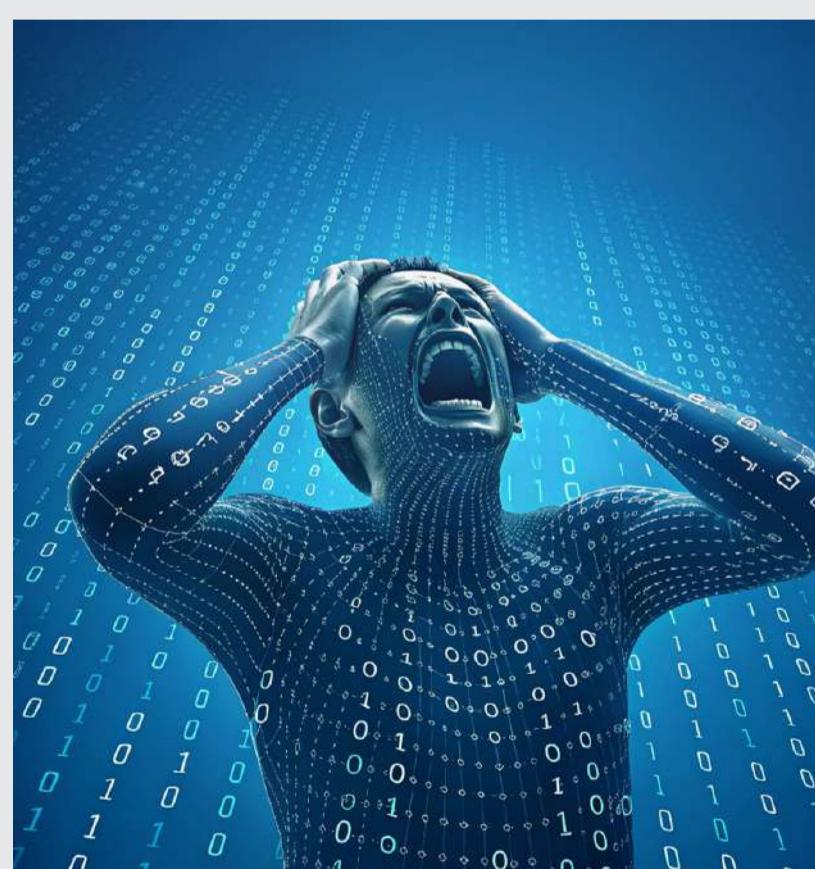
What they found overwhelmingly were words describing a new world dominated by AI and digitally mediated relationships.

A life online

Many of the new words most discussed this year reflected the dramatic change that the internet has introduced in how we live and work.

Oxford University Press selected “rage bait” as their word of the year, a word which describes online content specifically created to provoke anger for the sole purpose of driving up site traffic and engagement. They cited a massive rise in the usage of the word across media and public sentiment as factors underpinning this choice.

Also speaking to unhealthy emotional investment, Cambridge Dictionary picked “parasocial,” a word describing a fantasized relationship with someone—often a celebrity or influencer—who doesn't know you exist. Though this word has been around in academic



circles since the 1950s, its transfer over into mainstream conversation has been driven in large part by the faux intimacy that social media interactions with such figures helps create.

The proliferation of generative AI informed several other word selections. For instance, the American Dialect Society, Merriam-Webster, and the Australian Macquarie Dictionary all selected “slop” or “AI slop” as their words of the year based on the ever-increasing

prevalence of misleading or low-quality AI-generated content flooding digital feeds.

A more positive view

Not all tech-informed word selections focused on the negative: Collins English Dictionary chose “vibe-coding,” or creating code without any coding ability by simply telling generative AI what you want it to do, as its word of the year. This selection highlights the fact that AI has changed not just what

we see online, but also the types of content and work product that non-specialists can now create.

Though not selected as a winner, the word “agentic” also created a lot of buzz this year pointing toward the next phase of AI general intelligence, where AI is able to act with increasing autonomy, or agency, and makes informed decisions without human guidance.

In short, a tug-of-war between the advances technology might afford and what it might cost in return was on full view in the words that exploded in popularity this year.

A life in view

Discussions about which new or increasingly popular words best summed up the cultural zeitgeist of the year centered not only around those describing how technology has changed how we engage online, but also on how constantly posting about our lives and activities has complicated notions of authenticity in self-presentation.

The idea that modern culture has made it so that people feel the need to curate their lives for the view of others comes through in the rising popularity of words like “aura-farming” and “performative.” “Aura-farming” refers to trying hard to exude charisma or confidence, without looking like you are trying at all.

The adjective “performative” has been put to work in new ways to call out inauthentic behavior, most prominently in the phrase “performative male,” describing a man who tries to impress a woman by insincerely presenting himself as sensitive or pro-feminist. This idea that people are often simply dressing a part for public show has also driven its use in phrases like “performative activist” and “performative politics.”

Getting away from it all

The third major theme in the round-up of words newly prominent or popular this year was that of getting away from constant (often online) distraction to focus on what's really important.

For instance, the use of the phrase “touching grass” has grown exponentially since first appearing in 2016, typically used in a derogatory way to tell someone that they need to “get a reality check” or get offline and experience the outside world.

As well, the term “holding space,” meaning being meaningfully present for and validating of someone else's experience, has also seen an uptick in use, moving out of primarily psychological discourse to more mainstream use.

This is in sharp contrast to “glazing,” describing an almost embarrassing over-the-top level of complimenting, a slang term often used on TikTok to call out comments construed as insincere flattery or sucking up.

The world in a word

From words that sum up the low-quality content that clogs our feeds to those that sum up how we now curate our lives and behaviors for others to view, the words selected this year as “Words of the Year” captured the deep impact the digital age has had on how we understand the world and ourselves.

Maybe that's why we needed the escapism of the silly nonsensical fun summed up in Dictionary.com's choice of “6/7” as word of the year, a word which means, well, absolutely nothing.

Valerie Fridland, Ph.D., is a professor of linguistics at the University of Nevada, Reno, and the author of *Like, Literally, Dude: Arguing for the Good and Bad English*.

Source: Psychology Today

SC to examine plea challenging legal immunity to CEC, ECs

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine a plea challenging the immunity granted to the chief election commissioner and election commissioners under the CEC Act, 2023.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Jaymalya Bagchi issued notice to the Centre and the Election Commission in the matter, though it refused to stay the provision.

The top court was hearing a PIL filed by Lok Prahar, an NGO, challenging Section 16 of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.

According to the provision, "notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, no court shall entertain or continue any civil or criminal proceedings against any person who is or was a chief election commissioner or an election commissioner for any act, thing or word, committed, done or spoken by him, or in the course of acting or purporting to act in the discharge of his official duty or function".

The plea claimed the provision "gives unprecedented, unbridled power to the CEC and ECs by providing them complete blanket permanent immunity for life from any civil and even criminal proceedings for their wrongdoings in gross misuse of their office".

Cybercrime destroying social, economic fabric of society: Delhi court

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: Cybercrime is destroying the social and economic fabric of society, a Delhi court said while dismissing the anticipatory bail pleas of three men accused of online fraud.

Special Judge Rajesh Malik was hearing the pre-arrest bail pleas of Ankit Jain, Amardeep Sharma and Arijant Jain, whom the CBI has booked for the offences of criminal conspiracy, cheating and cheating by personation.

The agency's FIR also booked the trio under Sections 43 (damage to computer, computer system, etc.), 66B (dishonestly

receiving stolen computer resource or communication device), 66C (identity theft) and Section 66D (cheating by personation by using computer resource) of the Information Technology (IT) Act.

In the order dated January 8, the court said, "Cybercrime is destroying the social as well as economic fabric of society. Where a connection is established between the allegations and cybercrime, the court shall be reluctant to give any protection in the form of anticipatory bail to the accused or applicant."

It said the investigation was still at a nascent stage, the exact number

of victims was not known, and the agency, in future, could require their custodial interrogation.

The court dismissed the pleas, saying that based on the gravity of the offence and the evidence collected so far, no case for relief was made out.

The FIR alleged that a private company, M/s Lord Mahavira Services India Pvt Ltd, obtained 7,721 SIM connections from Vodafone Idea Ltd during 2024-2025, which were used to deceive unsuspecting citizens by making fraudulent calls, where callers impersonated as officials of TRAI, law enforcement agencies and others.

During the proceedings,

the prosecution alleged that the accused got the SIM cards issued by Vodafone by submitting a false list of end users.

It alleged, "The SIM cards were issued in the names of persons who were not employees of the applicant company (Mahavira Services), and it clearly establishes the malafide intention of the applicant(s) to participate in cybercrime activities."

The prosecution also claimed that these SIM numbers were used to send phishing links to a large number of people, because of which "innocent citizens lost their personal sensitive information to the cybercriminals".

Study finds how brain waves helps distinguish between one's own body & external world

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: Frequency of alpha waves in the parietal cortex -- the brain region that processes sensory information from the body -- determines how precisely we perceive our body as our own, according to a new study.

Faster frequencies of the brain waves could result in a more precise sense of body ownership, while slower frequencies could make it harder to separate self-related sensations from external ones, weakening the distinction between body and world, findings published in the journal *Nature Communications* show.

Researchers from Sweden's Karolinska Institutet looked at how the brain combines visual and tactile (touch-related) signals to create a feeling that a body part belongs to



oneself -- a phenomenon known as the sense of body ownership.

An analysis of behavioural experiments and brain recordings from 106

participants showed that the frequency of alpha waves in the parietal cortex -- the brain region that processes sensory information from the

body -- determines how precisely we perceive our body as our own.

Alpha waves is the brain's electrical activity that is at play when one is in a relaxed, alert and calm state, often with eyes closed.

"We have identified a fundamental brain process that shapes our continuous experience of being embodied," lead author Mariano D'Angelo, researcher at Karolinska Institutet's department of neuroscience, said.

"The findings may provide new insights into psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia, where the sense of self is disturbed," D'Angelo said.

The participants were engaged in a 'rubber hand' task. When touches on a visible rubber hand and the participant's hidden real hand were synchronised, many reported feeling that the rubber hand was part of their body -- but when the timing

was off, the feeling faded, the researchers said.

They also found that those with faster alpha frequencies were more sensitive to timing differences between touches that were seen and touches felt.

The individuals noted smaller differences in timing as if their brains operated at a higher temporal (time) resolution, resulting in a more precise sense of body ownership, the team said.

However, slower alpha frequencies were linked to a broader "temporal binding window", causing the brain to treat out-of-sync visual and tactile signals as if occurring together.

The reduced precision in timing made it harder to separate self-related sensations from external ones, thereby weakening the distinction between body and world, the researchers said.

CONT'D. FROM FRONT PAGE

Use power of art

Kesar's extraordinary contribution in nurturing and training thousands of artists who have achieved exceptional success globally marking significant milestones under his mentorship.

Padma Dr SP Varma; Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary Culture; Shruti Awasthi, Regional Director, IGNCA; KK Sidha, Director Archives; Harvinder Kour, Secretary JKAAI; Dr. Javida Rahi, Secretary, Kala Kendra Jammu; senior officials, prominent artists and citizens from different walks of life were present. (KNO)

Budget 2026-27

The budget presentation will be followed by a three-day discussion on February 7, 9 and 10. The budget discussion will conclude on February 10 with the Finance Minister's reply.

The Assembly Secretariat has earmarked seven days for demands for grants of different departments between February 11 and 19. As per the tentative calendar, February 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 19 have been reserved for demands for grants.

With the passage of grants, the House will break for a one-month long recess during the holy month of Ramzan, when Muslims observe fasting.

The session will resume on March 27 with the passage of appropriation bills, which will mark the approval of the budget.

As per the calendar, two days each have been kept for government business, private member bills and private member resolutions.

March 28 and April 4 have been reserved for government business; March 30 and April 1 for Private Member Bills; and March 31 and April 2 for Private Member Resolutions. (KNO)

JKBOSE to announce

PM Modi to inaugurate Commonwealth speakers' conference

Pakistan, Bangladesh to stay away

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Thursday inaugurate the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPC), which is expected to witness participation from 42 of the 56 member nations. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Monday that the participation will be the highest ever in the history of the conference that will be attended by countries including Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Birla said there will be no representation from Bangladesh as that country's Parliament is under suspension. Pakistan is also unlikely to send any representative, officials said.

A total of 61 speakers and presiding officers are expected to attend the event to be held at the Samvidhan Sadaa here from January 14 to 16.

"It is a matter of pride that the 28th CSPC being hosted in India will see the highest participation so far," Birla said. The



CSPC will discuss shared parliamentary values, democratic governance and institutional cooperation.

Birla said the work related to the conference has been done online and no paper has been used.

The speaker said an app has been developed to enable all aspects of conference coordination, facilitation and information

dissemination.

The 27th edition of the CSPC was hosted by Uganda in January 2024 where Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Harivansh, the leader of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation, assumed the baton as the host of the next edition of the conference.

The Lok Sabha speaker will chair the meeting of the Standing Committee of the CSPC at

the Red Fort here on Wednesday.

The CSPC was created in 1969 as an initiative of then speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, Lucien Lamoureux. Since its inception, Canada has provided the CSPC with a secretariat to support its activities.

The stated aims of the CSPC are to maintain, foster and encourage impartiality and fairness on the part of speakers and presiding officers of parliaments, promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms and develop parliamentary institutions.

The conference will have workshop sessions on topics, such as "AI in Parliament: Balancing Innovation, Oversight and Adaptation", "Social Media and its Impact on Parliamentarians", "Innovative Strategies to Enhance Public Understanding of Parliament and Citizen's Participation Beyond Voting" and "Security, Health and Wellbeing of Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Officials".

Silver soars 6 pc to record Rs 2.65 lakh/kg; gold hits lifetime high of Rs 1.44 lakh/10g

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: Silver prices rallied sharply by Rs 15,000 to hit a lifetime high of Rs 2,65,000 per kg in the national capital on Monday, and gold advanced to a fresh record of Rs 1,44,600 per 10 grams, mirroring strong gains in the global markets.

According to the All India Silver Association, silver soared by Rs 15,000, or 6 per cent, to touch a new peak of Rs 2,65,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from the previous close of Rs 2,50,000 per kg.

In addition, gold of 99.9 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 2,900, or 2.05 per cent, to hit a lifetime high of Rs 1,44,600 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had ended at Rs 141,700 per 10 grams on Friday.

In the international market, spot gold surged past the USD 4,600 per ounce level for the first time. The yellow metal gained USD 90.72, or 2 per cent, to touch a record USD 4,601.69 per ounce.

"Gold has responded positively, and jumped to the USD 4,600 per ounce level, while silver has seen an even sharper surge to USD 84 per ounce, highlighting its higher beta in risk-sensitive environments," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemmon Markets Desk, said. Spot silver in the international trade rose by USD 4.3, or nearly 6 per cent, to touch a record of USD 84.61 per ounce.

Silver has surged to fresh record highs, breaching the USD 84 per ounce, driven by a mix of rising geopolitical tensions and growing expectations that the US Federal Reserve will be forced to cut interest rates further, Renisha Chainani, Head - Research at Augmont, said. Geopolitical concerns have also come back into sharp focus with escalating unrest in Iran and continuing Russia-Ukraine conflict. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has said he is considering military options against Iran following anti-government protests, asserting that Tehran had crossed a 'red line'.

Adding to the uncertainty, investor sentiment was rattled by an intensifying feud between Trump and Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell after the US Attorney's Office reportedly opened a criminal investigation into Powell, reviving broader worries about the Federal Reserve's independence.

The probe weighed on the US dollar, lending further support to bullion prices, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. "This week's economic calendar is packed, with the spotlight on the US inflation and consumer indicators. The December CPI report due on Tuesday will be important, as it may be the first inflation print unaffected by the government shutdown," Chainani said.

Garg said the broader outlook for precious metals remains positive amid rising volatility in global equity markets, persistent geopolitical tensions, and sustained demand for safe-haven assets.

India faces second highest economic burden due to diabetes'

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: India faces the second highest economic burden due to diabetes of USD 11.4 trillion -- the United States bears the highest costs at USD 16.5 trillion, and China the third at USD 11 trillion, a new study has estimated. Researchers, including those from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and the Vienna University of Economics and Business in Austria, calculated the economic impact of diabetes across 204 countries from 2020 to 2050.

Global costs amount to around USD 10 trillion, excluding informal care provided by family members -- about 0.2 per cent of the world's annual gross domestic product (GDP), findings published in the journal *Nature Medicine* show.

Factoring in informal care amounts to up to USD 152 trillion, or 1.7 per cent of the world's yearly GDP, the study estimates.

"Caregivers often drop



out of the labour market, at least partially, which creates additional economic costs," author Klaus Prettner, professor of macroeconomics and digitalisation at the Vienna University of Economics and Business, said.

The high share of informal caregiving, making up almost 90 per cent of the total economic burden, is explained by the fact that prevalence exceeds mortality by a factor of 30-50, the researchers said.

"The United States faces the largest economic burden of diabetes mellitus at INT\$ 2.5 trillion, followed by India at INT\$ 1.6 trillion and China at INT\$ 1.0 trillion. When

considering informal care loss, the largest economic burdens are INT\$ 16.5 trillion in the United States, INT\$ 11.4 trillion in India and INT\$ 11.0 trillion in China," the authors wrote.

An international dollar (INT\$) is a hypothetical, statistical unit used to compare economic metrics across countries. It has the same purchasing power as a United States dollar (USD).

For India and China, the high economic costs of diabetes were mainly attributed to a large affected population, while those in the US were primarily due to high treatment costs and physical capital diversion, the researchers said.

ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket encounters 'anomaly', deviates from flight path, misses orbit

PTI

Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh), Jan 12: ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket carrying 16 satellites, including a foreign Earth Observation satellite, "encountered an anomaly", the space agency said on Monday, signalling the failure of the mission.

Disturbances in the rocket and later deviation from flight path was observed when strap-on motors were providing thrust during the flight's third stage to propel the vehicle to the intended altitude, space agency chairman V Narayanan said adding a detailed analysis has been initiated to identify the cause.

The mission of placing the satellites in the intended orbit could not be achieved and all the 16 satellites were lost in space, ISRO sources told PTI adding this was the second consecutive PSLV mission failure during the third stage.

A similar, previous attempt in May 2025 (PSLV-C61-EOS-09) also did not succeed due to "motor pressure issue," and there was a fall in the chamber pressure of the motor case.

A former top ISRO scientist said it would take some time for the space agency to collect data, analyse, understand what happened and make necessary corrections. It is expected that ISRO would officially release the findings in the days to come, he told PTI requesting anonymity. To a query, he said, "it is a setback as the satellites did not reach the intended orbit and all satellites lost in space may be drifting as space debris."

As the 22.5-hour countdown concluded on Monday morning, the 44.4 metre tall four-stage



rocket lifted off as scheduled at 10.18 am from the spaceport here. The mission was to deploy a primary Earth Observation satellite and multiple co-passenger satellites into a 512 km Sun-Synchronous Orbit, after a flight journey of about 17 minutes.

The automatic launch sequence commenced following approval from the mission director. ISRO scientists provided real-time updates as the vehicle ascended. The initial phases of the flight proceeded according to plan.

However, after the announcement that the "third stage ignited", an uneasy calm took over the Mission Control Centre. In his address at the centre, Narayanan said: "The PSLV is a four-stage vehicle with two solid stages and two liquid stages. The performance of the vehicle up to the end of the third stage was expected. Close to the end of the third stage we are seeing more disturbance in the vehicle and subsequently, there was a deviation observed in the flight path."

Confirming the mission's failure on its 'X' handle, ISRO said,

"The PSLV-C62 mission encountered an anomaly during the end of PS3 (third stage) of the vehicle. A detailed analysis has been initiated." However, the space agency did not provide more details.

Later, in a brief press conference, Narayanan, who is also the Secretary of Department of Space, said, "As all of you are aware, today we attempted PSLV-C62/EO-N1 mission... the mission could not proceed in the expected (flight) path. That is the information right now available."

Further, he said: "We are going through the data and with the data collected from all the ground stations and once the data analysis is completed, we shall come back to you."

When the earlier PSLV-C61 mission failed last year, former ISRO Chairman S Somanath had said he was aware of the formidable challenges faced during the development of the third-stage solid motor, an endeavour marked by multiple failures.

"Failure is never defeat, but rather a formidable tutor," he had said.

Ex-VP Dhankhar admitted to AIIMS after two bouts of unconsciousness

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: Former vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on Monday after he fell unconscious twice on January 10, officials said.

Dhankhar, 74, underwent an MRI, the officials said, adding that other tests will be carried out on Tuesday.

The former vice president had "two bouts of unconsciousness" in the washroom around 3.30 am on January 10, they said.

"Today, he had gone to AIIMS for a check-up when the doctors insisted that he should get admitted for tests. He will remain there overnight," an official said.

Dhankhar had blacked out on multiple occasions in the past, including in the Rann of Kutch, Uttarakhand, Kerala and the national capital while attending public events as the vice president, he said.

Dhankhar had quit as the vice president on July 21 citing health grounds.

He was admitted to AIIMS last year too for a heart-related ailment.



Glamorisation of tobacco can trigger next epidemic of cancer, lung diseases, warn experts

PTI

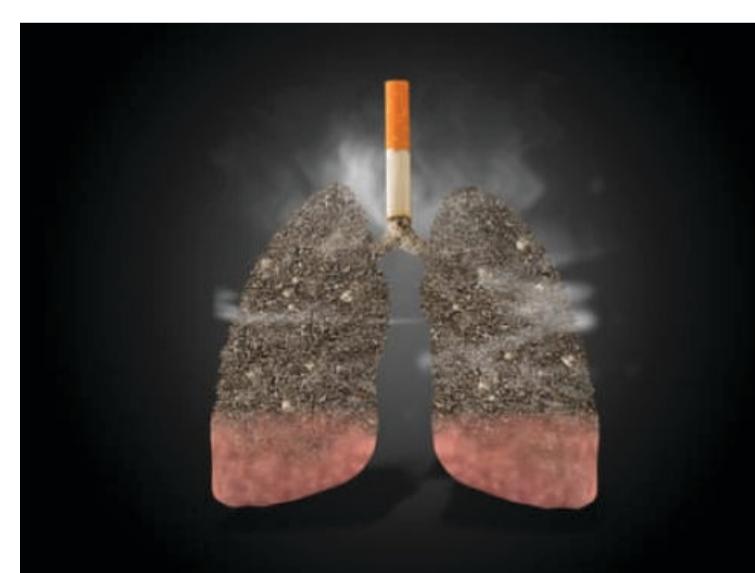
New Delhi, Jan 12: Health and education experts have warned that the growing glamorisation of tobacco through surrogate advertising and its normalisation, by selling it alongside toffees and candies, pose a serious threat to the health of children and adolescents.

They cautioned that if this trend is not checked urgently, it could lead to a new epidemic of cancer and lung diseases in the coming years.

The warning came during a National Youth Day webinar titled 'The Silent Push: Tobacco and Young India', organised by Tobacco Free India, a citizen initiative, on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekanand.

Speakers noted that while India has taken several commendable steps in recent years to strengthen tobacco control, children and young people between 10 and 20 years of age are increasingly being targeted through subtle and indirect practices.

They stressed that addressing this challenge would require tighter controls on surrogate promotions, strict limits on point-of-sale visibility, and



ensuring that tobacco is not sold alongside products meant for children.

They also underlined the need to delay initiation by raising the legal age for purchase, ending single-stick sales, and strengthening enforcement around educational institutions to better protect children's everyday

environment.

Dr Shalini Singh, director of the ICMR-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research, highlighted how children are exposed to tobacco through everyday influences, starting at retail points and extending to surrogate promotion. "When

tobacco products are displayed openly at points of sale and placed alongside items meant for children, it sends a misleading signal that these products are harmless," she said, adding that branding cues and indirect promotions further reinforce this exposure.

Other experts noted that these layered exposures together make tobacco products appear harmless, easily accessible, and socially acceptable to young minds.

From a child health perspective, Dr Naveen Thacker, executive director of the International Pediatric Association, warned that the problem begins far earlier than commonly assumed. Referring to a cross-sectional study conducted under his leadership in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, he said nearly one in six children around the age of 10 had already experimented with tobacco.

Echoing these concerns, Dr M C Misra, public health expert and former director of AIIMS, Delhi, cautioned that the consequences of inaction could be severe and long-lasting.

"If we do not intervene today and reduce children's exposure to tobacco, we are clearly heading towards the

next epidemic of cancers and lung diseases," he said.

Professor JS Rajput, former director of NCERT, said celebrity-linked surrogate promotions add another troubling layer to the problem and called for collective responsibility.

"Education does not happen only in classrooms. Children learn from what they see in society," he said. "When film stars or sports personalities are indirectly associated with tobacco brands, it sends a powerful and misleading message. Society and government must take responsibility."

Drawing on child health evidence, Dr Thacker said the growing signs of early exposure call for a much sharper focus on protecting children's everyday environment from tobacco influence.

Several speakers, including Prof Rajput, stressed the importance of curbing surrogate branding and celebrity-linked promotions, observing that aspirational cues play a disproportionate role in shaping youth behaviour. When admired public figures are indirectly associated with tobacco brands, it undermines both health messaging and value-based education, they said.

Trump says Iran 'want to negotiate' after reports of hundreds killed in protests

AFP

Washington, Jan 12: US President Donald Trump has said that Iran's leadership had called him seeking "to negotiate" after he repeatedly threatened to intervene militarily if Tehran killed protesters.

For two weeks, Iran has been rocked by a protest movement that has swelled in spite of a crackdown rights groups warn has become a "massacre."

Initially sparked by anger over the rising cost of living, the demonstrations have evolved into a serious challenge of the theocratic system in place since the 1979 revolution.

Information has continued to trickle out of Iran despite a days-long Internet shutdown, with videos filtering out of capital Tehran and other cities over the past three nights showing large demonstrations.

As reports emerge of a growing protest death toll, and images show bodies piled outside a morgue, Trump said Tehran indicated its willingness to talk.

"The leaders of Iran called" yesterday, Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One, adding that "a meeting is being set up... They want to negotiate."

He added, however, that "we may have to act before a meeting."

The US-based Center for



Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) said it had received "eyewitness accounts and credible reports indicating that hundreds of protesters have been killed across Iran during the current Internet shutdown."

"A massacre is unfolding," it said.

The Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR) said it confirmed the killing of at least 192 protesters but that the actual toll could be much higher.

"Unverified reports indicate that at least several hundreds, and according to some sources, more than 2,000 people may have been killed," said IHR.

More than 2,600 protesters have been arrested, IHR estimates. A video circulating on

Sunday showed dozens of bodies accumulating outside a morgue south of Tehran.

The footage, geolocated by AFP to Kahrizak, showed bodies wrapped in black bags, with what appeared to be grieving relatives searching for loved ones.

Near paralysis

In Tehran, an AFP journalist described a city in a state of near paralysis.

The price of meat has nearly doubled since the start of the protests, and many shops are closed. Those that do open must close at around 4:00 or 5:00 pm, when security forces deploy en masse.

There were fewer videos showing protests on social media Sunday, but it was not clear to what extent that was due to the

Internet shutdown.

One widely shared video showed protesters again gathering in the Pounak district of Tehran shouting slogans in favor of the ousted monarchy.

The protests have become one of the biggest challenges to the rule of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 86, coming in the wake of Israel's 12-day war against the Islamic republic in June, which was backed by the United States.

State TV has aired images of burning buildings, including a mosque, as well as funeral processions for security personnel.

But after three days of mass actions, state outlets were at pains to present a picture of calm returning, broadcasting images of smooth-flowing traffic on Sunday. Tehran Governor Mohammad-Sadegh Motamedian insisted in televised comments that "the number of protests is decreasing."

The Iranian government on Sunday declared three days of national mourning for "martyrs" including members of the security forces killed.

President Masoud Pezeshki an also urged Iranians to join a "national resistance march" Monday to denounce the violence.

In response to Trump's repeated threats to intervene, Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad

Bagher Ghalibaf said Iran would hit back, calling US military and shipping "legitimate targets" in comments broadcast by state TV.

'Stand with the people'

Reza Pahlavi, the US-based son of Iran's ousted shah, who has emerged as an anti-government figurehead, said he was prepared to return to the country and lead a democratic transition.

"I'm already planning on that," he told Fox News on Sunday.

He later urged Iran's security forces and government workers to join the demonstrators.

"Employees of state institutions, as well as members of the armed and security forces, have a choice: stand with the people and become allies of the nation, or choose complicity with the murderers of the people," he said in a social media post.

He also urged protesters to replace the flags outside of Iranian embassies.

"The time has come for them to be adorned with Iran's national flag," he said.

The ceremonial, pre-revolution flag has become an emblem of the global rallies that have mushroomed in support of Iran's demonstrators.

In London, protesters managed over the weekend to swap out the Iranian embassy flag, hoisting in its place the tri-colored banner used under the last shah.

Pope receives Venezuela opposition's Machado: Vatican



AFP

Nicolas Maduro.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he would meet Machado this week after previously saying she did not have the respect or support within Venezuela to lead.

Leo, 70, called for Venezuela's sovereignty to be protected in a speech to diplomats on Friday.

The Chicago-born pope issued an appeal "to respect the will of the Venezuelan people, and to safeguard the human and civil rights of all" following the suggestion by US President Donald Trump that the US could control the South American country for years.

The Vatican's chief diplomat Pietro Parolin, a former papal envoy to Venezuela, spoke with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio last week.

The two discussed "efforts to improve the humanitarian situation, particularly in Venezuela," the US Department of State said in a statement.

Kohli walks the talk: Shreyas Iyer

PTI

here on Sunday. During the innings, Kohli also became the fastest player to reach 28,000 international runs across formats and the second-highest run-scorer in international cricket, behind Sachin Tendulkar.

"Whatever we talk about his innings, it would be less. We have been seeing it for so many years now he's been doing it consistently. The way he rotates the strike and he takes on the bowlers, he basically walks the talk," Iyer said in a video posted by BCCI.

China pledges support for cyclone-hit Sri Lanka's rebuilding

PTI

Colombo, Jan 12: China on Monday reaffirmed its "fullest cooperation" in the reconstruction and recovery of cyclone-hit Sri Lanka.

The assurance came during a bilateral meeting between Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, who arrived here earlier in the day. According to Foreign Ministry officials, Wang made a brief stopover in Sri Lanka on his way back home from a visit to South Africa.

He was received by Herath, and the two held brief bilateral talks centring on the island nation's recovery and reconstruction.

In a post on X, Herath said that he was "pleased" to meet Wang during his short visit.

"I particularly requested the assistance of the Chinese government in infrastructure development including reconstruction of identified roads, railways and bridges which were affected," the Sri Lankan minister said.

Indian-origin astronomer wins UK's Royal Astronomical Society Gold Medal

PTI

London, Jan 12: US-based astronomer Professor Shrinivas Kulkarni has been awarded the prestigious Gold Medal by the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) in London for his "field-defining" discoveries in time-domain astronomy.

Maharashtra-born Kulkarni is the George Ellery Hale Professor of Astronomy and Planetary Science at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), where he has discovered a wide range of astronomical objects, including brown dwarfs and remote bursts of gamma rays.

His RAS Gold Medal citation from last week recognises his "sustained, innovative and ground-breaking contributions to multi-wavelength



transient astrophysics".

In receiving the highest honour from the historic organisation, awarded annually since 1824, he joins great scientific minds such as Stephen Hawking, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Albert Einstein and Edwin Hubble. "I was very surprised to hear the news, especially given the stellar list of past winners," said

Kulkarni. "I would like to thank my long-term collaborators and the engineering crew and members of the Palomar Transient Factory and the Zwicky Transient Facility for their immense contribution to the projects," he said.

The scientist described this discovery of the first millisecond pulsar as "the most fun achievement in my life",

adding: "I was a graduate student when I made the discovery. I could not sleep for several days!" Kulkarni, who also won the 2024 Shaw Prize in Astronomy recently, joined Caltech in 1985 and has since made many landmark findings including demonstrating in 1997 that powerful gamma-ray bursts originate outside our galaxy. He went on to lead the development of the Palomar Transient Factory (PTF) and its successor, the Zwicky Transient Facility (ZTF), which have caught thousands of real-time cosmic events as they blink, explode, and otherwise light up the skies. ZTF, based at Caltech's Palomar Observatory near San Diego, is still going strong and surveying the entire Northern sky every two nights.

Satwik-Chirag banking on India Open to revive title-winning run



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 12: The Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Monday said "one breakthrough title" can reignite a strong run as they look to revive their glory days at the USD 950,000 India Open Super 750.

Despite finishing runners-up at the Hong Kong Open and China Masters, and winning a bronze at the World Championships, and qualifying for the knockout stage of the World Tour Finals last year, Chirag admitted the season felt overwhelming by their own lofty standards.

Chirag highlighted how perspective can often get lost in elite sport. "I dropped to number 27 in the world and still managed to finish the year at number 3. When I was injured, if someone had told me I'd end the year ranked third, I would've taken it without hesitation."

"But once we actually finished at number 3, my first thought was still that I didn't win a title. That's just how an

athlete's mind works. It's never satisfied," he said, adding that in hindsight it was "a really good year."

Another title is just a matter of time, want to emulate 2022 run

Satwik and Chirag have a strong history at the India Open, having reached the final twice in the last four editions and winning the title in 2022. That triumph proved to be a turning point, triggering a remarkable run that included the Thomas Cup title and gold at the Commonwealth Games.

Recalling the unusual build-up to the 2022 event amid COVID restrictions, Satwik said the win transformed everything.

"Winning a tournament changes a lot of things. Just winning, no matter what, small or big. That tournament gave a lot of confidence," Satwik said.

"We are looking for that one win where we get that confidence and play our A game. It's just a matter of time. We've won many titles before, so I wouldn't call it a mental block. All we can do is keep finding ways to improve and address our shortcomings."

Chirag echoed the sentiment, calling the 2022 India Open a defining moment.

"We beat (Mohammad) Ahsan and (Hendra) Setiawan in the finals. That was a big win. That just kept the ball rolling. It completely changed the year for us. That 2022 India Open win was definitely very special."

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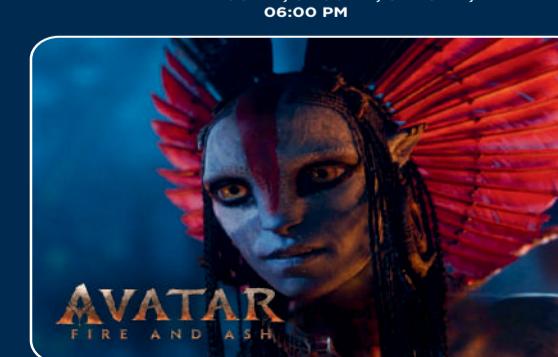
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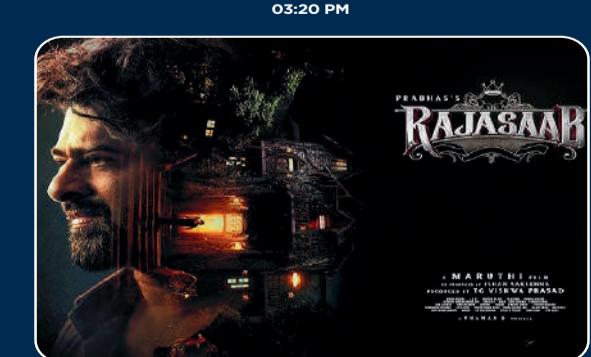
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