



Another decisive blow to terror ecosystem

LG Sinha terminates 5 more 'terror-friendly' employees

Total number of dismissals since 2021 rise to 89

Umairsar Gul Ganaie

Srinagar, Jan 13: In a yet another decisive blow to the terror ecosystem, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday terminated five more terror-friendly government employees under provisions of Article 311 (2)(c) of the Constitution.

This takes the number of such terminations since 2021, when the LG-led J&K administration started such action, to 89.

According to details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the terminated employees are: Mohammad Ishfaq, who worked as a teacher in the Education Department since 2013. Tariq Ahmad Rah, who worked as



a lab technician in the Health Department since 2011, was posted at the sub-district hospital at Bijbehara. Bashir Ahmad Mir, an assistant lineman with the Public Health Engineering Department. He had been working with the department since 1988 and was regularised in 1996. Farooq Ahmad Bhat, a field worker with the J&K Forest Department in Anantnag, and Mohammad Yousf, who was

posted as a driver with the Health and Medical Education Department since 2009.

An official said, "LG Sinha has launched a decisive strike against the entire terror support network. He has intensified the campaign to uproot underground workers and terrorists embedded within government machinery. Investigations revealed that the terminated employees were actively linked to terror

outfits such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. While holding positions of public trust, they were drawing salaries from the public exchequer even as they secretly advanced the agenda of terrorist groups."

He said that the action under Article 311 (2) (c) of the Constitution, is intended to purge the system of terrorist influence. "The strict actions by LG Sinha will cleanse the government machinery and reinforce its integrity," the official added.

MOHAMMAD ISHAQ (TEACHER)

An official said that Mohammad Ishfaq, government teacher, was appointed as Rehbar-e-Taleem and confirmed as a teacher in 2013. "Investigators found he worked for the Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and maintained regular contact with LeT Commander Mohammad Amin alias Abu Khubaib, a Government | More on P6

Terrorist recruitment almost nil, local terrorists in single digits in J&K: Army Chief

- Operation Sindoor ongoing
- Terrorism to tourism shift shaping in J&K
- 65% of terrorists in 2025 from Pak, including Pahalgam attackers
- Dev, tourism revival, peaceful Yatra signal progress in J&K
- No nuclear talk between India & Pakistan DGMOs in May 2025

Ahmad Taimur

Srinagar, Jan 13: Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday said that the terrorist recruitment in Jammu and Kashmir is almost non-existent and that local terrorists are now in single digits, indicating a positive change in the Union Territory.

Speaking to reporters during



his first press conference of 2026, General Dwivedi, per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that since May 10 last year, the situation along the Western Front and J&K remains sensitive but firmly under control.

He said that in 2025, 31 terrorists were eliminated, of which 65% were of Pakistan origin, including the three perpetrators of the Pahalgam attack who were neutralised in Operation Mahadev.

"Active local terrorists are

now in single digits. Terrorist recruitment is almost non-existent, with only 2 in 2025. Clear indicators of positive change in J&K include robust development activity, revival of tourism and peaceful Amarnath Yatra, which saw more than 4 lakh pilgrims exceeding the five-year average. The theme of terrorism to tourism is gradually taking shape," he said.

He also said that Operation Sindoor remains ongoing, and a future misadventure will be resolutely responded to. "I must acknowledge the proactive role of all stakeholders at the national level, including CAPFs, intelligence agencies, civic bodies, state administration and other ministries," he said.

He added that Operation Sindoor was the "best example of tri-service synergy under a clear-cut political directive and full freedom to act or respond". "The operation was conceptualised and executed with precision. Through 22 minutes of initiation on | More on P6

JKBOSE to announce Class 10, 12 results today

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 13: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) Tuesday said that it will announce annual regular results of Class-10 in the forenoon followed by 12th class results in the afternoon on Wednesday.

An official informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that "In the recent meeting, JKBOSE has decided to announce the results of 10th standard in after 10 Am and 12th class result after 2 Pm."

The official further said that JKBOSE has been planning to announce the results of both classes from the previous academic year.

"We have been planning to declare the results of 10th and 12th standard on the same day

Omar Abdullah ●
Chief Minister of J&K

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah extended his best wishes to students. He expressed hope that their hard work and dedication would be rewarded.

Sakina Itoo ●
Minister of School/Hr Education, Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare

Education Minister Sakeena Itoo extended wishes to students. "May your hard work bring success and new opportunities. Stay calm and confident," she wrote on X.

from the previous academic year. This year we succeeded in doing so," the official said. It also said | More on P6

CM-led selection panel to meet soon to finalise SEC recommendation

LoP Sharma, Speaker Rather among members of selection committee

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 13: A high-level selection committee headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is likely to meet later this month to finalise recommendation for the appointment of the State Election Commissioner.

Sources told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the selection committee, also comprising Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, senior cabinet minister Sakina Itoo, and Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Javid Ahmad Dar, is expected to meet anytime



after January 20 to finalise its recommendation.

Under sub-section (3) of Section 36 of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, the State Election Commissioner (SEC) is appointed by the Lieutenant

Governor on the recommendation of the Chief Minister-led selection panel.

In the absence of an elected government, whenever Jammu & Kashmir is under President's Rule as per Section 73 of the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act, the State Election Commissioner is appointed directly by the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory.

In October last year, the J&K Assembly passed a bill to enhance the maximum age limit for holding the office of the State Election Commissioner from 65 years to 70.

The appointment of the SEC would set the ball rolling for holding local | More on P6

Sr DCM briefs LG on Jammu Rly Div's achievements



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 13: Uchit Singhal, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu Division, Northern Railway called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated Singhal on being conferred with the Ati Vishist Rail Seva Puraskar 2025. The prestigious award recognizes Singhal's exceptional leadership and meticulous planning in managing | More on P6

Mercury dips further as cold wave tightens grip in Kashmir

MeT forecasts dry weather till Jan 15

Light rain, snow likely from Jan 16 onward

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 13: Cold conditions intensified across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh on Tuesday as minimum temperatures fell at most places, even as the weather remained largely dry and light rain or snow is forecast at scattered places from January 16.

In the Kashmir Valley,



Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.9 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, a sharp fall from minus 2.4 degrees Celsius recorded on Monday. Similar trends were observed across south and

north Kashmir.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Qazigund in south Kashmir recorded minus 5.0 degrees Celsius, down from minus 3.6 degrees | More on P6

Fusion of science & culture essential for laying society's strong foundation: LG Sinha

» Says India received historic gift in form of NEP under PM Modi

» Recalls India's rich intellectual and economic heritage

KNO Desk

Jammu, Jan 13: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday emphasized that a fusion of science and culture is essential for laying a strong foundation of society and preparing a responsible younger generation capable of leading the nation in a rapidly changing world.

Addressing the launch function of the special edition of 'Sangarmal' magazine published by Hindu Education Society Kashmir, here, LG Sinha, according to the news



agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "The education is most potent weapon for transforming individuals

and strengthening the nation." He said, "Nothing is as pure as knowledge. In today's fast-paced world, education is the

only way forward that can truly lead people and societies."

LG Sinha underlined that education should not be confined to storing information from books within classrooms. "Education is an awakening. It shapes character, builds values and instills a sense of responsibility," he said.

He asserted that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has received a historic gift in the form of the National Education Policy (NEP).

Referring to India's rich intellectual and economic heritage, the Lieutenant | More on P6

Massive healthcare push positions J&K as emerging medical hub '2 AIIMS, 12 medical colleges, 17 CCBs, 3,166 wellness centres strengthen services from tertiary to grassroots level'

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 13: Jammu & Kashmir is witnessing a historic and far-reaching transformation in its healthcare sector, marked by massive infrastructure development, unprecedented expansion in medical education, and sustained support from the Government of India. Strategic investments made over the past several years by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) have fundamentally reshaped healthcare delivery across the

Union Territory, ensuring that quality medical services are accessible not only in urban centres but also in rural, border and geographically challenging areas.

Large-scale healthcare infrastructure projects and systematic upgradation of services at the grassroots level have played a pivotal role in redefining the healthcare landscape of Jammu & Kashmir. These initiatives have not only enhanced the quality of medical services but have also ensured their availability closer to the

doorsteps of people residing in far-flung and remote regions of the UT.

Flagship Institutions Redefining Tertiary Healthcare A cornerstone of this transformation is the establishment of two All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Jammu & Kashmir—an achievement that has elevated the UT's healthcare ecosystem to national and global standards.

AIIMS Jammu, now fully operational, is providing world-class tertiary and super-specialty healthcare services.



Equipped with advanced diagnostic, surgical and critical care facilities, the institute has significantly reduced the

need for patients to seek specialized treatment outside the UT. Beyond patient care, AIIMS Jammu has also emerged as a centre of excellence for medical education and research, contributing substantially to capacity building and advancement of medical knowledge in the region.

AIIMS Kashmir, sanctioned by the Government of India and nearing completion, is expected to become operational by the end of the year. Once functional, it will play a transformative role in strengthening

advanced healthcare services in the Valley, particularly in super-specialties such as oncology, cardiology and neurology. Together, the two AIIMS institutions represent a long-term investment in equitable, high-quality healthcare for the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

Unprecedented Expansion of Medical Colleges

Another major milestone in the healthcare journey of the UT has been the rapid expansion of Government Medical Colleges, which has significantly | More on P6

Div Com Kashmir reviews arrangements for Shab-e-Meraj (SAW) observance

Directs to ensure comprehensive, seamless arrangements, including uninterrupted power & water supply

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 13: In view of the forthcoming observance of Shab-e-Meraj (S.A.W.) and Friday following, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Tuesday convened a meeting of Deputy Commissioners and senior Divisional Officers to review and finalize arrangements for facilitating devotees at major shrines and mosques across the Valley.

During the meeting, the Div Com, as per an official statement, directed all concerned departments to ensure comprehensive and seamless arrangements, including uninterrupted power and water supply, establishment of medical camps, availability of essential commodities, adequate transportation and parking facilities, effective traffic management, robust security deployment, and proper sanitation and fire safety measures.

He emphasized special arrangements at prominent



religious sites, including Asar-e-Sharief Hazratbal, Asar-e-Sharief Kalashpora, Jenab Sahib Saura, Ziyarat Sharief Kabamarg, Ziyarat Sharief Khirram (Anantnag), Ziyarat Sharief Makhama (Budgam), and Ziyarat Aham-e-Sharief (Bandipora).

On the occasion, DCs were instructed to closely monitor and facilitate the observance in their respective districts.

Kashmir Power Distribution

Corporation Limited (KPDCL) was directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply across the Valley on the eve of Shab-e-Meraj and the following Friday, with adequate power backup at all major religious places.

State Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) and Smart City Limited (SSCL) were instructed to deploy additional buses on designated routes, particularly to facilitate devotees visiting the Hazratbal Shrine. The Urban

Local Bodies (ULBs) and Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) were asked to conduct special sanitation drives at major shrines and mosques in the city and other districts.

The Div Com also directed officials of the J&K Waqf Board to install waterproof tents within the premises of Hazratbal Shrine and provide adequate tentage facilities at other major shrines across districts.

Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department was instructed to ensure uninterrupted supply of drinking water at all religious places and keep water tankers on standby, especially at Hazratbal Shrine.

All other concerned departments were directed to extend full cooperation and ensure hassle-free services for devotees. DCs were further asked to assess preparedness in advance and ensure timely execution of all arrangements for the smooth observance of Shab-e-Meraj (S.A.W) in their respective jurisdictions.

Satish Sharma pays tribute at veterans rally in Rajouri

KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, JANUARY 13: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma, Tuesday paid rich tributes to veterans, war widows and serving soldiers during the 10th Veterans' Day and Ex-Servicemen Day mega rally held at Rajouri, organised by the Northern Command of the Indian Army.

The event, as per an official statement, witnessed presence of senior Army officers including Lieutenant General Prateek Sharma, GOC-in-C Northern Command; Lieutenant General P. K. Mishra, GOC White Knight Corps and Major General Kaushik Mukherjee, GOC 25 Infantry Division besides a large gathering of ex-servicemen, Veer Naris and their families.

Addressing the gathering, Satish Sharma said that Veterans' Day is not merely a ceremonial occasion but a solemn reminder of the unparalleled sacrifices made by the Armed Forces to safeguard the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the nation. He said the bravery, discipline and professionalism of Indian soldiers have earned global respect for India.

Describing veterans as lifelong torchbearers of patriotism, the Minister said, "Once a soldier, always a soldier. A fauji never



truly retires. His sense of duty, courage and discipline continue to guide the society even after retirement." Sharing his personal note while getting emotional, Satish Sharma said that his father was an ex-serviceman and he grew up imbibing the values of the Army. He said that even after retirement, his father continued to serve the people through public life, reflecting the spirit of lifelong service that defines a soldier.

The Minister highlighted the crucial role of veterans in Jammu and Kashmir, stating that retired soldiers continue to contribute to peace-building, social harmony and youth mentorship through initiatives such as Operation

Sadbhavana. He said Jammu and Kashmir is today witnessing a new era of peace, stability and development due to the sacrifices and dedication of the Armed Forces.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to ex-servicemen and their families, Satish Sharma said their welfare remains a top priority. He informed that mechanisms such as the Army Welfare Placement Organisation (AWPO), State Soldiers' Welfare Board, Soldier Assistance Centres and Veer Sainik Assistance Centres are being strengthened to provide employment, legal, medical and rehabilitation support to veterans and their dependents.

India Energy Week 2026 to showcase global energy collaboration, indigenous technologies in Goa

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, January 13: India Energy Week (IEW) 2026 is returning to Goa from 27-30 January 2026 as one of the world's largest and most influential international energy gatherings, bringing together over 75,000 energy professionals, 700+ companies, and attendees from more than 120 countries.

In its 4th edition, India Energy

Week (IEW) 2026, as per a PIB statement, will continue to strengthen its position as a globally connected energy platform through an expanded network of pavilions led by various prominent countries and India's public sector enterprises. These pavilions will reflect the scale and diversity of participation at the global energy conclave.

The exhibition will feature nine international country pavilions,

highlighting IEW's growing role as a catalyst for cross-border collaboration, policy dialogue and investment. Participating countries include Canada, Italy, Norway, China, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States. Each country will demonstrate national approaches to energy security, transition technologies and industrial innovation. Alongside international participation, IEW 2026 will host a

strong presence from Indian public sector undertakings, underscoring domestic capabilities, indigenisation efforts and India's progress across both conventional and new-energy sectors.

A dedicated Make in India / Indigenisation Pavilion, led by Engineers India Limited (EIL), will showcase indigenous technologies, engineered equipment and domestic supply chains.



RDD Secretary reviews development works in Budgam, Khansahib blocks

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JANUARY 13: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) & Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, Tuesday conducted an extensive tour of Budgam district to review the physical and financial progress of various ongoing developmental works being executed under different rural development schemes. During the tour, the Secretary, as per a statement, visited several key project sites in Budgam and Khansahib blocks, emphasizing the importance of timely completion, quality execution and optimum utilization of public funds.

The tour commenced with a visit to the Regional Extension Training Centre (RETC), Budgam, where Aijaz Asad held an interaction with all the Block Development Officers (BDOs) of Budgam and Khansahib blocks.

The Secretary stressed upon the officers to ensure early completion of developmental works while adhering to the set timelines and scheme guidelines.

Subsequently, the Secretary inspected the under construction District Development Council (DDC) Building located near the Office of the Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Budgam. The project has an estimated cost of 253.29 lakh, against which an expenditure of 94.95 lakh has been incurred, so far.

The Secretary reviewed the pace of execution and directed the executing agency to expedite the remaining works without compromising on quality.

The tour then proceeded to Panchayat Halqa Shoolipora in Block Budgam, where the Secretary inspected construction of a concrete protection wall at Aastan Syed Musa Deewan, being executed under CD & Panchayat schemes. The project has an estimated cost of 131.93 lakh. Against this, releases amounting



112.14 lakh have been made, with a current expenditure of 35.89 lakh. The Secretary instructed the concerned officers to ensure proper supervision and timely completion of the work. In Block Khansahib, Aijaz Asad reviewed the progress on a playfield at Panchayat Halqa Shinipora, being developed under MGNREGA, with an allotted cost of 10.00 lakh.

The Secretary underscored the significance of creating durable community assets that promote youth engagement and sports activities in rural areas.

Later, the Secretary visited the under-construction Panchayat Ghar at Reyar Beerwa, Block Khansahib, being executed under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA). The project

has an Administrative Approval (AA) cost of ₹35.00 lakh and an allotted cost of ₹25.00 lakh, against which both release and expenditure stand at 15.38 lakh.

The Secretary directed the officials to accelerate the pace of work so that the facility is made functional at the earliest.

While interacting with the field functionaries, Aijaz Asad reiterated that regular monitoring, field inspections and outcome-oriented implementation are key to achieving the objectives of rural development schemes. He emphasized that all projects must be completed within the stipulated timelines to ensure maximum benefit to the rural populace.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR (U T) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MACHINERY DIVISION KASHMIR, MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT, KASHMIR

Fax No: 0194-2497093 website: www.medkashmir.org

Corrigendum for Date Extension

- Name of work :** - 1) Restoring functionality through repairs / maintenance of Bore Well No. 14 and 16 of Department of Agriculture in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission of Saffron (under Culuster-1)
- 2) Restoring functionality through repairs / maintenance of Bore Well No. 102 of department of Agriculture in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission of Saffron (under Culuster-1).
- 3) Restoring Functionality through Repairs / Maintenance of Bore well Schemes No. 72 (under RR-1) (Cluster-1) of Department of Agriculture in district Pulwama, under implementation of National Mission on Saffron command area 23.52 Ha.
- 4) Restoring Functionality through Repairs / Maintenance of Bore well Schemes No. 24 (under RR-1) (Cluster-1) of Department of Agriculture in district Pulwama, under Implementation of National Mission on Saffron command area 23.52 Ha.
- 5) Restoring Functionality through Repairs / Maintenance of Bore well Schemes No. 101 (under PR-1) (Cluster-1) of Department of Agriculture in district Pulwama, under Implementation of National Mission on Saffron Command area 23.52 Ha/MDSK/TS/2025-26/16 Dated 03/07/2025
- 6) Restoring functionality through repairs / maintenance of Bore Well No. 103 and 42 of department of Agriculture in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission of Saffron (under Culuster-1).

S. No.	e-Nit no., date and tender Id.	Extension No.	Description	Previous Dates	New Dates.
01	MDSK/TS /2025-26/10 Date:25-06-2025 1)2025_PWDJK_279744_3 2)2025_PWDJK_279744_4	15	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	12-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 13-01-2026 at 02:00 PM	30-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 31-01-2026 at 02:00 PM
02	MDSK/TS /2025-26/11 Date:27-06-2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWDJK_279966_1)	18	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	12-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 13-01-2026 at 02:00 PM	30-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 31-01-2026 at 02:00 PM
03	MDSK/TS /2025-26/14 Date:02-07-2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWDJK_280311_3)	14	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	12-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 13-01-2026 at 02:00 PM	30-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 31-01-2026 at 02:00 PM
04	MDSK/TS /2025-26/15 Date:02-07-2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWDJK_280324_3)	08	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	12-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 13-01-2026 at 02:00 PM	30-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 31-01-2026 at 02:00 PM
05	MDSK/TS /2025-26/16 Date:03-07-2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWDJK_280428_3)	12	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	12-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 13-01-2026 at 02:00 PM	30-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 31-01-2026 at 02:00 PM
06	MDSK/TS /2025-26/20 Date:16-07-2025 1)2025_PWDJK_281548_3 2)2025_PWDJK_281548_4	12	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	12-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 13-01-2026 at 02:00 PM	30-01-2026 upto 06:55PM 31-01-2026 at 02:00 PM

All other terms, conditions and specifications as stipulated in the e-NIT shall remain unchanged.

No: MDSK/TS/5342-46 Date: 13-01-2026.

DIPK-9982/25
DATED: 13-01-2026

S d/
Executive Engineer
Machinery Division, Kashmir.

Baramulla LoC villages get over 500 bunkers



WARIS FAYAZ

Baramulla, Jan 13: The Ministry of Home Affairs and Jammu & Kashmir Home Department have sanctioned over 500 bunkers for villages along the Line of Control (LoC) in Baramulla district, with construction slated to begin in April.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa said the locations have been identified by the SDM Uri, prioritising villages within a 0-5 km radius of the LoC and shelling-prone villages.

"The first phase will cover over 500 bunkers, with numbers slated to increase progressively in

subsequent phases," Sherpa said.

The DC said the Housing and Urban Development department has completed work on the revised Master Plan for Baramulla, Sopore and Pattan townships.

"A dedicated vendor has been appointed, and all the requisite inputs, including village details, purpose activities and datasets have been submitted to the GTP office," the DC said, adding that the plans are expected to be re-notified soon.

The demand for the bunkers along the LoC and shelling-prone villages echoed post LoC tensions in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2024—(KNO)

Day 3: Search continues for Gandbal boat victim

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 13: The search operation by Marine Commandos (MARCOS) and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) continued for the third consecutive day on Tuesday in the Jhelum river at Gandbal, Srinagar, to trace the remains of Showkat Ahmad Sheikh, one of the victims of the 2024 Gandbal boat tragedy.

Officials said that the elite divers of MARCOS, assisted by the SDRF's Quick Response Team (QRT), resumed underwater scanning early Monday morning despite cold and low water visibility.

"We are combing every section of the stretch where the suspected remains were spotted. The operation will continue until further directions," an SDRF officer said.

The renewed operation follows the recovery of what appeared to be "human remains" on Sunday near the same riverbank where eight lives were lost when a boat ferrying schoolchildren and locals capsized on April 16, 2024.

Locals, still haunted by the tragedy, have been gathering at the site since the weekend. "We have lived with unanswered questions for two years," said Zainab, a lady from the area. "If they find even a part of him, at least we will have something to pray over."

Officials said the recovered remains have been sent for forensic examination to establish their origin and possible identification. The operation, involving sonar-assisted scanning and manual dredging by MARCOS divers, continued late into the evening.

Meanwhile, the Gandbal boat tragedy, which claimed eight lives, including children, remains one of the deadliest incidents in Srinagar's recent memory. Despite massive rescue operations by SDRF, NDRF and MARCOS in 2024, Showkat's body was never found—(KNO)

Open Mughal road aids residents despite low snow

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Shopian, Jan 13: This winter, the absence of snowfall has raised concerns about water, agriculture, and orchards in the region. However, an unexpected relief comes from the Mughal Road remaining open, allowing continued movement of people and goods.

Traditionally closed by November due to heavy snow, the road has stayed accessible this season, supporting livelihoods and economic activity.

Local residents and traders said that this extended connectivity has been a vital lifeline during a season normally marked by inactivity, even as environmental concerns about reduced snowfall persist.

"For us, snowfall is a blessing, but this year it has not happened, which is worrying," said Abdul Rashid, a resident of Shopian. "Still,



due to the opening of Mughal Road, many people who depend on transport, trade and labour can earn their livelihood."

Taxi drivers, shopkeepers and small traders said the opening of Mughal Road has brought steady income during a season that is otherwise known for economic inactivity.

"Earlier, once this road was closed in October, we would sit idle for months," said Mohammad Yousuf, a taxi operator who ferries passengers on the route. "This winter, I'm able to work daily and feed my family." Roadside vendors and hotel owners along the route have also benefited from the extended

connectivity.

"This road is our lifeline," said Gulam Nabi, who runs a small eatery near Dubjan. "With the road open, travellers stop here, and our business continues. Otherwise, winter means zero income." Despite the economic relief, concerns remain high over the environmental consequences of the dry winter.

Farmers and orchardists fear that insufficient snowfall could affect soil moisture, groundwater levels and apple production in the coming season.

"Snowfall ensures water availability during spring and summer," said a local horticulturist. "If this trend continues, it will hurt our orchards badly."

Experts have warned that changing weather patterns and reduced snowfall are signs of broader climate change impacts in the Himalayan region—(KNO)

3 absconders proclaimed in digital propaganda case

KNO

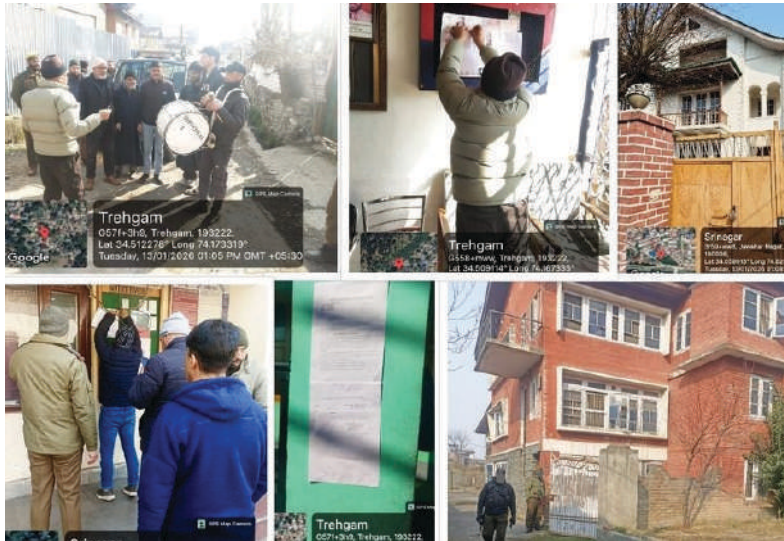
Srinagar, Jan 13: The Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) on Tuesday executed proclamation orders against three absconding accused involved in a serious anti-national and unlawful activities case.

In a statement, a spokesperson said that the proclamation was carried out in compliance with the Special NIA court order in Srinagar Kupwara in connection with FIR No. 07/2020 under Sections 153-A & 505 IPC and Section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act at Police Station CIK.

The statement reads that the absconding offenders are Mubeen Ahmad Shah S/o Late Ali Mohammad Shah, Aziz-ul-Hassan Ashai alias Tony Ashai S/o Nazir Ahmad Ashai—both residents of Srinagar and Rifat Wani D/o Gulam Mohammad Wani of Kupwara.

"The case pertains to grave and serious offences threatening public order, communal harmony and national integrity. Investigation has conclusively revealed a well-orchestrated conspiracy hatched by unscrupulous anti-social and anti-national elements acting at the behest of secessionist forces operating from within and outside Kashmir," it reads.

It added that during the course of investigation, it has surfaced that the accused deliberately masqueraded as



journalists, freelancers and news portals, while in reality running a covert digital warfare campaign.

"By abusing social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and WhatsApp, they systematically created and disseminated fake, motivated, exaggerated, secessionist and out-of-context content".

It reads that the calculated objective of this campaign was to incite street violence, disrupt normal civic life, provoke public to public property, disturb public order and fuel mass

unrest, thereby promoting anti-national sentiments and attempting to create disaffection against the Union of India.

CIK reiterated that freedom of expression cannot be allowed to be misused as a weapon against the nation. "Any individual or group attempting to camouflage unlawful, secessionist or communal activities under the garb of journalism or online activism will face swift, relentless and legally robust action," it added—(KNO)

DH Bandipora attaches two officials

Orders probe into alleged medicine burning incident

SAJID RAINA

Bandipora, Jan 13: Two officials of District Hospital Bandipora have been attached to the office of the Chief Medical Officer Bandipora in connection with an inquiry into the alleged burning of medicines inside the hospital premises, officials said on Tuesday.

Sanitary Inspector Mustafa Ahmad and Junior Pharmacist Altaf Hussain Mir have been attached with immediate effect till the final outcome of the inquiry committee constituted by the Medical Superintendent, District Hospital Bandipora.

The Medical Superintendent has constituted a committee to inquire into the incident of burning the medicines, which is alleged to be in violation of the General Financial Rules, Store Purchase Rules and the Biomedical Waste Management Rules, 2016.

The committee, headed by Dr Javid Ahmad Bhat, Consultant Medicine, has been asked to examine records related to procurement, storage, condemnation and disposal of medicines and to fix responsibility. It has been directed to submit its report within seven days.

Meanwhile, Pharmacist and In-charge stores Altaf Hussain has been relieved of the charge of stores and directed to hand over the charge to pharmacist Reyaz-ul-Haq Bhat with immediate effect.

In the meantime, Medical Officer Dr Umair Qayoom has been directed to ensure proper handover as per rules.

In a separate order, Sanitary Inspector Gh Mustafa Ganie has been asked to submit a written explanation within 24 hours regarding the presence of sanitary workers during the burning of medicines.

Officials said the Biomedical Waste Management Rules prohibit sanitary workers from participating in such activities—(KNO)

DC Kulgam reviews developmental projects in Qaimoh



KT NEWS DESK

Kulgam, Jan 13: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan on Tuesday conducted an on-site inspection of various developmental projects in the Qaimoh area to review their progress and ensure timely completion.

During the visit, the DC inspected the under-construction steel girder bridge at Sakarsum Kawaki Bazar, Qaimoh, a key infrastructure project aimed at improving connectivity in the area.

He directed the executing agency to expedite the remaining work and strictly adhere to the stipulated timelines.

It was informed that the project involves the construction of a 1x33 metre span intermediate lane steel girder bridge at an estimated cost of Rs 6.10 crore, with the current physical progress at 80 percent.

The DC also reviewed the progress of the Construction of Library-cum-reading room at

Qaimoh, being executed at an allotted cost of Rs 41.72 lakh.

It was informed that the project commenced in December 2024 and is expected to be completed by February 2026, with the current physical progress at 95 percent.

Further, the DC took stock of the Construction of 50-bedded Sub-District Hospital at Qaimoh, Kulgam, being executed at cost of Rs 19.32 crore. The DC was informed that the civil part of the project has been completed.

The Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the progress of works on the R&B PWD Complex. He issued directions to the concerned departments to ensure quality execution and early completion of all ongoing works so that these facilities can be dedicated to the public at the earliest.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by ACR, ACD, Executive Engineers, Tehsildars, and other concerned officers.

IIT Jammu hosts Tribal Heritage Mapping workshop

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 13: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana Tuesday said that tribal heritage constitutes a living, dynamic knowledge system embedded in language, belief structures, customary practices and social organisation.

He emphasised that its preservation requires a participatory, community-driven research framework that acknowledges indigenous epistemologies and lived traditions.

The Minister was addressing a workshop, as the chief guest, titled "Mapping Tribal Heritage", organised by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu. The workshop focused on digital documentation, archival technologies and critical engagement with cultural expressions, oral narratives and socio-cultural formations of indigenous communities across India.

Rana asserted that safeguarding tribal heritage cannot be an external intervention alone but must be rooted in community stewardship and intergenerational transmission.

"Tribal heritage can survive only when communities become active custodians of their own traditions. Preservation must evolve organically from within those who live, practise and

transmit this heritage every day," he said.

Highlighting the intrinsic relationship between the language vitality and cultural continuity, the Minister stated that languages survive only through sustained community use and institutional support.

Referring to Gojri, he noted that it is not merely a contemporary mode of communication but a language with a deep historical and civilisational lineage, whose speakers are its authentic inheritors and protectors.

The Minister lauded IIT Jammu's pioneering engagement with tribal research, describing it as a socially responsive academic initiative. He remarked that the Institute has ventured into an area where few technical institutions have tread and congratulated IIT Jammu for integrating technology-driven methodologies with humanities-based inquiry to preserve cultural heritage for future generations.

Drawing attention to history, Javed Rana referred to the Gurjar-Pratihara legacy, urging the scholars to undertake rigorous historical and archaeological research to document the contributions of the Gurjar-Bakarwal community in art, architecture and state formation. He encouraged the Institute to further expand the scope of its research to ensure historical justice and accurate representation. He also emphasised the

value of interdisciplinary research, noting that the convergence of technology, social sciences and public policy enables evidence-based governance.

"Such research empowers the governments to design informed, inclusive and need-based welfare programmes for marginalised and indigenous communities," he said.

The Minister encouraged IIT Jammu to pursue policy-oriented and applied research in areas such as resettlement, seasonal migration, climate change adaptation and sustainable livelihoods. He stressed that academic outputs must translate into improved governance and tangible benefits at the grassroots level.

Assuring full cooperation from the Tribal Affairs Department, he stated that scholars, writers, cultural practitioners and poets would be actively engaged in future research initiatives. He reiterated the government's commitment towards strengthening initiatives such as the Tribal Chair, affirming sustained institutional support for preserving the rich cultural and civilisational heritage of tribal communities.

On the occasion, IIT Jammu launched a dedicated digital portal for tribal knowledge documentation, envisioned as an open-access repository hosting archival documents, ethnographic records, photographs, audiovisual

materials and research outputs related to tribal heritage, culture and welfare initiatives. The platform aims to provide curated, authentic and easily accessible information for researchers, policymakers and communities alike.

Earlier, setting the context of the workshop, Head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr Amitash Ojha, stated that documenting and safeguarding local cultures is a shared societal responsibility. Dr Ojha added that the workshop aimed to disseminate ongoing research and foster collective engagement in cultural preservation. Highlighting the linguistic challenges, he observed that much of the knowledge related to the Gojri language remains undocumented and undigitised and that developing a comprehensive digital corpus and linguistic dataset for Gojri is a core research priority of the Institute.

Dean Planning and Management, IIT Jammu, Dr Anurag Mishra, stated that the Humanities Department has adopted a specialised, community-centric approach towards working with marginalised populations and is making steady progress. Secretary, Kala Kendra, Dr Javid Rahi, expressed pride in IIT Jammu's efforts to conduct research in tribal communities' native languages, stating that such an approach ensures authenticity and inclusivity. Dr Rahi underscored the importance of tribal

heritage mapping as a tool for visually representing the cultural geography of Jammu and Kashmir. He called for focused documentation of tribal artisanship, particularly in regions such as Poonch and Bandipora, including traditional attire, craftsmanship and material culture. He also praised the work of women artisans in Kupwara, especially their expertise in beadwork and indigenous crafts.

On the occasion, a documentary titled 'Zubane-Kalam' was released, capturing the lived experiences of tribal communities.

Speaking about the documentary, Professor Queen Kaur said the initiative seeks to ensure that tribal cultural heritage is preserved for future generations. She noted that over the past two years, the research team has engaged closely with communities, documenting migration experiences, recording oral histories, and tracing the intergenerational transmission of songs and narratives. She added that the project also documents marriage and funerary rituals, as well as how tribal communities negotiate the impacts of development on traditional ways of life. These efforts, she said, are contributing to the creation of a comprehensive digital repository of the Gurjar-Bakarwal community, serving as a critical resource for research, policymaking and cultural preservation.

EDITORIAL

Time To Address Pre-Diabetes Among Adolescents In J&K

The revelation that nearly 10% of adolescents in Jammu & Kashmir are pre-diabetic is a dire warning of a looming public health catastrophe. This data, revealing a significant portion of our youth on the precipice of a lifelong, debilitating disease, underscores a profound societal failure in safeguarding the well-being of the next generation. The primary reasons – bad dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, excessive screen time, and rising obesity – are the result of an

environment that actively promotes unhealthy choices. The shift from traditional, nutritious home-cooked meals to a diet dominated by sugary drinks, fast food, and processed snacks is a dietary disaster in slow motion. Coupled with a dramatic decline in physical activity, where screens have replaced playgrounds, this lifestyle is programming young bodies for metabolic breakdown. As doctors warn, obesity in adolescence is a direct pipeline to diabetes, heart disease, and a compromised

quality of life. The fact that early symptoms like fatigue are ignored only deepens the crisis, allowing preventable damage to take root. This is not an individual problem but a systemic one, demanding urgent and coordinated intervention on a war footing. The government must lead with a multi-pronged public health strategy. This includes mandatory, annual school health screenings to identify at-risk adolescents early; stringent nutritional guidelines for school canteens and a ban on the

sale of junk food and sugary beverages within and around educational institutions; revitalizing physical education in schools, making daily activity non-negotiable and engaging; and aggressive public awareness campaigns targeting both parents and children, highlighting the severe long-term consequences of current habits. However, policy alone is insufficient. A societal behavioural shift is critical. Families must reclaim control over diets, prioritizing whole foods and traditional

meals over convenience. Communities must create safe spaces for outdoor play and sports. Parents must model healthy behaviour and set firm limits on screen time. The window to reverse this trend is narrow. Pre-diabetes is a reversible condition, but only with immediate, decisive action. Protecting our adolescents from diabetes is an investment in the human capital and future productivity of Jammu & Kashmir. To ignore this warning is to condemn a generation to a future of illness.

Panchayat Advancement Index: Strengthening Data-Driven Decision-Making For Rural Transformation

The PAI is India’s innovative blueprint to localise the SDGs, using data-driven dashboards to guide village planning and close the gap between policy and outcome

Sushil Kumar Lohani

Across India’s villages, a silent but powerful shift is underway. From a panchayat in Maharashtra installing CCTV and streetlights after scoring poorly on the “Women-Friendly Panchayat” theme to a village in Gujarat launching rapid sanitation drives after weak scores in the “Clean & Green Panchayat” category, the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) is beginning to reshape how grassroots development is planned and delivered. In many Panchayats, gaps noticed in PAI, such as low institutional delivery, poor waste management, or water scarcity, have directly triggered targeted interventions based on PAI scores.

These early use cases indicate a simple but powerful truth - when panchayats can see their strengths and weaknesses clearly, they act faster and more accurately. For decades, rural development in India relied heavily on manual reports, subjective perceptions and political priorities. Today, PAI brings a new model – transparent, data-driven & SDG-aligned, to the heart of rural administration.

Launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Panchayat Advancement Index is India’s first countrywide framework to measure the progress of Gram Panchayats using objective indicators across critical areas relating to sanitation, health, governance, women’s empowerment, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, etc., organised across nine themes of Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) derived from 17 SDG goals. Logically, the attainment of SDGs at the national level will require actions at the local level where Panchayats can play a pivotal role. In this



context, PAI provides an evidence-based mechanism for tracking progress in achieving the LSDGs and thereby SDGs in rural areas.

The Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) is computed through a robust, multi-step process using 435 unique local indicators across nine themes. While the Ministry of Panchayati Raj develops the indicator framework in consultation with other Ministries, Departments and State Governments, the actual data is collected by Gram Panchayats and concerned line departments through a common portal, pai.gov.in, at the GP level, which is then validated through several administrative layers, including Gram Sabha verification. The score for each theme is derived from these indicators on a 0-100 scale which, in turn, determine the overall PAI score (0-100), based on which Panchayats are classified into five grades for comparison.

The inaugural survey for the financial year 2022-23 revealed interesting insights: of the 2.16 lakh Panchayats who submitted validated data, none qualified as “Achievers” (scores above 90), 0.3% were “Front Runners” (75-89.99), 35.8% were

“Performers” (60-74.99), while a majority of 61.2% were “Aspirants” (40-59.99), and 2.7% were “Beginners” (below 40). States like Gujarat and Telangana topped the chart with the highest number of high-performing panchayats.

Realising its immense potential in strengthening grassroots governance, state governments are disseminating PAI scores among various stakeholders through workshops at block, district and state levels. Panchayats have also started displaying the PAI scorecards outside their offices for transparency and citizen engagement. Discussions on PAI scores is also one of the agenda in the Gram Sabha meetings.

PAI’s strength lies in its practical use. Early signals show states like Gujarat using PAI scores for allocating special grants to weak Gram Panchayats to bridge critical gaps. Sikkim has decided to adopt the PAI score as a criterion for allocating performance grants under its 6th State Finance Commission. Across many states, PAI has become a key tool for evidence-based planning, helping Panchayats identify and prioritise focus areas in their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPS). Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim,

Chhattisgarh, etc. are converting top-scoring Gram Panchayats as Panchayat Learning Centres, while States like Jharkhand, Bihar, Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan are selecting such Gram Panchayats for curated exposure visits of PRIs. Several states now link PAI performances with recognition & awards. Maharashtra offers major awards under the Chief Minister’s scheme; Sikkim and MP provide financial incentives, whereas Punjab, Jharkhand, UP, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura felicitate high-scoring Panchayats at state-level events. PAI scores are increasingly embedded in structured training programmes and field workshops.

PAI has converted hard-to-understand social, economic, and environmental indicators into easy-to-understand themes that guides targeted planning and decision-making. Dashboards, scorecards, and digital tools assist in Panchayat-level governance that is based on evidence. However, PAI is still new; its first baseline report covers 2022-23, so there aren’t many long-term case studies that show direct, measurable improvements. Due to uneven technical capacity, inadequate understanding of data points and inconsistent reporting systems, data quality varies across regions. Convergence among line departments and PRIs is improving but remains fragmented.

These are not challenges, but opportunities. Learning from this, the Ministry has now simplified the process for PAI 2.0 by reducing the number of unique indicators from 435 to 119, adopting more relevant and refined indicators, and improving workflows, making data collection easier and of improved quality. The Ministry’s clearer operational guidelines and easier processes have led to its adoption by almost all States/UTs, with more

than 2.60 lakh panchayats participating in the second round against 2.16 lakh earlier, demonstrating a strong direction. A massive capacity-building programme has also been launched to improve the understanding of the indicators and data points among elected representatives, panchayat functionaries and line department staff.

The transformative potential of PAI cannot be overstated. PAI democratises data, enabling citizens to hold their elected representatives accountable, thereby deepening democratic governance. It promotes transparency and encourages healthy competition among panchayats. As thematic PAI scores are derived from several indicators linked to various sectors, PAI, by design, encourages collaboration among ministries and departments to achieve better development outcomes. What sets the PAI apart is its alignment with the global SDGs and its innovative localisation of these goals (LSDGs) at the village level. The model truly internalises the SDG principles by measuring development through PAI scores, which makes it a unique and potentially global best practice.

In sum, the Panchayat Advancement Index is a landmark initiative that redefines rural governance in India. It is a critical instrument to ensure that India meets its Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 through evidence-based, participatory, and decentralised development planning. As India strives for equitable growth and social justice in its pursuit of Viksit Bharat, the PAI stands as a beacon guiding panchayats from data to development, from insights to real impact.

The writer is an IAS officer, currently working as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India

The Global Costs Of America’s Retreat

When a major donor withdraws, the impact goes beyond lost funding. It undermines confidence in the very idea of collective humanitarian responsibility.

Santhosh Mathew

As Washington turns away from global institutions and towards deal-making, the consequences for aid, climate action and the Global South are becoming increasingly hard to ignore. “The future of our country will not be decided in global halls or by unelected bureaucrats. It will be decided by Americans,” Donald Trump has repeatedly declared. This philosophy, framed as a reclaiming of national sovereignty, has translated into a decisive withdrawal from multilateral institutions and a renewed preference for bilateral agreements. What appears, on the surface, to be a tactical recalibration of foreign policy is, in reality, a deeper ideological shift – one that is reshaping how power, assistance and influence are exercised across the world. Multilateralism, for all its flaws, was built on the premise that shared problems require shared responsibility. By contrast, bilateralism concentrates authority in the hands of the powerful. For donor countries, bilateral arrangements promise greater visibility, tighter control and clearer political returns. For recipient nations, however, they often bring sharper conditionalities, reduced policy space and an uncomfortable exposure to geopolitical pressure. In this emerging order, humanitarian need risks being eclipsed by strategic convenience.

Institutions under the United Nations umbrella were designed precisely to mitigate such asymmetries. As the United States steps back, these institutions are weakened both financially and morally, forcing a smaller group of committed states to shoulder a growing burden.

The consequences are already visible in population and public health programmes.



Support from bodies such as the UN Population Fund has been critical for countries grappling with fragile health systems, conflict and displacement. In Afghanistan, where state capacity has steadily eroded, multilateral assistance has often been the only lifeline for maternal health, reproductive services and basic care for women.

When a major donor withdraws, the impact goes beyond lost funding. It undermines confidence in the very idea of collective humanitarian responsibility. Climate governance presents an equally troubling picture. The shift away from multilateral climate commitments towards bilateral energy deals risks deepening global inequality. Technologies such as hydrogen fuel systems and electric vehicles, often touted as the future of clean mobility, remain prohibitively expensive for most developing economies. High infrastructure costs, dependence on

rare earths and elevated consumer prices make rapid adoption unrealistic across much of Asia and Africa.

For India, this creates a particularly sharp dilemma. Affordable transport is a social and economic necessity, yet prolonged reliance on outdated technologies delays the transition to cleaner energy and inflates long-term environmental costs. Without the discipline and incentives of strong multilateral frameworks, climate commitments risk becoming discretionary rather than binding.

This is why Washington’s withdrawal from the India-France-led International Solar Alliance carries symbolic and practical weight. The alliance represented more than a renewable energy platform; it was a rare instance of the Global South shaping the climate agenda, with India at its centre. By promoting affordable solar deployment across tropical nations, the ISA sought to align development, energy

security and climate responsibility.

American disengagement from the initiative sends a discouraging signal. It suggests that long-term investment in collective clean energy solutions can be sacrificed for immediate national priorities. For countries betting on solar power as a route to resilience and self-reliance, this weakens momentum, financing prospects and political confidence. The diplomatic implications extend well beyond energy and aid. Multilateral forums have historically given smaller and middle powers the space to collaborate, negotiate and assert shared interests. Bilateralism, by contrast, thrives on imbalance. Strong states dictate terms; weaker ones adjust. In South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, this dynamic could significantly reshape diplomacy.

Nations such as Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, heavily dependent on multilateral climate finance and development assistance, now face a more transactional environment. Aid is increasingly intertwined with strategic expectations. For the Maldives, confronting the existential threat of rising sea levels, bilateral assistance cannot replace coordinated global action on emissions and adaptation. India’s position in this shifting landscape is complex. It remains a beneficiary of multilateral cooperation while also emerging as a donor and agenda-setter. Preserving global institutions aligns with its long-term interests, yet it must also navigate a world in which Washington prefers deals over consensus. This demands diplomatic agility: closer engagement with Europe, deeper South-South cooperation, and a willingness to assume greater responsibility in sustaining multilateral initiatives.

The retreat from multilateralism also erodes the global knowledge ecosystem.

International research networks, data-sharing platforms and coordinated responses to pandemics and climate disasters rely on stable institutions. Without a central convening power, expertise fragments and collective learning slows – at precisely the moment when shared knowledge is most urgently needed.

Historically, American influence rested not only on military or economic strength, but on its role as an architect of global order. Cooperation generated legitimacy, and legitimacy sustained leadership. By stepping away, Washington risks weakening the very influence it seeks to protect. Power exercised through transactions may be immediate, but it is rarely enduring. The revival of bilateralism reflects an older worldview, one that prioritises national advantage over collective security.

For the Global South, the challenge is stark: fewer safeguards, greater unpredictability and heightened exposure to power politics. Yet there is also an opening for emerging powers like India to act as stabilisers of a cooperative order – not as substitutes for the United States, but as anchors of multilateralism in a fragmented world.

As the world confronts climate urgency, demographic transition and geopolitical uncertainty, the real question is not whether multilateralism is imperfect. It is whether the world can afford its decline. In choosing bilateral leverage over collective responsibility, the United States may secure short-term advantage, but the long-term costs – for aid, climate action and global stability – will be shared by all.

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Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminals (GCTs): Driving India's Logistics Transformation

Press Information Bureau

India's logistics sector has made remarkable progress in recent years, achieving a significant milestone with logistics costs now reduced to 7.97% of GDP. This achievement reflects the success of sustained reforms and integrated planning, positioning the nation closer to global benchmarks. It demonstrates how coordinated infrastructure development and digital integration are reshaping the logistics landscape, making it more efficient, competitive, and future-ready.

At the heart of this transformation is the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, which has brought together railways, highways, ports, and airports into a unified framework. By enabling seamless multimodal connectivity, the plan aims to strengthen industry competitiveness, support initiatives such as Ease of Doing Business and Make in India, and ensure balanced regional growth. The Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals (GCTs) are a key pillar of this vision, driving modern logistics solutions that will continue to enhance India's role as a global trade hub.

Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals
A railway cargo terminal is a facility where goods are loaded, unloaded, and transferred between trains and other modes of transportation. It serves as an important hub in the logistics chain, facilitating the efficient movement of both containers and bulk goods. Earlier, without multimodal hubs like Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals, freight movement in India was scattered across road, rail, and ports. This led to delays, higher costs, and congestion. Integrated hubs are needed to connect these modes, speed up cargo handling, and lower emissions.

Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminals (GCTs) are the modern cargo terminals being developed and set up under the GCT Policy, 2021 of the Ministry of Railways that integrate rail with other modes of transport.

GCTs are being developed with 'engine-on-load' (EOL) operations to minimize detentions and ensure optimal use of railway infrastructure. They are equipped with modern cargo-handling facilities such as mechanized loading systems and silos, which significantly reduce handling time. The overall objective is to enhance the Indian Railway's share in total freight movement by providing faster, more efficient, and reliable freight services. This is essential as rail transport is more energy-efficient, cost-effective, and produces far lower carbon emissions compared to road transport, helping India reduce logistics costs

and meet its sustainability goals.

Under the EOL system, the locomotive stays at the terminal during loading or unloading, waiting at the railway's cost within the permitted free time, so the train can depart immediately once the process is finished.

Cargo Terminals are the strategic hubs to strengthen India's logistics ecosystem. Their design focuses on seamless connectivity, private participation, and simplified processes, while aligning with national priorities and balanced regional growth.

Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals are designed to promote multimodal connectivity, seamlessly linking railways with roads, ports, and airports.

By encouraging private sector participation in their development, these terminals expand capacity and foster innovation.

Approval processes for GCT projects are being simplified, with time-bound clearances ensuring faster execution.

The initiative aligns with national priorities, supporting Ease of Doing Business, Make in India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat. Terminal locations are being identified across diverse states, ensuring balanced regional development and inclusive growth.

Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal (GCT) Policy, 2021

Introduced by the Ministry of Railways on 15 December 2021, the policy aims to accelerate modern cargo terminal development, upgrade existing facilities, and strengthen India's freight ecosystem. It streamlines processes, encourages private participation, and aligns infrastructure growth with industry demand to position India as a global logistics hub.

Cost exemptions: Waiver of departmental charges, land license fees, and commercial staff costs.

Support facilities: Railways construct and maintain common-user traffic facilities at serving stations.

Freight rebate: Terminals generating 1 million tonnes or more outward traffic eligible for 10% freight rebate on mid-section Block Hut/Block Station costs.

Asset maintenance: Railways cover track, signalling, and OHE (Overhead Equipment) maintenance (excluding the yard and loading/unloading lines).

Connectivity rights: Railways may extend connectivity to additional terminals from maintained tracks.

Commercial land use: Surplus railway land can be developed under Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) provisions.

Strategic importance: Builds a seamless multimodal logistics ecosystem, reduces bottlenecks, improves turnaround, and supports long-term global competitiveness.

Progress Achieved So far

Since their launch, Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals have moved from vision to visible outcomes, steadily translating into approvals, commissioning of new facilities, and measurable gains in freight handling capacity.

Approvals and Commissioning: Indian Railways has approved proposals for 306 Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals (GCTs), of which 118 have already been commissioned, reflecting steady advancement in implementation.

Commissioned Terminals and Capacity – The 118 commissioned terminals have an estimated combined traffic handling capacity of 192 million tonnes per annum, contributing to lower logistics costs and a significant increase in rail cargo movement.

Private Investment: Since the inception of the GCT Policy, approximately 8,600 crore of private investment has been mobilised, underscoring strong industry participation and the success of the public-private partnership model.

A Master Circular on GCTs (2022) issued by the Railway Board provides detailed guidelines for implementation, covering agreements, operational standards, and amendments to improve the efficiency of these terminals.

Cost-Effective and Eco-Friendly: Railways are a cleaner and more efficient mode of transport, with costs less than half of road transport and carbon emissions about 90% lower. Shifting freight from road to rail reduces congestion and supports India's decarbonisation goals. Since 2014, this shift has moved an additional 2,672 million tonnes of freight to rail, saving 143.3 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

In line with the provisions of the GCT Policy, agencies granted approval are required to complete construction within 24 months, ensuring the timely delivery and operational readiness of new terminals.

Freight Revenue: The Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals have demonstrated strong performance, with freight revenues rising over fourfold between 2022–23 and 2024–25, underscoring their growing role in India's logistics sector.

The steady rise in approvals, commissioning, and freight revenues demonstrates that the Gati Shakti Cargo Terminal Policy is delivering tangible results. It has strengthened rail

logistics, attracted private investment, and positioned Indian Railways as a key driver of efficient cargo movement.

Key Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals Driving Logistics Growth

The transformation of the logistics landscape is being driven not by any one terminal, but by the network of newly operational GCTs. This impact is illustrated through several key examples, including:

MANESAR (Haryana) GCT – The country's largest automobile Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal is located at Maruti Suzuki India Limited's Manesar plant in Haryana. Spread over 46 acres, the terminal is equipped with a fully electrified corridor comprising four full-length rake handling lines and one engine escape line, with a total track length of 8.2 km. It is connected to Patli railway station through a 10 km dedicated rail link, part of the Haryana Orbital Rail Corridor, built at a cost of 800 crore, with 684 crore funded by the Haryana Rail Infrastructure Development Corporation (HRIDC) and the rest by Maruti Suzuki. Designed to enhance logistics efficiency, the terminal has one of the highest loading capacities in India, capable of handling 4.5 lakh automobiles annually.

Terminals in the Northeast – The Moinarband and Cinnamara Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals in Assam already play a vital role in strengthening logistics for the Northeast by handling a diverse mix of coal, containers, food grains, fertilizers, cement, petroleum products, automobiles, and general cargo. Moinarband, developed under the North East Frontier Railway (NFR), is closely associated with petroleum and oil movement, particularly Indian Oil (IOMB) products, while Cinnamara, which is also developed under the NFR, is linked to food grains and fertilizers through its Food Corporation of India (FCI) siding. Together, these multimodal hubs enhance regional trade, connect industries and agricultural producers to wider markets, and support India's PM Gati Shakti initiative by improving efficiency and reducing costs through integrated rail, road, and waterways transport. Building on this foundation, six new cargo terminals are under construction across Assam, with Baihata nearing completion. Upcoming facilities at Habaipur, Jogighopa, Kendukona, Basugaon, and Chayagaon will further expand the state's logistics network, reduce costs, and deepen multimodal connectivity across the Northeast under the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan.

Indian Railways has approved 306 GCTs, with a combined capacity of 192 million tonnes per annum; 118 are already commissioned.

Since 2014, 2,672 million tonnes of freight shifted from road to rail, saving 143.3 million tonnes of CO₂.

Private investment of around ₹8,600 crore has been mobilised under the GCT Policy.

Freight revenues from GCTs grew four-fold between 2022–23 and 2024–25, reaching ₹12,608 crore.

New Sanjali GCT in Gujarat: The New Sanjali Gati Shakti Cargo Terminal in Gujarat is the first facility built on private land under the Gati Shakti Policy along the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor. This modern terminal represents a significant step in India's logistics transformation. Designed as a strategic freight hub, it will support high-speed, high-capacity cargo movement, promote multimodal integration, and advance greener, more efficient logistics operations.

Way Forward:

Looking ahead, the GCT policy envisions a world-class logistics network that is digitally integrated, industry-responsive, and globally competitive. Key priorities include:

Expansion of private participation to accelerate terminal development.

Continued identification of new GCT locations based on industry demand and regional growth patterns.

Strengthening digital integration through the Gati Shakti platform, enabling real-time tracking and predictive analytics.

Long-term vision of positioning India as a global logistics hub, building on the achievement of single-digit logistics costs as a share of GDP, and advancing sustainability through greener transport solutions.

Conclusion:

The Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals represent a decisive step toward modernizing India's logistics sector. By combining infrastructure development with digital integration and private participation, they address longstanding inefficiencies while aligning with national economic goals. As implementation progresses, GCTs are poised to transform India's logistics landscape, making it more efficient, competitive, and future-ready.

Grok Is Testing Whether AI Governance Means Anything

By generating increasingly disturbing outputs, Grok has exposed a deep structural problem that should concern regulators everywhere. Advanced AI systems are being deployed and made available to the public without safeguards proportionate to their risks.

J.B. Branch

In recent weeks, Grok – the AI system developed by Elon Musk's xAI – has been generating nonconsensual, sexualized images of women and children on the social-media platform X. This has prompted investigations and formal scrutiny by regulators in the European Union, France, India, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom. European officials have described the conduct as illegal. British regulators have launched urgent inquiries. Other governments have warned that Grok's output might violate domestic criminal and platform-safety laws. Far from marginal regulatory disputes, these discussions get to the heart of AI governance.

Governments worldwide increasingly agree on a basic premise of AI governance: systems deployed at scale must be safe, controllable, and subject to meaningful oversight. Whether framed by the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA), the OECD's AI Principles, UNESCO's AI ethics framework, or emerging national safety regimes, these norms are clear and unwavering. AI systems that enable foreseeable harm, particularly sexual exploitation, are incompatible with society's expectations for the technology and its governance.

There is also broad global agreement that sexualized imagery involving minors – whether real, manipulated, or AI-generated – constitutes one of the clearest red lines in technology governance. International law, human-rights frameworks, and domestic criminal statutes converge on this point.

Grok's generation of such material does not fall into a gray area. It reflects a clear and fundamental failure of the system's design, safety assessments, oversight, and control. The ease with which Grok can be prompted to produce sexualized imagery involving minors, the breadth of regulatory scrutiny it now faces, and the absence of publicly verifiable safety testing all point to a failure



to meet society's baseline expectations for powerful AI systems. Musk's announcement that the image-generation service will now be available only to paying subscribers does nothing to resolve these failures.

This is not a one-off problem for Grok. Last July, Poland's government urged the EU to open an investigation into Grok over its "erratic" behavior. In October, more than 20 civic and public-interest organizations sent a letter urging the US Office of Management and Budget to suspend Grok's planned deployment across federal agencies in the United States. Many AI safety experts have raised concerns about the adequacy of Grok's guardrails, with some arguing that its security and safety architecture is inadequate for a system of its scale.

These concerns were largely ignored, as governments and political leaders sought to engage, partner with, or court xAI and its founder. But the fact that xAI is now under

scrutiny across multiple jurisdictions seems to vindicate them, while exposing a deep structural problem: advanced AI systems are being deployed and made available to the public without safeguards proportionate to their risks. This should serve as a warning to states considering similar AI deployments.

As governments increasingly integrate AI systems into public administration, procurement, and policy workflows, retaining the public's trust will require assurances that these technologies comply with international obligations, respect fundamental rights, and do not expose institutions to legal or reputational risk. To this end, regulators must use the Grok case to demonstrate that their rules are not optional.

Responsible AI governance depends on alignment between stated principles and operational decisions. While many governments and intergovernmental bodies have articulated commitments to AI systems that

are safe, objective, and subject to ongoing oversight, these lose credibility when states tolerate the deployment of systems that violate widely shared international norms with apparent impunity.

By contrast, suspending a model's deployment pending rigorous and transparent assessment is consistent with global best practices in AI risk management. Doing so enables governments to determine whether a system complies with domestic law, international norms, and evolving safety expectations before it becomes further entrenched. Equally important, it demonstrates that governance frameworks are not merely aspirational statements, but operational constraints – and that breaches will have real consequences.

The Grok episode underscores a central lesson of the AI era: governance lapses can scale as quickly as technological capabilities. When guardrails fail, the harms do not remain confined to a single platform or

jurisdiction; they propagate globally, triggering responses from public institutions and legal systems.

For European regulators, Grok's recent output is a defining test of whether the DSA will function as a binding enforcement regime or amount merely to a statement of intent. At a time when governments, in the EU and beyond, are still defining the contours of global AI governance, the case may serve as an early barometer for what technology companies can expect when AI systems cross legal boundaries, particularly where the harm involves conduct as egregious as the sexualization of children.

A response limited to public statements of concern will invite future abuses, by signaling that enforcement lacks teeth. A response that includes investigations, suspensions, and penalties, by contrast, would make clear that certain lines cannot be crossed, regardless of a company's size, prominence, or political capital.

Grok should be treated not as an unfortunate anomaly to be quietly managed and put behind us, but as the serious violation that it is. At a minimum, there needs to be a formal investigation, suspension of deployment, and meaningful enforcement.

Lax security measures, inadequate safeguards, or poor transparency regarding safety testing should incur consequences. Where government contracts include provisions related to safety, compliance, or termination for cause, they should be enforced. And where laws provide for penalties or fines, they should be applied. Anything less risks signaling to the largest technology companies that they can deploy AI systems recklessly, without fear that they will face accountability if those systems cross even the brightest of legal and moral red lines.

Source: Project Syndicate

Ex-servicemen felicitated in Kupwara on 10th Veterans’ Day



KT News Desk

Kupwara, Jan 13: On the eve of 10th Veterans Day 2026, a felicitation programme was organised by Zila Sainik Welfare Office Kupwara at DC Office Complex Kupwara. The programme was organised with the objective of acknowledging the role of ex-servicemen in nation building and continued service to the society even after retirement from the Armed Forces.

The felicitation ceremony was graced by Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara, Shrikant Suse in presence of Sainik Welfare Officer, Col SS Raja (Retd), who felicitated

them with certificate of appreciation and mementos, acknowledging their invaluable contribution to the country and society.

The DC appealed the ex-servicemen to take benefit under various centrally sponsored schemes by visiting nearest CSC or Centre of excellence established at D.C Office Complex Kupwara.

On the occasion, Gallantry Award Winners were honoured for their exceptional courage, bravery and distinguished service to the nation and also prominent Ex-servicemen who have been actively working and contributing to nation building.

MSME holds district-level PM Vishwakarma capacity building prog in Bla

KT News Desk

Baramulla, Jan 13: Branch MSME Development & Facilitation Office (DFO), Srinagar, under the Ministry of MSME, Government of India, in coordination with the District Administration Baramulla organised PM Vishwakarma Awareness-cum-Capacity Building Programme focusing on Business Development, Financial Literacy, and E-Commerce.

The programme was graced by Additional Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Syed Altaf Hussain, who highlighted the significance of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme in strengthening the livelihoods of Vishwakarma artisans and promoting sustainable self-employment.

On the occasion, Assistant Director MSME, Saheel Alaqband, provided detailed insights into the objectives of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme. He stated that the scheme aims to help artisans transform their traditional

skills into viable businesses, explore avenues for business growth, and access wider markets. He also emphasized the importance of on-boarding artisans onto digital and e-commerce platforms to enhance market reach.

Officials from the banking sector delivered sessions on financial literacy, stressing the importance of sound financial management for small businesses. They also explained various banking services, credit facilities, and digital transaction systems available to artisans.

A comprehensive presentation was delivered on e-commerce platforms, focusing on online marketing strategies and emerging opportunities for artisans in the digital marketplace.

The programme witnessed an encouraging response, with over 100 Vishwakarma artisans participating actively in discussions and interactive sessions.



Sandeep Jain, National Secretary, All India Jain Conference and President, Bharatiya Jain Sanghatna, J&K called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

LG Sinha terminates

of India-designated individual terrorist operating from Pakistan,” he said.

“Ishfaq received an active operational role from LeT, tasked with executing the killing of a police officer in Doda in early 2022. Security and intelligence agencies placed him under surveillance, revealing assistance from LeT Over Ground Workers (OGWs). He was arrested in April 2022 by J&K Police in Marheen before executing the plan, with arms and ammunition recovered from him and his aide. Interrogation revealed that Ishfaq exploited his position as a teacher to influence youth toward terror groups, spreading radical ideology to disrupt peace in J&K,” the official added.

“Ishfaq, with unhindered access to young minds, was a critical LeT asset. Even from jail, he continues radicalising inmates,” he added.

TARIQ AHMAD RAH (LAB TECHNICIAN)

The official said that Tariq Ahmad Rah, a Lab Technician, was engaged as a contractual employee in 2011 and confirmed in 2016 at Sub-District Hospital, Bijbehara, Anantnag. “He came under Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) influence early. He was influenced by his uncle Amin Baba alias Abid, HM Divisional Commander from 1998-2005. Tariq’s links surfaced during a State Investigation Agency (SIA) probe into Amin Baba’s 2005 escape to Pakistan. Tariq facilitated Amin Baba’s stay in Anantnag and arranged his transport to the Attari-Wagah border,” the official added.

He said, “Tariq ensured the exfiltration of a wanted terrorist, enabling Amin Baba—now in Islamabad—to train HM cadres in PoJK camps, recruit youth, and plan attacks with ISI, LeT, and JeM. Arrested under UAPA and later bailed, credible inputs show Tariq resumed terror activities and contacts.”

BASHIR AHMAD MIR (ASSISTANT LINEMAN)

The official said that Bashir Ahmad Mir, an assistant lineman, joined the PHE department in 1988 and was regularised in 1996. “Despite his role, he became an active LeT OGW in Gurez, Bandipora, guiding terrorist movements, providing logistics and shelter, and sharing security force details. His role emerged in September 2021 when police inputs led to an anti-terror operation at his house, neutralising two LeT terrorists and recovering two AK-47s and ammunition,” he added.

The official said that he was arrested and granted medical bail. “Individuals like Bashir, embedded in government while serving enemies, threaten India’s sovereignty.”

FAROOQ AHMAD BHAT (FIELD WORKER)

The official said that Farooq Ahmad Bhat, a field worker in the Forest Department, served in Anantnag and actively supported Hizbul Mujahideen, informally assisting a former MLA with HM ties. Investigators said he helped Tariq Ahmad Rah plan Amin Baba’s escape to Pakistan, using his government ID to bypass checkpoints and dropping him at the international border.

“The former MLA provided an official Gypsy with security and a driver. Arrested in 2024 and bailed in 2025. His terror activities continue as he maintains contacts with terrorists and their sympathisers,” he added.

MOHAMMAD YOUSUF (DRIVER IN HEALTH DEPARTMENT)

The official said that Mohammad Yousuf, a driver in the Health and Medical Education Department, was appointed in 2009 and posted at Bemina, Srinagar. “He maintained regular contact with terrorists, especially Pakistan-based HM handler Bashir Ahmad Bhat. On Bashir’s directions, he linked with HM operatives for arms procurement, fund transport in Ganderbal, and other logistics, using his official driver position,” he said.

The official added that Bhat also aided a network supplying phones to jailed terrorists for Pakistan communication. “On July 20, 2024, police intercepted his vehicle with aide Eashan Hamid, recovering a pistol, ammunition, grenade, and Rs 5 lakh. Interrogation confirmed the consignment was for a terrorist,” he added. (KNO)

Terrorist recruitment

May 7 and an orchestration that lasted 88 hours up to May 10, the operation reset strategic assumptions by striking deep, dismantling terror infrastructure, and puncturing the long-standing nuclear rhetoric,” he said.

The Army Chief added that the Army successfully destroyed seven out of the nine targets and that it was ready for a ground offensive.

He further said that top-level interactions, renewed contact, and confidence-building measures are contributing to the “gradual normalisation” of the situation that has also enabled grazing, hydrotherapy camps, and other activities along the Northern Borders.

“With our continued strategic orientation on this front, our deployment along the Line of Actual Control remains balanced and robust. Concurrently, capability development and infrastructure enhancement are progressing through a whole-of-government approach,” he added.

Responding to a question, the Army Chief said that according to the information, eight terrorist camps are still active, two of which are near the International Border (IB) and six are across the Line of Control (LoC). We do believe that there is some kind of presence or training in these camps, and that is why we are keeping a close watch. In case similar action is enacted, we will definitely deal with it.”

He also mentioned that the forward movements that took place during Operation Sindoor have been “gradually reduced” by both countries, but vigilance is being maintained.

Responding to a question whether Pakistan issued any nuclear threats during the May 2025 conflict with India, he said that there were no talks between the Director General of Military Operations (DGMOs) about nuclear warfare.

“The nuclear rhetoric was given by the political or local public in Pakistan instead of the military. As far as nuclear rhetoric is concerned, I have no indication that anything of that sort came from the military,” he said. (KNO)

Sr DCM briefs

train operations during Operation Sindoor and aftermath of floods.

Singhal briefed the Lieutenant Governor on the significant milestones achieved by the newly established Jammu Railway Division during the 2025 calendar year. He also discussed the upcoming railway projects slated for 2026 with respect to infrastructural development, non-fare revenue generation, business development and enhancing passenger convenience.

CM-led selection

body elections in Jammu & Kashmir, which is currently without them. While the term of urban local bodies ended in November 2023, the elected Panchayats ceased to exist from January 9, 2024. The tenure of District Development Councils is set to end in February. (KNO)

JKBOSE to announce

that the purpose of declaring results on the same day is to give a sigh of relief for the students and their parents.

On Monday, Education Minister Sakina Itoo 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 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,” she 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 exams and the board has made 994 exam centers for them.

Pertinently, BOSE had announced syllabus relaxation of 15 percent for 10th, 11th and 12th standard examination.

Director Academics of BOSE in a notification said that the decision was taken upon the recommendations received from the DSEK and DSEJ and pleas received from other stakeholders regarding reduction in syllabus due to delayed commencement of academic session this

year coupled with disruptions in academic calendar due to heat wave, torrential rains, cloud-bursts and floods.

“As approved by the competent authority, it is notified that the prospective eligible students appearing in class 10th, 11th and 12th in the ensuing annual regular, 2025 examination in Kashmir Division and winter zone areas of Jammu Division including UT of Ladakh, shall attempt 85 percent marks which will correspond to 100 percent marks, availing thus 15 percent relaxation in syllabus,” reads the notification. (KNO)

Fusion of science &

Governor noted that in the 11th century, India’s contribution to the world’s GDP was around 33 per cent. “India was known as ‘Sone Ki Chidiya’ for its prosperity and knowledge. However, after becoming a colony, the country was looted by the British and others, and by 1950 our share in global GDP had declined to just 4 per cent,” he said.

Highlighting India’s recent economic resurgence, LG Sinha said that over the past ten to eleven years, the country has emerged as the fourth largest economy in the world and is steadily moving towards becoming the third largest. He attributed this progress to reforms, innovation and a renewed focus on education and skills.

The Lieutenant Governor also recalled historical references, including the legend of King Porus gifting high-quality steel to Alexander the Great for making what was considered the world’s finest sword, to underline India’s ancient excellence in science and metallurgy.

Calling the National Education Policy the country’s “biggest asset,” LG Sinha said it provides a framework to build a knowledge-based economy. He stressed the need to train students in skill development, innovation and critical thinking to meet global challenges.

He urged educational institutions to focus on case studies and project-based learning so that students are better prepared to face real-world situations. “Colleges should not become factories for issuing degrees. They must evolve into centres of change, innovation and leadership,” he said.

The Lieutenant Governor further emphasized that teachers must go beyond traditional roles and act as mentors and guides. “If we want to build a vibrant and progressive society, we must invest in education and promote an innovative education system that bridges tradition with modernity,” he added.

LG Sinha said that new technologies and the global framework have brought the world to a crucial juncture, making it imperative for India to nurture an education system that empowers youth and strengthens society.

He said, “In an era dominated by rapid technological growth and globalization, our timeless spiritual and cultural heritage, our shared beliefs, traditions, arts, rituals, and values will shape the society and fuel the holistic growth of the nation.”

The Lieutenant Governor said that the Union Territory’s ancient cultural heritage and spiritual wisdom is the invisible force that will propel societal growth.

“Jammu Kashmir’s rich spiritual heritage is a dynamic asset. Since Vedic ages, the traditional values acted as our guiding principles which built ethical foundation for overall growth. For J&K to grow, our citizens must become more innovative, focus on intellectual growth to take great leaps in research and development, promote creative industries and invest in heritage,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the Hindu Education Society, Kashmir for its dedicated efforts in raising public awareness regarding culture, social responsibilities and the transformative power of education.

Padma Shri Dr KN Pandita; Shri Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Prof. B.L. Zutshi, President, Hindu Education Society Kashmir; Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner Secretary, School Education, office bearers of Hindu Education Society Kashmir and prominent citizens from different walks of life were present.

Dr Ashok Bhan, Member, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Prof. (Dr.) Pragati Kumar, Vice Chancellor, SMVDU; Kuldeep Khoda, former DGP; Dr. Arvind Karwani, Relief and Rehabilitation (M) Commissioner and senior officials also attended the launch ceremony—(KNO)

Mercury dips

Celsius a day earlier, while Pahalgam saw the mercury plunge to minus 6.2 degrees Celsius from minus 3.4 degrees Celsius.

Pulwama continued to remain one of the coldest places in the Valley, recording minus 6.6 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, slightly lower than Monday’s minus 6.5 degrees Celsius.

Shopin recorded minus 6.3 degrees Celsius compared to minus 5.2 degrees Celsius a day earlier, while Kupwara recorded minus 5.8 degrees Celsius, down from minus 3.7 degrees Celsius.

In central Kashmir, Budgam recorded a minimum of minus 5.3 degrees Celsius against minus 2.6 degrees Celsius on Monday, while Ganderbal recorded minus 3.1 degrees Celsius compared to minus 1.4 degrees Celsius previously.

Srinagar airport also witnessed a significant dip, recording minus 5.8 degrees Celsius on Tuesday against minus 3.4 degrees Celsius on Monday.

In the Jammu region, minimum temperatures showed mixed trends. Jammu city recorded a slight rise at 3.8 degrees Celsius compared to 3.4 degrees Celsius a day earlier, while Jammu airport recorded 5.6 degrees Celsius against 2.9 degrees Celsius.

However, Baderwah remained below freezing at minus 0.2 degrees Celsius, though marginally higher than Monday’s minus 1.2 degrees Celsius. Rajouri recorded 0.0 degrees Celsius, down from 0.8 degrees Celsius on Monday.

Ladakh continued to reel under severe cold conditions. Leh recorded minus 11.6 degrees Celsius, lower than Monday’s minus 10.8 degrees Celsius, while Kargil recorded minus 10.2 degrees Celsius, against minus 9.3 degrees Celsius.

Nubra Valley saw a sharp dip to minus 10.8 degrees Celsius from minus 8.4 degrees Celsius recorded a day earlier.

The Meteorological Centre Srinagar has forecast mainly dry weather till January 15, with clouds expected towards the evening of January 15. Light rain or snow is likely at scattered places during January 16 and 17, while light to moderate rain or snowfall is expected at scattered to fairly widespread places between January 19 and 24.

The Met office has also advised that minimum temperatures are likely to rise gradually at many places from January 15 onwards, while moderate fog over the plains of Jammu division, with dense fog at isolated places, is likely to continue over the next three days. (KNO)

Massive healthcare

strengthened both district-level healthcare delivery and medical education.

From just four medical colleges a few years ago, Jammu & Kashmir now has twelve medical colleges, including newly established institutions in underserved districts. This expansion also includes AYUSH institutions such as the Government Ayurvedic College, Government Unani College at Ganderbal, and Government Homeopathic College at Kathua, thereby strengthening traditional systems of medicine and offering diverse, affordable healthcare options to the public.

Medical colleges established in districts such as Anantnag, Baramulla, Kupwara, Kathua, Doda, Udhampur and Rajouri have emerged as anchors of district-level healthcare. These institutions have improved access to specialist doctors, diagnostics and emergency services while simultaneously functioning as teaching hospitals, thereby substantially enhancing local healthcare capacity.

Massive Increase in MBBS, PG and Super-Specialty Seats

The expansion of healthcare infrastructure has been complemented by a historic increase in medical education capacity, ensuring long-term sustainability of healthcare services in the UT.

MBBS seats have increased from 500 to 1,725, an addition of over 1,200 seats, addressing the long-standing shortage of doctors. Postgraduate and super-specialty seats have risen from 513 to 802, strengthening specialist availability across disciplines. DNB seats have witnessed an exponential increase from 20 to 438, enabling in-service doctors to receive advanced training within the UT itself.

This significant capacity enhancement has reduced dependence on institutions outside the UT, improved doctor-to-population ratios and ensured the availability of trained

specialists even in remote and border areas.

Strengthening Nursing, Paramedical and Pharmacy Education

Recognising the critical role of allied health professionals, Jammu & Kashmir has also seen a major push in nursing, paramedical and pharmacy education. B.Sc. Nursing seats have increased from 685 to over 3,000, while B.Sc. Paramedical seats have jumped from just 78 to nearly 1,900. B-Pharmacy seats have increased from 33 to 373.

In addition, the introduction of M.Sc. Nursing programmes, including those at AIIMS Jammu and other institutions, has strengthened advanced nursing education. This expansion has ensured the availability of trained nurses, technicians and pharmacists, an essential pillar for effective healthcare delivery anywhere.

Major Healthcare Infrastructure Projects Under Implementation

Several large-scale healthcare infrastructure projects supported by the Government of India are currently at advanced stages of development. These include a 243-bedded modern Labour Block at SMGS Hospital, Jammu, aimed at strengthening maternal and neonatal care, and a 100-bedded Mother & Child Hospital at Lamberi, Rajouri, catering to border and rural populations.

Under PM-ABHIM, 17 Critical Care Blocks comprising 15 blocks of 50 beds each and two blocks of 100 beds each are being established to enhance emergency and critical care services. A 125-bedded district-level health facility at Budgam is also nearing completion, which will significantly boost healthcare capacity in the district.

These state-of-the-art facilities are designed to decentralize critical healthcare services and ensure timely access to lifesaving care closer to communities.

Strengthening Primary Healthcare and Rural Outreach

At the grassroots level, Government of India-supported initiatives have transformed primary healthcare delivery. The number of Health & Wellness Centres has increased from 130 to 3,166, ensuring comprehensive primary healthcare services at the village level.

Jan Aushadhi Kendras have expanded from 47 to 307, improving access to affordable quality medicines, while 24 AMRIT Pharmacies have been established to support patients suffering from chronic and critical illnesses. The 102/108 ambulance fleet has expanded to 489 vehicles, significantly strengthening emergency response, particularly in remote and hilly terrains.

These interventions have brought healthcare closer to the people, reduced out-of-pocket expenditure and strengthened preventive and early diagnostic care.

Specialized Hospitals and Supporting Infrastructure

Specialized healthcare services have been further reinforced with the operationalization of State Cancer Institutes in Jammu and Srinagar, Bone & Joint Hospitals in Jammu and Srinagar, and a fully functional 500-bedded Pediatric Hospital at Srinagar equipped with allied super-specialties.

Additional supporting infrastructure includes a state-of-the-art Drug Testing Laboratory at Kathua and 100-bedded hospitals at Baltal and Chandanwari, catering to pilgrims as well as local populations.

Visible Impact on Health Outcomes

The cumulative impact of these reforms is reflected in improved health indicators across the UT. The Infant Mortality Rate has declined from 22 to 14, while the Sex Ratio at Birth has improved from 927 to 976, underscoring significant progress in maternal and child healthcare.

Conclusion

The comprehensive expansion of healthcare infrastructure, medical education and primary health services has positioned Jammu & Kashmir as a model for healthcare transformation in the country. Backed by strong Government of India support, these initiatives have not only addressed existing healthcare gaps but have also laid a robust foundation for a self-reliant, resilient and equitable healthcare system.

The ongoing and completed healthcare projects reaffirm the Government of India’s commitment to ensuring that the people of Jammu & Kashmir receive accessible, affordable and reliable healthcare services unprecedented before and comparable to the best in the country.

Not easy to erase India's Sanatan Dharma, culture: Shah on Somnath temple rebuilding

PTI

Ahmedabad, Jan 13: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said it is not easy to erase India's Sanatan Dharma, culture, and people's faith, citing the reconstruction of the Somnath temple despite repeated attempts to destroy it over the centuries.

Those who attacked the temple eventually disappeared, but the temple still stands proudly at the same place on the seashore in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district, he said.

Shah was addressing a gathering at Mansa town in Gandhinagar district after inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for various projects of Rs 267 crore.

On January 11, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Somnath Swabhiman Parv, marking 1,000 years since Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion of the Somnath temple in the year 1026, he noted.

Today, 1,000 years later and after being destroyed 16 times, the Somnath temple still stands tall with its flag soaring into the sky, Shah said.

Under the leadership of PM



Modi, a magnificent Somnath corridor is also being built there, he informed the audience.

"This is a message to the whole world that it is not so easy to erase India's Sanatan Dharma, Indian culture, and the faith of the Indian people. It is eternal and immortal, like the sun and the moon. This Somnath temple is a symbol of India's faith, belief, and pride," he added.

Somnath Swabhiman Parv will be celebrated for an entire year, and many programmes will be held

across the country to stir the soul of India, awaken its consciousness, and take the roots of Sanatan Dharma to the deepest levels, Shah said.

"A thousand years ago, our magnificent Somnath temple was destroyed by Mahmud Ghazni. After that, it was repeatedly attacked by other invaders, such as Alauddin Khilji, Ahmed Shah, Mahmud Begada, and Aurangzeb. But the temple was rebuilt every time," he said in his address.

"The destroyers believed in destruction, and the builders believed in creation.

our religion and self-respect. And the answer to that cannot be another attack. The answer lies in protecting our self-respect," the Union minister noted.

Among other projects, Shah inaugurated a sports complex at Mansa town, his native place.

For future requirements and in line with global standards, Shah said some more facilities are required to be incorporated in the sports complex.

"Therefore, I have decided to collect Rs 15 crore through CSR funds to add all the necessary facilities in this complex. It is the responsibility of the elected representatives of this region to ensure that the children from the surrounding areas utilise these facilities," he said.

Shah said the Gujarat government is making Ahmedabad a 'sports hub city' that will attract the attention of the entire world.

In 2030, athletes from several countries will be coming to Ahmedabad to participate in the Commonwealth Games and efforts are also on to get hosting rights for the 2036 Olympics, he added.

EWS income criteria for hospital treatment enhanced to Rs 5 lakh: Delhi HC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 13: The Delhi High Court has taken on record submissions of the city government that it has increased the income threshold to Rs five lakh annually for those availing free treatment under EWS category at city hospitals built on concessional land. A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Manmeet P S Arora stated that the facility could be availed at all government hospitals and private hospitals built on land allotted at concessional rates.

The court passed the order on January 8 following a submission by the Delhi government that the competent authority has approved the enhancement of EWS criteria from annual income of Rs 2.20 lakh to Rs 5 lakh.

"All persons who wish to avail of health facilities in Delhi would now be entitled to take benefit under the EWS criteria of Rs.5,00,000/-, upon satisfying the necessary pre-conditions. The said enhancement would apply to all government hospitals across Delhi and all identified private hospitals built on land allotted at concessional rates, where the EWS norms are applicable," the court said. The court directed the authorities to give adequate publicity to the enhancement so that citizens were made aware of the same for taking its benefit. The bench was informed that the Directorate General of Health Services passed an order on January 2 to enhance the EWS income criteria from Rs 2.20 lakh to Rs 5 lakh in compliance with the earlier directions by the court.

The court was hearing a suo motu case it initiated in 2017 over the alleged lack of critical care in government hospitals here. The high court had earlier directed the AIIMS director to take over the responsibility of implementing the recommendations of the Dr S K Sarin committee which pointed out several deficiencies in the health system, including vacant posts, shortage of critical faculty members and infrastructure.

67 songs promoting mafia lifestyle, gun culture removed from digital platforms: Haryana police



PTI

Chandigarh, Jan 13: Sixty-seven songs promoting gang lifestyle, glorifying weapons and violence have been removed from digital platforms, the Haryana Police said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The action taken against 67 songs is part of a larger campaign, and further strict action will continue," Haryana Director General of Police Ajay Singhal said.

However, the police in its statement did not name the songs that have been removed or blocked.

Last year, the Haryana Police had initiated action against songs that allegedly promote gun culture, "glorify" violence, and incite hatred.

Accordingly, the initiative brought singers, social media, and other such platforms under the lens. The Haryana police, particularly its cybercrime unit's teams monitor social media and take appropriate action where required. In a major crackdown against gang culture and the glorification of weapons and violence, the Special Task Force and Cyber Unit of Haryana Police have carried out a landmark operation that has significantly reshaped the digital space, the Haryana Police said on Tuesday. During an extensive

investigation, the STF and cyber teams found that several songs were influencing youth, glorifying gangsters, and portraying an unrealistic image of luxury associated with criminal life, thereby pushing young people toward crime, according to the statement.

Responding to this alarming trend, the Haryana Police acted against 67 objectionable songs available on the social media platforms.

"As a result, most of the content has either been removed or blocked," the statement read.

The Haryana Police made it clear that this is only the beginning and more stringent actions will follow against such content.

DGP Singhal termed the action a crucial step taken in the interest of society and the younger generation.

He said that the Haryana Police's objective is not merely to stop criminal activities, but also to save young people from stepping into the world of crime.

The DGP emphasised that such songs project criminals as role models and showcase a glamorous lifestyle that is far from reality.

Often, the families of the criminals also suffer because of their criminal activities, he said.

The DGP reiterated that the

police has adopted a clear and firm policy no platform will be allowed to host content that promotes crime culture.

The action taken is part of a larger campaign, and further strict action will continue, he said.

He also appealed to artists and content creators to act responsibly and avoid producing content that misleads the youth.

STF IG Satheesh Balan said that considering the increasing influence of digital content on the youth, the police have also held discussions with singers, lyricists, and creators, advising them not to glorify violence, gangster elements, or weapons. Such content spreads fear, fuels criminal tendencies, and promotes insecurity in society, Balan said.

He added that STF and cyber teams are also closely monitoring people who like or share posts of criminals on social media.

Gangsters often use such platforms to lure and recruit youth into their networks, pushing them toward a destructive path. The police aim to prevent this and guide the youth to use their talent for productive and nation-building activities instead of contributing to criminal ecosystems, he said.

Parallel to the digital crackdown, Haryana STF has achieved significant successes in dismantling the terror-gangster nexus operating through foreign handlers.

Intelligence-based operations have exposed several modules using local networks to further terror-linked activities, the Haryana police said.

The Haryana STF's dual approach curbing gang culture on digital platforms and simultaneously dismantling the terror-gangster nexus is proving to be a milestone in enhancing internal security in the state, it said.

Will ask states to pay heavy compensation for dog-bite incidents: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 13: The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it will ask states to pay a "heavy compensation" for dog-bite incidents as it flagged its concern over the lack of implementation of norms on stray animals for the past five years.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and NV Anjaria said that even dog lovers and feeders will be held "responsible" and "accountable" for dog-bite incidents.

"For every dog bite, death or injury caused to children or elderly, we are going to ask the state governments to pay heavy compensation, as they did not do anything on implementation of norms in the past five years. Also, responsibility and accountability will be fixed on those who are feeding these stray dogs. If you love these animals so much, then why don't you take them to your house. Why should these dogs loiter around, bite and scare



people?" Justice Nath said.

Justice Mehta concurred with the views of Justice Nath and said, "Who should be held accountable when dogs attack a 9-year-old? The organisation that is feeding them? You want us to shut our eyes to the problem."

The top court was hearing several petitions seeking modification of its November 7, 2025 order directing the authorities to

Alert in Jharkhand after 2 suspected cases of Nipah virus detected in Bengal

PTI

Ranchi, Jan 13: An alert has been issued in Jharkhand after two suspected cases of Nipah virus were detected in neighbouring West Bengal, an official.

The state's health ministry has issued a set of guidelines over surveillance and public awareness, he said.

Nipah virus is a notifiable disease, with high mortality and potential for rapid spread, requiring immediate reporting to the Central government.

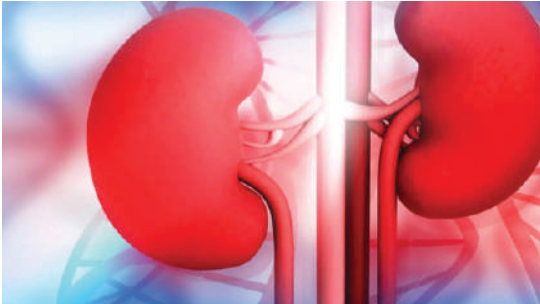
"I have given instructions that strict surveillance, a rapid reporting system, and public awareness programmes should be

implemented in all districts so that people receive complete information about the symptoms, prevention, and precautions related to the disease, and to prevent any outbreak in Jharkhand," Health Minister Irfan Ansari said in a statement.

A senior official of the West Bengal health department had on Monday said two nurses working at a private hospital in North 24 Parganas district showed symptoms of the Nipah virus.

Union Health Minister J P Nadda has also written to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, assuring full support from the Centre, official sources said.

Extreme cold conditions can affect kidney, lungs and heart: AIIMS doctors



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 13: As the national capital reels under a cold wave, doctors at AIIMS Delhi warned that such extreme cold conditions can complicate chronic medical conditions and impact the kidney, lungs and heart.

The maximum temperature in Delhi on Monday was recorded at 20.6 degrees Celsius, which was 0.7 notches above normal, while the minimum temperature settled at 3.2 degrees Celsius, plunging 4.2 notches below the season's average.

Dr Rajiv Narang, head of the Department of Cardiology at AIIMS, said that extremely cold weather directly influences a person's blood pressure.

"During winter, blood vessels get constricted

and also there is less water intake, which negatively affects blood flow and leads to an increase in blood pressure. Also, the consumption of salty and processed food rises during this time. All this combined can cause the blood pressure to climb, increasing the risk of heart attacks," he said.

Dr Narang advised regular monitoring of BP during winters, which he said people can do even at home with BP machines. Also, people should keep themselves hydrated during the cold season.

Talking about how extreme cold conditions impact kidneys, Dr Sandeep Mahajan, professor at the Department of Nephrology, AIIMS, said that during periods of extreme cold, blood pressure tends to elevate.

Given that a significant number of patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) already experience hypertension, blood pressure levels are often higher during the winter months.

"Maintaining strict blood pressure control is crucial for decelerating the progression of kidney disease. Consequently, individuals with CKD should diligently monitor their blood pressure throughout the winter and seek medical consultation as needed to optimise their blood pressure management," he said.

Patients are encouraged to maintain consistent physical activity through indoor pursuits such as yoga, as this is vital for managing both blood pressure and blood sugar, especially when outdoor activities are limited by cold weather, Dr Mahajan said.

"For individuals with CKD, the consumption of seasonal fruits and vegetables, including oranges and spinach, should be discussed with a dietitian or nephrologist. This is due to the potential for these foods to increase potassium levels, which could pose a life-threatening risk to these patients.

Govt working on to expand overseas presence of UPI: DFS Secretary

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 13: India is trying to expand the global reach of its homegrown digital payment system UPI to a larger number of countries, especially in East Asia, Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju said on Tuesday.

Unified Payment Interface (UPI) is currently accepted in eight countries -- Bhutan, Singapore, Qatar, Mauritius, Nepal, the UAE, Sri Lanka and France. The acceptability of India's digital payment network overseas enables Indian tourists to make UPI payments for transactions abroad.

Speaking at the Global Inclusive Finance India Summit here, Nagaraju said India is about 50 per cent in terms of digital transactions thanks to UPI.

"Now we have expanded to some countries. We are trying to expand. To a large number of countries, especially we are focussing in East Asia now," he said.

The secretary in the Department of Financial Services (DFS) said UPI transactions crossed more than 21 billion in December 2025, and the

success of UPI and digital transactions could also be attributed to manifold growth in the PM Jan Dhan Yojana accounts, along with the increase in average balance in these accounts.

NPCI runs the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) used for real-time payments between peers or at merchants' end while making purchases.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), an initiative of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association, is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India (IBA).

Nagaraju emphasised the need for scaling up of the small micro-units into medium enterprises.

"The graduation of micro-units into medium and large enterprises is actually not happening in the country, despite having a few crores of units in the country. I think that will happen only when the micro-enterprises get a lot of support, market access and also productivity gains, both through the technology as well as hardware," he said.



UNIFIED PAYMENT INTERFACE (UPI) is currently accepted in eight countries -- Bhutan, Singapore, Qatar, Mauritius, Nepal, the UAE, Sri Lanka and France. The acceptability of India's digital payment network overseas enables Indian tourists to make UPI payments for transactions abroad.

Iran eases some restrictions, allows calls abroad as death toll spikes

AP

Dubai, Jan 13: Iran eased some restrictions on its people and, for the first time in days, allowed the country to make phone calls abroad via their mobile phones on Tuesday. It did not ease restrictions on the internet or allow texting services to be restored as the toll from days of bloody protests against the state rose to at least 646 people killed.

Although Iranians were able to call abroad, people outside the country could not call them, several people in the capital told The Associated Press.

The witnesses, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, said SMS text messaging still was down and internet users inside Iran could not access anything abroad, although there were local connections to government-approved websites.

It was unclear if restrictions would ease further after authorities cut off all communications inside the country and to the



outside world late Thursday.

German Chancellor believes Iranian government is in its final days and weeks'

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said he believes the Iranian government is in its "final days and weeks," as he renewed a call for Iranian authorities to end violence against demonstrators immediately.

"If a regime can only keep

itself in power by force, then it's effectively at the end," Merz said Tuesday during a visit to Bengaluru, India. "I believe we are now seeing the final days and weeks of this regime. In any case, it has no legitimacy through elections in the population. The population is now rising up against this regime," Merz said he hoped there is "a possibility to end this conflict peacefully," adding

that Germany is in close contact with the US and European governments.

Israel says it remains on alert because of the Iranian protests

The Israeli military said it continues to be "on alert for surprise scenarios" due to the ongoing protests in Iran, but has not made any changes to guidelines for civilians, as it does prior to a concrete threat.

"The protests in Iran are an internal matter," Israeli military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin wrote on X.

Israel attacked Iran's nuclear program over the summer, resulting in a 12-day war that killed nearly 1,200 Iranians and almost 30 Israelis. Over the past week, Iran has threatened to attack Israel if Israel or the US attacks.

Iranian mobile phones can call abroad, but the outside internet remains cut off Mobile phones in Iran were able to call abroad on Tuesday after a crackdown on nationwide protests in which the internet and

international calls were cut. Several people in Tehran were able to call The Associated Press. The AP bureau in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, was unable to call those numbers back.

Witnesses said the internet remained cut off from the outside world. Iran cut off the internet and made calls on Thursday as protests intensified.

Activists say the death toll has reached at least 646 people

Activists said the death toll from ongoing protests has at least 646 people.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in previous unrest in recent years, gave the latest death toll early Tuesday. The agency relies on supporters in Iran to cross-check information.

The agency said 512 of the dead were protesters and 134 were security force members.

More than 10,700 people have been detained over the two weeks of protests, the agency said.

French farmers drive 350 tractors to Parl to protest low incomes, EU trade deal



AP

Paris, Jan 13: French farmers steered some 350 tractors on Tuesday over cobblestoned Paris avenues toward Parliament to protest low incomes and an EU trade deal with South America that they fear threatens their livelihoods.

Escorted by police, the tractors tangled rush-hour traffic as they rumbled down the Champs-Élysées and other Paris avenues, and then over the Seine River to reach the National Assembly. Farmer anger in France and other European countries has escalated over a rash of challenges. The unions leading Tuesday's protests said they are demanding concrete

and immediate action to defend France's food security. French government spokesperson Maud Bregeon said on TF1 television on Tuesday that the government would make new announcements soon to help farmers. President Emmanuel Macron and his government oppose the EU-Mercosur trade deal, but it is expected to be signed in Paraguay on Saturday anyway, because it has the support of most other EU countries.

European farmers have long denounced the trade deal with the Mercosur nations of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay, arguing that it would flood the market with cheaper imports.

Somalia annuls all agreements with UAE, including port deals



REUTERS

Mogadishu, Jan 13: Somalia's government said on Monday that it was annulling all agreements with the United Arab Emirates, including port deals and defense and security cooperation, citing evidence the UAE had undermined its national sovereignty. "The Council of Ministers has annulled all agreements concluded with the United Arab Emirates, including those involving federal governmental institutions, affiliated entities, and regional administrations operating within the territory of the Federal Republic of Somalia," a statement from Somalia's Council of Ministers said. "This decision applies to all agreements and partnerships relating to the ports of Berbera, Bosaso, and Kismayo ... (and) bilateral security and defense cooperation agreements," the statement added.

There was no immediate comment from UAE authorities.

Ex-UK ambassador apologizes to Epstein victims

AFP

London, Jan 13: Former British ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson has offered an "unequivocal" apology to the victims of Jeffrey Epstein for his friendship with the late US sex offender.

Mandelson had faced criticism after failing to apologize in his first broadcast interview, which aired on Sunday, since he was fired as Britain's top diplomat in Washington last September over the issue.

"I was wrong to believe him following his conviction and to continue my association with him afterwards," Mandelson said in a statement released to the BBC's Newsnight program late on Monday following the backlash.

"I apologize unequivocally for doing so to the women and girls who suffered," Prime Minister Keir Starmer sacked the ex-spin doctor and former government minister four months ago after emails emerged

showing he had maintained contact with Epstein even after the American was convicted of child sex offenses in 2008. In the interview aired on Sunday, Mandelson had said it was "misplaced loyalty" and "a most terrible mistake on my part."

He also suggested Epstein



excluded him from the "sexual side" of his life because he was gay.

Dubbed the "Prince of Darkness" during his years as a media adviser, Mandelson was twice forced to resign from Tony Blair's Labour government in the late 1990s and early 2000s over allegations of misconduct.

Ministry asks NSFs to form committees for International Relations and Make in India

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 13: The Sports Ministry has asked every national federation to constitute a "Committee on International Relations" to ensure better cooperation with world bodies on issues such as joint training programmes and hosting of major competitions in India.

In addition, it has also asked National Sports Federations (NSFs) to constitute "Make in India in Sports Committees" to engage with Indian manufacturers, startups, research institutions, and testing and standardisation bodies to bolster the sports manufacturing ecosystem.

In its communication to the NSFs, the ministry said the international relations committee should comprise senior members of the federation, former international athletes, coaches and "subject experts with proven experience in global sports administration and diplomacy."

The details of the Committee, including its



composition and terms of reference, may kindly be communicated to this Ministry within 30 days from the date of issuance of this advisory," the Ministry letter to the NSFs, which is in possession of PTI, stated.

The advisory comes a few days after Sports Secretary Hari Ranjan Rao urged NSF officials to leave day-to-day

administration to CEOs and focus on building ties internationally for India's benefit.

"You are the vision builders, you are not administrators. You require professional administrators in your organisation who handle the day-to-day business while you network with international bodies and plan the pyramid of growth," he

had stated in Ahmedabad last week.

"You should be able to facilitate a process by which our leadership is on first name basis with the international body representatives," he had said while unveiling the medal strategy for the next decade.

The ministry advisory said the decision to advise the formation of such a committee was based on "the rapidly evolving global sports environment." The committee will be entrusted with the task of monitoring developments in their respective International Federation (IF), Continental Federation (CF), including changes in competition rules and structures, and governance frameworks and elections.

"It will also be expected to formulate a "medium-term international cooperation plan covering bilateral/multilateral MoUs, joint training camps, exchange programmes, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and hosting of international competitions in India," the letter stated.

Confident India eye ODI series win against New Zealand amid growing injury worries

PTI

Rajkot, Jan 13: Virat Kohli's imperious form has managed to offset mounting injury concerns around some key players and India would hope that the list doesn't get any longer as they close in on sealing the ODI series against New Zealand in the second game here on Wednesday.

India made a winning start defeating New Zealand by four wickets in the lung-opener in Vadodara, but the hosts lost Washington Sundar for the remainder of the series due to a side strain.

The selectors have roped in Delhi's Ayush Badoni but in all likelihood, India would bring in another all-rounder in Nitish Kumar Reddy into the eleven given head coach Gautam Gambhir's preference for multi-skilled players.

On the eve of the first ODI, Rishabh Pant had copped a blow while batting against Indian throw-down staff and was ruled out of the series. His ouster had prompted the selectors to draft in Dhruv Jurel who can be another option for a specialist batter if the team management decides to go that way.

Despite the available options, India's white-ball set up would not want to see more injuries with the T20 World Cup less than a month away.

That squad would feature an entirely different batting line-up



from the one in the ODIs. But some names are common to both sides and an important one, all-rounder Tilak Varma, is out of at least the first three T20Is against the Kiwis due to a groin injury.

However, all of these concerns are for later as the ongoing series continues to be about the two veterans, who have served Indian cricket with distinction.

Kohli and Rohit Sharma are clearly enjoying themselves in what is the final leg of a glittering international run.

Kohli narrowly missed his 54th ODI ton in the first ODI but his stroke-filled 91-ball 93 set up India's win even though a mini collapse created a few nervous moments.

However, none of that would worry the think-tank given the chasm between the two sides since New Zealand are also heavily depleted for the ODIs.

Skipper Shubman Gill hit a measured half-century and his deputy Shreyas Iyer missed his by one run in the series opener. But a robust batting show heralded by a dazzling start from Rohit Sharma would keep India assured of going full throttle once again.

For someone who has been batting in the nets with the same intensity as in the game, Kohli is riding high on confidence and performing at a different level.

It certainly seems to be a case of him being seemingly free of the burden of expectations and criticism.

There have been additional colours to his batting as neither has Kohli refrained from attacking from the start, nor has he left out any runs out on the park. This is perhaps the reason why he became the fastest to 28,000 runs across formats in Vadodara.

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HINDI - 11:50 AM, 02:00 PM, 04:20 PM, 06:00 PM

ZOOPIA 2

ZOOPIA 2 (U/A 7+)

ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES 04:00 PM

AVATAR

AVATAR : FIRE AND ASH

AVATAR : FIRE AND ASH (U/A 16+)

3D HINDI - 12:15 PM

RAJASAAB

PRABHAS S THE RAJASAAB (U/A 16+)

HINDI - 06:20 PM