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Sports a 'real-life school' for youth, vital for nation-building: LG Sinha

» Says 'SRIJAN' conference to chart roadmap for J&K's sports future

» Calls for integrating sports with education, keeping it away from politics

KNO Desk

Jammu, Jan 17: Terming sports as a "powerful force" that shapes individuals, brings communities together, and plays a vital role in nation-building, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday called for linking sports with education and essential life skills.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the 2-day 'National Level Sports Conference - 'SRIJAN' organised by Department of Youth Services and Sports here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "For youth, sports serve as a real-life school which teaches discipline, values, and leadership through lived experience. It is a strong medium for empowerment, social awareness, and the overall progress of the society."

He said the 'SRIJAN' conference will identify the actionable strategies to further strengthen sports systems in



J&K UT, prepare a roadmap for effective implementation of the National Sports Policy 2025 & J&K Sports Policy 2022 and highlight measures for shaping a resilient and future-ready generation.

The Lieutenant Governor called for linking sports with education and essential life skills. "With integration in education curriculum, sports can become a powerful tool for the complete and holistic development of youth," he said, adding, "Sports is a

powerful force that shapes individuals, brings communities together, and plays a vital role in nation-building."

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that sports should be kept away from politics. He observed that sporting talent can only be nurtured in a peaceful environment. In order to make India a true sporting powerhouse, we must keep sports and politics strictly separate.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the Politics should not interfere in sports and the talented youth should not be deprived of the opportunities they deserve.

"We must move forward and create a system where there is no room for doubt on the selection process," he said.

He also reiterated the administration's resolve to extend requisite support to the sportspersons and developing state-of-the-art sports infrastructure at grassroots level.

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Devotees outside Hazratbal Shrine Kashmir on the occasion of Shab-e-Meraj
Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

Prime Minister's Dev Package for J&K records 81% completion

Rs 56946 crore released, Rs 54,986 crore utilised

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 17: As many as 81.13% of projects sanctioned under the Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) for Jammu & Kashmir have been completed or substantially completed, official documents add.

On November 7, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a Rs 80068 crore mega financial package for Jammu & Kashmir, with a focus on humanitarian relief, crisis management, social infrastructure, development projects, and economic infrastructure.

Documents in possession of the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) show that significant progress has been made in the implementation of the mega development package in J&K.

"As of November 2025, significant progress has been made, with 29 projects (nine by the Government of India and 20 by the Government of Jammu & Kashmir) completed, and 14 projects (4 by the Government of India and 10 by the Government of Jammu & Kashmir) substantially completed. Collectively, this represents 81.13% of the total projects," the documents state.

The documents further reveal that an expenditure of Rs 54986.17 crore has been incurred under the package.

At the time of its announcement, the PMDP comprised 63 projects for erstwhile state of J&K. Following the reorganisation of J&K, 53 projects remained applicable to the Union Territory.

While the PMDP's total financial outlay for J&K was Rs 58484 crore, the total sanctioned cost of these projects stood at Rs 68905 crore.

The sanctioned cost of certain projects—primarily those under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH) executed on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis—has

J&K, Ladakh record '900 MWs power swing' last month

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Jan 17: In the month of December-2025, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has recorded a variation of nearly 900 Megawatts (MWs) in power availability against the anticipated power availability during the peak hours.

Besides, the regions has witnessed a variation of minus five percent in power requirement against the anticipated requirement.

According to the official documents showing the anticipated power supply position v/s actual power supply position (Provisional) of Northern Region during the month of December-2025 states that in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh it has anticipated power availability of 2400 MWs.

The documents however, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) states that the actual availability was recorded with 3301 MWs during the peak hours.

The official figures further reveal that during the peak, NRPC has anticipated that there will be a peak power requirement of 3473 MWs. However, the commission has recorded a power requirement of | More on P6

Dir Info, DIPR employees condole tragic demise of former officer



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 17: Director Information, Nitish Rajora has expressed deep grief and sorrow on the tragic demise of Thakur Singh, former officer of the department, who also served as Director Public Relations, Lok Bhawan and Cultural Officer, Jammu.

In his message, the Director said that | More on P6

Cold conditions persist in J&K as another wet spell looms

MeT predicts prolonged wet spell till Jan 26

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 17: Minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh remained largely unchanged on Saturday compared to the previous day, even as the Meteorological Department forecast a prolonged wet spell with the possibility of heavy rain and snowfall in several areas later this month.

As per the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the Kashmir Valley, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, the same as on Friday. Qazigund and Pahalgam also witnessed

identical overnight lows of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius and minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, respectively, showing no variation from the previous day.

Gulmarg, the Valley's coldest tourist destination, registered a low of minus 4.2 degrees Celsius, unchanged from Friday, while Shopian and Pulwama continued to remain among the coldest plains at minus 5.6 degrees Celsius and minus 5.3 degrees Celsius, respectively. Anantnag recorded minus 4.7 degrees Celsius, also unchanged.

North Kashmir districts showed stable conditions as well, with Kupwara at

minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, Baramulla at minus 1.6 degrees Celsius, and Bandipora at minus 3.1 degrees Celsius, all matching Friday's readings. Srinagar Airport recorded minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, while Budgam and Awantipora stood at minus 3.8 degrees Celsius, with no day-to-day fluctuation.

In the Jammu region, minimum temperatures also remained steady. Jammu city recorded 4.6 degrees Celsius, Banihal 0.6 degrees Celsius, Baderwah 1.5 degrees Celsius, and Rajouri minus 0.5 degrees Celsius, mirroring Friday's data. Katra and Kishtwar registered relatively

warmer | More on P6

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warmer | More on P6

Kulgam's Veshow Nallah, a key Jhelum tributary, runs completely dry



Photo: Umaisar Gull Ganie

Locals told the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that not a single drop of water is visible in the nallah, which serves as a vital source of

drinking water and irrigation for several villages.

The unprecedented situation has resulted in acute water scarcity in areas | More on P6

Al Falah University hired doctors linked to Red Fort area blast without police verification: ED

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 17: Faridabad-based Al Falah University had appointed three doctors -- two arrested by the National Investigation Agency and the third an alleged suicide bomber of the November 2025 Red Fort area blast -- apart from other specialists without police verification or scrutiny, the Enforcement Directorate has found.

The agency, as part of its money laundering probe against the promoter of the university, is understood to have furnished statements of various senior executives

and faculty of the varsity in this context in a chargesheet filed before a Delhi court on Friday.

Arrested 61-year-old Al Falah Group chairman Jawad Ahmad Siddiqui and the Al Falah Charitable Trust that controls all the educational institutions of the varsity are the two accused named in the complaint filed under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The about 260-page chargesheet seeks prosecution of Siddiqui and his Trust for alleged generation of illicit funds | More on P6

LG releases short film Save Girl Child



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 17: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday released Save Girl Child awareness short film "Mareya Ni Maye Migi", at Lok Bhawan. He congratulated the entire team and conveyed his

best wishes to them.

The film, produced under the banner of DLSR Production Jammu, addresses the issue of female foeticide and draws inspiration from Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's empowering slogan, "Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao." | More on P6

Dy CM inaugurates mega health camp in Nowshera

Surinder Choudhary, Satish Sharma inaugurate border sports festival 2026

KT NEWS DESK

NOWSHERA, JANUARY 17: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Saturday inaugurated a mega health camp organised by the 80th Infantry Brigade in collaboration with the health department and Shafa multi-speciality clinic Nowshera at Senior Secondary School, Seri, Nowshera, providing medical services to a large number of people from border and far-flung areas.

Later, the Deputy Chief Minister alongwith Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports and Transport, Satish Sharma, as per an official statement, inaugurated the Border Sports Festival-2026 at the Sports Stadium, Nowshera.

On the occasion, the dignitaries also laid foundation stone for construction of a volleyball court, practice pitch and other allied works at the stadium.



The programme commenced with a welcome address by Secretary, J&K Sports Council, Nuzhat Gul, who highlighted the government's initiatives to strengthen sports infrastructure and promote sporting culture in border areas.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister said that projects worth Rs 2 crore have

been sanctioned for improving sports infrastructure in Nowshera. He announced that the stadium will be equipped with proper lighting facilities and released 20 lakh from his Constituency Development Fund (CDF) for further development works.

The Dy CM warmly welcomed international players participating in the Border Sports Festival and emphasized that sports play a vital role in steering youth away from drugs. He said the government is actively considering the regularisation of Rehbar-e-Khel and appealed the parents to encourage their children to actively participate in sports.

Highlighting the patriotic spirit of the region, he said the people of Nowshera have always stood firmly with the nation and defence forces, citing their courage and resilience during Operation Sindoar. He reaffirmed that the government is committed towards safeguarding the rights of players, farmers and residents of far-flung border areas.

Satish Sharma, while speaking on the occasion, said the government is fully committed to promote border sports developing employment hubs and strengthening indoor sports facilities. He remarked that "today's sweat becomes tomorrow's success" and reiterated the government's resolve to combat drug menace and narco-terrorism.

The Minister announced that playfields will be developed in every Panchayat and a cricket academy will be established next year. He also appreciated the efforts of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for actively promoting sports activities across Jammu and Kashmir.

As part of the Border Sports Festival, a vibrant Dangal (traditional wrestling) competition, Kabaddi competition and tug of war were also organised, drawing enthusiastic participation and large public turnout.

The programme concluded with a felicitation ceremony, where the players, organisers and contributors were honoured for their outstanding efforts.

District-level PM Vishwakarma capacity building programme held in Anantnag



KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, JANUARY 17: Branch MSME DFO Srinagar under Ministry of MSME in collaboration with District Industries Centre Anantnag, organised a PM Vishwakarma Capacity Building Programme on Business Development, Financial Literacy and E-Commerce in collaboration with the District Administration Anantnag.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation, with more than 220 artisans attending.

A.K. Tamaria (IEDS), Joint Director & Head of Office, MSME J&K, graced the occasion and provided detailed insights into the performance and progress of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme in Jammu & Kashmir.

As per an official statement issued on Saturday, ADC Anantnag, Sundeep Singh Bali, also attended the programme as Guest of honour and motivated artisans to avail maximum benefits under the scheme.

Aftab Shala, Senior Corporate Official, J&K Bank, joined the programme virtually and elaborated on the credit facilities available under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme.

Faculty members from IUST gave a detailed presentation highlighting e-commerce platforms as an effective tool for Vishwakarmas to expand market reach and enhance business sustainability.

Sakeena Itoo addresses National Technical Conclave on ISM at GCET Jammu

Lays foundation stone for Canteen block, inaugurates college's PRISM portal



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 17: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo Saturday remarked that Education is a powerful weapon which can change the dynamics of the world, adding that semiconductor technologies are the future now.

The Minister made these remarks while addressing National Technical Conclave on India Semi-Conductor Mission (ISM) at Government College of Engineering and Technology (GCET), Jammu.

The Conclave, as per an official statement, is being organised by GCET Jammu in technical collaboration with IIT Kharagpur and close association with Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and department of Industries and Commerce, J&K Government.

Sakeena Itoo called upon academia, industry, and research institutions to work in close collaboration to create a robust pipeline of engineers and technologists equipped with cutting-edge skills. She stressed on the need to encourage start-ups

and Principal GCET Jammu, Dr. Sameeru Sharma; experts from IIT Jammu, Keynes technologies, senior faculty members of the college and large number of students were also present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Minister Sakeena said that Education is a very powerful weapon which can change any aspect of the world, adding that semiconductor technologies are future and our lives are surrounded these things. She highlighted the importance of semiconductor technologies in shaping J&K's economic growth, technological self-reliance, and future-ready workforce.

Minister Sakeena emphasized that institutions of higher technical education have a pivotal role in nurturing skilled talent, promoting research and fostering industry aligned curricula to meet the evolving demands of the semiconductor ecosystem.

Sakeena Itoo called upon academia, industry, and research institutions to work in close collaboration to create a robust pipeline of engineers and technologists equipped with cutting-edge skills. She stressed on the need to encourage start-ups

within engineering institutions to translate research into scalable solutions. Commending GCET Jammu for hosting the conclave, the Minister noted that such platforms enable knowledge exchange, policy dialogue and exposure for students and faculty to societal priorities in advanced technologies.

On the occasion, the Education Minister also said that the Auditorium of GCET Jammu will be upgraded on modern lines, adding that the institute has a rich legacy in educational sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

In her address, MLA Nagrota, Devyani Rana said that the students and youth of J&K are very talented and they have proven their mettle in every field. She encouraged the students to actively engage in this Conclave as chip design and semiconductor technologies will be key drivers of future employment and innovation. She also stressed on importance of internships for young students in technological sector especially in emerging technologies, adding that to be competitive and employable is very important in present day

technological job market.

Commissioner Secretary Higher Education, Ram Niwas Sharma, in his address highlighted the importance of this institute for Jammu and Kashmir. He called upon the young students to be drivers of change and emerge as job givers rather than job seekers in near future. He highlighted that Capacity Building of faculty is must as per the emerging technologies and developments.

Director, India Semi-Conductor Mission, in his address spoke in length about the objectives of ISM.

In her welcome address, Director and Principal, GCET, Dr. Sameeru Sharma enlightened the audience about the broad contours of this National Conclave.

The Conclave will feature technical sessions, expert talks and interactive discussions with academics, industry experts, and policymakers, focusing on opportunities and challenges under the India Semiconductor Mission.

The Minister, on the occasion also inaugurated PRISM portal of GCET Jammu, an integrated academic and examination system for the benefit of students as well as faculty of the college.

Controller of Accounts (CA), N.P. Singh; Deputy Controller of Accounts, Hridesh Patel and V. Muthu Kumar. The event at Jammu was hosted by Controller of Accounts (CA), Shakeel Maqbool; Deputy Controller of Accounts (DCA), Lovepreet Kour; and Senior Accounts Officer (Sr. AO), Dalip Kumar Bhat, along with officers and staff of RPAO BSF, RPAO CRPF, PAOs of the J&K Home Department, Srinagar, and representatives of Internal Audit Parties (IAPs).

The establishment of the CA/DCA/PAO offices is expected to facilitate effective financial management, ensure timely accounting and payment functions, and enhance transparency and efficiency in financial operations of the Ministry of Home Affairs in the Union Territory.

The inaugural ceremony was followed by a review meeting chaired by the Controller of Accounts, J&K Home Department, with PAOs, RPAOs and IAPs located in Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on coordination and strengthening of accounting and audit processes.

Pr CCA, MHA virtually inaugurates CA, DCA, PAO offices of J&K Home Dept

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, January 17: The Principal Chief Controller of Accounts (Pr. CCA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Dr. Ajay Shanker Singh, virtually inaugurated the newly established offices of the Controller of Accounts (CA), Deputy Controller of Accounts (DCA) and Pay and Accounts Office (PAO) of the Jammu & Kashmir Home Department at Jammu under the Departmental Accounting Organisation (DAO), Ministry of Home Affairs.

The inauguration marks

the formal operationalisation of the CA, DCA and PAO offices under DAO, MHA, Jammu, which have been functioning since September 2024. The establishment of these offices is a significant step towards strengthening the accounting and financial management framework of the Ministry of Home Affairs in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The virtual inauguration, as per PIB statement, that took place on January 16 was attended by the Chief Controller of Accounts (CCA), Shri Pankaj Sharma,

PM Vishwakarma MSME organises entrepreneurship programme in Ganderbal

KT NEWS DESK

among artisans.

The Lead District Manager (LDM), Ganderbal, interacted extensively with the artisans and addressed their queries related to bank finance, credit linkage, and repayment mechanisms. He assured the participants of complete cooperation and support from all branches of J&K Bank in District Ganderbal for timely processing of loan cases under PM Vishwakarma, PMEGP, and other allied schemes.

The programme also focused on motivating PM Vishwakarma artisans to formalise their enterprises, adopt entrepreneurial practices, and expand their traditional skills into viable micro-businesses. Interactive sessions were held to clarify doubts and encourage active participation from the artisans.

The programme was organised under the directions of the Incharge, Br. MSME DFO Srinagar, and General Manager, DIC Ganderbal, reflecting coordinated efforts of MSME and district-level institutions towards strengthening entrepreneurship among artisans.

Secretary RDD reviews rural development schemes in Rajouri

KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, JANUARY 17: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Ajiaz Asad, on Saturday reviewed the progress and on-ground implementation of key rural development schemes during an extensive tour of Rajouri district.

He conducted block-wise reviews in Sunderbani, Siot, Lamberi, Nowshera, Qila Darhal, Kalakote and Moughla, focusing on major Centrally Sponsored Schemes including MGNREGA, PMAY-G, SBM-G, NRLM, RGSA and IWMP.

The Secretary, as per an official statement, inspected the BDC building at Siot and the under-construction BDC building at Kalakote, directing concerned officers to



expedite and complete the remaining works at Kalakote within the stipulated timeframe.

Emphasising sanitation and cleanliness, he directed strengthening of door-to-door waste collection and proper operation and maintenance of SBM-G assets. The district has completed 140 compost pits, 197 soakage pits, 87 community sanitary complexes, 10 segregation sheds and 11 DEWATS units. All remaining SBM-G works were directed to be completed by February. Reviewing AIP 2025, the Secretary stressed timely completion of approved works. Under PRI Grants, 1,611 works have been completed against a target of 2,862, with instructions to fast-track the remaining projects.

Under MGNREGA, the district

has generated 41 lakh person-days, with an additional 11 lakh person-days to be released to further boost employment. Under PMAY-G, 60,186 houses have been completed against a target of 62,184, with directions to complete the remaining houses within 15 days.

The Secretary also met Panchayat Secretaries, who thanked him for their recent upgradation from Level-2 to Level-4. He interacted with public delegations and directed BDOs and field staff to remain responsive and ensure prompt grievance redressal.

The visit was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Kalakote Tanveer Ahmed, Assistant Commissioner Development Rajouri Auqil Nuvaid, and concerned Block Development Officers.

KASHMIR THUNDER



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AT ALL LEADING
STALLS

The sophisticated fraud that cost a elderly couple dearly

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 17: An elderly couple from Srinagar has fallen victim to a sophisticated cyber fraud, losing Rs 48 lakh after being subjected to what fraudsters described as a "digital arrest."

An official said that the scammers contacted the couple through a WhatsApp video call, impersonating officers of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). "The callers falsely accused the couple of involvement in a major financial fraud allegedly under CBI investigation and shared forged orders purportedly issued by CBI and TRAI," he said.

"To intimidate the victims, the fraudsters threatened to freeze their bank accounts and seize their property. They also forced the couple to remain under continuous video surveillance for several days, restricting them from leaving their house without



permission and keeping them under constant watch, even during personal activities. Under severe psychological pressure, the couple eventually transferred Rs 48 lakh to accounts provided by the scammers," the official added.

Meanwhile, the Cyber Crime Investigation Centre for Excellence (CICE), Crime Branch, Jammu and Kashmir, has reiterated that there is no such thing as a digital arrest.

Officials have urged the public to immediately treat such calls as fraudulent and report them without delay.

People facing similar situations have been advised to contact the national cybercrime helpline 1930 or lodge a complaint at www.cybercrime.gov.in

Senior citizens, especially those living alone while their children are away for work or business, are often targeted in such scams, they said.

The Crime Branch has once again appealed

"To intimidate the victims, the fraudsters threatened to freeze their bank accounts and seize their property. They also forced the couple to remain under continuous video surveillance for several days, restricting them from leaving their house without permission and keeping them under constant watch, even during personal activities. Under severe psychological pressure, the couple eventually transferred Rs 48 lakh to accounts provided by the scammers," the official added.

to the public to remain vigilant, verify any such claims with local police, and not fall prey to intimidation tactics used by cyber fraudsters—(KNO)

Kashmir observes Shab-e-Meraj, devotees throng Hazratbal



Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 17: Kashmir observed Shab-e-Meraj with religious fervour, as the historic Hazratbal Shrine witnessed one of the largest congregations on Friday night.

Hundreds of devotees thronged Hazratbal Shrine, which houses the

holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) last night.

The holy night was marked by uninterrupted prayers and heartfelt supplications that filled the shrine's courtyard with spiritual energy.

"This night and day fill my heart with peace. Being here with my family, offering prayers, I feel as if the

Prophet's blessings surround us," Sana Bano, 62, from Nishat told KNO.

GHulam Rasool, 65, from Pulwama, said, "Every year, this day reminds us of unity, devotion and the mercy of the Prophet (SAW). The prayers and recitations strengthen our faith like nothing else." Officials and volunteers ensured smooth crowd

management, water stations, medical assistance and proper lighting, allowing devotees to focus entirely on their spiritual experience.

Across the Valley, households and other shrines also hosted prayers, recitations and night-long gatherings, echoing the devotion of Hazratbal far beyond its gates—(KNO)

4 injured in Tral wild boar attack

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pulwama, Jan 17: Panic gripped the busy market area at Tral in South Kashmir's Pulwama district on Saturday after a wild boar, entered public space and attacked civilians, leaving four people injured.

The incident occurred in the market area of Tral town, where people were going about their normal business when the animal suddenly appeared and began charging at passers-by.

The unexpected assault caused chaos as men, women and children tried to escape from its path.

At least four persons sustained injuries in the attack and were immediately evacuated by locals and health responders to the Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Tral for urgent medical attention.

The injuries ranged from lacerations and bruises to deeper wounds caused by the boar's tusks.

Medical staff at SDH said that the injured have been treated at the hospital and are in a stable condition.

Soon after the news spread, Rafiq Ahmad Naik, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) MLA representing the Tral Assembly constituency, rushed to the SDH Tral to meet with the injured victims and their families. "Such attacks reflect larger problems related to human-animal conflict, especially in areas close to forests or where wild animals increasingly stray into human settlements," Naik said.

He asked the administration, wildlife and forest departments to take immediate steps to prevent similar incidents in the future. "The victims should be compensated," he added—(KNO)

Orphanage student excels, hits nearly 99% in exams

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 17: In a heartwarming story from Bijbehara, a Class-10 resident of the Yateem Trust's Girls Orphanage proves that circumstance is no match for unwavering determination—staggering 493 marks, a score that speaks louder than words.

Rukhaya has been living at the orphanage for the past three years, during which the institution has taken complete responsibility for her upbringing, including food, clothing, education and other essential needs.

Recognising her academic potential, the Yateem Trust enrolled her in a nearby private school in Bijbehara, where she consistently performed

well and ultimately achieved this remarkable result.

Rukhaya said that life without a father is never easy, especially when there is no stable source of income. "Life becomes even more challenging when you are struggling financially. There were times when it felt very difficult to move forward," she said.

She credited the Girls Orphanage and its staff for standing by her during her toughest phase. "When my struggle for my future was at its peak, this orphanage supported me and helped me chase my dreams. They bore every expense related to my education and daily needs," she said, adding that the institution gave her not just shelter, but hope and confidence. Rukhaya described

the orphanage as her second home. "I feel like I am living with my own family here. Everyone takes care of me with love and affection, especially our warden Saba Jan, who has supported and guided me very well" she said.

Sharing a message for other students facing hardships, Rukhaya said that no one should ever lose hope. "If you learn to overcome challenges, you can achieve any dream in life. Continuous struggle makes you strong and bold, and it teaches you how to live life with courage," she said.

"I want to reach a position where I can help people who are facing difficulties, just like I was helped during my hard times," she added—(KNO)

Ex-cop booked in fake job scam

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 17: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Crime Branch, Kashmir, has registered a case against an ex-police employee for allegedly cheating several individuals by promising government jobs and issuing fake appointment orders.

The accused is said to have duped victims of nearly Rs. 23 lakhs using forged documents and false assurances.

According to a statement, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Crime Branch, Kashmir, has registered a case against an individual for cheating and duping innocent people on the pretext of providing government jobs.

The statement reads, the case was registered following a written complaint received by the Economic Offences Wing, Srinagar. The complainants alleged that the accused, an ex-police employee, fraudulently collected an amount of approximately Rs. 23 lakhs by promising government

employment. It was further alleged that the accused issued fake appointment orders and supplied forged documents, including fake identity cards, licenses, appointment letters, and fabricated police and CID verification reports.

"Upon receipt of the complaint, a preliminary probe was initiated by the Economic Offences Wing of Crime Branch, Kashmir. During the inquiry, the allegations were found to be prima facie substantiated. The investigation revealed that the accused had systematically cheated the complainants of their hard-earned money by issuing fake job orders under false assurances of government employment."

The statement reads, "Consequently, cognizance of the matter was taken, and a case has been registered at Police Station Economic Offences Wing, Srinagar, under Sections 420, 467, 468, and 471 of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC). Further investigation into the matter is underway."—(KNO)



Relief and resentment for Iran returnee students

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 17: Relief mixed with anger marked the return of over three dozen Kashmiri students from Iran on Saturday, as families expressed gratitude for their safe arrival, but students spoke of the huge financial burden and frustration over media portrayal of their situation.

Several students said that there was no immediate danger where they were studying. "We came back on our own. There is no harsh situation as shown on TV; they only portray panic and exaggeration."

Meanwhile, National Convenor of the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA), Nasir Khuehami, said, "All students travelled at their own expense, and a significant number of pilgrims also returned on these two flights. The students have reached India safely and have since returned to their native places. Many more students are expected to arrive from today onwards, as they have booked commercial flights."

"The Indian Embassy is in direct contact with the students and will personally inform them through official channels if evacuation becomes necessary," he added.

Khuehami said that JKSA is maintaining constant communication and coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian Embassy officials upon the students' arrival. "The families conveyed their trust in the Government of India and the MEA, and expressed gratitude for the timely efforts taken to ensure the safety of their children during a difficult period," Khuehami said.

The Association welcomed the safe return of the students and said the development has brought much-needed relief to anxious families across



which are closely coordinating with the Iranian authorities. He added that all students who remain in Iran are safe, secure, and stable, and that the situation on the ground is gradually stabilising.

He further noted that family members expressed relief and appreciation to the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian Embassy officials upon the students' arrival. "The families conveyed their trust in the Government of India and the MEA, and expressed gratitude for the timely efforts taken to ensure the safety of their children during a difficult period," Khuehami said.

Families expressed relief and gratitude to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Indian Embassy officials for their support, but the personal cost and frustration over misleading media reports cast a shadow on what should have been a purely joyous homecoming—(KNO)

Pampore demands district status

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 17: After Awantipora and Tral, residents of Pampore in south Kashmir's Pulwama district have stepped up their demand for the grant of district status, saying the move is essential for balanced regional development and improved administrative efficiency.

The demand was highlighted by the Regional Development Forum Pampore, which said that Pampore's historical importance, industrial presence and economic potential fully justify its upgradation to a separate district.

Forum members said that Pampore is among the oldest tehsils in the region and has long served as an administrative and economic hub for adjoining areas.

"Pampore is not just another town; it is a historically significant tehsil with decades-old administrative relevance. Despite this, it continues to remain administratively neglected," members of the forum said while addressing a press conference in Pampore.

They said that Pampore hosts dozens of industrial units, including stone crushers, cement-related industries and small manufacturing enterprises, which significantly contribute to the local economy and employment generation. "With proper district-level infrastructure and governance, Pampore has the potential to emerge as a major industrial and commercial centre in south Kashmir," the forum said.

Highlighting Pampore's global identity, the forum said the town is internationally recognised for its GI-tagged Kashmiri

saffron, which has brought worldwide fame to the area. "The saffron belt of Pampore is an economic and cultural asset. Granting district status would help in better planning, protection and promotion of saffron cultivation and allied sectors," they added.

The forum further proposed that areas from Pulwama, Budgam and Srinagar districts could be carved out and merged to form the proposed Pampore district, stating that such reorganisation would reduce administrative pressure on existing districts and bring governance closer to the people.

"People living in peripheral areas of Pulwama, Budgam and Srinagar face difficulties in accessing district-level offices. A Pampore district would ensure quicker delivery of services, better law and order management and focused development planning," a local resident said.

They also claimed that the demand is non-political and rooted purely in public interest. "This is about development, accessibility and dignity. Pampore has fulfilled all parameters required for district status, but successive governments have ignored our genuine demand," they added.

The demand for new districts has gained momentum across south Kashmir in recent weeks, with Awantipora and Tral residents also seeking district status, citing administrative overload and developmental imbalances.

"We are hopeful that the administration will take a serious view of our long-pending demand and ensure justice to Pampore," the forum said—(KNO)

Vande Bharat Express: Modernising Inter-City Rail Mobility In India

Press Information Bureau

As India advances towards its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, mobility has emerged as a central pillar of national development. Modern transport systems today extend beyond basic connectivity and serve as critical enablers of economic integration, regional development, and social inclusion. Vande Bharat Express stands out as a prominent initiative of the Indian Railways providing faster, safer, more reliable, and passenger-centric rail travel across the country. Vande Bharat Express, India's first indigenously designed and manufactured semi-high-speed trainset has been developed to strengthen inter-city rail services by combining modern technology, improved passenger comfort, and reduced journey times.

Vande Bharat Express: Reimagining Premium Train Travel

Vande Bharat represents a new phase in India's premium passenger rail services. Introduced as an indigenously developed, self-propelled semi-high-speed trainset, it marks a shift from conventional locomotive-hauled trains to integrated train systems optimised for efficiency, safety, and reliability.

The requirement for Vande Bharat emerged from growing demand for reduced travel time and enhanced onboard comfort on inter-city routes, particularly on medium-distance corridors. Earlier premium services such as the Rajdhani Express (introduced in 1969) and the Shatabdi Express (introduced in 1988) significantly upgraded rail travel in their time by providing high-quality overnight and daytime connectivity. Vande Bharat trains are architecturally aligned with present and future mobility requirements, forming the foundation for the next phase of passenger rail modernisation in India.

Key Features include:

Semi-permanent jerk-free couplers and improved suspension systems contribute to better ride comfort, while regenerative braking systems enhance energy efficiency during operations.

KAVACH is India's indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, certified to Safety Integrity Level-4 (SIL-4). Implemented through a combination of onboard and trackside equipment, it continuously monitors train movement and signal status. The system automatically applies brakes to prevent collisions, overspeeding, and signal passing at danger, thereby strengthening preventive safety in train operations.

Provision for the indigenously developed Train Collision Avoidance System (KAVACH).

Centrally controlled automatic plug doors and fully sealed wider gangways.

Modern air-conditioning systems with indigenously developed UV-C lamp-based disinfection systems.

CCTV cameras, emergency alarm push buttons, and passenger-crew talk-back units in all coaches

Coach condition monitoring System (CCMS) display with remote monitoring.

Bio-vacuum toilets and Divyangjan-friendly lavatories in the driving coaches at both ends of the train.

GPS-based passenger information systems, ergonomically designed seating, and improved ride comfort contribute to an enhanced overall travel experience on Vande



Bharat trains.

The Vande Bharat trainsets, manufactured at the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) with around 90% localisation, are in line with the Make in India initiative. Indigenous capability is reflected in the domestic design and integration of key systems. In 2024, ICF received the National Energy Conservation Award (NECA) for the manufacturing of Vande Bharat trainsets, underscoring the emphasis on energy efficiency and sustainable manufacturing practices.

Vande Bharat Cuisine:

From December 2025, Indian Railways has introduced regional cuisines on select Vande Bharat trains to further enhance passenger experience by offering authentic local flavours reflective of India's diverse culinary heritage. This initiative enables passengers to enjoy traditional dishes associated with the regions through which the trains operate, adding a cultural dimension to rail travel.

Delicacies on Board:

The onboard menus feature a wide range of regional specialities, including Maharashtra's Kanda Poha and Masala Upma, Andhra Pradesh's Kodi Kura, Gujarat's Methi Thepla, Odisha's Aloo Phulkopi, and West Bengal's Kosha Paneer and Murgir Jhol. Southern delicacies such as Kerala meals with Appam and Palada Payasam, along with Bihar's Champaran Paneer and Chicken, further enrich the offering. Select services also feature Dogri and Kashmiri dishes, including Ambal Kadu and Kesar Phirni.

Seven Years of Vande Bharat Express

Launched on 15 February 2019, the Vande Bharat Express commenced service on the New Delhi-Kanpur-Prayagraj-Varanasi

corridor. The 16-coach, fully air-conditioned trainset is designed for a maximum speed of 160 kmph. It incorporates modern passenger amenities such as automatic doors, GPS-based passenger information systems, and onboard infotainment, along with regenerative braking to improve energy efficiency and operational sustainability.

Vande Bharat services have expanded rapidly across the national rail network. By December 2025, 164 Vande Bharat services had been operationalised in 274 districts, carrying more than 7.5 crore passengers.

These trains are designed for faster acceleration and deceleration, enabling a reduction in journey time up to 45 percent on several corridors. For reference, the scheduled travel time between New Delhi and Varanasi is approximately eight hours, making it around 40 to 50 percent faster than earlier services on the route.

High occupancy of Vande Bharat reflects strong passenger demand for these services. Occupancy stood at 102.01 percent in 2024-25 and increased further to 105.03 percent in 2025-26 (up to June 2025) demonstrating that faster, cleaner, and more reliable rail travel is not confined to metropolitan corridors but reflects a broader structural change in passenger preferences.

Vande Bharat 2.0: The Vande Bharat Express 2.0 has been introduced as an upgraded version of the original trainset to enhance performance, safety, and energy efficiency. The first Vande Bharat 2.0 trainset was flagged off on 30 September 2022 on the Gandhinagar-Mumbai Central route. The new version is lighter, with a reduced weight of about 392 tonnes compared to 430

tonnes in the earlier model, enabling faster acceleration. It is equipped with the indigenously developed Train Collision Avoidance System (KAVACH), improved regenerative braking, and air-conditioning systems that are approximately 15 percent more energy-efficient. All these trains have a design for a maximum speed of 180 kmph and an operating speed of 160 kmph, subject to route readiness.

Vande Bharat 3.0: The semi-high-speed version 3.0 of the Vande Bharat trainset in operation demonstrates enhanced performance parameters, including faster acceleration and improved ride quality, contributing to smoother and more comfortable journeys. It is capable of accelerating from 0 to 100 kmph in about 52 seconds, a performance parameter that compares favourably with semi-high-speed trains operating in countries such as Japan and several European nations, while running on existing rail infrastructure. The current-generation trainsets also incorporate modern onboard systems aligned with contemporary passenger service standards. Features include low noise and vibration levels, along with onboard Wi-Fi and charging ports for passenger convenience.

Vande Bharat 4.0 is envisaged to incorporate Kavach 5.0, the next evolution of India's indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection system, as part of its advanced safety and technology framework.

Vande Bharat 4.0 is the upcoming next-generation model of the Vande Bharat platform, aimed at setting higher global benchmarks in performance, passenger comfort, and overall build quality. The focus is on delivering a superior passenger experience, including improved seating, upgraded toilet facilities, finer coach workmanship, and enhanced interior finish.

The next-generation trainsets are being positioned not only to meet India's future mobility needs but also to demonstrate export potential, reflecting the growing maturity of indigenous rail technology. In terms of performance, Vande Bharat 4.0 aims to establish new benchmarks, with future plans linked to dedicated high-speed corridors capable of supporting speeds of up to 350 kmph.

Vande Bharat 4.0 is expected within 18 months from late 2025, reinforcing continued efforts towards future-ready, high-performance passenger rail systems.

Vande Bharat Sleeper: Expanding To Long Distance Travel

Further adding momentum to the expansion of the services, the Vande Bharat Sleeper Train is scheduled for introduction in January 2026, extending the platform to long-distance overnight travel. The first Vande Bharat Sleeper Train will operate between Howrah in West Bengal and Guwahati

in Assam, strengthening inter-regional connectivity. This corridor connects Eastern and North-Eastern India and is used daily by thousands of passengers, including students, workers, traders, and families.

Travel Time Comparison: Howrah-

Guwahati Corridor

Saraighat Express (12345/12346): ~17 hours

Vande Bharat Sleeper (expected): ~14 hours

Estimated Time Saving: Nearly 3 hours

The sleeper trainset consists of 16 air-conditioned coaches, including one AC First Class, four AC Two-Tier, and eleven AC Three-Tier. It is designed to provide safe and comfortable overnight travel, with a total capacity of around 823 passengers.

The indigenously designed Vande Bharat Sleeper Trainset has completed trial runs, testing, and certification, marking a significant milestone towards its operational deployment. High-speed trials conducted on the Kota-Nagda section demonstrated stable operations at speeds of up to 180 kmph. Long-distance performance trials carried out by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO) on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor validated endurance, ride comfort, and system reliability. The train also offers well-planned luggage spaces, including overhead racks, under-berth storage, and dedicated areas near coach entrances for larger suitcases, ensuring uncluttered interiors during long journeys.

Staff Support and Seamless Operations: The Vande Bharat Sleeper also introduces significant improvements for railway staff, supporting safer and more efficient operations. Loco Pilots benefit from ergonomically designed driver cabins that reduce strain and fatigue during long duty hours, along with dedicated and well-equipped toilets to ensure hygiene and convenience.

For onboard staff, including TTEs and pantry personnel, the train provides dedicated cabins and compartments, improved berths, and better onboard amenities. These provisions enable adequate rest during duty hours, contributing to higher alertness, improved efficiency, and enhanced overall service quality.

Looking Ahead: Scaling the Vande Bharat Express

Vande Bharat is envisioned as a key pillar of India's passenger rail modernisation in the coming decades. By 2047, the Vande Bharat fleet is envisioned to scale to around 4,500 trainsets, aligned with India's long-term development goals. In the medium term, the focus is on scaling up services, operating about 800 Vande Bharat trainsets by 2030, subject to infrastructure readiness and manufacturing capacity.

Conclusion

The Vande Bharat trains reflect Indian Railways' strategic shift towards modern, efficient, and passenger-centric rail services, supported by continuous infrastructure upgradation and indigenous manufacturing capability. Through the expansion of new-generation trainsets, diversified variants, and improved onboard services, Vande Bharat is strengthening regional connectivity and improving the quality of inter-city travel. These trains underscore the role of rail infrastructure as a critical enabler of economic integration, sustainable mobility, and inclusive national development.

How To Feed Ten Billion People

With the world's population expected to reach ten billion by mid-century, agriculture must produce more with less – every season, everywhere.

The knowledge and tools to end and prevent food insecurity are already in hand, but they have yet to be used wisely and at scale.

Yurdi Yasmi

With the world struggling to feed eight billion people today, how will we feed ten billion by 2050? Meeting the nutritional needs of a growing population requires not just a radical increase in food production – almost all of it plant-based – but also a more equitable distribution to ensure that no one is food-insecure.

That is a tall order. The current food system is already buckling. Roughly 673 million people go to bed hungry every night, and in 2025, we witnessed two famines (in Gaza and Sudan), each driven by conflict, climate shocks, and soaring food prices. At the same time, 1.66 billion hectares – 60% of which are agricultural land – have been degraded by the very practices we rely on to feed the world.

Global hunger stems not from a lack of capacity to produce enough food, but from our failure to produce it efficiently and distribute it evenly. Conflict and insecurity remain the dominant causes of hunger across 20 countries and territories, leaving nearly 140 million people facing acute food insecurity. Disasters have inflicted an estimated \$3.26 trillion in agricultural losses

worldwide over the past 33 years – an average of \$99 billion annually, or roughly 4% of global agricultural output; and recent supply-driven food-price spikes have pushed tens of millions of people into hunger almost overnight. Worse, these are not one-off shocks. They represent the new normal.

For decades, the agriculture sector has responded well to rising demand by developing higher-yielding crops and using more of everything: more fertilizer, more pesticides, and more water. Yet this trend has produced unnecessary waste, polluted rivers, degraded the soil, and released ever-more greenhouse gases (GHGs). We need to find a better path, and science can show us the way. We already have the knowledge and the tools to optimize what we use and diversify what we grow.

One priority is to improve efficiency. Between 1990 and 2020, fertilizer use rose 46% and pesticide use doubled. But only 30-60% of fertilizer nutrients and 20-70% of pesticides are effectively absorbed; the rest washes into rivers, degrades soil, or releases GHGs. Fortunately, research shows that optimizing nitrogen use can boost yields by up to 19% and slash fertilizer use by 15-19%. Improved pesticide management

– through precision spraying, biopesticides, and residue monitoring – reduces chemical waste while safeguarding biodiversity. Agroecological practices – such as intercropping, crop rotation, and integrating trees into farm systems – further enhance soil health, lower input dependence, and strengthen long-term resilience.

The next priority is to diversify the food system. Decades of productivity gains have fostered a dangerous dependency on just three crops. Wheat, rice, and maize now provide most of the world's calories. Such reliance on monocultures creates profound vulnerability to pests, diseases, and climate change. The solution lies in the crops we have marginalized. Traditional and underused species – hardy millets, nutrient-dense legumes, indigenous fruits, robust yams – offer ample nutrition alongside other benefits such as climate resilience. United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization initiatives like Future Smart Food (in Asia) and 100 Crops for Africa demonstrate how these “forgotten” crops can simultaneously expand diets, boost farm incomes, and restore degraded soils.

Finally, we must scale up effective technologies. Data analytics and precision-agriculture

tools are already reshaping farming. Drones can plant seeds and deliver inputs with pinpoint accuracy. AI platforms can use satellite imagery to provide tailored, real-time recommendations. Robots can detect weeds for targeted spraying, avoiding the need for blanket herbicide applications. Digital soil tests and weather stations can guide day-to-day decisions, and blockchain systems can link smallholders to transparent and traceable markets.

Scaling these tools will require substantial investments in agricultural extension services (to promote best practices), major science-based policy shifts, and knowledge-sharing platforms to help farmers optimize inputs. Likewise, ongoing innovation must be incorporated into local practices, which calls for greater collaboration among governments, investors, the private sector, and farmers.

The objective is clear: agriculture must produce more with less – more crop per drop, more calories per kilogram of fertilizer, and more nutrition per hectare – every season, everywhere. That requires replacing one-size-fits-all industrial packages with resilient, context-specific systems finely tuned to local soils, water regimes, crops, and

climates. Publicly funded research must lead where markets fall short to ensure equitable access to precision agriculture, while private innovation continues to scale up what works. Knowledge is no longer the bottleneck; political will and aligned incentives are.

Even in the face of recurring conflict, drought, and market chaos, stable production and affordable prices are possible. Resilient soils, diversified cropping, and precision management hold the key. A world where nearly everyone eats well, farmers prosper, soils regenerate, waters run clean, biodiversity recovers, and agrofood systems emit minimal GHGs is not utopian. It is the realistic reward for embracing a different agricultural model before the old one collapses.

The only question is whether we use the knowledge, science, and proven tools already in hand. Future generations will not ask whether the solutions existed; they will ask what took us so long to implement them. The choice is ours, and it starts with turning science into real-world practice.

Yurdi Yasmi is Director of the Plant Production and Protection Division at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

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

Amrit Bharat Express: Transforming Affordable Long-Distance Rail Travel

Press Information Bureau

Empowering Everyday Journeys Railways have long been the backbone of India's social and economic fabric. They have carried generations of passengers across vast distances and diverse landscapes. As the lifeline of affordable mass transport, Indian Railways has played a pivotal role in connecting people, markets, and opportunities. This is especially true for those for whom train travel is not a choice but a daily necessity. Nearly two centuries after India's first train journey, Indian Railways continues to transform mobility for millions. By extending comfort, convenience, and reliability, once associated primarily with premium services, Indian Railways have steadily built a more inclusive transport system. The focus remains on safety and a passenger-centric approach.

Aligned with this vision, the Amrit Bharat Express has emerged as a significant milestone for everyday travellers. It was introduced as a flagship initiative of the Amrit Kal. Since its launch in December 2023, 30 Amrit Bharat Express trains have already become operational, and 9 additional services are going to be introduced. These routes will strengthen connectivity by linking the eastern and sub-Himalayan regions with major destinations across southern, western, and central India. This reinforces the nation's commitment to affordable, comfortable, and reliable travel for all.

Amrit Bharat Express: The Idea and the Intent

The Amrit Bharat Express is a modern, non-AC long-distance sleeper class train service introduced by Indian Railways to provide reliable, affordable, and comfortable travel. It is designed to handle heavy passenger volumes, especially during festive seasons and peak migration periods. With fares of approximately 500 per 1,000 kilometres and proportionately lower pricing for short and medium-distance journeys, the service follows a simple and transparent fare structure with no dynamic pricing. To bridge regions often separated by distance and opportunity, the Amrit Bharat Express supports travel for employment, education, and family needs. It is a part of India's continued push to expand affordable long-distance



Source: Ministry of Railways

connectivity across the country.

Amrit Bharat trains are fully non-AC, configured with 11 General Class coaches, 8 Sleeper Class coaches, 1 Pantry Car, and 2 Second Class-cum-Luggage-cum-Guard Vans with disabled-friendly compartments. Designed and manufactured to meet the needs of the general public, these trains aim to deliver a modern, comfortable, and high-quality travel experience for passengers in the non-AC segment.

Broadening Reach: Nine New Amrit Bharat Express Trains

The introduction of nine new Amrit Bharat Express trains marks a significant expansion of the network. These new services are aimed at strengthening long-distance connectivity and meeting rising passenger demand across key regions of the country.

Ashtalakshmi of Bharat's Northeast: Powered by Kamakhya-Rohtak Amrit Bharat Express

Connecting Kamakhya, a major spiritual hub in Assam, with Rohtak in Haryana, this Amrit Bharat Express strengthens long-distance

connectivity between the Northeast and northern India.

Operates as a weekly service across Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana, offering affordable and comfortable travel.

Train Timings:

Departs Kamakhya at 10:00 PM on Fridays, arrives Rohtak at 2:45 PM on Sundays.

Return journey departs Rohtak at 10:10 PM on Sundays, arrives Kamakhya at 12:15 PM on Tuesdays.

Serves multiple districts across six states and passes near destinations such as Kamakhya Temple and the Ganga ghats of Varanasi, enhancing accessibility, tourism and regional ties.

Dibrugarh-Lucknow Amrit Bharat Express: Strengthening Purvodaya se Bharat Uday Vision

The Dibrugarh-Lucknow Amrit Bharat Express establishes a vital rail link between the North-Eastern region and northern India.

Originates from Dibrugarh in Assam and passes through Dimapur in Nagaland, connecting frontier and border regions with Uttar Pradesh.

Key Takeaways

- 30 Amrit Bharat Express trains have been operational since December 2023, with 9 new services added, expanding nationwide coverage.
- Non-AC sleeper travel priced at ~ 500 per 1,000 km, with no dynamic pricing, ensures accessibility for the common passenger.
- New routes link the Northeast, eastern, central, western, and southern India, connecting border areas, major cities, and pilgrimage centres.
- Enhanced rail access supports employment mobility, tourism, trade, and access to education and healthcare across multiple regions.

Passes close to major destinations including Kaziranga National Park (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Kamakhya Temple, Vikramshila Mahavir, Ayodhya and Lucknow.

Expected to boost tourism, local trade, small businesses and employment mobility by linking pilgrimage centres and major cities.

New Jalpaiguri-Nagercoil Amrit Bharat Express: From Dooars to Nilgiris

Linking the eastern Himalayan foothills with the southern tip of the country, this service strengthens national integration and long-distance connectivity.

Connects New Jalpaiguri, a key border-area hub near Bhutan and Bangladesh, with Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district.

Operates as a weekly service along a strategically important corridor linking border-adjacent regions, ports, industrial belts and hinterlands.

Passes near destinations such as Darjeeling-Dooars, Visakhapatnam beaches, Madurai (Meenakshi Temple) and Coimbatore, supporting tourism and regional development.

New Jalpaiguri-Tiruchirappalli Amrit Bharat Express: From Darjeeling Foothills to Education Hub

This service creates a long-distance rail corridor from the Northeast gateway to Tamil Nadu's education and temple hubs.

Begins at New Jalpaiguri, a strategically important border-region station, and connects it with Tiruchirappalli.

Passes through destinations including Agra, Prayagraj, Bhubaneswar, the Cauvery delta, Thanjavur and Chennai.

Strengthens access to markets, tourism centres, educational institutions and employment hubs, boosting local economies.

Alipurduar-Bengaluru Amrit Bharat Express: Boosting Border-to-Tech Connectivity

Providing a direct rail link between a strategic border district and India's technology capital, this service enhances east-south connectivity.

Weekly service connecting Alipurduar near Bhutan with SMVT Bengaluru.

Train Timings:

Departs Alipurduar at 10:25 PM on Mondays.

Returns from Bengaluru at 8:50 AM on Saturdays.

Serves districts across West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, promoting tourism and economic integration.

Alipurduar-Mumbai (Panvel) Amrit Bharat Express: Northeast's Gateway to Mumbai Metropolis

An important east-west rail corridor connecting North Bengal's border belt with the Mumbai suburban region.

Weekly service connecting Alipurduar with Panvel, traversing West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Train Timings:

Departs Alipurduar early Thursday morning, arrives Panvel by Saturday evening.

Return journey begins Panvel on Monday, concludes Alipurduar on Wednesday.

Provides access to major destinations including Darjeeling, Triveni Sangam, Chitrakoot Dham and Trimbakeshwar Jyotirlinga, supporting tourism and trade.

Santragachi-Tambaram Amrit Bharat Express: Strengthening East-South Rail Connectivity

Strengthening east-south rail connectivity, this service links eastern India with southern metropolitan and suburban regions.

Connects Santragachi near Kolkata with Tambaram, Chennai's suburban hub.

Benefits districts across West

Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu by improving access to education, healthcare and markets.

Passes near landmarks such as Jagannath Temple, Konark Sun Temple (UNESCO site) and Shore Temple (UNESCO site), boosting tourism and regional trade.

Connecting Eastern India with the National Capital: Howrah - Anand Vihar Amrit Bharat Express

This service provides a fast and dependable rail link between eastern India and the National Capital Region.

Weekly service connecting Howrah with Anand Vihar Terminal, Delhi.

Train Timings:

Departs Howrah at 11:10 PM on Thursdays, arrives Anand Vihar at 2:50 AM on Saturdays.

Return journey departs Anand Vihar at 5:15 AM on Saturdays, arrives Howrah at 10:50 AM on Sundays.

Serves major districts across West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, improving access to employment and administrative centres.

Kolkata (Sealdah) - Banaras Amrit Bharat Express: Faith Fusion - Jyotirlinga to Gurdwara Ghats

Enhancing connectivity between eastern India and one of the country's most significant spiritual centres.

Daily service connecting Sealdah in Kolkata with Banaras.

Train Timings:

Departs Sealdah at 7:30 PM, arrives Banaras at 7:20 AM the next day.

Return journey departs Banaras at 10:10 PM, arrives Sealdah at 9:55 AM the next day.

Passes near pilgrimage destinations including Baidyanath Dham Jyotirlinga, Takht Sri Patna Sahib, Kashi Vishwanath Temple and Sarnath, boosting religious tourism and regional growth.

Conclusion

The Amrit Bharat Express represents a decisive step towards strengthening India's long-distance rail network with a clear focus on inclusivity and scale. By combining affordability, extensive geographic reach, and passenger-oriented design, it supports mobility needs across regions that are critical for economic integration and social cohesion. As the network continues to expand, the Amrit Bharat Express is positioned to play a lasting role in connecting people, regions, and opportunities across the country.

What Are You Designed To Do? Why purpose is about pattern, not passion

Jeff DeGraff

On airplanes, in classrooms, and across café tables, people often lean toward me with earnest eyes and tell me what they want to do with their lives—what they hope to create or become. I listen, then offer a starting point that sends them in a different direction: What are you designed to do?

Often, there's a hush in their voice, as if they've asked for a password to meaning. Almost invariably, I disappoint them. I ask again: "What are you designed to do?"

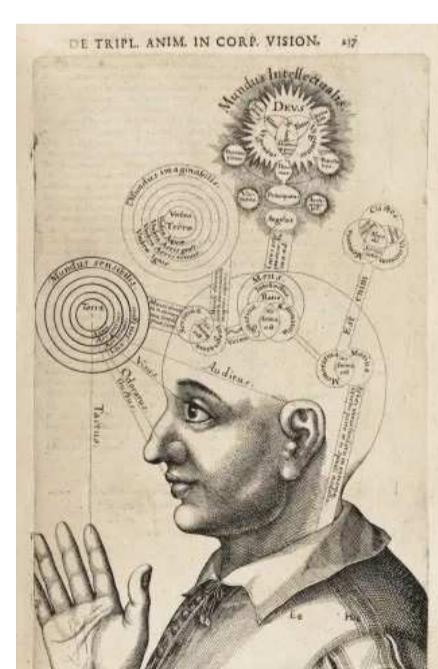
It's not a trick question—it's a shift in the axis of inquiry. The modern imagination is obsessed with wanting: what we want to have, become, or prove. But wanting is mercurial. It is appetite dressed up as purpose. The deeper question is one of design: the configuration of gifts, temperament, and circumstance that shape the current of your life.

When I was young, the question was phrased differently: What are your gifts? It was quieter, humbler. It assumed that something in you was given—either by divine endowment or by biology's peculiar inheritance. You didn't choose your gifts; you discovered them through the long apprenticeship of living.

The Greeks called this the daimon—the inner genius that summons us to what we must do. Carl Jung (1953) called it individuation, the process by which the self becomes itself.

Today, that question has been replaced by slogans of self-determination—Find your passion! Follow your dreams!—which sound liberating but are quietly tyrannical. Passion burns bright, then dims; it changes with age and circumstance. Design endures. It asks not what you crave, but what you are made for.

My mentor, Rudolf Arnheim, one of the great perceptual psychologists of the twentieth century, taught me that form and function are inseparable: the way something is shaped determines how it moves and holds together (Arnheim, 1974). The same is true of people. Yet "design thinking" has become a corporate buzzword—stripped of the very insight it once promised.



When I speak of design, I mean something elemental. Your design is the unique arrangement of three forces:

Your natural abilities and temperaments—the innate patterns of perception and emotion.

The capacities you've developed through experience and education—the honed edges of practice and pain.

The situation in which those capacities are valued—or not valued—by the world around you.

The point is not to discover an ideal job description but to discern the alignment between your nature, your cultivation, and your context. That's what defines a life that fits.

The Superficial and the Essential

Years ago, I spoke at a conference for members of the U.S. Special Forces—men and women trained to operate under impossible conditions. Between sessions, I listened to a panel about how they might transition to

civilian life. A well-meaning HR staffer urged them to describe their skills in business terms: "You've managed communications? You're a network technician."

I wanted to interrupt: That's not who they are. Those labels missed their essence. These individuals weren't electricians or technicians—they were experts in improvisation, pattern recognition, and real-time problem-solving. They were designed not for routine, but for emergence.

We mistake the superficial for the essential because the superficial is easier to measure. The visible skills—what can be certified and codified—are often the least revealing. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observed, creativity arises when people align their deepest strengths with challenges that fully absorb their attention. Flow, he argued, is not about "following your bliss," but about doing the work your design was meant to perform.

The same holds true in my own life. My ability to think quickly and speak fluently makes me a strong public speaker. Forty years of teaching have refined that ability. Universities and conferences have rewarded it.

But those are expressions of my design, not the design itself. The deeper pattern is synthesis—the impulse to connect ideas, people, and paradoxes into coherent wholes. That pattern could have emerged in a courtroom, a studio, or a cockpit. The context is incidental; the design is essential.

This is where so many people get trapped. They confuse their profession with their design. The job title becomes a proxy for identity. But history is full of counterexamples.

Anton Chekhov, the playwright, was also a doctor—his art and science intertwined. T. S. Eliot worked as a banker even after publishing *The Waste Land*. Wallace Stevens, the great modernist poet, spent his days as an insurance executive.

Their professions were incidental. Their designs—observation, reflection, language—were intrinsic.

So if you want to know what you're designed to do, ask not what you do for a living,

but what remains when everything else is stripped away. What pattern persists under pressure?

The Gift in Motion

There's an old saying among musicians: You don't really know an instrument until you've played it out of tune. The same is true of the self. The surest way to see your design is to notice what you do when everything goes wrong.

Under stress, we revert to our dominant mode of being. Some default to logic, others to empathy, others to control or improvisation. Those reflexes are not random; they are the architecture of our design revealed under pressure. As Jung wrote, "The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases" (Jung, 1953, p. 81).

But design is not destiny—it evolves. Your early gifts are often raw; life tempers them. A musician who begins as a technician may, through heartbreak, become an artist of emotion. A soldier trained for precision may, through reflection, become a teacher of resilience. As Carol Dweck's (2006) research on growth mindset shows, our capacities are not fixed traits but living systems that adapt through effort, feedback, and failure.

That's why personality tests—Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, DISC—are at best sketches. They may describe tendencies, but they don't capture the value those tendencies create in context. A type is a snapshot. A design is a living film.

When people ask me how to find their purpose, I tell them: Stop chasing what you want to do. Start uncovering what you're designed to do. One is a wish; the other is a truth waiting to be remembered.

Every life, like every instrument, has its own resonance. To live well is to keep tuning it—not once, but continually—to the key of the moment.

4 Ways To Discover What You're Designed to Do

Study your defaults under pressure.

Look beyond your job title.

Experiment, don't declare.

Refine through service. When stress rises, notice what you instinctively do. That pattern—your natural mode of problem-solving or connecting—is a clue to your design.

As Viktor Frankl (1959) observed, purpose is not found in what we get from life but in what life expects from us. Your profession

Trump says 8 European countries will be charged 10 pc tariff for opposing US control of Greenland

AP

Nuuk (Greenland), Jan 17: President Donald Trump said Saturday that he would charge a 10 per cent import tax starting in February on goods from eight European nations because of their opposition to American control of Greenland.

Trump said in a social media post that Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland would face the tariff and that it would climb to 25 per cent on June 1 if a deal is not in place for "the Complete and Total purchase of Greenland" by the United States.

The threat of tariffs was a drastic and potentially dangerous escalation of a showdown between Trump and NATO allies, further straining an alliance that dates to 1949 and provides a collective degree of security to Europe and North America.

The Republican president has repeatedly tried to use trade penalties to bend allies and rivals alike to his will, generating investment commitments from some nations and push-back from others such as China, Brazil and India.

It was unclear how Trump could impose the tariffs under US law, though he could cite economic emergency powers that are currently subject to a US Supreme Court challenge.

Trump said in his Truth Social post that his tariffs were retaliation for recent trips to Greenland by representatives from Britain, the Netherlands and Finland and for general opposition to his efforts to purchase the semi-autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

He has Greenland is essential for the "Golden Dome" missile defence system for the US, and has argued that Russia and China might try to take over the island.

Resistance has steadily built in Europe to Trump's ambitions, even as several countries on the continent agreed to his 15 per cent tariffs last year in order to preserve an economic and security relationship with



Washington.

Earlier Saturday, hundreds of people in Greenland's capital braved near-freezing temperatures, rain and icy streets to march in a rally in support of their own self-governance.

The Greenlanders waved their red-and-white national flags and listened to traditional songs as they walked through Nuuk's small downtown. Some carried signs with messages like "We shape our future," "Greenland is not for sale" and "Greenland is already GREAT." They were joined by thousands of others in rallies across the Danish kingdom.

The rallies occurred hours after a bipartisan US congressional delegation in Copenhagen sought to reassure Denmark and Greenland of their support.

US Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., said the current rhetoric around Greenland was causing concern across the Danish kingdom and that he wanted to de-escalate the situation.

"I hope that the people of the Kingdom of Denmark do not abandon their faith in the American people," he said in

Copenhagen, adding that the US has respect for Denmark and NATO "for all we've done together."

NATO training exercises

Danish Maj. Gen. Søren Andersen, leader of the Joint Arctic Command, told The Associated Press that Denmark doesn't expect the US military to attack Greenland, or any other NATO ally, and that European troops were recently deployed to Nuuk for Arctic defence training.

He said that the goal isn't to send a message to the Trump administration, even through the White House hasn't ruled out taking the territory by force.

"I will not go into the political part, but I will say that I would never expect a NATO country to attack another NATO country," he told the AP on Saturday aboard a Danish military vessel docked in Nuuk. "For us, for me, it's not about signaling. It is actually about training military units, working together with allies."

The Danish military organised a planning meeting Friday in Greenland with NATO allies, including the US, to discuss Arctic security on the alliance's northern flank in the face of a potential Russian threat. The Americans were also invited to participate in Operation Arctic Endurance in Greenland in the coming days, Andersen said.

In his 2½ years as a commander in Greenland, Andersen said that he hasn't seen any Chinese or Russian combat vessels or warships, despite Trump saying that they were off the island's coast.

But in the unlikely event of American troops using force on Danish soil, Andersen confirmed a Cold War-era law governing Danish rules of engagement.

"But you are right that it is Danish law that a Danish soldier, if attacked, has the obligation to fight back," he said.

"Important for the whole world"

Thousands of people marched through Copenhagen, many of them carrying Greenland's flag. Others held signs with slogans like "Make America Smart Again" and "Hands Off."

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"This is important for the

whole world," Danish protester Elise Riechie told the AP as she held Danish and Greenlandic flags. "There are many small countries. None of them are for sale."

Trump has sought to justify his calls for a US takeover by repeatedly saying that China and Russia have their own designs on Greenland, which holds vast untapped reserves of critical minerals.

"There are no current security threats to Greenland," Coons said.

Trump has insisted for months that the US should control Greenland, and said earlier this week that anything less than the Arctic island being in US hands would be "unacceptable."

During an unrelated event at the White House about rural health care, he recounted Friday how he had threatened European allies with tariffs on pharmaceuticals.

"I may do that for Greenland, too," Trump said.

He had not previously mentioned using tariffs to try to force the issue.

Earlier this week, the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland met in Washington with Trump's vice president, JD Vance, and secretary of state, Marco Rubio.

That encounter didn't resolve the deep differences, but did produce an agreement to set up a working group — on whose purpose Denmark and the White House then offered sharply diverging public views.

European leaders have said that it's only for Denmark and Greenland to decide on matters concerning the territory, and Denmark said this week that it was increasing its military presence in Greenland in cooperation with allies.

"There is almost no better ally to the United States than Denmark," Coons said. "If we do things that cause Danes to question whether we can be counted on as a NATO ally, why would any other country seek to be our ally or believe in our representations?"

BJP's Ravinder Raina discusses public issues with LG Sinha



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 17: Ravinder Raina, senior BJP leader and former MLA called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday.

Raina discussed various public important issues and development of several religious sites including Baba Naar Singh Ji Dev Sthan (Lambri) Nowshera, Mangla Mata Shrine & Mangla Devi (Fort & Temple) under religious and border tourism and Peer Badesar near LoC in Rajouri.

Meanwhile, LG Sinha released

J&K Shri Kashi Vidvat Parishad's Dairy and Panchang Calendar 2026, at Lok Bhawan. He extended his felicitations to Padma Shri Prof. Vishwa Murli Shastri, President, J&K Shri Kashi Vidvat Parishad Jammu, editorial team, and all the members of the parishad for their dedicated efforts in promoting and preserving cultural heritage.

The 2026 Calendar is designed as a comprehensive spiritual and cultural guide featuring information about auspicious occasions, festivals and religious rituals.

Bangladesh's interim govt incapable of holding fair polls: Awami League

PTI

Awami League leaders Hasan Mahmud and Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury also said that the Muhammad Yunus-led interim govt in Dhaka is incapable of holding free and fair polls in the country.

"Under this administration, a level playing field for Awami League will never be possible," Mahmud, who was a minister in the Sheikh Hasina-led government, said in a media briefing in New Delhi.

"We do want to participate in the election, we came to power all the time through elections, we

believe in people's power," he said. Hasina, 78, has been living in India after she fled Dhaka following collapse of her government in August, 2024 in the face of a massive anti-government agitation.

Mahmud and Chowdhury also accused the Yunus-led dispensation of failing to protect the minorities in Bangladesh.

Mahmud said the Awami League was banned from contesting the election in view of the party's popularity.

"There must be rule of law. We shall definitely return to the country along with Sheikh Hasina, our leader," he said.

CONT'D. FROM FRONT PAGE

Sports a 'real-life'

giving special focus and strong encouragement to the participation of women and youth in sports and working towards removing the major barriers that hold them back.

He said the policymakers and industry leaders should create avenues of opportunity through sports.

"Investing in sports means investing in disciplined citizens and a confident future to shape the destiny of the country.

To truly build a sports culture, we must bring sports into the heart of daily community living and connect sports with education and life skills," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the Department of Youth Services and Sports, J&K for its unique endeavour aimed at advancing the national sports agenda through sharing of best practices in governance, participation, athlete development and performance excellence.

He urged sports councils, federations, administrators and officials to chalk-out a strategic development plan specifically designed to elevate performance in international competitions.

Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Yasha Mudgal, Commissioner/Secretary to Government, Youth Services and Sports; Padma Shri Dr Karnam Malleswari (Olympian) Vice Chancellor, Delhi Sports University; Ramesh Kumar; Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Anuradha Gupta, Director General Youth Services and Sports, senior officials, representatives of Sports Authority of India; eminent sports personalities; sports-experts and youth in large number attended the inaugural ceremony. (KNO)

Prime Minister's Dev

exceeded the allocations initially provided in the Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) as approved in 2015. (KNO)

J&K, Ladakh record

only 3301 MWs.

Pertinently, in November-2025 KNO reported that in view of 'nonavailability of real-time telemetry data', authorities have said that the power control rooms in Jammu and Kashmir are unable to monitor and see as to what is happening at their own power stations and substations.

The Northern Regional Power Committee (NRPC) while taking up the issues of telemetry in J&K has said, "Reliability and accuracy of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) data and its associated communication system is essential for monitoring and coordinating operations of a large electricity grid."

"It helps in visualization and management of

the critical grid element failure, grid incident in real time and minimizes the possibility of any untoward incidents or disturbances," NRPC said.

The official documents of the committee further said, "Real-Time data availability from Jammu and Kashmir is very poor. There is zero visibility of data in J&K stations at J&K and NRLDC. With poor monitoring of data, it is very difficult to monitor the grid in an efficient manner."

The committee also said that the matter has been discussed in various Technical Co-ordination Committee (TCC) and Technical Sub-Committee for Testing and Commissioning (TeST) meetings. "But there is no improvement of the same."

"Remote Terminal Units (RTUs) were tested locally and commissioned without data availability at the Control Centre. Due to non-availability of data, JKPPD is not able to monitor or control the grid and its generation," it reads.

NRPC further mentioned that J&K is dependent on central sector data for monitoring of drawal.

Earlier, in the first week of September KNO reported that in Jammu and Kashmir, real-time telemetry data continues to remain unavailable at both JK-SLDC and Northern Regional Load Despatch Centre (NRLDC), raising concerns about increased risks of data breaches and other cyber threats.

According to official documents, the NRLDC representative had highlighted that till that time "real-time telemetry data from Jammu and Kashmir remains unavailable at both JK-SLDC and NRLDC" (KNO)

Cold conditions

nights at 7.4 degrees Celsius and 7.5 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Ladakh continued to experience severe cold, with Drass recording the lowest minimum at minus 9.9 degrees Celsius, unchanged from Friday. Leh and Hanle recorded minus 7 degrees Celsius and minus 8 degrees Celsius, respectively, while Kargil stood at minus 5.1 degrees Celsius, all showing stable conditions.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has forecast partly to generally cloudy weather on January 18, with light snowfall at isolated higher reaches. From January 19 to 20, light to moderate rain or snow is expected at scattered to fairly widespread places.

A more intense wet spell is likely between January 22 and 25, with the possibility of heavy rain or snowfall over parts of the Chenab Valley, Pir Panjal range, and districts of south Kashmir, particularly on January 23 and 24.

The MET office has issued an advisory warning of possible landslides at vulnerable locations and urged travellers to plan their journeys

carefully, while farmers have been advised to suspend farm operations during the peak wet spell. (KNO)

Dir Info, DIPR employees

Thakur Singh had served the department in various capacities and his contribution has been widely recognised in the department. He expressed deep grief on his tragic demise and also extended his sympathies with the bereaved family.

Meanwhile, the employees of Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), have also expressed deep grief and sorrow on the sad demise of Thakur Singh.

The Employees extended their deepest sympathies to the bereaved family and also prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Al Falah University

from fees paid by students, while allegedly misrepresenting the accreditation and recognition of his institutions.

In a statement, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said it has provisionally attached the university land and building, worth about Rs 140 crore and located in the Dhauj area of Faridabad.

The court is yet to take cognisance of the ED chargesheet.

Quoting the ED chargesheet, officials told PTI that doctors at the medical college were employed on "paper" and were listed under a "22 days punch" or "two days per week" clause to be represented as regular faculty "just to obtain" requisite approvals from the National Medical Commission (NMC) so that the healthcare facility runs uninterrupted.

According to officials, the ED has recorded the statement of the Registrar of the University, who "acknowledged" the visit of probe agencies to the campus and the arrests of "Dr Muzammil and Dr Shaheen" and the University hospital." He said in his statement that the doctors of the medical college, established in 2019, were hired "without" any police verification.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University told the ED that the doctors reported to be involved in terror-related activities -- Dr Muzammil Ganaie, a junior resident in general medicine department since October 2021; Dr Shaheen Saeed, an associate professor in pharmacology since October 2021, and Dr Umar Nabi, the alleged suicide bomber and an assistant professor in general medicine since May 2024 -- were appointed during her tenure.

She informed the agency that these appointments were, however, "recommended" by the varsity's HR head and "approved" by Siddiqui, following which she issued formal appointment letters.

The V-C is also understood to have told the ED that "no police verification or scrutiny" was conducted while appointment of these doctors.

The explosives-laden car blast near Delhi's Red Fort area on November 10 last year killed 15 people and injured several others. Nabi was stated to have been driving the car and was killed in the blast, while Ganaie and Saeed were arrested by the NIA. They, along with some others, are currently in judicial custody.

A document appended in the chargesheet also lists the name of Nabi as a regular doctor at the medical facility.

Siddiqui, in his statement before the agency, is stated to have denied having "any connection" with a terrorist or banned organisation.

The ED records statements of various persons in a money laundering investigation under Section 50 of the PMLA and such statements are admissible before court.

PM Modi leads roadshow in Guwahati; huge crowd gather to greet him

PTI

Guwahati, Jan 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi took part in a colourful roadshow in Guwahati on Saturday evening, witnessing diverse cultural elements of Assam on the first day of his two-day tour to the state.

The PM arrived in the state capital on Saturday evening. In his two-day trip, he is scheduled to roll out projects worth around Rs 7,000 crore.

The roadshow began from the round-about on National Highway-17 outside the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBIA) here and concluded at Azara, covering a distance of almost four kilometres.

Modi, who was sitting on the front of a black SUV, was seen waving to the enthusiastic crowd. He went to Indira Gandhi



Athletic Stadium inside the Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex in Sarusajai to witness the traditional Bagurumba dance of the Bodo community by more than 10,000 artistes.

Once his cavalcade reached

the roadshow point, it slowed down, while slogans like "Modi Ji Zindabad" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" echoed through the streets.

As the roadshow progressed, the crowd grew larger and pushed towards the road. There

were two layers of bamboo barricades to separate the public from the road.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other senior party leaders joined Modi during the roadshow.

The roadshow was a showcase of the BJP's strength in Assam, where state assembly polls are likely to take place in March-April this year.

The event was marked by a strong presence of BJP workers and volunteers, who had tried hard to ensure a grand reception for the Prime Minister.

Thousands of people gathered along the 4-km route of the roadshow to have a glimpse of the PM, who witnessed Assam's diverse ethnic culture. Several platforms were erected on the roadside for the performances by hundreds of artistes from different parts of the state, an

official said.

"We tried to present cultural shows of dance, songs and playing of instruments from our ethnic and indigenous tribes," he added.

The event was marked by a strong security presence with elaborate arrangements made to ensure the PM's safety and smooth passage through the city.

Earlier during the day, Guwahati Police Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) Jayanta Sarathi Borah told PTI that from the airport, the PM would reach the roadshow's starting point in his cavalcade, for which vehicular movement was regulated as per protocol.

"All traffic arrangements have been made for smooth conduct of the roadshow. We tried to ensure that the public do not face any difficulty in having a glimpse of the PM," he said.

NIA court refuses to discharge accused linked to gangster Dawood Ibrahim's aide in FICN case

PTI

Mumbai, Jan 17: A special NIA court has refused to discharge a man allegedly linked to fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim's aide Javed Chikna in a Fake Indian Currency Note (FICN) smuggling case.



The court ruled there is "more than sufficient material" against accused Nasir Chaudhary to face trial for his alleged role in the case.

In the order passed on January 16, Special Judge Chakor S Baviskar dismissed the defence's claim that the protection had planted evidence against Chaudhary by observing that the veracity of such theory can only be decided during a full trial, not at the discharge stage.

In November 2021, a raid in Thane led to the arrest of prime accused Riyaz with 149 counterfeit notes of Rs 2000 denomination. Chaudhary was held on November 26 that year based on Riyaz's interrogation.

Following his arrest, Chaudhary disclosed that Javed Chikna, a designated individual terrorist and a close aide of Dawood Ibrahim, had sent him one high quality FICN of Rs 2000 denomination, the NIA said.

Further, the prosecution submitted that the accused stated that he had hidden the currency behind an under-construction masjid. It led the authorities to discover the note from a pile of construction debris behind a masjid.

As per National Investigation Agency, Chaudhary

and all other accused are indulging in trafficking and circulating FICN on the instruction of Javed Chikna.

The accused, however, had contended the FICN recovered was planted by the prosecution.

Besides this, there is no evidence against him and, hence, he deserves to be discharged, the accused said.

On the theory of false implication, the court said "no basis has been put forth by accused Nasir Chaudhary as to why the investigating agency, *prima facie*, does an attempt to implicate him, sans any previous enmity".

The investigating officer does not appear to be having any grudge against Chaudhary, the court added. The special judge emphasised that the defence of the accused cannot be looked into at the time of discharge, particularly when "prosecution creates grave suspicion against the accused having committed alleged offences".

"Considering these broad probabilities of the material, I came to the specific conclusion that, *prima facie* case is made out against this accused Nasir Chaudhary to stand the trial," the judge ruled.

Modi witnesses 10,000 artistes perform Bodo folk dance 'Bagurumba'

PTI

Guwahati, Jan 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday witnessed a performance of the traditional Bagurumba dance of the Bodo community here, with over 10,000 artistes participating in the programme.

Modi, who arrived in Assam on a two-day visit, had said the programme celebrates Bodo culture and reaffirmed the government's commitment to fulfilling the aspirations of the community.

"This programme celebrates the great Bodo culture. The NDA Government at the Centre and in Assam are working extensively to fulfil the vision of Bodo Open-drain Brahma," the prime minister said in a post on X on Friday.

Brahma, a revered leader of the Bodo community, died of a terminal illness in 1990 at the age of 34 and

was posthumously honoured with the title 'Bodofa' (guardian of the Bodos).

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, among others, accompanied Modi in witnessing the performance.

Titled 'Bagurumba Dhwou 2026', the performance was held at the Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Stadium in the city's Sarusajai area.

Over 10,000 artistes, including around 8,000 dancers from 81 assembly constituencies across 23 districts, participated in the event.

Bagurumba, a folk dance of the Bodo community -- one of Assam's largest indigenous groups -- is deeply rooted in nature and symbolises blooming flowers and harmony between human life and the natural world.

Performed traditionally by women, with men accompanying them as musicians, the dance features graceful

movements imitating butterflies, birds, leaves and flowers.

The Guwahati presentation incorporates the word 'dhwou', meaning wave in the Bodo language, and was accompanied by songs in Bodo and traditional instruments such as kham, serja, sifung, jatha and japsnhring, several of which carry Geographical Indication tags.

Closely associated with festivals like Bwisagu, the Bodo New Year, and Domasi, Bagurumba represents peace, fertility, joy and collective harmony.

The programme involved several Bodo organisations, with 25 experts training 400 master trainers in Guwahati, who then coached the artistes in their respective districts.

The state government has organised similar large-scale performances of Bihu and Jhumoir dances over the past two years.

'Maruti Suzuki to invest Rs 35,000 crore for new manufacturing plant in Gujarat'



PTI

Ahmedabad, Jan 17: Maruti Suzuki India Limited will develop a new plant near Sanand in Ahmedabad district with an investment of Rs 35,000 crore, facilitating potential employment opportunities for 12,000 individuals, the Gujarat government has said.

The country's largest passenger car manufacturer will establish the plant at Khoraj GIDC, an official release said.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Saturday handed over an "investment letter" to Maruti Suzuki Managing Director Hisashi Takeuchi in Gandhinagar for this plant.

Maruti Suzuki India Limited will establish a new vehicle manufacturing plant at Khoraj on 1,750 acres of land made available by GIDC (Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation), with an investment of Rs 35,000 crore," it said.

This new Maruti plant will generate potential employment opportunities for over 12,000 persons, the release said.

Deputy CM Harsh Sanghvi, along with Maruti Suzuki's Whole Time Director and Executive Committee Member Sunil Kakkar, were also present at the event.

This is not merely a new automobile manufacturing facility, but also an important step towards further strengthening the country's largest and most competitive automobile manufacturing corridor, the release quoted CM Patel as saying.

CM Patel highlighted that under the

leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India-Gujarat-Japan relations have remained strong. He emphasised that the government will continue its efforts to uphold the assurance given by Suzuki's CEO during his visit to Japan.

He added that under PM Modi's leadership, Gujarat has become a policy-driven state through sustainable policymaking. In addition, Gujarat has also earned a reputation for robust infrastructure and a development approach aligned with the needs of industries, the release said.

Since the inception of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit, a global business event, Japan has remained both a partner country and a key partner in development, Deputy CM Sanghvi said.

When Maruti Suzuki Motors first came to Gujarat for investment, the state extended proactive support and cooperation, which will continue in the same spirit, he said.

An MoU (memorandum of understanding) was signed between the Gujarat government and Maruti Suzuki India Limited during the Vibrant Summit 2024 for the construction of this new vehicle facility.

PM Modi had invited Suzuki Motors to invest in Gujarat in 2012, following which the carmaker's first plant in the state came up at Hansalpur, the release said.

The Hansalpur plant currently produces 7.5 lakh cars per year, and a plan has been made to increase this by 2.5 lakh cars to reach a production of 10 lakh units per year by the 2026-27 financial year, it added.

Experts call for HPV vaccination, screening scaling to eliminate cervical cancer

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 17: Government and cancer institutions on Saturday pitched for expanding HPV vaccination, improving screening coverage through self-sampling HPV DNA testing at AIIMS here.

Speaking at the first national summit on Elimination of Cervical Cancer in India, the participants signalled commitment to translate policy intent into on-ground action.

The conference was organised by the departments of Radiation Oncology, Surgical Oncology, and Onco-Anaesthesia, and DRBRAIRCH, AIIMS. The speakers spoke of three pillars in HPV diagnosis and care.

They called for scaling HPV vaccination to strengthen screening through the high-performance HPV DNA testing -- to ensure timely access to diagnosis and treatment, which involves self-sampling.

The summit advocated establishing uniform national standard operating procedures and streamlining treatment and follow-up pathways to ensure equitable, high-quality care nationwide.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Aradhana Patnaik, Additional Secretary and Managing Director, National Health Mission (NHM), Union Health Ministry, reaffirmed the government's commitment to eliminating cervical cancer.

"Cervical cancer elimination is an achievable goal for India,

and we are fully committed to accelerating action across prevention, screening, and treatment," she said.

Patnaik said the Centre's focus is on rapidly expanding HPV vaccination, strengthening screening at all levels -- particularly through high-performance methods such as HPV DNA testing -- to ensure timely access to diagnosis and treatment for every woman.

Dr VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, highlighted the need for evidence-based models. "India has a historic opportunity to eliminate cervical cancer, but it requires speed, scale and system-wide alignment," he said. Dr Paul called for pilot projects that demonstrate how HPV-based screening and self-sampling can be implemented on scale, across primary healthcare platforms.

"These insights will help India build a national model that ensures women everywhere benefit from timely screening, accurate diagnostics, and seamless follow-up," he said.

Dr Abhishek Shankar, Assistant Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology, DRBRAIRCH, AIIMS, Delhi, stressed cervical cancer can no longer be addressed in silos.

"Convening government, clinicians, innovators, and patient advocates is key to creating the momentum and accountability needed to accelerate prevention, early detection and effective treatment," he said.

Representing the diagnostics industry, Vaibhav Kohli, the head of Marketing, Access and Commercial Excellence at Roche Diagnostics India, stressed the importance of accuracy and accessibility in screening.

The summit brought together over 500 participants, including representatives from AIIMS campuses nationwide, state health departments, cancer institutes, WHO, UNICEF, ICMR, civil society organisations, and industry partners.

Congress top brass discusses poll strategy with TN leaders

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 17: The Congress' top brass

met senior party leaders from Tamil Nadu on Saturday to chalk out a strategy for the upcoming Assembly polls and deliberate on the cadres' demand for a power-sharing understanding with the DMK.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge chaired the meeting that was attended by former party chief Rahul Gandhi, AICC general secretary in-charge organisation K C Venugopal, Tamil Nadu Congress chief K Selvaperunthagai, MPs P Chidambaram, Manickam Tagore, Karti Chidambaram, Jyothimani, V Vasanth, and Professionals' Congress chief Praveen Chakravarty, among others.

The meeting at the party's Indira Bhawan headquarters here comes amid calls from Tamil Nadu Congress for a share in power if the DMK-led alliance wins the Assembly election due by March-April this year.

Congress MP Manickam Tagore had said recently that it was time to debate "share in power."

CLP leader and Killiyoor (Kanyakumari district) legislator S Rajeshkumar had also batted for a coalition government.

Congress party in-charge for Tamil Nadu, Girish Chodankar had asked if any political party, "will say that they don't want the power; then we should name

ourselves as NGO."

However, ruling out the scope for a coalition government, senior DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Minister Periyasamy had asserted this week that Chief Minister M K Stalin is firm on the stand against sharing power with allies.

The meeting comes amid speculation that the Congress could also consider an alliance with newly formed actor-turned-politician Vijay's TVK, but state unit leaders have denied such a possibility.

Since 1967, both the DMK and the AIADMK had formed their own governments despite fighting polls in alliance with other parties. Following independence, when the first general election was held in the then composite Madras state in 1952, the Congress party failed to secure an absolute majority.

It was the only during the First Assembly's term (1952-57) that non-Congress leaders (including Manickavelu Naicker of the Commonweal Party) were accommodated in the Congress-led state Cabinet.

In 2006, though the DMK did not have an absolute majority, it ran the government for full five years (2006-11) with support from allies, including the Congress and without sharing power with allies. Without any success, the TN Congress leaders had made the same "share power with us" demand during the DMK's 2006-11 term too.

Punjab recognised as 'leader state' in Export Preparedness Index 2024: I&C Min

PTI

Chandigarh, Jan 17: Punjab has been recognised as a "leader state" in the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024 released by NITI Aayog, State Industries and Commerce Minister Sanjeev Arora said on Saturday.

He said Punjab ranked second among landlocked states, a notable achievement as most of the top-ranked states are coastal with direct access to seaports. The Export Preparedness

Index is a data-driven framework developed by NITI Aayog to assess the export readiness of states and Union Territories on parameters such as policy framework, business environment, export ecosystem, and export performance.

The EPI 2024 report was released by NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam and Member Arvind Virmani, who praised Punjab for its improved performance driven by stronger policies, infrastructure development and a growing export ecosystem, Arora said.

Iran's leader calls Trump 'criminal' for backing protests, blames demonstrators for deaths

AP

Dubai, Jan 17: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday branded US President Donald Trump a "criminal" for supporting protesters in Iran, and blamed demonstrators for causing thousands of deaths.

In a speech broadcast by state television, Khamenei said the protests had left "several thousand" people dead — the first indication from an Iranian leader of the extent of the casualties from the wave of protests that began December 28 and led to a bloody crackdown.

"In this revolt, the US president made remarks in person, encouraged seditionists to go ahead and said: 'We do support you, we do support you militarily,'" said Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters. He reiterated an accusation that the US seeks domination over Iran's economic and political resources.

"We do consider the US president a criminal, because of casualties and damages, because of accusations against the Iranian nation," he said.

He described the protesters as "foot soldiers" of the United States and said they had destroyed mosques and educational centres. "Through hurting people, they killed several thousand of them," he said.

Trump had sounded a conciliatory tone

His comments come a day after Trump sounded a conciliatory tone, saying that "Iran cancelled the hanging of over 800 people," and adding that "I greatly respect the fact that they cancelled." He did not clarify who he spoke to in Iran to confirm the state of any planned executions. His comments were a



sign he may be backing away from a military strike.

In recent days, Trump had told protesting Iranians that "help is on the way" and that his administration would "act accordingly" if the killing of demonstrators continued or if Iranian authorities executed detained protesters.

In his speech, Khamenei said rioters were armed with live ammunition that was imported from abroad, without naming any countries.

"We do not plan, we do not take the country toward war. But we do not release domestic offenders, worse than domestic offenders, there are international offenders. We do not let them alone either," he said, and urged officials to pursue the cases.

An uneasy calm

Iran has returned to an uneasy calm after harsh repression of protests that began December 28 over Iran's ailing economy. The crackdown has left at least 3,090 people dead, according to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, exceeding that

of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades and recalling the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution.

The agency has been accurate throughout the years of demonstrations, relying on a network of activists inside Iran that confirms all reported fatalities. The AP has been unable to independently confirm the toll.

Iranian officials have repeatedly accused the United States and Israel of fomenting unrest in the country. On Friday, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, in a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, accused the US and Israel of meddling in the unrest.

Reports of limited internet access briefly restored

There have been no signs of protests for days in Tehran, where shopping and street life have returned to outward normality. A call by Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi for protesters to take to the streets again from Saturday to Monday did not appear to have been heeded by Saturday afternoon.

Pahlavi, whose father was overthrown by Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, enjoys support from die-hard monarchists in the diaspora but has struggled to gain wider appeal within Iran. However, that has not stopped him from presenting himself as the transitional leader of Iran if the government were to fall.

During the unrest, authorities blocked all internet access on January 8. On Saturday, text messaging

and very limited internet services began functioning again briefly in parts of Iran, witnesses said.

Cellphone text messaging began operating overnight, while users were able to access local websites through a domestic internet service. Some also reported limited access to international internet services via use of a virtual private network, or VPN.

The extent of access and what was behind it wasn't immediately clear. It was possible that officials were turning on some systems for the start of the Iranian working week, as the outage has affected businesses, particularly banks in the country trying to handle transactions.

Internet traffic monitoring service Cloudflare and internet access advocacy group NetBlocks reported very slight increases in connectivity Saturday morning, while Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency also reported limited internet access. It did not offer an explanation.

Exiled Iranian royal calls for further protests

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NASA's new moon rocket heads to pad ahead of astronaut launch as early as Feb

AP

Cape Canaveral (USA): NASA's giant new moon rocket headed to the launch pad Saturday in preparation for astronauts' first lunar fly-around in more than half a century.

The out-and-back trip could blast off as early as February.

The 322-foot (98-meter) rocket began its 1 mph (1.6 kph) creep from Kennedy Space Center's Vehicle Assembly Building at daybreak. The four-mile (six-kilometer) trek could take until nightfall.

Thousands of space center workers and their families gathered in the predawn chill to witness the long-awaited event, delayed for years. They huddled together ahead of the Space Launch System rocket's exit from the building, built in the 1960s to accommodate the Saturn V rockets that sent 24 astronauts to the moon during the Apollo program. The cheering crowd was led by NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman and all four astronauts assigned to the mission.

Weighing in at 11 million pounds (5 million kilograms), the Space Launch System rocket and Orion crew capsule on top made the move aboard a massive transporter that was used during the Apollo and shuttle eras. It was upgraded for the SLS rocket's extra heft.

Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover and Christina Koch — longtime NASA astronauts with spaceflight experience



— will be joined on the 10-day mission by Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen, a former fighter pilot awaiting his first rocket ride.

They will be the first people to fly to the moon since Apollo 17's Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt closed out the triumphant lunar-landing program in 1972. Twelve astronauts strolled the lunar surface, beginning with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in 1969. NASA is waiting to conduct a fueling test of the SLS rocket on the pad in early February before confirming a launch date.

Heat shield damage and other capsule problems during the initial test flight required extensive analysis and tests, pushing back this first crew moonshot until now. The astronauts won't orbit the moon or even land on it. That giant leap will take place on the third flight in the Artemis lineup a few years from now.

The space agency has only five days to launch in the first half of February before bumping into March.

China cuts its US debt holdings to a 17-year low, shifts reserves to gold

PTI

Beijing, Jan 17: China has reduced its US Treasury holdings to a 17-year low as part of the continued diversification of its foreign reserves towards gold and overseas equity investments amid unsettling ties with Washington.

China's holdings of US treasuries fell to USD 682.6 billion in November last year, down from USD 688.7 billion in October, the lowest since 2008, according to data released by the US Department of the Treasury on Thursday.

Beijing's move to trim its US holdings came as the foreign ownership of the US debt hit a record high, with Japan and the UK scaling up their holdings, according to the data.

Japan's holdings rose by USD 2.6 billion to USD 1.2 trillion, while the UK's pool rose by USD 10.6 billion to USD 888.5 billion.

China holds the world's largest forex

reserves totalling USD 3.3579 trillion at the end of December 2025, according to the official media reports here.

Observers say the reduction of US holdings by China is part of its continued efforts to adjust its strategic reserve allocations towards other assets, such as gold, non-US currencies and overseas equity investments.

The decrease in China's holdings of the US treasuries is a result of increased optimisation and diversification of holdings of foreign assets seen in recent years, which helps strengthen the overall safety and stability of the portfolio," Xi Junyang, a professor at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, told state-run Global Times.

Shao Yu, chief economist with the Sci-tech Innovation Management Research Centre at Fudan University, said Beijing appeared set to keep reducing its stockpile amid the growing risk of US debt unsustainability.

Bangladesh ask ICC to swap group with Ireland, relocate T20 WC matches to Sri Lanka

PTI

Dhaka, Jan 17: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Saturday asked the ICC to swap its national team with Ireland in Group C during the upcoming T20 World Cup in order to play in Sri Lanka instead of India.

Bangladesh are currently placed in Group C along with the West Indies, Italy, England and Nepal and are scheduled to play their matches in Kolkata and Mumbai.

Ireland are in Group B alongside Sri Lanka, Australia, Oman and Zimbabwe and their matches are scheduled in Colombo and Pallekele.

The two-member ICC team, consisting of Gaurav Saxena, General Manager, Events and Corporate Communications, and Andrew Ephgrave, General Manager, Integrity Unit, was in Dhaka to convince BCB about the security arrangements in India and to



follow the original schedule.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) today held a meeting with representatives of the International Cricket Council (ICC) to discuss matters relating to Bangladesh's participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026," said the BCB in a release after the meeting with ICC delegates.

PTI

KSCA receives government permission to host int'l, IPL matches at Chinnaswamy Stadium



The subsequent investigation had blamed the lack of crowd management measures for the stampede on June 4 when nearly three lakh fans thronged the venue to take part in RCB's celebrations.

The new state association regime headed by former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad has been holding talks with various government agencies since last month to bring cricket back to the venue.

"The Association has already presented a detailed compliance roadmap before the Expert Review Committee and remains fully committed to implementing all safety, security, and crowd-management

measures in letter and spirit," said Mruthyunjaya.

The development might also have put a temporary stop to the talks of Royal Challengers Bengaluru shifting their home matches to Raipur and Pune during this year's IPL.

In an official communication to KSCA on Friday, RCB had proposed to install 300-350 AI-enabled cameras at the venue and offered to bear the estimated cost of Rs 4.50 crore for this initiative.

While a final decision in that regard will be taken in a KSCA Managing Committee meeting soon, it showed RCB's desperation to keep their home matches at the Chinnaswamy.

MOVIES Schedule

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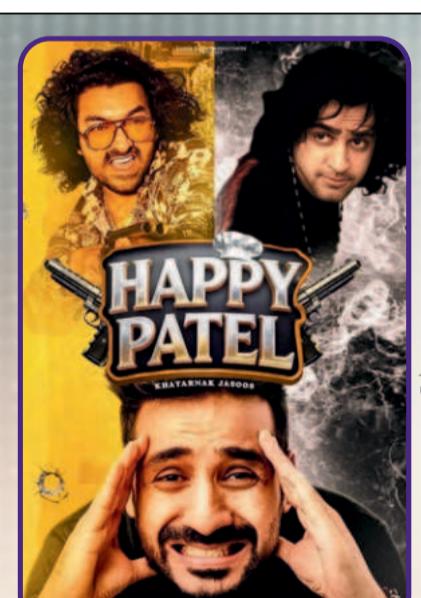
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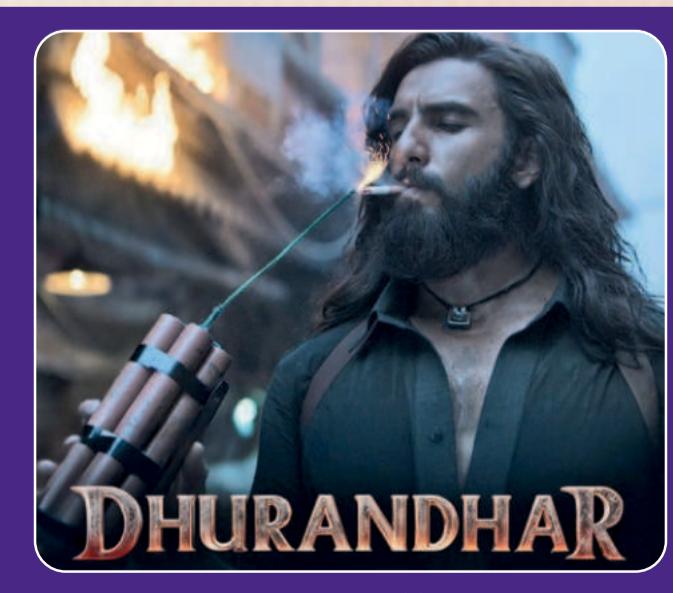
HAPPY PATEL: KHATARNAK JASOOS (A)

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AVATAR : FIRE AND ASH (UA 16+)

3D HINDI - 03:45 PM



DHURANDHAR (A)

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