



Union Home Secy wraps up 2-day J&K visit after hectic security deliberations

» Meets LG Sinha at Lok Bhavan, chairs joint security meet on 2nd consecutive day

» Reviews security situation in twin regions, op preparedness, anti-terror ops in Jammu region

Ahmad Taimur

Jammu, Jan 15: Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, who was on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, held a meeting with Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and joint high-level security meeting in Jammu to review the ongoing anti-terror operations and various other security aspects vis-a-vis the Union Territory, sources said. He concluded his two-day visit to J&K today after holding hectic deliberations top security brass.

As already reported by news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Home Secretary arrived in Jammu yesterday and soon after chaired a high-level security meeting at the Convention Centre on Canal Road here.

His visit to Jammu and Kashmir comes a week after Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a high-level security



meeting in New Delhi where he directed the security agencies to continue the anti-terror operations in the Union Territory in a mission mode.

The Home Secretary, according to sources, held a meeting with Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to discuss and review the security situation, anti-terror operations, and operational preparedness by various security agencies in Jammu and Kashmir.

They said that he called on the LG at the Lok Bhawan this morning and held discussions on wide-ranging security and developmental issues in Jammu and Kashmir. "They discussed and reviewed the current security situation in the twin regions of Kashmir and Jammu, the ongoing anti-terror operations in the Valley and the forested areas of several districts in the Jammu region," they said. He also chaired another joint

security high-level review meeting at the Convention Centre for the second day. The meeting was attended by Intelligence Bureau Director, Tapan Deka, BSF Director General, Praveen Kumar, CRPF chief, G P Singh, DGP J&P Police, Nalin Prabhat, senior Army, Police, Civil, and Intelligence Officers.

Sources said that the meeting reviewed heightened operational security in the mountainous and forested areas and assessed the ongoing anti-terror operations and drone intrusions along the Line of Control and the International Border.

They said that the meeting focussed on the ongoing anti-terror operations in mountainous and forested areas of Doda, Kishtwar, Kathua and Udhampur and Udhampur districts.

Security forces have been carrying out sustained operations to track | [More on P6](#)

Republic Day celebrations: Security heightened across J&K

Multi-tier deployment, drone, CCTV surveillance, frisking intensified

Security enhanced at borders to thwart any infiltration attempt

DG CRPF chairs high-level security meet in Jammu

DIG BSF says anti-infiltration grid strengthened

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 15: The security measures have been heightened across Jammu and Kashmir ahead of the Republic Day celebrations, with multi-tier arrangements, intensified surveillance, and area domination exercises underway across the Union Territory, officials said.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that security arrangements have been strengthened across all 20 districts, with



special focus on border belts.

"Enhanced security measures, including naka checking, frisking of vehicles and pedestrians are in place in both the regions of Kashmir and Jammu ahead of the Republic Day celebrations," they said.

They said that an extensive deployment of security forces has been made along the International Border and the Line of Control to prevent any outward incident.

In urban areas, particularly Srinagar and Jammu, frisking and checking have been intensified at key locations

to enhance security measure for the smooth conduct of the Republic Day celebrations," they said.

They added that to further bolster security measures, advanced surveillance systems, including drones and high-resolution CCTV cameras, have been set up to monitor the situation at key locations.

Area sanitisation and domination exercises are also being conducted in vulnerable pockets, officials said.

Meanwhile, Director General of the CRPF, G P Singh chaired a high-level | [More on P6](#)

Indian Army earned global respect through its professionalism: Rajnath

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 15: Ever vigilant on India's borders and steadfast in times of crises, the Indian Army has earned "global respect" through its professionalism, discipline and humanitarian service, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

In a post on X, he extended greetings to the Army personnel and their families on the occasion of the 78th Army Day. "Greetings to our brave Indian Army personnel and their families on the proud occasion of Army Day. The nation salutes their indomitable courage, supreme sacrifice and unwavering commitment to safeguarding



India's sovereignty and integrity," he said.

The defence minister said, "Ever vigilant on our borders and steadfast in times of crises, the Indian Army has earned global respect through its professionalism, discipline and humanitarian service." | [More on P6](#)

Temperatures improve across J&K as wet spell looms

Light snowfall expected at isolated higher reaches till Jan 21

Rain, snow forecast to intensify thereafter

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 15: Minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir showed a slight rise at most places on Thursday compared to the previous day, while the weather department forecast light snow at scattered locations till January 21 and a wet spell between January 22 and 24.

As per the news



agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the Kashmir Valley, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of

minus 3.9 degrees Celsius on Thursday, up from minus 5.2 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. Qazigund | [More on P6](#)

Govt nominates nodal officer for coordination on safety of J&K residents, students in Iran

Additional Resident Commissioner, New Delhi to liaise with MEA, Indian Embassy

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 15: In view of the prevailing situation in Iran, the Jammu and Kashmir Government on Thursday nominated Anil Sharma (JKAS), Additional Resident Commissioner, New Delhi, as the Nodal Officer for coordination and liaison in respect of residents and students from the Union Territory presently residing or studying in Iran.

According to a Government Order issued by the General

Administration Department (GAD), Civil Secretariat, J&K, accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Anil Sharma has been designated to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, the Indian Embassy/Consular authorities in Iran and other relevant agencies to facilitate information sharing, travel support, and welfare interventions for J&K residents and students.

The order further states that the officer shall coordinate and liaise with the Ministry of External Affairs, the concerned Embassy/Consular authorities, and other relevant agencies, as may be required, to facilitate information | [More on P6](#)

DGPC Jammu delegation meets LG Manoj Sinha

Highlights Sikh community's welfare, dev needs



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 15: A delegation of District Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee (DGPC) Jammu led by its President S. Ranjeet Singh Tohra called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday.

The delegation comprised of S. Ranvir Singh, S. Jagpal Singh, S. Gurmeet Singh, S. Karan Singh Bali and S. Avtar Singh put forth various issues pertaining to welfare and empowerment of Sikh Community in Jammu Kashmir | [More on P6](#)

Cyber frauds in J&K cross Rs 185 cr mark: SSP CICE Ramnish Gupta

Says Rs 32.64 crore recovered through swift action

'Over 18,000 complaints filed nationwide'

Warns against 'digital arrest', fake job & investment scams

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jan 15: Asserting that timely reporting remains the most effective tool in combating online frauds, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Cyber Investigation Centre for Excellence (CICE), Ramnish Gupta, on Thursday said that cybercrimes in J&K



touched a staggering Rs 184.91 crore in 2025.

Talking to the reporters at the sidelines of a CICE workshop the SSP, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Citizens need to fight digital scams and greed by keeping their eyes and minds open. They have to ensure that they don't fall into fake

investment traps, impersonation calls and other deceptive online tactics used by fraudsters."

He said, "Over 18,000 cyber fraud complaints were registered nationwide last year, reflecting both growing digital adoption and the alarming rise in online criminal activity. The first few minutes after a cyber fraud are critical, the golden hour. If victims report immediately on helpline 1930, we can freeze the funds before they vanish," Gupta said, calling early reporting "the strongest weapon against cyber frauds."

"The swift reporting by victims has helped us recover Rs 32.64 crore," he added.

"DIGITAL ARREST" CALLS TOP NEW MODUS OPERANDI

SSP Gupta | [More on P6](#)

Special ops, CASOs intensified ahead of Jan 26: SSP Baramulla

Says all arrangements in place for Republic Day

Waris Fayaz

Baramulla, Jan 15: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Baramulla, Gurinderpal Singh on Thursday said that special forces are conducting regular Cordon and Search Operations (CASOs) ahead of Republic Day, with large-scale coordinated special operations launched across the district and inter-district levels.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a multi-agency disaster response drill at the ski resort in Gulmarg, | [More on P6](#)

Handwara boy studies in tin shed, secures 98% marks in Matric exams

Faizan thanks mentors, teachers; dreams of becoming doctor

Waris Fayaz

Handwara, Jan 15: In a heart-warming tale of grit and determination, 17-year-old Faizan Majeed Malik from Guloor, Handwara in North Kashmir's Kupwara District has scripted a success story straight out of adversity, by scoring 488 marks in JKBOSE Class 10 exams.

In an exclusive chat with



news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Faizan, son of a daily wage, Abdul Majeed Malik, said he managed his studies inside a cramped temporary tin shed, battling | [More on P6](#)

DIPR holds two-day workshop on holistic wellness

Renowned dietitian Dr Mitali Gupta trains participants

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 15: The Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), organised a two-day workshop on Holistic Wellness: The Science of Breath, Mind & Meditation at the DIPR Auditorium.

The workshop was attended by Director Information, Nitish Rajora; Joint Director (Hqr), Dr Zahoor Ahmad Raina; Joint Director, Jammu Division, Deepak Dubey; officers and other officials of DIPR and divisional office, Jammu.

The sessions were conducted by renowned Dietician, Yoga Teacher and Chakra Meditation



Expert Dr Mitali Gupta, who seamlessly blended scientific principles with ancient yogic wisdom, making the sessions practical, engaging and transformative through her experiential teaching approach.

A special highlight of the

workshop was a live practical demonstration by Dev, an underprivileged and a student of Dr. Dr. Mitali Gupta.

His confident and disciplined demonstration was appreciated and stood as a live example of how yoga and

meditation can empower individuals and promote inclusive growth.

During the two-day workshop, participants gained deep insights into the interconnection between the body, breath and mind along with practical tools for achieving mental calmness and inner balance.

The workshop focused on explaining how physical health, breathing patterns and mental state is deeply interconnected. Participants learned how conscious breath regulation can calm the mind, balance emotions, reduce stress, and enhance overall well-being. | [More on P6](#)

Hajj 2026

J&K State Hajj Committee schedules training, orientation programme for pilgrims

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 15: J&K Hajj Committee has informed that the training Programme for selected pilgrims for Haj-2026, about Man-sik-e-Haj and other logistics will be conducted in their respective districts and has advised all selected pilgrims of Kashmir Division to attend the compulsory Training Programme as per schedule.

The programme, as per an official statement, is scheduled to be held on 19th January, 2026 at 10:30 AM in the Auditorium hall, Govt Degree College, Womens, Anantnag for the pilgrims of Anantnag, Pahalgam, Sallar, Kokernag, Larnoo and Srigufwara. Likewise, for the pilgrims of Shangus, Dooru, Qazigund, Shahabad Bala, Mattan, Bijbehara will be held on January 20, 2026 at 10:30 AM in the Auditorium hall , Govt Degree College, Womens, Anantnag.

Similarly, the Training programme for the pilgrims from Tehsils of Pattan, Khoi,Vagur, Kreeri, Singpora, Tangmarg, Kunzer and Karhama of district Baramulla will be held on 22nd January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Jamai Hamdania Masjid Sharief, Kunzer, Baramulla. Likewise, for pilgrims of Baramulla,Uri, Boniyar, Wagoora, Dangiwaacha, Rohama, Sopore, Watrgam, Zanigeer and Dangerpora will be held on 24th January, 2026 from 10:30 AM at Masjid-e-Baitul Mukararamah, Baramulla.

Further, training programme for pilgrims of Budgam, Khansahib, Narabal, Magam, Khag and Beerwah is scheduled on19th January, 2026



at 10:30 AM at Jamia Masjid Sharief, Ompora. Likewise, training for the pilgrims from Tehsils of Chadoora, Kanipora, charari sharief and BK Pora of district Budgam will be held on 20th January, 2026 from 10:30AM at Jamia Masjid Sharief, Ompora.

Similarly, training programme for all pilgrims of district Bandipora will be held on 22nd January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Peer Masjid, Bandipora.

Likewise, training programme for all pilgrims of district Ganderbal will be held on 21st January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Markazia Hanfia Jamia Masjid, Behama, Ganderbal.

Similarly, training programme for the pilgrims from Tehsils of Kupwara, Dragmulla, Trahgam, Kralpora, Keran, Machil, Sogam, Lalpora, Tangdar and Karnah will be held on 29th January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Jamia Masjid, Kupwara. Likewise, training for the pilgrims from Tehsils of Handwara, Langate, Kralgund, Qaziabad, Bilgam, Zachaldara and Kalamabad is scheduled on 31st January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Jamia Masjid, Handwara.

Further, training programme for

the pilgrims from Tehsils of Rajpora, Litter, Pulwama and Kakapora will be held on 21st January, 2026 from 10:30 AM at Jamai Masjid Chatpora, Pulwama. Likewise, for the pilgrims from Tehsils of Awantipora, Tral, Aripal and Pampore is scheduled on 22nd January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Jamia Masjid, Awantipora.

Likewise, training programme for the pilgrims of district Shopian will be held on 22nd January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Markazi Jamai masjid, Kulgam.

Similarly, training programme for the pilgrims of district Shopian is scheduled on 24th January, 2026 at 10:30 AM at Tak Masjid Sharief, Shopian.

Similarly, training for the pilgrims of district Srinagar will be held at Baitul Hujaj Haj House, Bemina, Srinagar at 10:30 AM from Cover No. JFK-1-2-0 to JFK-1158-3-0 on 28th January, 2026; Cover No. JFK-1159-2-0 to JFK-1369-4-0 on 29th January, 2026 and from Cover No. JFK-1370-2-0 to JFK-2249-2-0 on 31th January, 2026.

DC Kulgam reviews Mission YUVA progress

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, JANUARY 15: Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, on Thursday chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress of Mission YUVA in the district.

The meeting involved a detailed, component-wise review of all verticals under the mission to ensure effective implementation and timely achievement of targets.

During the review, progress under key components including Credit, Capacity Building, Output Tracking, Udyam Jagriti, Hiring of Motivators, functioning of Small Business Development Units (SBDU) and Business Help Desks (BHD), Sanctions, and Disbursements was thoroughly assessed.

Detailed discussions were held on achievements, pendency, and bottlenecks across each vertical.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for expeditious processing of cases, enhanced coordination with banks, and timely sanctions and disbursement of financial assistance.

He stressed the importance of strengthening output tracking and post-sanction handholding to ensure sustainability and long-term success of enterprises established under the mission.

Special focus was laid on Udyam Jagriti and awareness campaigns to maximize outreach and bring more eligible youth under the ambit of Mission YUVA.

The functioning of SBDUs and BHDs was also reviewed, with instructions issued to further improve efficiency, accountability, and grass-roots-level service delivery.

The meeting was attended by the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Noorabad, SBDU members, Career Counseling Officer (CCO), DE&CC Kulgam, BHD members, and other concerned officials.

Engaging youth in sports a powerful tool for building fit generation: Sports Minister



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 15: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports and Transport, Satish Sharma, on Thursday attended a vibrant Dangal (traditional wrestling) competition at Gharattal.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation of renowned wrestlers from Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.

The competition drew a large gathering of sports lovers and local residents, turning Gharattal into a hub of traditional sporting fervour. The prize distribution reflected the scale and spirit of the event, with the first prize set at 1.51 lakh, second prize at 1 lakh and third prize at 50,000.

The event was organized by the Dangal Committee, Gharattal.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister, as per an official statement, appreciated the organisers for keeping alive the rich heritage of traditional sports and providing a platform

for wrestlers from across the region to showcase their talent. He said that Dangal is not just a sport but a cultural legacy, which promotes discipline, strength and sportsmanship among the youth.

The Minister reiterated the government's firm commitment to promotion and upliftment of sports activities across Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasised development of modern sports infrastructure besides preservation and promotion of traditional and indigenous sports. He assured that the government will continue to extend support for such events that encourage youth participation and foster a healthy sporting culture.

Sharma added that engaging youth in sports is a powerful tool for building a fit, confident and responsible generation. He added that the administration is determined to ensure equal opportunities and facilities for athletes in both modern and traditional disciplines.

The event concluded with an exciting series of bouts, reflecting the enduring popularity and cultural importance of Dangal in the region

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather addresses book review event at Jammu University

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 15: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Advocate Abdul Rahim Rather Thursday addressed the Book Review event of 'Durr-e-Naayaab', a biography of Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo at Department of Urdu, University of Jammu.

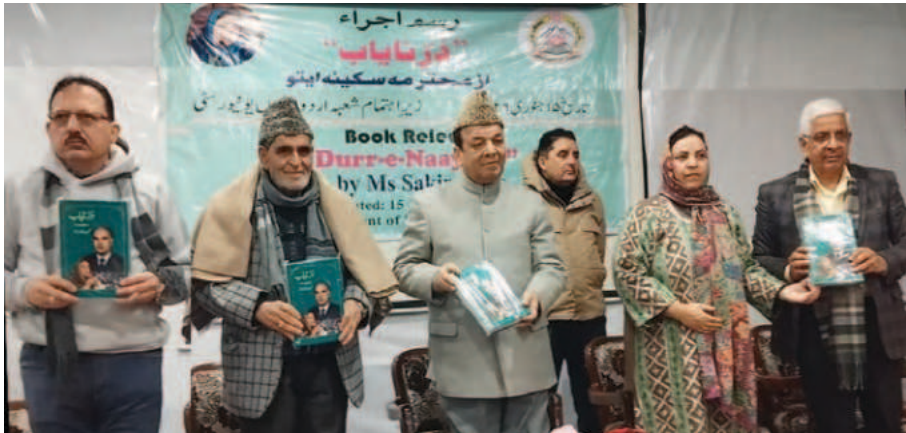
The book, authored by Minister Sakeena Itoo, daughter of late leader, chronicles the life and contributions of Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo, former Minister and Speaker of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, who was assassinated on March 18, 1994, in Jammu.

Speaking on the occasion, the Speaker, as per an official statement, paid glowing tributes to late leader, describing him as "an able administrator and people friendly leader, who sacrificed his life for the well being of people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially the downtrodden communities."

The Speaker recalled that Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo was a man of principles who remained committed to his principles and his party despite the turbulent times of militancy in early nineties. "He never wanted to leave Kashmir in those difficult times and always desired to be among his people for their upliftment", the Speaker said.

Remembering his close association with the late leader, the Speaker said, "In the year 1977 both of us were elected as first time MLAs and this association changed into a close relation till he left us". He added that his tenure as MLA, MLC, Minister or Speaker has been very noteworthy which left an indelible mark on those associated with him.

Paying glowing tributes,



the Speaker remarked Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo as a great leader whose selfless work cannot be defined in words. The Speaker also said that great leader has done a great favour to the society by giving us a brave daughter Sakeena Itoo who is living the mission of her great father.

While lauding the Minister Sakeena Itoo's literary accomplishment, the Speaker said that despite being the most active Minister, she spared some time to write this extraordinary book, adding that this book will be a guide for younger generation to do something for society, as it reflects deeply on life and mission of a leader who dedicated himself to his people and his land.

On the occasion, the Speaker also lauded the Government and especially the Education Minister Sakeena Itoo for exceptional performance of Government Schools in 10th and 12th results declared yesterday. He underlined that the performance of students of Government Schools reflects the commitment towards the improvement of Education sector from last more than a year, adding that the teachers and the government deserve

due credit for this.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Sakeena spoke about the valuable and golden moments she shared with her father which became cornerstone for her to write this unique book. She also expressed her gratitude to former Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah; Chief Minister Omar Abdullah; Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather and others for guiding her while penning this book.

Addressing the gathering, Vice Chancellor, Jammu University, Prof. Umesh Rai said that this book is an important asset for the younger people to acquaint themselves about the life long teachings and learnings of a great leader, who dedicated his life for the betterment of society. He also appreciated the author and Minister Sakeena Itoo for writing this book despite such a busy schedule.

He also announced that the University will provide every possible support for translating the book into English, Hindi or other local languages.

Speaking on the occasion, noted poet, writer and Sahitya Academy Awardee, Prof. Mohammad Zaman Azarduh said that this book is great tribute of a daughter to her father, highlighting the great

contribution of a great leader who dedicated his life and everything for the welfare of people. He also lauded the author and Minister, Sakeena Itoo for keeping the the mission of her father alive by dedicated herself to the society as a public representative and Minister.

In his welcome address, Professor & Head department of Urdu, Prof. Shohab Inayat Malik remembered his close association with the late leader. He added that the late leader had a very soft corner towards his people and he always remained at forefront in helping others.

On the occasion, Assistant Professor, Dr. Sehnaz Qadri also read a review of the book 'Durr-e-Naayaab' which captivated the audience to read this book.

Pertinently, the book was released by Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah in the month of October 2025 at Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) Srinagar.

Dean Research Studies, Jammu University, Prof. Neelu Rohmetra; noted poet and Sahitya Academy Awardee Manshoor Banihali; Author and Tribal Social Reformer, Javaid Rahi; Professors, faculty members and large number of students were also present on the occasion.

DC Ganderbal chairs district level committee meeting Approves 690 cases under JKICIP, 136 under IDDS

KT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, JANUARY 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore Thursday chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee to discuss and approve cases under Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKICIP) and Integrated Dairy Development scheme (IDDS)

After detailed scrutiny, the committee approved 690 cases under JKICIP pertaining to Agriculture, Horticulture, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries departments while 136 cases were approved under IDDS of the Animal Husbandry department.

On the occasion, DC directed agriculture and allied departments to focus on establishment of units under these schemes.

Besides, he also directed for making improvements in L2, L3 registrations on KKGs, and processing of credit applications under HADP. In order to achieve tangible results on the ground, DC directed officers to maintain close coordination with beneficiaries for effective monitoring and adopting an outcome based approach. He further directed the concerned departments to take proactive measures to bridge any deficiencies and ensure early processing of applications and wider coverage under these schemes.

The meeting was attended by General Manager DIC; Assistant Commissioner Development, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Assistant Director Fisheries, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, and other committee members.

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

Telefax:- 0194-2496089, Email ID:- mechhospsgr@jk.gov.in

GIST OF E-TENDER

e-NIT No: M&HDS/TS/2025-26/135/e-tendering,

Dated: 15.01.2026

(SHORT TERM)

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

Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Time of completion (in days)	AA Accorded Vide No:	TS No	Earnest Money	Position of Funds
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Refilling of various fire extinguishers at Govt. LD Hospital, Srinagar	0.889	100	10	04 MCS of 2025 Dt:08.05.2025	M&HDS/TS/78 Of 11/25	2% of the estimated cost	Available with intending Department

- Downloading of Bids:- The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q.), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 15.01.2026 (18.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 15.01.2026 (18.00 hrs)
- Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site 15.01.2026 (18.00 hrs) to 22.01.2026 (13:00hrs) in two (02) covers.
- Opening of Bids :- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 22.01.2026 at 15.00(hrs)

DIPK-10082/25

DATED: 15-01-2026

No: M&HDS/TS/7896-99 Dated:15.01.2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
M&HD, Srinagar

KASHMIR THUNDER

IS AVAILABLE AT ALL LEADING STALLS

7 Specially-abled students ace Class-12 exams

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 15: In an inspiring demonstration of resilience and determination, seven specially-abled students of Abhinandan Home, Rambagh, here, have cleared the Class 12 examinations with distinction, marking yet another proud moment for the institution dedicated to the education of children with disabilities.

All seven students, who are hearing and speech impaired or visually challenged, secured excellent marks, proving that physical limitations are no barrier to academic excellence when the right support system is in place. The achievement has been widely hailed by educators, parents and social activists as a testament to inclusive and specialised education.

Principal of Abhinandan Home, Mudasir Ahmad, said that the school appeared in the Class 12 examinations with seven students this year and every one of them passed with flying colours.

"This is only the second time in the institution's history that such an outstanding result has been recorded at the senior secondary level. For these children, Abhinandan Home

was not just a school but their only hope," he said.

Ahmad added that over the years, hundreds of specially-abled students from the institution have successfully completed their Class 12 education. "Many of our students have gone on to live independent and dignified lives despite immense challenges," he added.

The successful candidates include Tanzeela, who scored 454 marks; Abid with 453; Seerat with 450; Mohammad Umaq with 438; Burhan with 418; Muskan with 419; and Towheeda with 415 marks.

Sharing their journey, the students said that most of them had initially enrolled in regular schools but were forced to leave due to communication barriers, lack of understanding from peers and teachers, and the absence of appropriate learning tools.

"We struggled a lot in normal schools. It was only after joining Abhinandan Home that we truly felt understood and supported," they said.

The availability of Braille textbooks, large-print study material, sign-language-based teaching, and specially trained teachers played a



crucial role in our academic success, the students said.

"A specially-abled student has to work twice as hard as others. Our success belongs as much to our parents and teachers as to us," they said.

Family members of Abid, who is hearing and speech impaired said that if this institution did not exist, our son might never have been able to continue his studies and this school changed his life.

Tanzeela, who is visually impaired, echoed similar sentiments, saying that crossing the Class 12 milestone would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of her teachers and the unwavering support of her parents.

"Our teachers believed in us even when society doubted our abilities," she said.

The students said their message to others living with disabilities is clear and firm.

"We believe in making disability our strength, not our weakness. We want to show so-called 'normal' people that we can compete with them on equal footing," they said, urging students who had dropped out due to disability to rejoin education

through special schools.

However, amid the celebrations, a serious concern continues to trouble these achievers. The students pointed out that their academic journey now faces uncertainty due to the absence of separate or adequately inclusive college-level institutions for specially-abled students in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Once again, we are at a crossroads. There is no dedicated college for students like us, and we will be forced to join regular colleges that may not have the infrastructure or trained staff to support our needs," one of the students said.

"We fear that the lack of facilities at the higher education level may hinder our progress," they added.

Students collectively appealed to the government to take immediate steps to establish separate colleges for specially-abled students or, at the very least, create fully inclusive and well-equipped sections within existing colleges.

"Education should not stop at school. We request the authorities to intervene at the earliest so that students with disabilities are not pushed back into dependency after coming this far," they said—(KNO)

CS pushes faster housing development

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 15: In a significant push towards addressing the growing housing requirements of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Secretary chaired a meeting on Thursday to assess the progress and future roadmap of housing colonies being developed by the Jammu & Kashmir Housing Board (JKHB), Jammu Development Authority (JDA), and Srinagar Development Authority (SDA).

The review focused on ongoing, proposed, and planned housing projects, with particular emphasis on sustainable development, affordability, and timely execution through innovative models such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and Self-Financing Schemes (SFS) in both Kashmir and Jammu division.

The meeting besides Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD was attended by Vice-Chairmen, JDA/SAD; MD, JKHB Housing Board; CEO, CITAG and other concerned officers.

The Chief Secretary observed that the rapid shrinkage of available urban land coupled with steadily rising land prices has made housing increasingly unaffordable for large sections of the population. He emphasized that the government must proactively intervene through planned housing colonies to ensure that home ownership remains within reach of the common citizen, particularly middle- and lower-income groups.

Highlighting the strategic importance of public housing projects, he noted that structured, high-density housing developed by government agencies not only



optimizes land use but also significantly reduces per-unit costs, thereby making housing more accessible to a wider cross-section of society.

The Chief Secretary stressed that affordable housing cannot be achieved through isolated efforts and requires a coordinated, multi-agency approach supported by innovative development models. He underlined that leveraging PPP frameworks, self-financing schemes, and vertical development is essential to counter land scarcity while ensuring quality construction, adequate amenities, and long-term sustainability.

Speaking in this meeting the Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur remarked that the Department is alive to the social dimension that secure and affordable housing is central to social stability and economic well-being. She stated that government-led housing colonies play a vital role in preventing urban sprawl, reducing pressure on infrastructure, and ensuring equitable access to basic services for all segments of society.

She gave out the efforts made by the Department in the past in providing suitable housing units/

plots to the public and the present projects advancing in both the divisions of the UT. She also apprised the meeting about the future plans of the Department to raise housing projects here in different districts in PPP or self-financing mode to meet the dwelling requirements of all sections of the society.

The MD, Housing Board, Shahbaz Ahmed Mirza apprised the meeting that the Housing Board is actively developing multiple housing colonies across Jammu and Kashmir to cater to diverse income groups.

He revealed that several land parcels have been identified for development under the PPP model at locations including Birpur (Samba), Padgampora (Pulwama), Watapora (Bandipora), Chowadi (Jammu), Changran (Kathua), and Chatterhama (Srinagar). He added that the market and demand assessments are being finalized to ensure commercially viable and people-centric housing solutions are created at these locations.

Additionally, housing colonies at Chak Bhalwal (Jammu), Bakoor (Ganderbal), and Bhalwal (Jammu) have been approved under the Self-Financing Scheme.

Notably, these colonies envisage residential units along with modern amenities such as commercial spaces, parking, and other facilities for the amenable living of the inmates there.

The VC, Jammu Development Authority, Rupesh Kumar apprised the meeting that a substantial progress has been attained on JDA Heights Phase-II at Lower Roop Nagar, comprising 144 residential flats of various configurations. He said that the structural works have been completed, and the project has achieved approximately 75% physical progress.

He gave out that another major initiative of JDA includes the Transport Nagar, Narwal improvement and upgradation project featuring modern residential apartments, parking facilities, elevators, and community amenities.

Moreover, he revealed that JDA has also resolved several long-pending legacy issues during the current financial year, unlocking valuable land assets and improving institutional efficiency.

The VC, Srinagar Development Authority, Mohammad Rafi highlighted progress on Shehar Heights Phase-II at Bemina, where 112 additional flats are under construction, with project completion targeted for 2027-28. The project is being executed with advanced structural designs to ensure seismic safety and sustainability.

A flagship initiative under SDA is the development of the Satellite Township at Rakhi Gund Aksha, Bemina, spread over nearly 2,950 kanals in its initial phases. The township, launched in December 2022, has witnessed

overwhelming public response, with thousands of online applications received. It was further given out that NBCC has been engaged as the Project Executing Agency, and the township will be developed in a phased manner over five years.

A key highlight of the review was the government's emphasis on sustainable, net-zero housing colonies, aligned with India's commitments under COP-26. The adoption of PPP models aims to reduce government exposure while creating model townships that integrate energy efficiency, transit-oriented development (TOD) norms, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Additionally the CEO, CIT-AG (Centre for Innovation and Transformation in Governance) gave out that the centre is actively facilitating PPP-based housing and commercial projects by conducting site visits, preparing DPRs, and finalizing Expressions of Interest (EOIs) to attract national-level developers. Multiple land parcels across Jammu and Kashmir are being bundled and structured to ensure financial viability and inclusive development, including mandated EWS housing, he explained.

The Chief Secretary stressed the need for time-bound execution and quality construction, while ensuring affordability for the common citizen. He underscored that housing remains a key pillar of urban development and social well-being, and directed all agencies to work in coordination to translate these projects into tangible benefits for the people of J&K.

Parents gather outside DC Office, seek student evacuation from Iran



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 15: As the situation in Iran grows increasingly tense, anxious parents of Kashmiri students stranded there gathered outside the office of the District Commissioner (DC) Srinagar on Thursday, appealing for urgent government intervention to ensure their children's safety and evacuation.

Families said they have lost contact with their wards for several days due to a communication blackout and disruption in online banking services.

"We are completely cut off," Abdul Hameed, a resident of Parimpora, whose son is studying medicine in Tehran.

He said neither calls go through nor are they able to send money. "The embassy has advised them to leave, but how can they do that without assistance? Their safety, security and even their studies are at stake now," Hameed said. Another worried parent, Mohammad Sulaiman, echoed similar fears. "We can't even transfer money to our children. The banks are down, and students are frightened. We appeal to the government to please act now as it did during the crises in June and July," said. Parents said they had

gone to meet the DC Srinagar but to no avail. "We were told to leave our representation in the office. No one met us. We just want assurance that our children will be brought back safely," one parent said, fighting back tears.

The protest came hours after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said he had spoken to External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar regarding the safety of students and residents from Jammu and Kashmir currently in Iran, assuring that the situation was being closely monitored.

Meanwhile, sources aware of the developments told KNO that the first evacuation flight from Tehran to Delhi is scheduled for Friday morning. Kashmiri students have reportedly been registered, and the first batch has been asked to be ready by 8:00 AM.

"Parents are requested not to worry," the source said, adding that the government is coordinating to ensure the safe return of all students.

Notably, with communication lines down but hope slowly returning, parents in Kashmir wait anxiously, with their prayers fixed on the skies that will soon bring their children home—(KNO)

Police arrest peddler in Pulwama

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 15: Continuing its drive against the drug menace, Jammu and Kashmir Police in Pulwama arrested a drug peddler during Naka checking at Circular Road near Tahab Chowk.

According to a statement, during Naka checking, the Naka party intercepted one person identified as Bilal Ahmad Ganaie, son of Bashir Ahmad Ganaie, resident of Chatapora. Upon thorough search, contraband substances including cannabis (Charas Choori-like substance) weighing 413.50 grams, Charas (01 stick) weighing 36.5 grams, Charas powder weighing 70 grams was recovered from his possession.

Accordingly, a case FIR No. 08/2026 under section 8/20 NDPS Act has been registered at the concerned Police Station and investigation has been taken up. J&K Police remain committed to its mission of eradicating the menace of drugs from society and urge the general public to cooperate and share information to help in building a drug-free Pulwama, the statement reads—(KNO)

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pulwama, Jan 15: Defying geographical isolation, lack of basic infrastructure and everyday hardships, two students from far-flung areas of Tral in south Kashmir's Pulwama district delivered exceptional performances in the Class 10 board examinations.

According to the details, Rayees ul Islam, a tribal boy from the remote village of Zradihard Tral, secured an outstanding 491 marks out of 500, while Mudasir Ahmad Gojar from the highly isolated Nagnaad Tral scored an impressive 496 marks, proving that determination and consistency can overcome even the toughest odds.

Rayees, who studied in a local private school, comes from a modest tribal background where access to quality education and facilities remains



limited. He attributed his success to the unwavering support of his parents and teachers.

"Whatever I have achieved today is because of my parents and teachers. Many students fail

not because they lack ability, but because they don't listen to their parents and teachers," Rayees told KNO.

Rayees plans to opt for the science stream. "My dream is to become a doctor and serve society, especially people living in underdeveloped and marginalised areas. People in far-flung areas suffer due to the lack of medical facilities, and I want to change that," he said.

Sharing his mantra for success, Rayees emphasised the importance of discipline and perseverance. "Determination, consistency and self-motivation are the keys to success. There are no shortcuts," he said.

However, Rayees also raised serious concerns about the neglect of remote tribal areas.

Continued on
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Remote Tral villages celebrate as students excel in Class 10

EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: Piety As A Holistic Way Of Being

In the Islamic tradition, true piety (Taqwa) is a profound, all-encompassing state of the heart that shapes every facet of a believer's life. It is the conscious awareness of God's presence, coupled with a vigilant effort to live in accordance with His will. The Quran offers the most eloquent definition, stating the righteous are those "who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them, and who believe in what has been revealed to you, and what was revealed before

you, and have firm faith in the Hereafter" (2:3-4). This verse seamlessly links faith with actionable deeds—prayer, charity, and belief—establishing piety as a holistic way of being. The Quran repeatedly emphasises that the true measure of a person is not their lineage or appearance, but their piety: "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" (49:13). This righteousness is defined by a moral compass oriented toward justice, mercy, and compassion. Piety is thus the inner guard

that prevents transgression, as the believer acts not out of fear of societal judgment, but out of consciousness of the Divine. The Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) beautifully illustrate the practical manifestations of this inner state. He taught that piety resides in the heart, and his famous response to a question about the essence of goodness directs one to "consult your heart." He explained that righteousness is that which brings peace to the soul, while sin is that which wavers in the

heart, even if people repeatedly sanction it. This internal moral barometer, calibrated by divine guidance, is the core of Taqwa. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) linked piety directly to ethical conduct towards others. He stated, "Piety is good character," and warned that fasting, prayer, and pilgrimage may not benefit one who fails to guard their tongue and actions from harming others. True piety, therefore, demands honesty in trade, kindness to neighbours, care for parents, and justice in all dealings. In essence, Islamic

piety is the harmonious integration of sincere worship and impeccable social ethics. It is the spiritual discipline that transforms ritual acts into meaningful worship and daily interactions into opportunities for divine pleasure. It is not a cloak worn for appearances, but the very fabric of a believer's character—woven from faith, manifested in good deeds, and dedicated entirely to the contentment of Allah. This is the Taqwa that elevates the human spirit and purifies society.

India's Tunnels: Engineering Marvels Beneath The Surface

Press Information Bureau

Carving Connectivity: The Story of India's Tunnels

Tunnels in India represent more than infrastructure development; they reflect the nation's determination to overcome geographical challenges. By cutting through mountains and terrain that once limited connectivity, tunnels have enabled year-round transportation. They have also improved access to remote regions and strengthened links between communities. From strategic Himalayan tunnels to urban metro networks, these projects are transforming how India moves people, goods, and resources. Built using modern engineering and innovative planning, tunnels play a vital role in economic growth, national security, and regional development. They are shaping a more connected and resilient country.

India's tunnelling boom is being propelled by national highway expansion, alongside strategic border infrastructure, metro rail growth, bullet-train corridors, and all-weather connectivity initiatives in remote regions. As infrastructure scales up, tunnelling has become one of the fastest-growing construction domains.

Why Tunnel Infrastructure Matters More Than Ever

Tunnels are rapidly reshaping India's developmental map, offering smarter, safer, and more sustainable alternatives to traditional transport routes. Their impact goes far beyond engineering. They catalyse regional development, enhance strategic preparedness, and improve the daily lives of millions.

India's Evolving Tunnel Technology

Over the past decade, India's tunnelling capability has transformed. It has progressed from traditional drill-and-blast methods to sophisticated technologies. This enables faster, safer, and more complex underground construction. Modern projects now rely on advanced geological mapping and real-time monitoring systems, allowing the engineers to construct longer and deeper tunnels even in harsh conditions.

Contemporary Indian tunnels are designed as high-tech, safety-integrated corridors equipped with engineered ventilation systems, emergency escape routes, fire-suppression units, LED lighting, CCTV surveillance, and centralised tunnel control rooms. This modernisation has significantly improved both operational reliability and disaster readiness.

Key Technologies Driving India's Tunnel Revolution

Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs)

Used extensively in metro networks and long rail/road tunnels, TBMs provide high precision, reduced vibration, and enhanced safety in densely populated and geologically complex regions.

New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM)

Widely adopted in the Himalayas, NATM allows engineers to adapt excavation support in real time, making it ideal for variable and fragile rock formations.

Integrated Tunnel Control Systems (ITCS)

Critical for modern road tunnels, ITCS combines ventilation control, fire detection, communication networks, CCTV, and emergency management into a centralised digital platform, ensuring 24/7 safety.

India's Landmark Tunnels: Defining Modern Infrastructure

India's expanding infrastructure has given rise to a series of remarkable tunnels



that redefine how people and goods move across the country. Each tunnel stands as a testament to innovation and problem-solving on a grand scale.

Atal Tunnel

Tucked beneath the snow-laden peaks of the Pir Panjal ranges, the Atal Tunnel stretches 9.02 km, providing a high-altitude passage that bypasses Rohtang Pass. Its completion has transformed connectivity, enabling seamless, year-round travel between Manali and the remote valleys of Lahaul-Spiti. The tunnel's strategic significance also lies in ensuring safe, reliable access for civilians and defence movement alike under challenging mountain conditions. It is officially recognised as the World's Longest Highway Tunnel above 10,000 feet in 2022 by the World Book of Records UK. The tunnel has cut the Manali-Sarchu distance by 46 km and reduced travel time by four to five hours. Built in harsh Himalayan conditions where winter temperatures dropped to -25°C and the tunnel interior sometimes reached 45°C, its construction demanded exceptional resilience. Engineers faced fragile geology, Seri Nala seepage that once flooded the tunnel, heavy overburden, and intense snowfall, all of which were successfully overcome by the Border Roads Organisation's (BRO) dedicated Karmyogis.

Z-Morh/Sonamarg Tunnel

The Sonamarg Tunnel, a 12-km engineering feat carved through mountains at an altitude of over 8,650 feet above sea level, is set to transform travel in Jammu & Kashmir. It is built at a cost of 2,700 crore. It includes a 6.4-km main tunnel, an egress tunnel, and modern approach roads creating an all-weather lifeline between Srinagar and the golden meadows of Sonamarg, and further towards Ladakh. No longer will avalanches, landslides, or heavy snowfall cut the region off. The tunnel keeps the route open improving access to major hospitals and ensuring the availability of essential supplies. Constructed using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM) for challenging Himalayan geology, the tunnel is a major technological milestone. It features an Integrated Tunnel Management System (ITMS) with advanced systems such as Public Address System, Electrical Fire Signalling System, Radio Re-Broadcast System (FM), Dynamic Road Information Panel (DRIP), etc. It is designed to handle about 1,000 vehicles per hour. Once paired with the upcoming Zojila Tunnel (2028), the journey will shrink from 49 km to 43 km, with speeds rising from 30 km/hr to 70 km/hr, boosting defense logistics, winter tourism, adventure sports, and

the livelihoods of the people who call these mountains home.

Sela Tunnel

The Sela Tunnel, dedicated to the nation during the Viksit Bharat Viksit North East programme in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, is built by the BRO at 13,000 feet on the Tezpur-Tawang route. The tunnel is constructed at a cost of Rs 825 crore. It ensures all-weather connectivity and holds immense strategic value for the Armed Forces while boosting socio-economic growth in the border region. Built using the New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM), it stands as a powerful reminder of how perseverance and regional commitment can reshape the future of remote mountain communities.

Banihal-Qazigund Road Tunnel

The Banihal-Qazigund Road Tunnel, constructed at a cost of over 3,100 crore, is an 8.45-km-long twin-tube tunnel designed to significantly improve connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir. The tunnel has reduced the road distance between Banihal and Qazigund by 16 km and has cut travel time by approximately one and a half hours. Built with two separate tubes, one for each direction of traffic, the tunnel is interconnected by cross passages at every 500 metres to facilitate maintenance and emergency evacuation. It has established an all-weather road link, thereby strengthening accessibility and bringing the two regions closer.

Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Tunnel

Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Tunnel, formerly known as the Chenani-Nashri Tunnel in Jammu & Kashmir is a 9-km-long, twin-tube, all-weather road tunnel connecting Udhampur and Ramban. Built at an elevation of about 1,200 metres in difficult Himalayan terrain, it has reduced travel time between Jammu and Srinagar by nearly two hours while bypassing 41 km of road length. The tunnel features advanced ventilation, safety, and intelligent traffic systems operated through a fully integrated control mechanism with minimal human intervention, along with enhanced security measures. Developed in line with the Make in India and Skill India initiatives, the skill sets of local people were improved, and they were engaged for construction of this tunnel. The project generated employment for over 2,000 local workers, with nearly 94 percent of the workforce drawn from Jammu and Kashmir.

Tunnel T50 under USBRL Project

Tunnel T50, a 12.77-km engineering feat connecting Khari and Sumer in Jammu & Kashmir, stands as one of India's longest transportation tunnel constructed under the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, forming a crucial rail lifeline between the Kashmir Valley and the rest of the country. Constructed using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method, it cuts through challenging geology ranging from quartzite and gneiss to phyllite, with engineers overcoming high-water ingress, landslides, shear zones, and jointed volcanic rock. The tunnel features a main tube paired with a parallel escape tunnel, linked every 375 metres for safety. Enhanced with CCTV cameras placed every 50 metres and monitored from a central control room, T50 is designed for secure, seamless rail operations.

Kolkata's Underwater Metro Tunnel

In 2024, India marked a historic breakthrough with the launch of its first underwater metro tunnel in Kolkata, linking Esplanade and Howrah Maidan beneath the Hooghly River. This engineering feat not only showcases the nation's rising technological and infrastructural capabilities but also redefines urban mobility for one of India's busiest metropolitan regions.

India's Next Wave of Tunnel Projects

A new generation of tunnels is preparing to take shape. These forthcoming projects promise to redefine how the nation moves and connects. The following upcoming projects highlight the scale of progress underway.

Zojila Tunnel

The Zojila Tunnel is emerging as a monumental achievement in India's infrastructure landscape, cutting through some of the most formidable Himalayan rock formations to establish a dependable, all-weather link between Ladakh and the rest of the country. With nearly 12 kilometers already completed, the project integrates advanced safety measures and a semi-transverse ventilation system designed to maintain steady airflow deep within the mountains. The project incorporates a Smart Tunnel (SCADA) system constructed using the New Austrian Tunneling Method. It is equipped with facilities such as CCTV surveillance, radio control, uninterrupted power supply, and ventilation systems. The adoption of modern technology in this project has resulted in savings of over 5,000 crore for the government. Once completed, this ambitious undertaking will become India's longest road tunnel and Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel,

Key Takeaways

- With landmark projects like the Atal Tunnel, India is rapidly expanding its tunnel infrastructure.
- Record-breaking rail links led by the 12.77-km Tunnel T50 are reshaping India's freight and connectivity network.
- Upcoming mega-tunnels like Zojila will provide all-weather access to Ladakh, boosting mobility, defence reach, and regional growth.

reinforcing its national significance. Rising at an altitude of 11,578 feet and unfolding across over 30 kilometers, the project is on track for a 2028 completion. As a critical component of the Srinagar Kargil-Leh National Highway, it promises to enhance both civilian and military mobility across the region.

Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Tunnel

India's Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail corridor has marked a futuristic leap with the breakthrough on its 4.8-km undersea tunnel section. It is a defining feature of the nation's first bullet-train route. Excavated simultaneously from the Ghansoli and Shilphata ends, the project posed extraordinary challenges. The teams advanced through difficult underwater terrain before meeting with precision, an achievement hailed as a landmark in India's engineering history. The project utilizes the advanced New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM), supported by comprehensive safety measures. Designed using single-tube technology capable of housing two high-speed trains, this tunnel stands at the forefront of cutting-edge rail construction and reflects the innovation driving India's next-generation transport infrastructure.

Rishikesh-Karnaprayag New Rail Line Project Tunnels

The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line in Uttarakhand is a landmark tunnelling project in the Indian Himalayas. Spanning about 125 km, the alignment passes through some of the most geologically complex and environmentally sensitive Himalayan terrain. This has resulted in the project being predominantly tunnel-based. It comprises 16 main line tunnels with a cumulative length of approximately 105 km and 12 parallel escape tunnels totaling about 98 km. Overall, 199 km of tunnelling has been completed against a total scope of 213 km. A major technological milestone of the project is the deployment of a Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) in Himalayan geology for the first time in Indian Railways. It is used for the 14.8 km-long Tunnel T-8, where a successful breakthrough has been achieved. Advanced tunnelling techniques and continuous monitoring have been adopted to minimize ecological impact while ensuring safety and long-term stability. This makes the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag tunnels a defining example of high-altitude railway tunnelling in India.

Light At the End of the Tunnel

India's tunnel infrastructure reflects a clear shift toward smarter and more resilient development. These projects solve long-standing connectivity challenges while supporting economic growth and national priorities. Advances in technology and execution have strengthened India's ability to build safely in complex terrain. As new tunnels come into operation, they will continue to improve mobility, reliability, and regional integration. Together, they signal a future where geography is no longer a limitation to progress.

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

BISAG partnership drives major IT-Led governance transformation in J&K

KT New Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 15: For decades, governance in Jammu & Kashmir was shaped by its geography—mountains, remoteness and access gaps that often made service delivery slow and uneven. Over the past few years, the Union Territory has witnessed not incremental digitisation, but its first comprehensive IT-led governance transformation—one that has unfolded steadily, strategically and with enduring impact.

This transformation, as per an official statement issued on Thursday, is not defined by isolated mobile applications or stand-alone portals. Rather, it marks a systemic shift in the way governance is conceived, delivered and monitored, with technology now embedded into the core architecture of administration.

The Architecture of Change At the heart of this transformation are 35 pioneering IT interventions implemented across 20 departments, developed in

close partnership with BISAG-N. These initiatives have replaced fragmented, paper-intensive processes with integrated digital platforms that are real-time, transparent and citizen-centric.

What distinguishes Jammu & Kashmir's IT journey is not the scale alone, but the manner in which technology has been deployed—not as an add-on, but as a redesign of governance itself. From agriculture and healthcare to welfare delivery, grievance redressal and industrial planning, departments now function on shared dashboards, live data streams and outcome-based monitoring systems.

This decisive shift—from file movement to field visibility—marks the true inflection point in governance over the last two years.

Agriculture Goes Digital: Farmers at the Centre

The transformation is perhaps most visible in agriculture, a sector that sustains a significant portion of Jammu & Kashmir's population. The Daksh Kisan Portal, India's first Learning Management System (LMS)

dedicated exclusively to farmers, represents a quiet yet path-breaking intervention.

For the first time, farmers have access to structured, certified digital learning modules tailored to local crops, climate conditions and farming practices. Through videos, assessments and progress tracking, Daksh Kisan moves beyond advisories to genuine capacity building—empowering farmers with knowledge rather than instructions and bridging long-standing gaps in extension services.

This initiative is complemented by Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) and the Kisan Sathi 360 Dashboard, which together integrate data from multiple agricultural schemes under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP). Administrators and farmers alike now have a unified, real-time view of progress, outputs and outcomes.

Processes that once required multiple visits, registers and follow-ups are now visible on a single screen, making agriculture

governance more predictable, responsive and accountable.

Empowering Youth, Enterprise and Innovation

IT interventions have also reshaped youth engagement with the economy. The digital ecosystem under Mission YUVA goes far beyond online applications. Its AI-based Detailed Project Report (DPR) generator—a national first—enables aspiring entrepreneurs to convert ideas into structured, bankable business plans with minimal procedural friction.

For youth in remote and rural blocks, this translates into seamless access to financial assistance, skill development modules, career counselling and market linkages—without navigating multiple bureaucratic layers. The result is not only ease of doing business, but enhanced confidence to participate in economic activity.

Healthcare, Grievances and Citizen-Centric Governance

In healthcare, JK SEHAT has brought tele-consultation, hospital discovery and service availability directly to citizens'

fingertips, particularly benefiting populations in far-flung areas. Telemedicine services, geo-tagged health facilities and multilingual access have significantly reduced travel, waiting times and uncertainty for patients.

Similarly, JK Samadhan, the unified grievance redressal and monitoring system, has institutionalised accountability across departments. Citizens no longer pursue offices for redressal; grievances are digitally logged, tracked and reviewed through centralized dashboards, enabling senior officers to identify systemic issues rather than isolated complaints.

These platforms signify more than convenience—they represent a shift in governance power dynamics by placing information, visibility and accountability firmly in the hands of citizens.

AI, Geospatial Intelligence and Smart Administration A defining feature of Jammu & Kashmir's IT transformation is its calibrated adoption of AI-driven governance tools. From AI-based GST fraud detection

systems to intelligent search engines that allow officials to query multiple databases through natural language, technology is increasingly being used to anticipate risks, prevent leakages and support informed decision-making.

Advanced geospatial mapping of industrial assets, healthcare facilities, welfare coverage and infrastructure has introduced a level of planning precision rarely seen at the sub-national level. Policy decisions are now guided by live, location-specific data rather than assumptions.

Several of these interventions are already being recognised as unique in the country and readily replicable by other states and Union Territories.

A Greener Footprint of Governance

Beyond efficiency, the digital shift has also delivered environmental gains. The transition to paperless systems, online surveys, digital certifications, tele-consultations and remote monitoring has led to a substantial reduction in carbon footprints.

Fewer physical visits, reduced paperwork and optimised logistics together represent a quieter yet meaningful contribution to sustainable governance—an outcome seldom associated with administrative reform, but deeply embedded in Jammu & Kashmir's digital transformation.

A Journey Still Unfolding

Officials describe the current phase as only the beginning. With robust foundational platforms now firmly in place, the next phase will focus on deeper AI integration, predictive analytics, enhanced cross-departmental interoperability and more anticipatory governance models.

What Jammu & Kashmir has achieved over the past two years is not a digital makeover, but a structural reset of governance. From being viewed as a late entrant in e-governance, the Union Territory is now advancing on the IT path like never before—setting benchmarks that resonate well beyond its borders. The revolution may be quiet, but its impact is unmistakable.

WMDA bans littering, warns of penalties for waste violations

KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, JANUARY 15: In a significant step aimed to safeguard the fragile ecosystem and enhance cleanliness in Manasbal area, the Wullar-Manasbal Development Authority (MDA) has appealed people living in catchment areas and stakeholders besides tourists to ensure scientific waste management, prevent littering and promote a clean, hygienic and environmentally sustainable Manasbal.

As per a notification of WMDA, households, commercial establishments and institutions have been directed to hand over their waste only to the designated sanitation staff of WMDA or collection vehicles of the Rural Development Department, Block Safapora, at the notified time and place.

The public has been strictly advised to segregate waste at source, separating wet/biodegradable waste such as kitchen and food waste from dry/non-biodegradable waste

including plastic, paper, glass and metal. Mixing of wet and dry waste has been prohibited.

The Authority has also imposed a complete ban on dumping of garbage, plastic waste or construction debris on roads, open spaces, water bodies, drains and other public places. Burning of waste in open areas has likewise been prohibited. Citizens have been urged to use designated dustbins and collection points and avoid dumping waste at unauthorised locations.

Further, the Authority has cautioned that any violation of these directions shall invite penal action under the J&K Development Act, Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and other relevant regulations, including the imposition of fines and other legal proceedings.

Seeking active public participation, the Manasbal Development Authority appealed to residents, traders, visitors and institutions to cooperate in making Manasbal a litter-free, clean and plastic-free destination.

Gujjar-Bakerwal hostel students shine in JKBOSE Class 10, 12 results

Tribal Affairs Minister lauds meritorious achievers

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 15: The students residing in various Gujjar-Bakerwal (G&B) Hostels across the Winter Zone have registered an outstanding performance in the recently declared Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) Class 10th and 12th examination results, reflecting their dedication, perseverance and the enabling academic atmosphere being provided in the hostels.

As per the consolidated result details, 147 students appeared in the Class 10th examinations, of which, 136 students passed, achieving an overall pass percentage of 92%, with 30 students securing distinctions.

Several hostels, including G&B Hostel Budgam, Boys Hostel Pulwama, Girls Hostel Srinagar, Boys Hostel Kupwara, Kishtwar (Chatroo) and Doda, have recorded a 100% pass percentage, underscoring remarkable academic consistency.

The Class 12th results, as per an official statement, were equally encouraging. Out of 94 students who appeared, 83 students qualified successfully, registering an overall pass percentage of 88.29%, with 38 distinction holders.

A number of hostels including Pulwama, Anantnag, Shopian, Bandipora, Girls Hostel Srinagar and Kupwara have achieved a 100% success rate, with Girls Hostel Srinagar alone contributing 16 distinction holders.

J&K Tribal Affairs Minister



Javed Ahmed Rana has congratulated all the successful students particularly those belonging to the tribal communities for their excellent performance. He lauded the committed efforts of the Hostel Wardens and staff, whose guidance and mentoring played a vital role in these achievements.

He said the results reflect the effectiveness of welfare initiatives aimed at uplifting educational standards among the tribal students.

The Minister conveyed special congratulations and best wishes to Saira Noor of G&B Girls Hostel, Srinagar, who secured an exceptional 99.20% marks and bagged outstanding position in the JKBOSE Class 10th examination.

Rana described her achievement as a source of inspiration for the entire Gujjar-Bakerwal community, especially for young girls aspiring to excel in academics.

Reaffirming Omar Abdullah Government's commitment, the Minister stated that focused efforts will continue to strengthen the hostel facilities and educational support systems to ensure holistic development and brighter futures for tribal students.

Javid Dar meets Union Agriculture Minister, seeks enhanced central support for J&K

KT News Desk

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 15: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Departments, Jammu & Kashmir, Javid Ahmad Dar, Thursday called on the Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development and held detailed discussion on key issues concerning agriculture, horticulture and rural development in the Union Territory.

During the meeting, Javid Dar, as per an official statement, apprised the Union Minister of the progress and implementation status of major Centrally Sponsored Schemes and flagship programmes in Jammu & Kashmir. He highlighted the sectoral priorities including strengthening of agricultural infrastructure, promotion of horticulture, expansion of irrigation and water management facilities, farm mechanisation, availability of quality seeds and inputs, extension services and enhancement of rural livelihoods.

The Minister specifically sought early release of the second instalment under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and Krishonnati Yojana. He emphasised that timely financial support is crucial for uninterrupted execution of



ongoing projects and effective delivery of benefits to the farmers.

Emphasising the unique agro-climatic conditions, difficult terrain and recent weather-related challenges faced by Jammu & Kashmir, the Minister urged the Union Government to accord special consideration for restoration of rural infrastructure and strengthening of farm-based livelihoods.

The Minister also discussed the recently concluded India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement and conveyed the concerns of apple growers of Jammu & Kashmir regarding its potential impact on domestic

markets.

The Union Minister assured that the interests of local farmers would remain the foremost priority of the Government of India. He said that adequate safeguards would be ensured to protect the domestic horticulture, particularly the apple sector.

The Union Minister further assured that all the issues raised would be examined expeditiously for resolution. He reiterated the Government of India's commitment in extending all necessary support for the continued development of agriculture, horticulture and rural sectors in Jammu & Kashmir.

RDD Secretary reviews SBM-G progress, stresses timely completion of sanitation infrastructure

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 15: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) and to deliberate on the formulation of the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) 2026-27 for Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Director General, Rural Sanitation, Anoo Malhotra; Additional District Development Commissioners (ADDCs); Superintending Engineers and Executive Engineers of REV; Assistant Commissioners Panchayats (ACPs); and other concerned officers.

Reviewing the status of SBM-G assets, it was noted that community-level works such as Community Compost Pits, Community Soak Pits, Community Sanitary Complexes and Segregation Sheds have shown encouraging progress. However, larger infrastructure projects—including Plastic Waste Management Units (PWMUs), Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs), DEWATS and GOBARdhan



plants—continue to lag, primarily due to low levels of tendering and slow execution.

The Secretary stressed that Plastic Waste Management Units must be developed in and around Yatra transit camps to strengthen sanitation arrangements and waste handling mechanisms.

He noted that such facilities would also support revenue generation and improve overall upkeep of Yatra infrastructure, underscoring the need for integrated planning and sustained maintenance.

He said districts like Rajouri, Jammu, Reasi, Samba, and Udhampur have reported high levels of tender finalisation, early work commencement, and substantial completion of sanitation assets.

Similarly, Bandipora and Kupwara have also recorded steady improvement, signalling better coordination between planning and execution at the district level.

Highlighting environmental concerns, Secretary emphasised the need for a permanent solution for debris management in both rural and semi-urban areas.

Addressing implementation gaps, he directed that tendering for all pending major assets be completed immediately, and works commenced without delay where allotments have already been made. He made ADDCs directly responsible for resolving land-related issues and ensuring commencement of works, calling for close coordination with line departments and regular district-level

reviews.

The Secretary directed the DG Rural Sanitation to undertake bi-weekly reviews of SBM-G asset progress, while ADDCs were instructed to continuously monitor implementation in their respective districts. He identified land availability and timely initiation of works as the two most critical factors requiring focused attention. District Commissioners were asked to intervene wherever land issues persist, while Superintending Engineers and Executive Engineers were directed to resolve DPR-related issues on priority and ensure time-bound execution.

Stressing that sanitation infrastructure must translate into functional service delivery, the meeting also reviewed progress under Individual Household Latrines (IHHLs) for 2025-26. The Secretary directed that geo-tagging be completed on priority and long-pending IHHL cases be cleared within fixed timelines, cautioning that delays adversely impact ODF sustainability and beneficiary confidence.

Under the GOBARdhan initiative, 18 biogas plants are planned across the Union Territory. Secretary emphasised that GOBARdhan projects and FSTPs are central to sustainable

waste management and circular economy objectives, and directed officers to expedite tendering, address contractor response issues and ensure convergence with other schemes.

The status of Operations & Maintenance (O&M) and Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) policies was also reviewed. Draft policies, prepared after public consultation and incorporating inputs from the Environment Committee of the J&K Legislative Assembly, have been submitted for legal vetting and are currently under examination by the Law Department. The Secretary stressed that finalisation of these policies is essential for long-term sustainability of SBM-G assets.

Discussions were also initiated on the AIP 2026-27, with emphasis on realistic planning, prioritisation of incomplete works and greater focus on large waste-management infrastructure.

Calling for a results-oriented approach, Secretary Asad directed officers to move beyond target-centric implementation and focus on timely completion, functionality and effective utilisation of sanitation assets to sustain gains achieved under SBM-G in rural Jammu and Kashmir.

DC Kupwara chairs NCORD meeting



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JANUARY 15: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Thursday chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee under the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) to review the measures undertaken by various departments to review the ongoing anti-drug measures and the overall response to drug abuse and trafficking in the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by SSP Kupwara, Syed Tahir Al Geelani; SSP Handwara, Sahil Sarangal; ADC Kupwara, Gulzar Ahmad Khan; ACP Kupwara, CEO, CMO, MS Associated hospital GMC Handwara and other concerned officers. Principals of Government Degree Colleges (GDCs) and Tehsildars participated in the meeting virtually.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner sought detailed feedback from all departments on the progress made on various important

agenda points like functioning of ATF and DDRC, ongoing awareness drive, CCTV surveillance monitoring in hot spot areas, Nasha mukta Panchayat, rehabilitation etc.

SSP Kupwara and SSP Handwara briefed about enforcement action and preventive initiatives undertaken including registration of cases, arrests, seizures, licence suspensions, and attachment of properties related to narcotics offences.

While addressing the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for sustained and coordinated efforts to eradicate drug abuse and addiction in the district. He directed the concerned departments to work proactively and aggressively, with special focus on the rehabilitation by facilitating self-employment opportunities.

CEO Kupwara and all Principals of GDCs were instructed to submit status of working of CCTV cameras to ensure strict surveillance and deter drug-related activities.

KCCI holds key meeting with customs officials to boost export facilitation

Discussions focus on addressing procedural challenges, infra needs, policy support to enhance export competitiveness from J&K

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jan 15: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Thursday organised an interactive session with senior officials of the Customs Department at the Chamber Office to discuss key issues confronting exporters from Jammu & Kashmir and to explore ways to facilitate smoother export operations from the region.

The interaction was attended by Mr. Sanjay Gupta, Chief Commissioner, Customs Preventive Zone, Delhi; Mr. Alok Srivastava, Commissioner, Customs Preventive Commissionerate, Amritsar; Mr. Buddhi Prakash, Additional Commissioner, Customs Preventive Commissionerate, Amritsar; Mr. Puneet Gunawat, Joint Commissioner, Customs Preventive Commissionerate, Amritsar; and Mr. Purushottam Gupta, Assistant Commissioner, Customs Preventive Division, Jammu.

President, Kashmir Chamber



of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Javid Ahmad Tenga, welcomed the Customs officials and appreciated their willingness to engage directly with exporters and industry stakeholders. The meeting was attended by members of the Executive Committee, past presidents of the Chamber, and a large number of exporter members.

In his address, Mr. Javid Ahmad Tenga highlighted major concerns faced by exporters, including

drawback-related issues, procedural and compliance challenges, and the infrastructure deficit at Srinagar International Airport, particularly with regard to cargo handling facilities and operational constraints during adverse weather conditions. He stressed that these bottlenecks adversely affect the competitiveness of exports from Kashmir.

Outlining KCCI's vision, Mr. Javid Ahmad Tenga emphasised the need to substantially increase

exports from the Kashmir region and said the Chamber aims to work towards doubling exports through improved infrastructure, facilitative Customs procedures, and supportive policy interventions. He underlined the urgent requirement to upgrade export infrastructure on a war-footing basis and reiterated KCCI's long-standing demand for the establishment of an Inland Container Depot (ICD) in the region.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of Jammu and Kashmir Bank, including Mr. Vishal Sharma, Chief Manager (Forex), J&K Bank, and Mr. Shabir Ahmad Reshi. The Bank officials shared the perspective of the banking sector on issues faced by exporters, particularly those relating to issuance of Electronic Bank Realisation Certificates (e-BRCs), timelines and procedural requirements, and requests for extension of export bills.

A dedicated question-and-answer session formed an important part of the interaction, during which exporters directly raised

their operational and procedural concerns and sought clarifications from the Customs officials on issues relating to drawback processing, documentation requirements, cargo movement, and airport-related logistics.

Mr. Sanjay Gupta gave a patient hearing to the issues and queries raised by the exporters and assured that genuine concerns would be examined at appropriate levels.

Mr. Alok Srivastava reiterated the Customs Department's commitment to trade facilitation and constructive engagement with stakeholders while ensuring regulatory compliance.

Mr. Rauf Ahmad Punjabi, Past President, KCCI presented a vote of thanks and requested the Customs officials to organize an awareness workshop for exporters. The Chief Commissioner, Customs Preventive Zone, Delhi appreciated the suggestion of Mr. Punjabi and assured KCCI that an awareness workshop will be organized in April at Srinagar.

Former DC Poonch Vikas Kundal receives COAS Disc Award

Honored for distinguished service during Operation Sindoor



KT News Desk

Poonch, Jan 14: Vikas Kundal (IAS), former Deputy Commissioner of Poonch, has been awarded the prestigious Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Disc Award in recognition of his exemplary administrative leadership and outstanding contributions during Operation Sindoor.

The award honors Kundal's effective coordination with the Indian Army and civil administration, showcasing his unwavering commitment to public service during a critical operational period. His proactive approach, prompt decision-making, and efficient crisis management significantly

contributed to ensuring seamless civil-military coordination, public safety, and the continuity of essential services during the operation.

The COAS Disc Award is a distinguished honor awarded for high-order service and reflects Shri Kundal's dedication, professionalism, and sense of duty beyond routine administrative responsibilities.

The people of Poonch have expressed pride and appreciation for this recognition, viewing it as a moment of honor for the district. The award also underscores the vital role civil servants play in supporting national security initiatives through effective governance and collaboration with the armed forces.

Iran's nationwide protests appear increasingly smothered after crackdown and internet outage

AP

Dubai, Jan 15: The nationwide protests challenging Iran's theocracy appeared increasingly smothered Thursday, a week after authorities shut the country off from the world and escalated a bloody crackdown that activists say has killed at least 2,637 people.

The prospect of US retaliation for the deaths of protesters still hung over the region, though President Donald Trump signalled a possible de-escalation, saying the killing appeared to be

ending.

The US announced new sanctions on Iranian officials accused of suppressing the protests, which began late last month over the country's faltering economy and the collapse of its currency.

In Iran's capital, Tehran, witnesses said recent mornings showed no new signs of bonfires lit the night before or debris in the streets. The sound of gunfire, which had been intense for several nights, has also faded.

Meanwhile, Iranian state media has announced wave after

wave of arrests by authorities, targeting those it calls "terrorists" while also apparently looking for Starlink satellite internet dishes, which offer the only way to get videos and images out to the internet.

"Since January 8, we saw a full-fledged war, and anybody who was in the gathering since then is a criminal," said Justice Minister Amin Hossein Rahimi, according to a report Wednesday from the judiciary's Mizan news agency.

Iranian state media broadcast a roster of damage from what

it called a "terrorist operation," including damage to hundreds of stores and public buildings, scores of cars and ambulances and several "heritage sites," including mosques and shrines.

China's foreign ministry said Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told his Chinese counterpart that the situation in the country was now stable.

But as Iran tries to assert control at home, it has signaled worries about threats from abroad, including the United States, which has threatened military action over the

killing of peaceful demonstrators. Tensions soared after Trump's comment Tuesday that "help is on its way" to Iranian protesters.

The Islamic Republic shut down its airspace for hours early Thursday without explanation, something it has done in previous rounds of attacks between it and Israel, as well as during the 12-day war in June.

The US also took steps to move some personnel from Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base while warning diplomats in Kuwait to stay away from military bases

where American troops are stationed. Britain closed its Tehran embassy and withdrew British staff from Iran.

Airspace shut

The airspace closure lasted for over four hours, according to pilot guidance issued by Iran, which lies on a key east-west flight route. International carriers diverted north and south around Iran, but after one extension, the closure appeared to have expired, and several domestic flights were in the air just after 7 am.

Around midday, Iranian state

television carried a statement from the country's Civil Aviation Authority saying that the nation's "skies are hosting incoming and outgoing flights, and airports are providing services to passengers." It did not acknowledge the closure.

The closure immediately rippled through global aviation.

"Several airlines have already reduced or suspended services, and most carriers are avoiding Iranian airspace," said the website SafeAirspace, which provides information on conflict areas and air travel.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Union Home Secy wraps

and neutralise terrorists in the forested areas of these districts over the past few weeks. Sources said that the Home Secretary flew back to New Delhi after concluding his 2-day visit to J&K today. (KNO)

Republic Day celebrations

security review meeting in Jammu, focusing on strengthening the counter-terrorism operations across the region.

He reviewed the prevailing security situation, assessed operational preparedness, and emphasised coordination among security agencies to ensure effective responses to emerging challenges.

The Border Security Force (BSF) has strengthened anti-infiltration measures in north Kashmir's Baniptora sector following intelligence inputs indicating increased attempts of infiltration from across the border.

Speaking with reporter in Baniptora, DIG BSF Sector Headquarters Baniptora, N K Babu said that the BSF has enhanced surveillance and ground deployment to counter any such attempts.

He said that drone surveillance has been increased and foot patrols intensified across vulnerable areas. "The BSF, in coordination with the Army, has deployed multi-layered anti-infiltration grids in successive lines to monitor movement along the border. The vehicle and foot patrols have also been increased along the main road connecting Baniptora to Razdan Pass and Gurez to maintain surveillance and prevent movement of suspicious elements".

He also said the BSF units are deployed at high-altitude locations ranging between 12,000 and 16,000 feet and are continuing operations despite challenging terrain and weather conditions. "The force is prepared to ensure security in the sector and maintain normalcy during the Republic Day celebrations," he said. (KNO)

LG Manoj Sinha to

the function at Srinagar; Minister for Health and Medical Education Sakina Ittoo at Anantnag; Minister for Jal Shakti Javed Ahmad Rana at Poonch; Minister for Rural Development Javed Ahmad Dar at Baramulla; and Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Satish Sharma at Kathua.

As per the letter, the District Development Council chairpersons will preside over functions at district headquarters in other 14 districts.

The Sub-Divisional Magistrates will preside over the main functions at their respective sub-divisional headquarters, whereas the Tehsildar or senior civil officer will preside at the respective Tehsil, Block, or Municipal headquarters, as decided by the concerned Deputy Commissioners. (KNO)

Temperatures improve

recorded minus 4.7 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 5.3 degrees Celsius the previous day, while Pahalgam recorded minus 5.0 degrees Celsius, up from minus 6.0 degrees Celsius.

Kupwara recorded a minimum of minus 4.9 degrees Celsius, higher than minus 6.2 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Kokernag registered minus 1.1 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 2.3 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. Gulmarg recorded minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, slightly higher than minus 3.8 degrees Celsius.

At Srinagar airport, the mercury settled at minus 5.0 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 6.0 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. Awantipora recorded minus 4.8 degrees Celsius, up from minus 6.4 degrees Celsius, while Budgam recorded minus 4.8 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 5.4 degrees Celsius.

Pulwama and Shopian each recorded minus 6.1 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 7.0 degrees Celsius and minus 7.5 degrees Celsius, respectively, a day earlier. Anantnag recorded minus 5.7 degrees Celsius, up from minus 6.6 degrees Celsius. Baramulla recorded minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 1.8 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, showing a marginal dip.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a minimum of 4.4 degrees Celsius, slightly higher than 4.0 degrees Celsius the previous day. Jammu airport recorded 5.4 degrees Celsius, compared to 4.8 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. Katra recorded 6.8 degrees Celsius, up from 5.5 degrees Celsius.

Bhaderwah recorded minus 0.1 degrees Celsius, compared to 0.5 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, while Udhampur recorded minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, down from 1.0 degrees Celsius. Rajouri recorded 0.3 degrees Celsius, compared to minus 0.6 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Poonch recorded 4.4 degrees Celsius.

In Ladakh, Leh and Hanle had recorded minus 11.4 degrees Celsius each on Wednesday, while Kargil recorded minus 10.0 degrees Celsius and Nubra Valley minus 10.4 degrees Celsius.

The weather department said there would be no significant weather activity till January 21, with light snow at scattered places during January 16 and January 19-20. From January 22 to 24, there is a possibility of light to moderate rain or snow at most places.

The department also indicated the possibility of moderate to heavy rain or snow over a few districts of the Chenab valley and south Kashmir during January 23 and 24.

An advisory has been issued warning of moderate to dense fog over the plains of the Jammu division for the next two days. Travellers have been advised to plan their movement accordingly in view of the expected wet spell and to follow traffic and administrative advisories. (KNO)

Indian Army earned

He added that the government remains "fully committed" to building a modern, 'Atmanirbhar' and a future-ready army.

"A grateful nation stands united in pride and respect for its soldiers," Singh said.

Later in the day, he attended an event hosted as part of the 78th Army Day celebrations, which was held in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Govt nominates

sharing, coordination, and necessary interventions relating to the safety, welfare, travel facilitation and related matters of the residents and students of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in Iran.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister's Office said the Government, concerned about the safety and well-being of J&K residents and students presently in Iran, has nominated the Additional Resident Commissioner, New Delhi, as the Nodal Officer to coordinate with the MEA and the Indian Embassy in Iran for documentation, advisories, and welfare support.

The government also informed that concerned families may contact the CM Helpline at 1800-8900-166 or 0094-2501955 for assistance and information. (KNO)

DGPC Jammu

including preservation and development of important Sikh religious and historical sites, Amendment of Sikh Religious and Endowment Act, 1973 and promotion of Punjabi language.

Cyber frauds

warned that fraudsters are now misusing technology and psychological manipulation to trap victims through "digital arrest" scams, where callers impersonate police or courier officials, falsely claiming that a parcel in the victim's name contains illegal items.

"There is no such term in law. If someone claims you are 'digitally arrested' or demands money to avoid legal action, cut the call immediately, it's a scam," he said, citing cases from Delhi and Srinagar involving senior citizens who lost large sums.

FAKE INVESTMENTS, JOB SCAMS AND MALWARE LINKS

The SSP said fake online investment schemes promising to double or triple money, fraudulent job offers and malicious APK or QR code links remain among the most common traps.

"A hacker doesn't hack your phone; he hacks your mind," Gupta said. "They study people's social media behaviour, target those seeking jobs or investment opportunities and use fear or greed to make them act fast."

He urged citizens to avoid clicking unknown links or installing unverified apps, as these often contain malware that grants criminals access to personal data and bank accounts. He also cautioned against scanning random QR codes, plugging into public charging ports ("juice jacking"), or sharing Aadhaar and PAN details online, which can lead to impersonation and mule account misuse.

TECH VIGILANCE: CHECK YOUR SIMS, LINKED DEVICES

SSP Gupta advised people to regularly verify their mobile connections through the government's 'Sanchar Saathi' portal to ensure no fake SIM cards are issued in their name. He also recommended checking linked WhatsApp devices for unauthorized access and avoiding suspicious friend or job requests online.

"Fraudsters operate across borders using fake identities, spoofed calls and AI-generated videos. Never send money or personal data without verification," he said.

1930: INDIA'S CYBER LIFELINE

Explaining how the cyber helpline 1930 works, SSP Gupta said it is directly integrated with banks and financial intermediaries. "Once a complaint is filed, money trails are instantly flagged and accounts can be frozen within minutes," he said, calling the helpline a 24x7 lifeline for victims.

He also encouraged citizens to report through the national portal <https://cybercrime.gov.in> and spread awareness within communities.

"Cybercrime thrives on fear and hesitation. Awareness, vigilance and prompt action are our strongest tools. Every citizen can help create a safer digital world," he said.

The SSP reaffirmed that CICE's specialised teams are working round the clock with banks, payment gateways, and telecom firms to trace money trails, block mule accounts, and dismantle fraud networks operating across states.

"With rising digitalisation, cyber frauds are growing, but so is our capacity to fight back. Timely reporting and awareness can save both money and trust," SSP Gupta added. (KNO)

Special ops, CASOs

Baramulla SSP, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), assured that all the arrangements for January 26 celebrations remain intact.

"Special operations have been launched wherein large-scale and coordinated efforts are underway all across the district and beyond", he said.

The drill at Gulmarg, involving Police, Army, CRPF and BSF, simulated disaster and security scenarios to access response mechanism and inter-agency coordination. Notably, essential services and tourism activities continued uninterrupted.

Police had earlier urged the public not to panic, clarifying that the rehearsal is purely precautionary to refine protocols, enhance response time and identify areas for improvement during actual emergencies.

"These exercises help put our best foot forward in a real crisis," the SSP added. (KNO)

Handwara boy studies

extreme hot summer and the bone chilling winters.

"I used to study a few hours daily despite the challenges", said, Faizan, who had no smartphone distractions with only his books, belief and guidance from the teachers at Government

Report suicide, unnatural death of students to police fast: SC to higher education institutions

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all higher education institutions (HEIs) across the country to report any suicide or unnatural death of a student to the police authorities as soon as they come to know about the incident.

Issuing a slew of directions, the top court said the HEIs cannot shirk away from their fundamental duty to ensure that their institutions as a whole are safe, equitable, inclusive and conducive spaces of learning.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan also directed the HEIs to submit an annual report of student suicides or unnatural deaths to the University Grants Commission (UGC) and all other relevant regulatory bodies for professional courses.

"All HEIs must report any incident of suicide or unnatural death of a student, regardless of the location of its occurrence (i.e. on campus, hostels, PG accommodations, or otherwise outside the institutional premises), to the police authorities no sooner than they come to know about the incident. This should cover all students, irrespective of whether they are studying in the classroom, distance or online mode of learning," the bench said.

In case of central universities and institutes of national importance or any HEI that does not fall within the above-mentioned framework, it must be reported to the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, government of India, it said.

The apex court ordered that every residential HEI must have access to qualified medical help round-the-clock, if not on campus, then within a



one-km radius to provide emergency medical health support to students.

"Keeping in mind the faculty shortages which have been reported in several HEIs, both public and private, it must be ensured that all vacant faculty positions (both teaching and non-teaching) be filled within a period of four months, with priority given to posts reserved for candidates from marginalised and underrepresented communities including those posts reserved for PwDs (persons with disabilities)," the bench said.

Special recruitment drives may be held for faculty recruitment that come under various forms of reservations according to central and state government rules, it added.

Observing that student suicide represents only the visible tip of a much larger iceberg of student distress and well-being, the top

court said appointment and filling of vacancies of the post of vice chancellors, registrars and other key institutional and administrative positions must also be made within a period of four months.

Moreover, it must be ensured as a matter of practice that these positions are filled within a period of one month from the date on which the vacancy arises in order to ensure the smooth functioning of HEIs, it said.

"All HEIs must report on an annual basis to the central and relevant state governments, as to how many reserved posts are vacant, how many are filled, reasons for non-filling, time taken, etc., so that periodic accountability is ensured.

"The backlog of any and all pending scholarship disbursements must be cleared within a period of four months by the relevant central and

state government authorities," the bench said.

The apex court also said that it must be ensured that the disbursement of all future scholarships are done with clear timelines, without any delay by the relevant central and state government authorities.

"Disbursal of dates and schedules must also be made known to the student recipient. Even in cases of unavoidable administrative delay, HEIs must not, as a policy, make the student recipients accountable for paying or clearing their fees.

"No student should be prevented from appearing in an examination, removed from hostels, barred from attending classes, or have their mark sheets and degrees withheld because of delays in disbursal of scholarships. Any such institutional policy may be viewed strictly," the bench said.

It directed all HEIs to remain fully compliant with all the regulations that have a binding effect on them, including inter alia, the UGC Regulation on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009 and other related provisions.

The top court directed that the sample registration system data on suicides, especially those falling within the age group of 15-29 years, must be centrally maintained for better and more accurate estimates of deaths by suicide of students in HEIs.

The apex court had last year constituted a National Task Force (NTF) to address the mental health concerns of students and prevent incidents of suicides and said the duty of colleges was not just to ensure academic excellence of the students but also their mental well-being.

High-level panel formed to examine digital arrest issues: MHA tells SC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Thursday informed the Supreme Court that it had formed a high-level committee to examine issues regarding digital arrest scam cases.

Digital arrest is a growing form of cybercrime in which fraudsters pose as law enforcement, court officials or personnel from government agencies to intimidate victims through audio and video calls. They hold the victims hostage and put pressure on them to pay money.

Earlier in December last year, the apex court had asked the CBI to carry out a unified pan-India probe into digital arrest scam cases. It had passed the directions in a suo motu case registered on the complaint of an elderly couple from Haryana.

It had also sought the views of various Union ministries, including the MHA, on how to deal with cybercrime cases.

The MHA submitted that a high-level inter-departmental committee under the chairmanship of the special secretary (internal security) had been constituted to comprehensively examine digital arrest cases.

It said the committee's mandate was to examine real-time issues faced by enforcement agencies, consider the amicus curiae's (friend of the court) recommendations and court directions, identify relevant legislations, rules, circulars and implementation gaps, suggest corrective measures and provide inputs for further directions.

According to the submissions, the members of the committee comprise officers from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI), National Investigation Agency (NIA), Delhi Police and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).

The MHA said that the chief executive officer (CEO) of I4C would be the committee's member-secretary. The committee would meet every two weeks, it added.

It said the first meeting of the committee was held on December 29, when the CBI suggested having a monetary threshold for cases.

According to the MHA, the MeitY emphasised during the meeting the need for strengthening and activating the adjudication mechanism under the Information Technology Act provision. It said the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) informed that the draft rules under the Telecommunications Act, upon notification, would address concerns, including those regarding negligence in issuance of SIM cards, multiple SIM issuance to a single individual and others.

The MHA said that I4C had informed that standard operating procedures (SOPs) for immediate freezing, de-freezing, recovery and restoration of money to victims were under final consideration. Besides, the revamping of the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) and the 1930 helpline were being actively considered.

It said that the committee also considered the amicus curiae's suggestion for victim compensation and agreed that such relief could be provided where the loss was attributable to negligence or there existed a deficiency of service or fraud on the part of banks or telecom service providers.

The MHA said the committee observed that victims should not suffer due to systemic failures or regulatory non-compliance.

It sought a month from the apex court for further deliberation and inputs, following which the matter was posted for further proceedings on January 20.

Lawyer should move beyond articulation of grievances: CJI Kant



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 15: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Thursday called upon lawyers to wholeheartedly engage on the administrative side of the justice delivery system and move beyond "articulation of grievances".

CJI Kant, who was speaking at an event organised by the Delhi High Court Bar Association (DHCBA) to felicitate him, said when the Bar and the bench share the ownership of "administrative innovation", the system is more likely to command trust even during the period of transition.

A Bar that is prepared, ethical and conscious of its duties strengthens the administration of justice, and by encouraging such a Bar and

acknowledging its strength, the foundation for the establishment is reinforced, the CJI said.

"The Bar must extend beyond the articulation of grievances to proactive engagement. It is here that I call upon the members of the Bar to engage wholeheartedly in the administration side of justice by offering practical suggestions, volunteering new systems and participating in consultative processes to ensure that reforms are not only well-intended, but are workable also," CJI Kant said.

During the event, DHCBA president and senior advocate N Hariharan raised some "deep institutional concerns", such as inadequate physical infrastructure and "diminishing elevation" of lawyers from the high court as judges.

"Despite 47,000 advocates, only three have been elevated as judges since August 2024," Hariharan said, adding that he was "not questioning any individual appointments" made to the high court. Hariharan also raised the issue of vacancies in the high court.

With 44 judges against a sanctioned strength of 60, there is a 27 per cent vacancy in the Delhi High Court, he said. In response, CJI Kant said the system would address these issues in due course.

WHO urges govts to strengthen taxes on sugary drinks: Doctors welcome move

TOI HEALTH

New Delhi, Jan 15: Just when everyone was busy preparing New Year health resolutions, the World Health Organisation (WHO) made an announcement urging governments to strengthen taxes on sugary drinks.

"Sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages are getting cheaper, due to consistently low tax rates in most countries, fueling obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancers and injuries, especially in children and young adults," the WHO said in a news release on Tuesday.

Strategies to Reduce Sugar Intake for Better Health

"Health taxes are one of the strongest tools we have for promoting health and preventing disease," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "By increasing taxes on products like tobacco, sugary drinks, and alcohol, governments can reduce harmful consumption and unlock funds for vital health services."

What does the UN health agency mean by sugary drinks? This includes sodas, fruit juices, sweetened milk



drinks, and ready-to-drink coffees and teas. It found that "sugary drink taxes are weak and poorly targeted with the median tax accounting for only about 2% of the price of a common sugary soda and often applying only to a subset of beverages, missing large parts of the market."

"With the rise of childhood obesity and early onset diabetes, the WHO's recommendation to increase taxes on sugary drinks is both timely and needed. Sugary drinks are often the largest supplier of "hidden sugar" in children's diets, providing high calorie counts with low or no nutritional value. When consumed regularly, they create repeated spikes in blood sugar & added

weight gain, often resulting in an increase of early insulin resistance — and are thus a pre-cursor for Type 2 diabetes far earlier than adulthood," Dr. Vivek Jain, Senior Director & Unit Head – Paediatrics, Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh told TOI Health.

"When considering these beverages from a child's perspective, the greatest risk associated with their intake is the long-lasting negative effects they will have on a child's body through metabolic damage. Children who begin consuming high-sugar-content beverages early in their lives will develop a predisposition to consume these high-sugar-laden products throughout their adulthood, which places

them at greater risk for developing diabetes, fatty liver disease, or heart disease," he highlighted.

A leap of health
"The promotion of enhanced taxation of sugary products by the WHO is an appropriate, science-driven public health measure. The excessive intake of sugar has been identified to contribute to the growing prevalence of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and dental diseases in low- and middle-income countries, which are escalating at an alarming rate. Studies have established that sugar sweetened beverage taxes offer effective remedies in reducing their overall consumption, especially among children, in addition to generating funds for enhanced preventive healthcare measures. Apart from shaping consumer practices, fiscal policies have become important drivers to persuade manufacturers to change, particularly in countries such as India, to contain the escalating cases of non-communicable diseases," Dr. Sanjeeva Kumar

Gupta, Consultant, Dept of Cardiology at the CK Birla Hospital, Delhi told TOI Health.

"If the taxes on sugary drinks are too high, people might choose healthier drinks like water, milk, and fresh fruit juices that don't have any added sugar. When these taxes are used wisely to make school lunches better and teach kids about health, they start a strong cycle that helps kids eat better, stay healthy, and grow over time," said Dr. Rajiv Chhabra, Chief, Pediatrics Artemis Hospitals Gurgaon.

"Taxation cannot solve the problem alone; it needs to be part of a broader strategy that includes better food labelling, the banning of marketing sugary drinks to children, and making sure parents and schools are aware of the risks. Protecting children from excess sugar is one of the most effective methods of preventing lifestyle related diseases. The introduction of policy based interventions, such as the taxation of sugary drinks, helps to create a healthier generation," says Dr Vivek.

2023 Parl security breach on Dec 13 can't be coincidence: Delhi HC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Delhi High Court on Thursday said the 2023 Parliament security breach happening on December 13, the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, could not be a coincidence. A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Sudha Jain made the remark while dealing with the bail pleas of three accused — Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma and Lalit Jha — in the security breach case.

Even as the counsel for the accused submitted that there was no connection between the two incidents by them as the accused in the present case were merely protesting

unemployment, the bench retorted, "It can't be a coincidence... 13 December can't be a coincidence".

The senior lawyer appearing for the accused said that while the "way of protest" might not have been right, the accused people ought not be kept in jail indefinitely.

"They had anger, but I totally agree that it was not the way to protest. If we look at history, even the English people did not keep people behind bars for an indefinite period," the counsel said. He emphasised that the charges were yet to be framed and the accused were educated youth with no prior involvement in a criminal case.

The counsel for the police said the

prosecution had concluded its arguments on the charge before the trial court.

The court listed the matter for further hearing in February and asked the parties to go through the Supreme Court's judgement in the case of Gulfisha Fatima, who was granted bail recently in a 2020 Delhi riots case under UAPA.

The three accused had moved the high court against the dismissal of their bail pleas by the trial court in December 2024. Accused Neelam Azad and Mahesh Kumawat were granted bail by the high court in July 2025. In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, accused Sagar

Sharma and Manoranjan D allegedly jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour, released yellow gas from canisters and sloganeered before they were overpowered by some MPs.

Around the same time, two other accused — Amol Shinde and Azad — allegedly sprayed coloured gas from canisters while shouting "tanashahi nahi chalegi (dictatorship won't work)" outside the Parliament premises.

The Delhi Police had registered the FIR on the next day of the incident, i.e. December 14, 2023, under sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Smartphone exports up 43.7 pc during Apr-Nov: Comm min data

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 15: The country's smartphone exports rose 43.7 per cent to USD 18.8 billion during the April-November period this fiscal year, according to the commerce ministry data released on Thursday. It was USD 13.08 billion in April-November 2024-25 and USD 9.07 billion during April-November 2023-24.

The data showed that the US was



the major destination for the shipments. It was followed by the UAE, China, Portugal, and Spain.

Wikipedia inks AI deals with Microsoft, Meta and Perplexity as it marks 25th birthday

AP

London, Jan 15: Wikipedia unveiled new business deals with a slew of artificial intelligence companies on Thursday as it marked its 25th anniversary.

The online crowdsourced encyclopedia revealed that it has signed up AI companies including Amazon, Meta Platforms, Perplexity, Microsoft and France's Mistral AI.

Wikipedia is one of the last bastions of the early internet, but that original vision of a free online space has been clouded by the dominance of Big Tech platforms and the rise of generative AI chatbots trained on content scraped from the web.

Aggressive data collection methods by AI developers, including from Wikipedia's vast repository of free knowledge, has raised questions about who ultimately pays for the artificial intelligence boom.

The Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit that runs the site, signed Google as one of its first customers in 2022 and announced other agreements last year with smaller AI players like search engine Ecosia.

The new deals will help one of the world's most popular websites monetize heavy traffic from AI companies. They're paying to access Wikipedia content "at a volume and speed designed specifically for their needs," the foundation said. It did not provide financial or other details.

While AI training has sparked legal battles elsewhere over copyright and other issues, Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales said he welcomes it.

"I'm very happy personally that AI models are training on Wikipedia data because it's human curated," Wales told The Associated Press



in an interview. "I wouldn't really want to use an AI that's trained only on X, you know, like a very angry AI," Wales said, referring to billionaire Elon Musk's social media platform.

Wales said the site wants to work with AI companies, not block them. But "you should probably chip in and pay for your fair share of the cost that you're putting on us."

The Wikimedia Foundation last year urged AI developers to pay for access through its enterprise platform and said human traffic had fallen 8 per cent. Meanwhile, visits from bots, sometimes disguised to evade detection, were heavily taxing its servers as they scrape masses of content to feed AI large language models.

The findings highlighted shifting online trends as search engine AI overviews and chatbots summarise information instead of sending users to sites by showing them links.

Wikipedia is the ninth most

visited site on the internet. It has more than 65 million articles in 300 languages that are edited by some 250,000 volunteers.

The site has become so popular in part because its free for anyone to use.

"But our infrastructure is not free, right?" Wikimedia Foundation CEO Maryana Iskander said in a separate interview in Johannesburg, South Africa.

It costs money to maintain servers and other infrastructure that allows both individuals and tech companies to "draw data from Wikipedia," said Iskander, who's stepping down on Jan. 20, and will be replaced by Bernadette Meehan.

The bulk of Wikipedia's funding comes from 8 million donors, most of them individuals.

"They're not donating in order to subsidize these huge AI companies," Wales said. They're saying, "You know what, actually you can't just smash our website. You have to sort of come in the right way."

Editors and users could benefit from AI in other ways. The Wikimedia Foundation has outlined an AI strategy that Wales said could result in tools that reduce tedious work for editors.

While AI isn't good enough to write Wikipedia entries from scratch, it could, for example, be used to update dead links by scanning the surrounding text and then searching online to find other sources.

"We don't have that yet but that's the kind of thing that I think we will see in the future."

Artificial intelligence could also improve the Wikipedia search experience, by evolving from the traditional keyword method to more of a chatbot style, Wales said.

"You can imagine a world where you can ask the Wikipedia search box a question and it will quote to you from Wikipedia," he said. It could respond by saying "here's the answer to your question from this article and here's the actual paragraph. That sounds really useful to me and so I think we'll move in that direction as well."

Reflecting on the early days, Wales said it was a thrilling time because many people were motivated to help build Wikipedia after he and co-founder Larry Sanger, who departed long ago, set it up as an experiment.

However, while some might look back wistfully on what seems now to be a more innocent time, Wales said those early days of the internet also had a dark side.

"People were pretty toxic back then as well. We didn't need algorithms to be mean to each other," he said. "But, you know, it was a time of great excitement and a real spirit

of possibility."

Wikipedia has lately found itself under fire from figures on the political right, who have dubbed the site "Woikipedia" and accused it of being biased in favour of the left.

Republican lawmakers in the US Congress are investigating alleged "manipulation efforts" in Wikipedia's editing process that they said could inject bias and undermine neutral points of view on its platform and the AI systems that rely on it.

A notable source of criticism is Musk, who last year launched his own AI-powered rival, Grokipedia. He has criticized Wikipedia for being filled with "propaganda" and urged people to stop donating to the site.

Wales said he doesn't consider Grokipedia a "real threat" to Wikipedia because it's based on large language models, which are the troves of online text that AI systems are trained on.

"Large language models aren't good enough to write really quality reference material. So a lot of it is just regurgitated Wikipedia," he said. "It often is quite rambling and sort of talks nonsense. And I think the more obscure topic you look into, the worse it is."

He stressed that he wasn't singling out criticism of Grokipedia. "It's just the way large language models work."

Wales say he's known Musk for years but they haven't been in touch since Grokipedia launched.

"I should probably ping him," Wales said.

What would he say?

"How's your family? I'm a nice person, I don't really want to pick a fight with anybody."

We will build a country free of racism: Sri Lankan Prez to Tamils

PTI

Colombo, Jan 15: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Thursday assured the minority Tamil community that he would build a country free of racism and rich in national unity.

"I know that many of you here placed your trust in us at the last general election. For the first time, we won the Jaffna District, which means you have placed your trust in us," said Dissanayake, who is on a visit to Jaffna, the cultural capital of the Tamils, marking the Tamil Thai Pongal day.

"I assure you that we will not allow that trust to be betrayed even in the slightest. We will build a country free of racism and rich in national unity, and we will create a better future for your children," he said.

"We will build a country where everyone can live happily. I give you my assurance that we will discharge our responsibilities tirelessly to fulfil these expectations," he added.

According to Tamil culture, today marks the dawn of the new

year, Dissanayake said.

Recalling the past year of his NPP government for which the northerners voted en masse, Dissanayake said, "This year has been one in which racially motivated conflicts were at their lowest, campaigns that foster racism were weakened and there was a collective struggle for national unity".

Dissanayake said that the Jaffna people now stand witness to many development projects happening in the north, including the construction of a cricket ground.

While in Mannar, Dissanayake officially launched a 50-megawatt wind power project in line with the government's policy to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The project is scheduled for completion in March 2027.

"Joined the Northern Province Thai Pongal Festival in Velanai, Jaffna today. Our goal is clear: to build a prosperous Sri Lanka, free from racism, where every citizen can live with dignity, regardless of their language or faith," he later said in a post on X.

Courtois blasts racist chants aimed at Real Madrid star Vinicius

AFP

Madrid, Jan 15: Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois criticised racist chants aimed at teammate Vinicius Junior by Albacete fans near their stadium before a Copa del Rey last 16 clash on Wednesday.

The Belgian goalkeeper, not involved in Madrid's cup tie against the second-tier side, shared a video of a group of fans



appearing to chant racist abuse at Vinicius on Instagram and wrote, "Enough

of the racism, this is disgusting." Brazilian winger Vinicius,

25, has been targeted with racial abuse during his time in Spain on several occasions

by opposition fans.

Four Atletico Madrid ultras were handed suspended jail sentences in June last year for hanging a dummy of Vinicius from a bridge in what police deemed a "hate crime," among several other court convictions.

Vinicius started the game against Albacete, new Real Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa's first match at the helm after he replaced Xabi Alonso on Monday.

Golf: Theegala aims for reset as Sony Open opens PGA TOUR schedule in 2026

IAN S

Honolulu, Jan 15: The Professional Golf Association (PGA) Tour calendar gets underway for 2026 at the Sony Open this week, and Sahith Theegala arrives in Hawaii hoping to turn the page after a disrupted 2025. Once ranked as high as No. 11 in the world, the 27-year-old Californian saw injuries halt his rise last season and spent much of the Fall trying to regain competitive sharpness.

Theegala begins 2026 targeting stronger finishes as he looks to rebuild confidence. His presence continues to resonate with fans in India and the global Indian diaspora.

Waialae Country Club, with its coastal



winds and emphasis on precision, provides the season's first genuine test of form. Theegala is paired with Ireland's Seamus Power and Norway's Kristoffer Reitan for the opening two rounds.

India Open

Lakshya enters quarters; Satwik-Chirag, Srikanth, Prannoy bow out

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 15: Former champion Lakshya Sen produced a composed and tactical performance to progress to the quarterfinals of the USD 950,000 India Open Super 750 badminton tournament but Kidambi Srikanth and H S Prannoy bowed out after a spirited show here on Thursday.

The top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, one of the favourites to win the title, also exited after a heartbreaking 27-25 21-23 19-21 loss to Japan's Hiroki Midorikawa and Kyohei Yamashita in the second round later in the day.

Sen, a 2021 world championships bronze medallist, showed resilience and maturity to overcome Japan's Kenta Nishimoto 21-19, 21-11 in the second round to emerge as the only Indian challenge in singles at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

"At the start of the opening game I was struggling with my rhythm a bit and was lifting short and that allowed him to attack more. But then I started lifting the shuttle longer and focused on defending well and I think that turned the first game," Lakshya told reporters.

"In the second game, I knew I could not give him the



opportunity to keep playing his game, so mixed my speed and it worked."

The 24-year-old from Almora will next face Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi, who defeated Ireland's Nhat Nguyen 21-16, 21-17.

Earlier, Srikanth fought hard but went down 21-14, 17-21, 21-17 to France's Christo Popov, the reigning World Tour Finals champion. Prannoy also pushed his opponent close before losing 18-21, 21-19, 21-14 to eighth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore.

Malvika Bansod also went down 18-21 15-21 to China's fifth seed Han Yue in a women's singles match.

India's challenge in women's doubles also ended when Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand lost 22-20 22-24 21-23 against seventh seeds Li Yijing and Luo Xumin of China in a marathon match that lasted 84 minutes.

Sen vs Nishimoto
Sen struggled initially with timing and depth, allowing Nishimoto to seize control and open up a 16-11 lead at the mid-game interval.

Down 14-18, Sen showed great composure as he extended the rallies, retrieving fiercely, and forced errors from his opponent.

A run of five consecutive points swung the momentum decisively, enabling Sen to close out the game at the first opportunity.

The second game was a one-sided affair as Sen raised his intensity. He mixed pace intelligently, alternated between sharp half-smashes and disguised drops, and denied Nishimoto any rhythm.

With his defence holding firm and his shot selection precise, Sen sealed the contest in 50 minutes.

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