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DIPK-10188/25
Dated: 20.01.2026

Helpline No. 1930

Smart cities must blend heritage with modernity: LG Manoj Sinha

Inaugurates redeveloped Amira Kadal Bridge

Says it'll boost mobility, tourism, preserve cultural legacy

Terms project as part of broader efforts to revitalise city's riverfront, markets

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jan 20: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday inaugurated the redeveloped Amira Kadal Bridge in Srinagar, an iconic wooden structure revitalised under the Srinagar Smart City Project, to integrate the city's rich heritage with modern urban design.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Corner (KNO), that the project, executed at a cost of rupees 7.70 crore, was launched in December 2023 with a strong focus on heritage conservation, structural safety and public convenience.

The redeveloped bridge, now pedestrian, connects Lal Chowk with adjoining markets and is designed as a vibrant cultural and recreational public space along the Jhelum riverfront.

Dedicating the bridge to the people of Srinagar, the Lieutenant Governor said the historically significant project aims to preserve the legacy while improving mobility and



quality of life.

"Our prime objective is to lift the quality of life to a new level with modern technology and inclusive design. We have made it a mission to protect the soul of every city while upgrading infrastructure. By preserving historic lanes, bridges, traditional

markets, lively squares and peaceful green spaces, we are weaving amenities into the cultural heartbeat of each city," the LG said.

He added that the renovation and upgradation of a city's infrastructure should serve as a bridge between heritage and

modern needs.

"A true smart city is never just about new infrastructure. It's about sparking a vibrant, efficient and inclusive way of living," Sinha said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that projects like Jhelum Riverfront, [More on P6](#)

Unity of J&K non-negotiable; bifurcation not in Jammu's interest: Omar Abdullah

Says people's welfare, regional balance NC govt's priorities

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 20: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Tuesday said that as long as the plough-bearing flag of the National Conference (NC) continues to fly across Jammu and Kashmir, no power on earth will dare attempt to divide the region on regional or religious lines.

He was addressing the concluding session of the two-day Party Block Presidents' Convention in Jammu. The convention, which commenced on Monday, was chaired by the Party President Dr Farooq Abdullah.

Addressing party functionaries, Omar highlighted his government's "pro-people, pro-Jammu measures": increased ration quotas, free bus rides for women, enhanced pensions, free land for landslide victims and the restoration of the historic Darbar Move. He stressed that initiatives across tourism, roads, healthcare, education and recruitment are driving Jammu back onto the path of progress and development.

Taking a sharp dig at BJP leaders, Omar said those who stopped the Darbar Move or



celebrated the closure of a medical college cannot claim to be Jammu's well-wishers. "Such narrow, divisive politics has harmed Jammu before and will continue to do so, something the NC government will never allow," he said.

He reiterated that as long as the NC flag flies, no force can divide Jammu and Kashmir.

Targeting LoP Sunil Sharma, the CM said the bifurcation talk is a personal power play. "If he wants to be Chief Minister, why only Jammu and not J&K? If ambition drives him so much, let him contest Jammu municipal elections," he said.

Omar added, "The BJP leaders' dream of ruling would not extend beyond Kanak Mandi and Raghunath Bazar as the

people of Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal will never support divisive agendas." He warned that such "wishful and dangerous politics" will only harm Jammu's interests, which the National Conference remains steadfast in protecting.

He further asserted that the National Conference has always stood firm in protecting the secular character of the region. "Despite being a Muslim-majority region, the people of Jammu and Kashmir chose to align with a secular India and remain steadfast despite persistent propaganda from across the border," he added.

Among those present on the occasion were Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Ministers [More on P6](#)

Cold conditions prevail; heavy snowfall predicted on Jan 23

Met warns of landslides, gusty winds, urges caution

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 20: Minimum temperatures dropped across most parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on Tuesday compared to the previous day, with several areas in the Kashmir Valley recording a sharp fall in night temperatures, according to data.

According to details obtained by the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the Kashmir region, Srinagar recorded a minimum of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, down from minus 1.2 degrees Celsius on Monday. Srinagar Airport also saw a decline, settling at minus 4.4 degrees Celsius compared to minus 3.8 degrees Celsius a day earlier.

Pahalgam registered a notable dip, with the mercury falling to minus 4.0 degrees Celsius from minus 1.8 degrees



Celsius on Monday.

Gulmarg recorded minus 5.5 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, compared to minus 3.5 degrees Celsius the previous day, while Sonamarg, however, showed a marginal improvement, rising to minus 6.2 degrees Celsius from Monday's minus 8.3 degrees Celsius. Kupwara saw a slight rise to minus 1.2 degrees Celsius from minus 1.6 degrees Celsius, [More on P6](#)

CM holds pre-budget consultation with key depts

Stresses people-centric governance, J&K's inclusive growth

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 20: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday began pre-budget consultation meetings by chairing detailed discussions with key departments ahead of the Budget Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, scheduled to begin on February 2.

The Chief Minister reviewed departmental priorities, assessed public needs and stressed the importance of aligning proposals with the overall development goals of Jammu and Kashmir. He laid emphasis on people-centric initiatives, efficient service delivery and inclusive growth to ensure balanced development across all regions.

Chief Minister Omar



Abdullah, who also holds the portfolio of Finance Minister, held extensive deliberations with departments including Power Development, Housing and Urban Development, Finance, Revenue, General Administration, Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs, Tourism, Information and Information Technology. The meetings were attended

by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary Tourism Ashish Chander Verma, Additional Chief Secretary Power Development Shalendra Kumar, Principal Secretary Finance Santosh D. Vaidya, Administrative Secretaries of Housing and Urban Development, General Administration, [More on P6](#)

Police intensify frisking across valley

IED recovered, destroyed along NH in Tappar

Waris Fayaz

Srinagar, Jan 20: Ahead of Republic Day Celebrations, Jammu and Kashmir Police Tuesday intensified frisking and checking operations across valley parts.

Witnesses told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that police teams were deployed in and around the main Sopore town, including the busy Iqbal Market, vital road crossings and the Sopore railway station, where thorough checking of vehicles and pedestrians was carried out.

Similar reports were received from other areas of Baramulla, Kupwara and Anantnag districts.

Eyewitnesses informed that during the frisking operations, security personnel stopped and checked private and passenger vehicles. "Pedestrians were also

being frisked and their identity cards were being verified. Nakas were laid at several entry and exit points."

Officials said the intensified checking is part of the heightened security drill put in place to 'ensure peaceful and incident-free celebrations of Republic Day.'

Pertinently, the exercise comes on a day when security forces recovered an improvised explosive device (IED) from Tappar village along the Srinagar-Baramulla National Highway on Tuesday morning.

The suspected device was detected during a routine sanitisation and checking operation that was later destroyed on the spot by a bomb disposal squad without causing any damage or injury, officials added.

Official while talking to KNO, assured peaceful [More on P6](#)

Addiction treatment centres emerge as lifelines for drug-abusing youth in Kashmir

Experts say family support, awareness, expansion of facilities crucial to combat growing menace

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jan 20: At a time when drug abuse continues to pose a serious social and public health challenge in Kashmir, addiction treatment centres across the Valley are increasingly emerging as vital support systems and rays of hope for individuals trapped in substance dependency.

Health experts and officials said these centres, despite limited infrastructure, are playing a critical role in treatment, counselling and rehabilitation of drug abusers, many of whom



are young and vulnerable.

Officials associated with the Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF) at District Hospital Kulgam

told the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that since its establishment, the centre has registered 2,109 patients,

reflecting the magnitude of the crisis as well as the growing trust in institutional treatment. Of these, 112 new patients were registered in 2025 alone, while the facility recorded an impressive 18,835 follow-up visits during the same year, indicating sustained engagement with those undergoing treatment.

Similarly, the ATF at Shopian has also witnessed a steady rise in footfall. Officials said 713 patients have been registered so far, with around 100 new patients enrolled in 2025, underlining the expanding reach of addiction [More on P6](#)

Anti-terror op in Kishtwar continues on third day

Forces dig deeper into forested terrain to locate, eliminate terrorists

Sajid Raina

Jammu, Jan 20: The anti-terrorist operation in Kishtwar district entered its third day on Tuesday, with security forces continuing searches in the forested Chatroo area amid difficult terrain.

The operation, codenamed Operation Trashi-I, began on Sunday in Sonnar village of Mandal-Singhpura following intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists in the area, officials said.

An officials told the news

agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that a joint team of Army, police, and paramilitary forces is involved in the operation, which is supported by drones and sniffer dogs to locate well-concealed hideouts.

He said that during the initial encounter on Sunday, one Army paratrooper, Havildar Gajendra Singh, was killed, and seven others were injured. The soldiers had come under fire from terrorists reportedly affiliated with the [More on P6](#)

DGP Prabhat reviews security preparedness in Ganderbal

Calls for heightened alertness, foolproof security planning

PTI

Srinagar, Jan 20: Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat on Tuesday reviewed the security scenario and operational preparedness in Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Prabhat chaired a comprehensive security review meeting at the District Police Office (DPO), Ganderbal to assess the prevailing security scenario and operational preparedness of the district, a police spokesperson said.

During the [More on P6](#)

DC Srinagar, SSP review enforcement, rehabilitation measures at NCORD meet



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR JANUARY 20:- A meeting of District Level Committee on Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) was convened on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo here at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office to review the ongoing enforcement actions and preventive initiatives undertaken by various departments in the district to combat the drug menace and strengthen deterrence measures against drug peddlers. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Srinagar, Sandeep Chakravarthy was also present in the meeting. During the meeting, as per an official statement, a comprehensive review with regard to the districts performance for the year 2025 was held with a focus on identifying gaps and challenges in combating drug abuse, illicit trafficking,

identification of drug hotspots, vulnerable areas and transit routes. The meeting also took assessment of drugs related financial investigations and asset forfeiture, prevention of diversion of pharmaceutical drugs, strengthening inter-agency coordination and intelligence sharing, and enhanced scrutiny of parcels and consignments. The role of the Social Welfare, School education and Colleges were emphasized particularly with regard to IEC activities. While role of health department was also deliberated upon and status of de-addiction centres, availability of counselling facilities, and rehabilitation programmes for affected individuals. The NCORD Committee also emphasized the active involvement of educational institutions and religious leaders in awareness generation and community-level interventions.

Budgam DLIC approves 1,769 HADP, 1,420 JKCIP cases

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JANUARY 20: A meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) was held Tuesday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-din Bhat, to undertake a detailed review and accord approvals to eligible cases under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Jammu and Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement in Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP), Integrated Sheep Development Scheme (ISDS) and Integrated Dairy Development Scheme (IDDS). During the meeting, the status of applications received, scrutinized and approved under each component was reviewed threadbare. The DC, as per an official statement, emphasised that the objective of these schemes is to strengthen the rural economy, enhance farm incomes and create sustainable livelihood opportunities, and accordingly directed that approvals be processed with utmost transparency, accountability and adherence to prescribed guidelines. While reviewing HADP, it was informed that a total of 5,233 applications have been approved under the Animal Husbandry Department so far, including 400 additional eligible cases approved in Tuesday's DLIC. Under the Agriculture Department, 16,803 cases stood approved, including 827 fresh cases approved in the meeting.

J&K Assembly Speaker addresses AIPOC 2026 in Lucknow
Terms fairness and responsibility as hallmarks of legislative power

KT NEWS DESK

LUCKNOW, JANUARY 20: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, Tuesday addressed the 86th All India Presiding Officers Conference (AIPOC) 2026 at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Abdul Rahim Rather spoke on the "Accountability of the Legislature towards the people" to improve mechanisms for the legislature to be more responsive and accountable to citizens. The Speaker, as per an official statement, while addressing the conference, mentioned verses from Manusmriti and Quran, saying that accountability of the Legislature towards the people had deep roots in ancient Indian democratic traditions, where Dharma guided governance and institutions like Sabha and Samiti ensured public participation. Referring to hindu scriptures, he called lawmakers as the servants of dharma, not masters of power. He said that Legislatures are accountable for the welfare and protection of people. Similarly, in Islam, it is stated that the Legislators must exercise their power with fairness, honesty and responsibility towards the people they serve, the Speaker asserted. "The Constitution envisions a Legislature that is transparent, responsive and answerable. It entrusts the Legislatures with immense responsibility to frame laws, oversee the Executive, approve public expenditure and provide a forum for debate and dissent" he added. The Speaker further said that in a democracy, the Legislature is not merely an institution of lawmaking; it is the collective voice, conscience and custodian of the people's will. Rather asserted that one of the primary ways Legislatures demonstrate accountability is through thoughtful, inclusive and



well-scrutinized legislation. "A House that debates with depth and dignity sends a powerful message that people's issues are being taken seriously and laws passed in haste, without adequate debate or stakeholder consultation, may erode public confidence" he said. He also highlighted that public concern has grown over disruptions, disorders and declining decorum in Legislative chambers, while passionate disagreement is intrinsic to democracy and persistent disruption undermines public faith. The Speaker stressed on another vital dimension of Legislative accountability which is effective oversight of the Executive.

"Questions, calling attention motions, committee deliberations and budgetary scrutiny are not procedural formalities; they are instruments through which the Legislature safeguards public interest" he exhorted. The Speaker said that in the digital age, accountability also demands greater transparency and direct engagement with citizens. Live telecasts, open committee systems, accessible legislative records and use of technology can bridge the gap between the Legislature and the people, he asserted. Secretary, J&K Legislative Assembly, Manoj Kumar Pandita also accompanied the Speaker at the conference.

DC Budgam reviews telecom infrastructure, pushes faster mobile tower installations

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JANUARY 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, Tuesday chaired a meeting of the District Telecom Committee (DTC) to review issues related to the installation of mobile towers and overall telecom infrastructure development in the district. The meeting, as per an official statement, focused on addressing public grievances, streamlining inter-departmental coordination, and facilitating the expeditious implementation of telecom projects, including the USOF 4G Saturation Project in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. During the meeting, the DC emphasized the importance of robust telecom connectivity for governance, emergency services, education and economic activities. He directed

all concerned departments to extend timely clearances and cooperation to telecom service providers, while strictly adhering to safety, environmental and regulatory norms. The DC reiterated that the District Telecom Committee shall act as a single-window coordination mechanism to resolve public grievances related to mobile tower installations and other telecom-related issues. He further directed that the Committee shall meet at regular intervals to ensure effective monitoring and speedy resolution of pending matters. The DC stressed that all departments must work in close coordination to ensure the timely completion of telecom infrastructure projects, especially in unserved and underserved areas of the district, thereby improving digital connectivity and public service delivery.

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION URI

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
eNIT No.100 of 2025-26/8247-57/R&B Uri e-tendering
DATED: 20-01-2026
For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S.No.	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/ DOC (In Rupees)	E/Money (In Rs.)	Time for completion of work	Time Date of opening o f Bid	Class of Contractor	M. H of Account
1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8
01	Construction of Resource Room at KGBV Salamabad Jhulla	10.42	600/-	20840/-	120 Days	28.01.2026 (03:00PM)	BEE CEE DEE	Samagra Shiksha
02	Construction of Resource Room at Middle School Lagama	10.42	600/-	20840/-	120 days	28.01.2026 (03:00PM)	BEE CEE DEE	Samagra Shiksha
03	Construction of Boundary wall at High School Kandikallar Garkote	9.50	600/-	19000/-	30 days	28.01.2026 (03:00PM)	BEE CEE DEE	Samagra Shiksha
04	Construction of Boundary wall at Primary School Gojerpathi Salamabad Dachana	7.53	300	15060/-	30 days	28.01.2026 (03:00PM)	BEE CEE DEE	Samagra Shiksha
05	Construction of ACR at Primary School Sheikh Mohalla Bujithalla Azadpora	10.26	600/-	20520/-	120 Days	28.01.2026 (03:00PM)	BEE CEE DEE	Samagra Shiksha
06	Construction of ACR at Primary School Gujjar Nalla	10.42	600	20840	120 Days	28.01.2026 (03:00PM)	BEE CEE DEE	Samagra Shiksha

Project Authority: Deputy Director Samagra Shiksha J&K UT
AA/TS: Accorded/Granted
1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	20.01.2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	20.01.2026 from (10:00 AM) to .28.01.2026 (02:00 PM)
3	Bid submission Start Date	20.01.2026 from (10:00 AM)
4	Bid Submission End Date	28.01.2026 (02:00 PM)
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	28.01.2026 (03:00 PM) in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Uri

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan debited under M.H-0059 in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Uri (tender inviting authority) (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date)
2. At the time of tendering, all the bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR/ pledged to the tender receiving authority i.e. Executive Engineer R&B) Division Uri (The date of Earnest money should be between Date of Start of bid and bid submission End date). The successful (1st lowest) bidder will have to provide Performance security @ 5% of Allotted cost in shape of CDR/FDR at the time of contract award. The earnest money/bid security of 2% will be released to the successful bidder only after the submission of performance security of 5% of the total allotted cost which will be released after successful completion of the DLP.
3 (a) Failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non-responsive and case for debarring of the Contractor for a period of 01 Year be forwarded to Higher Authorities.
3. (c) The Earnest Money/Performance Security shall be forfeited If:
(i) Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in the terms and conditions of the bid.
(ii) Failure of successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within specified time period before issue of letter of intent.
(iii) Successful Bidder fails to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.
(iv) If at any stage of work, the Bidder back up from the contract, again the Performance security/EMD as well as work done claim will be forfeited.
4. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B) Division Uri (tender receiving authority).

No.:-2025-26/8247-57
Dated:-20.01.2026

DIPK-10206/25
DATED: 20-01-2026

(Er Imran Ali)
Executive Engineer,
R&B Division, Uri.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION & PR OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT INFORMATION OFFICER KULGAM

Ph/Fax: 01931-260032

email: diointf-kulgam@jk.gov.in

DASTI QUOTATION

Sealed short term quotations are invited from cultural organizations for performance of Cultural Programme at DPL Kulgam on the Republic Day Celebrations 2026. The selected parties have to give the demo of their cultural programme before the final performance on 26th January 2026 at DPL Kulgam. The quotations shall reach the office of the undersigned by or before 22th January upto 04 pm. Terms and Conditions,
1. The price quoted shall be inclusive of GST and must be equal or less than government approved rates.
2. The bid shall be opened in the next working day on completion of stipulated time on 22th January 2026. More information can be obtained from the office of District Information Officer, Kulgam during office upto 22th January 2026.

District Information Officer Kulgam

No: DIC/INF/KUL-651-54/2026

Dated: 20-01-2026

DIPK-10224/25
DATED: 20-01-2026

Security tightened in Srinagar ahead of R-Day



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 20: With Republic Day around the corner, security agencies in Srinagar city have intensified vigilance across the city, conducting searches and a mock drill to ensure seamless and incident-free celebrations.

Officials said that large-scale searches were carried out in several areas including Takanwari, Karnabal, Shallbug and Bakshipora on the outskirts of Srinagar.

"Teams of Srinagar Police assisted by other security forces conducted thorough searches of residential houses, open fields and suspected areas as part of the heightened security measures ahead of January 26," an official said.

He added that the operations are part of routine area domination and preventive exercises aimed at

maintaining peace and thwarting any potential disruption during the national event.

Meanwhile, a mock drill was also held at Srinagar Railway Station to assess coordination and emergency response readiness among multiple agencies. The exercise witnessed participation from police, railway protection personnel and disaster response teams.

Officials said frisking and checking have been intensified at all major entry and exit points of the city, while additional checkpoints have been set up to monitor vehicular movement and maintain strict surveillance.

Security agencies have appealed to the public to extend cooperation during the checks and promptly report any suspicious movement or unattended objects to the nearest police station—(KNO)

Dr. Farooq labels PDP's proposal to split Chenab, Pir Panjal regions a 'Dixon Plan'

YOGESH

Jammu, Jan 20: A day after former Chief Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti floated the idea of creating separate divisions for Chenab and Pir Panchal regions, former Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday termed it the Dixon Plan.

Talking to reporters the NC president said that the proposal floated by PDP president Mehbooba Mufti is an old plan, known as the Dixon Plan.

"It is the Dixon Plan. You might not know that. The Dixon Plan is an old proposal which envisaged the division of Jammu & Kashmir on the basis of the Chenab River, creating a Greater Kashmir on one side of the river and separating the other part," Farooq said when asked about Mehbooba Mufti's demand for the creation of separate divisions for the Chenab and Pir Panchal regions. The Dixon



Plan was proposed in 1950 by Sir Owen Dixon, an Australian jurist appointed by the United Nations.

The NC president said that they were against the separation of Ladakh from Jammu & Kashmir.

"What benefit did Ladakhis get from separation? Today, Ladakhis are seeking reunification with J&K and are saying that they don't want UT status. One day, Ladakh will reunite with J&K," he said, adding that there are many

people who want to break J&K, but they will never succeed in their designs.

He said the media is suffering from a phobia of Pakistan. "We should remember Vajpayee ji and his words—that we can change friends but not neighbours," he said.

Farooq also slammed Mehbooba Mufti for questioning Omar Abdullah's government over unemployment.

"What did she do as Chief Minister? Her father was also Chief Minister. It is easy to point fingers at others, but she should remember that three fingers are also pointing back at her," he said.

On being asked about Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma's recent remarks that the National Conference and PDP are trying to create disturbances in Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah said that it is they who create disturbances. "We have taken bullets for India," he added—(KNO)

'Dixon Plan' was NC's agenda: Mehbooba

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 20: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday clarified that the so-called "Dixon Plan" was never part of her party's vision. She said it was associated with the National Conference (NC) and its founder, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who was jailed over it.

The NC patron, Dr Farooq Abdullah, earlier in the day, termed Mehbooba Mufti's idea of creating separate divisions for the Chenab and Pir Panjal regions as a "Dixon Plan".

Addressing a press conference in Jammu, Mufti reminded Dr Abdullah of this history, criticising him for allegedly misrepresenting her remarks. "Farooq Sahab is our tallest leader; we respect him, but he forgot that his father, Sheikh Abdullah, was arrested over the Dixon Plan," Mehbooba said. "That (Dixon Plan) may have been NC's agenda, not ours. This can never be the agenda of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's party," she said.

The PDP chief said her remarks regarding the creation of divisional administrations for Pir Panjal and Chenab Valley were purely administrative in nature. "Pir Panjal and Chenab are remote, sensitive regions facing environmental fragility, connectivity issues and recurring disasters. Giving them administrative empowerment is justice, not division," she said.

Criticising Dr Abdullah for "misinterpreting" her remarks, Mufti said, "I was expecting Farooq Sahab to speak against the summoning of journalists in Srinagar and them being made to sign bonds. Instead, he accused me of pursuing the Dixon Plan."

She accused the BJP and NC of double standards, saying that neither party raised objections when Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated in 2019. "BJP already divided the state into two parts. You talk about their leader's trifurcation demand, yet Farooq Sahab remains silent. But when I talk about administrative convenience, it becomes an agenda," she said.

Reiterating her party's core policy, the former Chief Minister said, "The PDP has only one agenda of



Kashmir livestock traders face harassment for 47 days, 'Punjab government silent'

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 20: Nearly 47 days after a formal appeal from the Jammu and Kashmir government, allegations of extortion and harassment against livestock transporters at Punjab checkpoints remain unresolved.

At Shambhu and Madhopur checkpoints, traders report harassment, while the Punjab administration is yet to take any action against the matter.

The letter, sent from the office of J&K's Minister for Food, Civil Supplies, Transport, Science & Technology and ARI Trainings had requested for a government-level meeting between the two states to resolve the crisis affecting the interstate movement of livestock from Punjab to J&K.

General Secretary of the Kashmir Mutton Dealers Association, Mehraj-Ud-Din said, "Despite repeated representations, Punjab's silence demonstrates complete disregard for transporters and traders, who continue to be bled dry by extortionists at the checkpoints."

"Even after a formal government-to-government letter, there's total silence. Trucks carrying livestock are being stopped, bribes demanded and the trade is suffering. Is this how inter-state cooperation works?" he said.

The illegal levies and repeated harassment have driven mutton prices in Kashmir to Rs 750 per kilogram, while locals report the same rates at multiple places across the valley.

"If this continues, prices will rise further," Mehraj said.

The letter, as accessed by KNO, had proposed a meeting in Chandigarh between December 10-13, but no appointment was scheduled, no response was received and repeated reminders have gone unanswered.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Nearly 5,000 families in Poni, Sledge business fear impact of tourist taxis



WARIS FAYAZ

Gulmarg, Jan 20: The Gulmarg Poni and Sledge Association Tuesday expressed concern against the vehicles being allowed to ferry tourists directly to the Gondola and other spots—threatening livelihoods of around 5,000 families dependent on their traditional businesses.

President of the Association during a peaceful protest said that they are being ignored by the local government. "We

requested the MLAs of Gulmarg, Baramulla and Kreeri several times but nothing fruitful has come to fore", he questioned. "Where should these 5,000 families go that are dependent on the Poni and sledge business," he questioned.

Meanwhile, the operators said, "The authorities are only bothered about the construction. They failed to take care of the persons associated with sledge and poni business," the president added.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

DIG south Kashmir assesses security, crime scenario in Anantnag

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 20: DIG South Kashmir Range Javid Iqbal Matoo-IPS, chaired a comprehensive security and crime review meeting at DPO Anantnag to assess the prevailing security scenario and the overall law-and-order situation in the district.

According to a statement, the meeting was attended by SSP Anantnag Amritpal Singh-IPS, SP Headquarters Anantnag Kartik Shrotriya, SP Operations Anantnag Furqan Qadir, ASP North Aishmuqam Rameez Raja, along with all SDPOs and SHOs



of District Anantnag.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on security preparedness, crime trends, anti-militancy operations, crime prevention, and public safety measures.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

KCCI welcomes redevelopment of Amira Kadal foot bridge

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 20: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) has welcomed the inauguration of the redeveloped Amira Kadal Foot Bridge, terming it a significant addition to Srinagar's urban infrastructure and an important step towards enhancing the city's appeal for tourists.

The Foot Bridge was inaugurated by the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Manoj Sinha.

In a statement, KCCI said that the modern redesign of one of Srinagar's most iconic crossings not only improves connectivity but also adds to the aesthetic and cultural vibrancy of the city's historic core. The Chamber observed that well-planned urban infrastructure plays a crucial role in shaping visitor experience, particularly in heritage-rich cities like Srinagar.

KCCI noted that projects which thoughtfully blend heritage elements with contemporary urban planning have the potential to attract both domestic and international tourists, encourage longer stays, and increase footfall in traditional markets and commercial areas. The Chamber said the Amira Kadal redevelopment will benefit local businesses, traders, and service providers by increasing pedestrian movement and revitalising surrounding commercial hubs.

The Chamber also felicitated Srinagar Smart City Limited, the Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Mr. Fazlul Haseeb, and the divisional and district administration for their coordinated efforts in completing the project and contributing to urban renewal in the city.

Reiterating its commitment to the promotion of tourism-led economic growth, KCCI expressed hope that similar initiatives will be undertaken across Srinagar and other urban centres of Kashmir. The Chamber further urged sustained focus on creating people-friendly public spaces that reflect the region's cultural identity while supporting tourism, trade, and livelihoods—(KNO)

"Surely to Allah we belong and to Him we will return."

FATEH KHAWANI

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of our beloved

Parvaiz Ahmad Malik,
R/o: Jawahar Nagar, near DAV School, Srinagar – ,
Present address: Wanabal-Kralpora Link Road
on 19th January.

May Almighty Allah bestow His choicest blessings on the departed soul.

Fateh Khawani will be observed on
Wednesday, the 22nd of January, at 11:00 AM
at our ancestral graveyard
Near Polytechnic College, Gogji Bagh, Srinagar.

Bereaved Family

EDITORIAL

Dry Jhelum: Time To Build A Water-Secure Future For Kashmir

The Jhelum River, the historic lifeblood of Kashmir, is sending a distress signal that can no longer be ignored. Recording its second consecutive year of critically low winter levels, with key tributaries like Veshow Nallah running completely dry, this is a clear symptom of a structural climate crisis. The simultaneous depletion of countless springs across the Valley confirms a terrifying pattern: Kashmir's traditional water security, dependent on winter snowfall and glacial melt, is collapsing.

The reasons are stark. A fundamental shift in winter weather, characterised by a persistent deficit in snowfall and warmer temperatures, is crippling the natural recharge system. Reduced snowpack means less stored water for spring, while accelerated, premature melting offers only a fleeting surge, ultimately depleting the glacial reservoirs that ensure perennial flow. This is a present emergency, crippling drinking water schemes, threatening agriculture, and upending daily life for communities dependent on now-

dry springs. Addressing this crisis demands an immediate, multi-pronged response that moves beyond emergency water tankers. First, we must declare water conservation a state mission. This entails massive investments in watershed management, including the revival of traditional springs through aquifer recharge projects and the construction of small, decentralised check dams to slow runoff and replenish groundwater. Second, a climate-resilient agricultural policy is urgent. Promoting water-efficient crops and

micro-irrigation techniques is no longer optional but essential for food security. Third, robust glacier and hydrological monitoring systems must be established to provide accurate data for predictive planning. Ultimately, this is a call for a fundamental shift in mindset, from treating water as an infinite resource to valuing it as the finite, sacred commodity it is. Every citizen must become a water steward, practising strict conservation. The government must lead by enforcing sustainable usage, protecting wet-

lands that act as natural sponges, and investing in alternative sources like treated wastewater for non-potable uses. The Jhelum's declining flow is a warning written in water. Heeding it requires moving from panic to purposeful, collective action. We must build a water-secure future for Kashmir, not with temporary fixes, but with a comprehensive, science-backed strategy that honours and preserves our most precious lifeline. The time to act is now, before the wells and rivers run silent.

Border Roads Organisation: Connecting Places, Connecting People

Press Information Bureau

From Himalayan glaciers where oxygen thins, to river valleys where torrents roar, and deserts where silence burns-Border Roads Organisation leaves behind a signature of courage etched in asphalt, steel, and stone. To the soldier on the frontline, these are lifelines of defence; to the villager in a remote valley, they are bridges of hope.

Born on 7 May 1960, the Border Roads Organisation carries a simple yet stirring creed: "Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam" means "through hard work, all things are possible.". Over six decades, this mantra has guided the BRO beyond the role of a construction agency, shaping it into a silent sentinel of India's frontiers.

A bridge over a riverAI-generated content may be incorrect.Beyond India's borders, the BRO's footprint extends to Bhutan, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, where roads and airfields serve as instruments of regional connectivity and strategic cooperation. Landmarks such as the Delaram-Zaranj Highway in Afghanistan stand not merely as feats of engineering, but as enduring symbols of partnership and trust.

When disaster strikes, be it the 2004 tsunami, the Kashmir earthquake, or flash floods in Ladakh, the BRO is among the first to arrive, restoring broken lifelines and hope itself.

In the years 2024 and 2025, 356 infrastructure projects executed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) have been dedicated to the nation, setting a significant benchmark in the development of strategic border infrastructure. In recognition of BRO's vital contribution to national security and regional development, the government has increased its allocation from 6,500 crore in the Union Budget 2024-25 to 7,146 crore in the Union Budget 2025-26. In FY 2024-25, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) achieved its highest-ever expenditure of 16,690 crore. Continuing this upward trajectory, an expenditure target of 17,900 crore has been set for FY 2025-26.

Today, the BRO stands as a living monument to the belief that the toughest terrains yield to the toughest spirit. It is more than an organisation, it is the quiet, steadfast architect of India's security and development at the nation's edges, where every milestone doubles as a marker of sovereignty.

BRO Panorama: Legacy and Scale

Established in 1960, the BRO is the Government of India's premier border infrastructure agency. It builds and maintains vital connectivity in remote and strategic regions. Since 2015-16, BRO is functioning fully under the Ministry of Defence. Earlier, it was partially under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

At the core of BRO's achievements lies its people- a distinctive fusion of military precision and civilian craftsmanship. The organization is built upon the twin pillars of the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) and Indian Army engineer officers, supported by essential civilian personnel and Casual Paid Labourers (CPLs).

From its humble start with just two projects- Vartak in the East and Beacon in the North, BRO now commands 18 dynamic projects:

•9 in North West India (J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan)
•8 in North East and Eastern India (Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya)

•One in Bhutan

Strategic Projects in Border States

BRO currently maintains 18 field Projects, each dedicated to engineering and executing strategic infrastructure across 11 States and 3 UTs. Large-scale roads, bridges, tunnels, and airfields, complemented by tele-medicine nodes, reinforcing both national security and socio-economic development under initiatives like Act East and Vibrant Villages Programme.

In Arunachal Pradesh, BRO projects such as Vartak, Arunank, Udayak, and Brahmank tackle some of India's most challenging frontiers, connecting remote villages to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) through critical

infrastructure including Sisseri Bridge, Siyom Bridge, Sela Tunnel, and Nechiphu Tunnel.

In Ladakh, projects like Himank, Beacon, Deepak, Vijayak, and Yojak maintain vital lifelines to Kargil, Leh, and the Karakoram region, covering strategic routes such as the Srinagar-Leh highway, Darbuk-Shyok-DBO (DS-DBO) Road, Atal Tunnel, and the ongoing Shinku La Tunnel, ensuring all-weather connectivity.

The Northeast sees projects like Swastik in Sikkim, Pushpak in Mizoram, Setuk in Assam and Meghalaya, and Sewak in Nagaland and Manipur strengthening regional access. On the western borders, Sampark in Jammu and Chetak in Rajasthan enhance strategic mobility.

Beyond the Himalayas, Shivalik ensures reliable access to the Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand, while Hirak extends connectivity into Left-Wing Extremism-affected areas of Chhattisgarh.

Finally, Dantak, BRO's overseas arm in Bhutan, reinforces bilateral ties through extensive road, bridge, and infrastructure development. Together, these initiatives exemplify BRO's unwavering commitment to national security, strategic preparedness, and regional development.

Critical BRO Infrastructure: Roads, Tunnels, Bridges & Airfields

The BRO has significantly accelerated the pace of infrastructure development across border States and Union Territories, delivering strategic assets that serve defence preparedness, socio-economic growth, disaster resilience, and neighborhood integration.

Roads

Over the five-year period from Financial Year 2020-21 to 2024-25, the Ministry of Defence has allocated approximately 23,625 crore to BRO for General Staff (GS) roads. This funding has enabled the construction of around 4,595 km of roads in forward areas. Significant progress has been made in improving connectivity, particularly along the Northern borders. In the FY 2024-25 alone, about 769 km of road construction has been completed.

Blacktopping the remote Hapoli-Sarli-Huri Road and advancing links toward the Line of Actual Control.

Ladakh: Project Vijayak has developed more than 1,000 km of roads and it ensures rapid restoration of critical routes such as Zojila Pass, providing year-round connectivity and enhancing both civilian access and troop mobility in challenging terrain.

Sikkim: Project Swastik has developed more than 1,000 km of roads and is planning new highways, including NH-310A/310AG, to ensure year-round connectivity, enhancing both civilian access and troop mobility in challenging terrain.

Bridges

Arunachal Pradesh: Project Arunank, raised in 2008, has constructed and maintained 1.18 km of major bridges in remote valleys and forward areas. The Siyom Bridge and Sisseri River Bridge further strengthens logistics and troop movement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Ladakh: Project Vijayak has delivered and maintained over 80 major bridges across Ladakh, significantly improving year-round movement in high-altitude terrain. Notably, the Zojila Pass was rapidly reopened by BRO on 1 April 2025 after a record winter closure of just 32 days.

Sikkim: Project Swastik has built 80 major bridges, with 26 bridges completed in the last decade, ensuring year-round access despite natural challenges like floods and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).

Jammu & Kashmir: The 422.9 m Devak Bridge, constructed under BRO's Project Sampark, strengthens a vital road linkage, enhancing troop movement, heavy vehicle transit, and regional connectivity. It was inaugurated as part of 90 BRO projects in September 2023.

North Sikkim: By April 2024, as part of Project Swastik, BRO restored six key bridges damaged by heavy rains and flash floods, re-establishing vital lifelines and ensuring continued civilian and strategic movement in the high-altitude region.

Tunnels

Himachal Pradesh: The Atal Tunnel, a 9.02-km highway tunnel under Rohtang Pass and the world's longest highway tunnel above 10,000 ft, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, enabling all-weather Leh-Manali connectivity.

Arunachal Pradesh: The 500-metre Nechiphu Tunnel bypasses the Nechiphu Pass, a fog-prone section on the Balipara-Charduar-Tawang route, ensuring safer, faster, all-weather transit and enhancing both local connectivity and strategic military logistics.

Arunachal Pradesh / Tawang region: The Sela Tunnel, located at 13,000 ft, bypasses the high-altitude Sela Pass, ensuring uninterrupted, all-weather access to Tawang for both civilian and military movement.

Ladakh: The Shyok Tunnel on the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie Road, a 920-metre tunnel, delivers reliable year-round access in extremely challenging terrain.

In 2025, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) continued to expand strategic road, bridges and tunnel connectivity across India's frontier regions, enhancing all-weather access crucial for both defence and civilian movement.

Airfields West Bengal: On 12 September 2023, as part of 90 BRO infrastructure projects dedicated to the nation by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh, the Bagdogra and Barrackpore airfields were reconstructed. The works, costing over 500 crore, were undertaken to enhance Indian Air Force operational readiness, dual-use civilian connectivity, and strategic capability in the eastern sector.

BRO in Disaster Response

Beyond building roads, the Border Roads Organisation is often India's first line of defence against disasters. From the Himalayas to the North East and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, its teams restore lifelines when calamity strikes.

Road Opening Parties, avalanche detachments, and bridge units work round the clock to clear landslides, rebuild washed-away bridges, and reopen mountain passes after cloudbursts, flash floods, or earthquakes. By integrating Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADRR) into its operational doctrine, the BRO embodies a dual mandate, safeguarding national security while ensuring civil resilience.

BRO: Enabling Fast and Effective Relief

Road Clearance & Snow Management
Every winter, mountains shut their doors. And every spring, the Border Roads Organisation forces them open. From Zoji La to Rohtang and Sela, its teams cut through towering walls of snow, bringing back lifelines for soldiers, rescue teams, and civilians. In 2023, BRO made history when Zoji La was cleared on 16 March - just 68 days after closure, the fastest ever. Each pass reopened is more than a road. It is access to safety, supplies, and survival.

Flowchart: Off-page Connector: Class 70 Bailey bridges and modular spans are pre-fabricated steel bridges constructed by BRO, designed to carry very heavy military vehicles and equipment. Bailey/Modular Bridges & Causeways

When floods wash away connectivity, the Border Roads Organisation builds new ones.

Class-70 Bailey bridges and modular spans built within days, reconnecting villages to hope and help. In 2021, when the Rishiganga floods swept away Reini's bridge, BRO restored access in just 26 days with a 200-foot Bailey bridge, aptly named the Bridge of Compassion. From Uttarakhand to Assam, these instant bridges carry more than supplies. They carry survival itself.

Emergency Air Logistics

BRO by restoring access to Advanced Landing Grounds and helipads, enables the Indian Air Force to fly in relief and fly out the injured. From Pasighat, Along, and Mechuka in the Northeast to Harsil and Gauchar in flood-hit Uttarakhand, BRO has kept the skies open when the ground was broken.

Inter-Agency Coordination

The Border Roads Organisation works with the Army, Air Force, NDRF, and state agencies. Its Road Opening Parties act as the spearhead, clearing paths for troops, relief teams, and supplies.

Regional and Neighborhood Connectivity

The BRO has played a pivotal role in strengthening India's regional outreach through the execution of critical overseas infrastructure projects.

Bhutan: BRO's oldest and most enduring mission, Project DANTAK, launched in 1961, has shaped Bhutan's modern connectivity. Project DANTAK has built bridges, developed key airports such as Paro and Yonphula, and supported telecom networks and hydro-power infrastructure, contributing directly to Bhutan's socio-economic development and symbolizing the deep Indo-Bhutan partnership.

Myanmar / Southeast Asia: BRO has advanced regional integration through projects such as the 160 km India-Myanmar Friendship Road, inaugurated in 2001, connecting Moreh in India to Tamu and Kalewa in Myanmar.

Afghanistan: BRO constructed the 218 km Delaram-Zaranj Highway (Route 606), providing Afghanistan with direct access to Iran and the Port of Chabahar. This project enhanced regional trade options and demonstrated India's commitment to development-led diplomacy.

Tajikistan: BRO undertook strategic reconstruction at the Farkhor and Ayni air bases, including runway expansion, air traffic control systems, hangars, and navigational upgrades, strengthening India's strategic reach and reinforcing its role as a trusted regional partner.

These projects strengthened India's strategic reach and reinforced its role as a trusted partner in regional connectivity and cooperation.

BRO Moving Forward

Under BRO's perspective plan, 470 roads covering about 27,300 km are planned in border areas. The Trans-Kashmir Connectivity project, spanning about 717 km, has been approved for development to NHDIL (paved shoulders) standards. The alignment will run from Poonch to Sonamarg, strengthening strategic road infrastructure across key mountain passes. Tunnels are planned at Sadhna Pass, P Gali, Z Gali, and Razdhan Pass to ensure all-weather connectivity. The project will be executed phase-wise by the BRO, with funding from MoD (GS). Once completed, it will significantly enhance forward connectivity, improve inter-sector movement, and strengthen inter-valley linkages. Overall, the project will play a critical role in boosting operational preparedness and long-term regional integration.

Conclusion

For over six decades, the Border Roads Organisation has exemplified resilience, innovation, and nation-building. Operating in some of the world's toughest terrains, from the icy passes of Ladakh to the dense forests of the Northeast, BRO delivers infrastructure that strengthens India's defence preparedness while transforming lives in remote border regions.

As it moves ahead, BRO will continue to build not just roads, but confidence and connectivity, binding the nation's frontiers with its heartland and ensuring security, mobility, and prosperity reach the last mile. True to its ethos, BRO will always find a way or make one.

J&K Bank Net Profit jumps over 10% YoY for Q3

Our performance underscores our strong fundamentals: MD & CEO

KT News Desk

Srinagar, January 20: J&K Bank on Tuesday announced healthy financial results for the October-December quarter (Q3 FY 25-26), with net profit rising by 18.7% Quarter-on-Quarter and 10.4% year-on-year (YoY) to Rs 586.73 Cr when compared to Rs 531.51 Cr recorded during the same period last fiscal.

The Bank's Board of Directors, as per an official statement, approved the numbers for the quarter and nine-months during a meeting held at the Bank's Divisional Office in Jammu.

Meanwhile, the Bank's net profit for the first nine months of current financial year grew 4.5% YoY to Rs 1565.68 Cr as against Rs 1497.92 Cr recorded for the same period last year, reflecting its sustained growth trajectory.

Operating Highlights
The Bank's Net Interest Margin (NIM) for the quarter has improved to 3.62%, up by 6 bps QoQ. Cost-to-Income Ratio of the Bank improved to 55.88% YoY for the quarter from 57.28%, while as Return on Assets (RoA) for nine-months stood at 1.23%.

The Bank's operating metrics

reflected steady growth, as the Net Interest Income (NII) witnessed 3.8% growth QoQ to Rs 1488.88 Cr, while the Other Income for the quarter surged 15.3% YoY to Rs 279.46 Cr from Rs 242.32 Cr recorded last financial year. The Bank's Cost of Deposits also declined to 4.69% QoQ from 4.86%.

Commenting upon operating performance, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee said, "Despite rate cut, impairment provisioning for Grameen Bank and challenging conditions - particularly the events of April 22, their subsequent impact, and the floods that disrupted the local economy - the Bank remains firmly on track to deliver record profits for the fourth consecutive year."

"Characterized by robust top-line growth and better asset quality, overall our Q3 performance underscores our strong fundamentals, disciplined execution, and sustained operational efficiency", MD & CEO added.

Asset Quality
The Bank's Gross NPA ratio declined YoY to 3.00%, down by 108 basis points (bps) from 4.08%, while as the Net NPA reduced by 26 bps YoY to 0.68%

from 0.94% and 8 bps QoQ from 0.76%. The Provision Coverage Ratio (PCR) for the quarter is above 90% at 90.46%.

In his comments on asset quality, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee remarked, "Even as our core geography has navigated significant challenges extending beyond the banking sector, the Bank's asset quality has continued to improve steadily. Supported by robust risk management practices, Gross NPAs have declined from around 4 percent to 3.00% percent, which is almost in line with our stated annual guidance."

"The sustained improvement in asset quality despite such disturbances speaks volumes about the resilience and commitment of borrowers and the underlying robustness of the local economy", he added.

Business Growth
Maintaining strong business momentum during the third quarter of the current financial year, the Bank recorded a robust YoY growth of 17.3% in gross advances and a healthy YoY growth of 10.6% in deposits. As on December 31, 2025, the Bank's gross Advances surged to



Rs 116248 Cr while total deposits reached Rs 155861 Cr.

Commenting on the business growth, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee said, "Delivering over 17% year-on-year growth in advances - well ahead of the guidance we had shared with the market - reflects the strength of our franchise, the effectiveness of our credit strategy and the meticulous execution by our

teams on the ground. Double-digit growth of deposits in a competitive environment also highlights the trust reposed in the Bank by our customers."

"The accelerated advances growth was driven by focused expansion in retail, MSME, agriculture and select corporate portfolios, supported by improved credit appetite and strengthened customer

engagement across both core and emerging geographies. Our consistent focus on deepening relationships within JKL and beyond, improving product penetration and enhancing service delivery continues to support stable balance-sheet expansion", he added.

Capital Adequacy
The Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) under Basel III stood at 15%.

Regarding capital position, MD & CEO remarked, "With our CAR at 15% - which will be further augmented by internal accruals on account of net profit for current fiscal - we are well capitalized to expand our lending operations as per our business plan. Moreover, the board approved capital raise of Rs 1250 Cr will boost our capital adequacy and cushion us comfortably to support calibrated business expansion across key sectors."

"It will enhance our ability to absorb risk, while reinforcing our long-term focus on sustaining asset quality, improving profitability and creating enduring value for our shareholders", he added.

Key Initiatives
Highlighting the Bank's key

initiatives during the CFY so far, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee remarked, "During these quarters, we remained steadfast in supporting our customers, particularly through initiatives such as the 2025 Rehabilitation Package for disturbance-affected borrowers, which provided extended repayment timelines and additional credit support. This underscores our role as a responsible institution committed to sustaining livelihoods and economic activity in our core operational geographies."

Terming digital transformation as central to the Bank's strategy, he further added, "Simultaneously, we accelerated our digital transformation with the launch of several customer-focused innovations to strengthen customer experience, improve security and efficiency, and position the Bank for sustained, technology-led growth."

On the occasion, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee extended heartfelt gratitude to the customers and stakeholders - especially the promoters - for their unwavering trust and continued support besides entire Bank staff for their steadfast dedication.

Kupwara Admin organises patriotic rally to mark 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JANUARY 20: In continuation to the commemoration of 150 years of National Pride 'Vande Mataram', the District Administration Kupwara Tuesday organised a vibrant and patriotic rally to celebrate the spirit of nationalism and honour India's freedom struggle.

The rally commenced from Fountain Chowk, Kupwara, and culminated at the General Bus Stand, Kupwara. It witnessed enthusiastic participation from officers and officials of the district administration, police personnel, students, youth, traders and members of civil society, reflecting a strong collective commitment towards national unity and pride.

Adding to the patriotic fervour, the Police Band led the rally and performed soul-stirring patriotic tunes, evoking a sense of pride and reverence among the participants and onlookers

alike. The melodious renditions created an atmosphere charged with national spirit and remembrance of the sacrifices made by freedom fighters.

As part of the programme, the DIPR Kupwara organized cultural performances highlighting key episodes of India's freedom movement. These performances artistically depicted the struggle, sacrifices, and resilience of the nation's heroes, while also emphasizing the enduring relevance of Vande Mataram as a symbol of unity, devotion, and national identity.

The initiative aimed to foster awareness, especially among the younger generation, about the historical significance of Vande Mataram and to strengthen feelings of patriotism, social harmony, and respect for the nation's rich legacy.

Similarly, a Police band rally was organized at Handwara Chowk to commemorate the 150 years of Vande Mataram.

Republic Day 2026 Celebrations: DC Pulwama finalises arrangements

'Ensure widespread public participation to strengthen spirit of patriotism across district'

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JANUARY 20: Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Dr Basharat Qayoom, Tuesday chaired a meeting at Circuit House Pulwama to finalise arrangements for the upcoming Republic Day 2026 celebrations in the district.

At the outset, the Additional Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, briefed the chair on the responsibilities assigned to various officers with regard to venue preparedness, including seating arrangements, sound systems, illumination, transportation and overall logistical management of the event.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner also took a detailed review of the Republic Day preparations from the Additional Deputy Commissioners of Sub-Divisions Awantipora and Tral regarding the arrangements being made at the sub-divisional level. He further directed the concerned officers to ensure that Republic Day celebrations are organised in a befitting manner at tehsil, block and panchayat levels as well, so as to ensure widespread public participation and to strengthen the spirit of patriotism across



the district.

Highlighting the significance of Republic Day, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of organising vibrant and culturally enriching programmes showcasing local traditions and in line with the theme of Vande Mataram celebrations. He also reiterated the need for strict compliance with the National Anthem protocol and Flag Code to ensure the dignified hoisting and handling of the National Flag.

Furthermore, the Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to organise activities and programmes in accordance with Phase-II of the year-long Action Plan for the commemoration of 150 years of "Vande Mataram", aimed at further strengthening the spirit of patriotism.

The Health Department was instructed to ensure adequate medical preparedness at the venue, including the deployment of medical personnel, availability of first-aid facilities and ambulance services, especially in view of the prevailing winter conditions.

The meeting was attended by SSP Pulwama, ADC Pulwama, Tral and Awantipora and other senior officers of the district administration, Police and CRPF, along with all district and sectoral officers.

DC Baramulla inspects NH-1 road widening works, seeks faster completion



KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 20: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, Tuesday conducted an extensive inspection of the ongoing road widening works along the Baramulla-Uri NH-01 Package -IV road to assess progress and address issues affecting public convenience.

During the visit, the DC, accompanied by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue and other concerned officers,

inspected multiple road expansion sites and reviewed the quality, pace, and execution of works being undertaken by the executing agencies. Special attention was given to the Dhanakhan area, where recent landslides had disrupted the smooth flow of traffic and posed risks to commuters.

Taking serious note of the situation, the DC, as per an official statement, directed the

concerned authorities and executing agencies to expedite the pace of construction, particularly in landslide-prone and vulnerable stretches, to prevent recurrent disruptions and ensure uninterrupted traffic movement.

The DC further instructed the agencies to adopt all necessary preventive and protective measures to mitigate the risk of future landslides.

Meanwhile, Minga Sherpa directed that traffic diversion plans be implemented wherever feasible during the execution of works, ensuring minimal inconvenience to the general public and maintaining smooth vehicular movement.

The DC stressed the importance of timely completion, adherence to quality standards and urged the officers on the ground to conduct regular monitoring and ensure strict compliance with safety norms.

DC Kupwara reviews road safety measures

Orders crackdown on traffic violations

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JANUARY 20: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Tuesday convened a meeting of the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) to comprehensively review the implementation of road safety measures and traffic regulation across the district.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, underscored that road safety is a matter of paramount importance, directly concerning the protection of human lives. He exhorted all stakeholders to take all necessary measures in ensuring safer roads in addition to cooperation from general public by adhering strictly to traffic rules and regulations. He directed the enforcement agencies to intensify on-ground regulation and adopt stringent measures against violators in order to minimize the occurrence of road accidents.

During the deliberations, discussions held regarding analysis of road accidents and subsequent the measures taken for avoiding future occurrence. The DC also directed strong action restricting underage and



teenage driving. He emphasized the need for timely disbursement of compensation to injured persons and to the next of kin of deceased victims of road accidents.

Directions were also issued for strengthening emergency medical evacuation protocols, including adequate deployment of ambulances across accident-prone stretches to provide immediate medical assistance and readiness of health institutions.

Multi-dimensional committee was directed to conduct a comprehensive audit of school buses to ensure compliance with safety standards and regulations, while the ARTO Kupwara was directed to carry out regular inspections of driving schools to verify adherence to prescribed norms and training standards. The Public Works Department, PMGSY and BEACON authorities were instructed to conduct road safety audit on regular basis

particularly on hilly roads and highways. Progress made on identification of black spots and rectify corrective measures was also discussed.

In addition, ARTO and Traffic Police, in coordination with the Chief Education Officer, will conduct extensive road safety awareness campaigns in schools during upcoming academic sessions.

The Public Works Department was further directed to undertake curve improvements on major roads, particularly in hilly areas and to ensure timely patching and repair of both main and inner roads throughout the district to facilitate smooth movement of vehicles. BEACON authorities were asked to install appropriate signages on their roads especially at blind curves. He also directed Beacon authorities to ensure all safety norms during ongoing NH-701 works to avoid accidents.

"Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat

DLSA Srinagar organises child marriage awareness programme

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 20: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar organized an awareness program on the prevention of child marriage at Lal Bazaar, Srinagar under the aegis of J&K Legal Services Authority as a part of the nationwide 100-day intensive awareness campaign "Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat".

The campaign, as per an official statement, has been launched by the Ministry of Women & Child Development with the objective of strengthening legal awareness, outreach and rapid prevention at the grassroots level in line with the AASHA (Awareness, Support, Help & Action) Framework.

The program was conducted with the objective of sensitizing the community about the social, legal and health consequences of child marriage and to promote the rights and welfare of children.

During the awareness

session, the PLVs educated the participants about the prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006, highlighting the legal age of marriage, the punishment for offenders and the role of citizens in reporting incidents of child marriage.

Emphasis was laid on the adverse impact of early marriage on education, health and overall development of children, particularly girls. The PLVs also informed the participants about the free Legal Aid Services available through DLSA Srinagar and encouraged community members to seek legal assistance in cases involving child marriage or related issues.

The programme witnessed active participation of local residents, parents and community elders.

DLSA Srinagar reiterated its commitment to crating awareness and working towards a child marriage free society (Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat) through continuous legal literacy and community engagement initiatives.

SWD holds sensitisation programme on 'Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat' in Srinagar

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 20: In a significant step towards strengthening the nationwide campaign to eliminate child marriage, a sensitization programme on "Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat" was organized for Anganwadi Workers at HSS kothibagh Srinagar under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao by Mission Shakti, Social Welfare Department (SWD) Srinagar.

The programme, as per an official statement, aimed to enhance awareness and capacity building of Anganwadi Workers, who play a pivotal role at the grassroots level, to identify, prevent, and report instances of child marriage and to promote the rights, education, health, and protection of children, especially girls.

During the session, resource persons of Social Welfare and Education department elaborated on the legal provisions of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, the adverse social, health, and psychological consequences of child marriage, and the importance of community vigilance and timely intervention.

Emphasis was laid on the role of Anganwadi Workers as change agents, counsellors, and first responders in their respective communities.

The speakers highlighted that ending child marriage is not only a legal obligation but also a social responsibility essential for achieving gender equality, women empowerment, and sustainable development. Anganwadi Workers were encouraged to actively engage with parents, adolescents, Panchayati Raj Institutions, schools, and community leaders to create sustained awareness against child marriage.

Interactive discussions, case studies, and experience-sharing sessions were also conducted, enabling participants to better understand practical challenges and solutions in preventing child marriages at the ward level.

The programme concluded with a collective pledge by all participants to work tirelessly towards making their communities child marriage-free, thereby contributing to the vision of a "Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat."

Chief Secy assesses progress of ₹7,000 cr NABARD funded RIDF works across depts

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 20: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the High Powered Committee (HPC) of NABARD to review the progress and achievements under various tranches of the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) and to assess new projects proposed under RIDF XXXI (2025–26) across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department; Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works (R&B); Principal Secretary, Finance; Director General, Resources; Chief General Manager, NABARD; and senior officers from Health, Jal Shakti and other concerned departments.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary undertook a department-wise appraisal of ongoing RIDF projects and emphasized the need for timely completion of works sanctioned under RIDF XXVI and XXVII, which are nearing their final implementation phase. He impressed upon all executing agencies to adhere strictly to stipulated timelines and accord priority to projects showing satisfactory progress.

Stressing the importance of seamless fund flow, the Chief



Secretary directed departments to expeditiously secure the remaining tranches from NABARD to ensure successful completion of ongoing programmes. He cautioned against delays and carrying over of liabilities, noting that such lapses could place an additional burden on the normal Capex budgets of departments.

The Chief Secretary also advised departments to upload RIDF projects on the PM Gati Shakti portal to facilitate effective monitoring and utility analysis. He further enjoined upon the concerned departments to identify and finalize new projects proposed under RIDF XXXI well before the end of February 2026.

Principal Secretary, Finance, Santosh D. Vaidya, briefed the Committee on the overall expenditure and physical

progress of projects under various RIDF tranches. He highlighted the need to further enhance expenditure efficiency to maximize developmental outcomes, pointing out that every department has scope for improvement.

Presenting expenditure trends since 2022–23, the Principal Secretary noted a steady increase in utilization, with overall expenditure rising from about 56% in 2022–23 to 76% in 2024–25. He urged departments to maintain and further improve this momentum during the current financial year. He informed that against an expenditure of 1,024 Cr in 2024–25, an allocation of 1,816 Cr has been made this year for completion of ongoing projects.

Giving a detailed overview, Director General, Resources,

M.Y. Itoo, informed the Committee that a total of 1,426 projects worth 6,981 Cr had been sanctioned under RIDF XXVI to XXX. Of these, about 35% of the loan amount has been expended so far, with 333 projects already completed across the Union Territory.

The sanctioned projects include 1,145 projects of the Public Works Department (R&B) worth 5,249 Cr; 90 projects of the Jal Shakti Department worth 740 Cr; 104 projects of the Agriculture Department worth 517 Cr; 22 projects of the Horticulture Department worth 145 Cr; 45 projects of the Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department worth 203 Cr; and 20 projects of the Health Department worth 127 Cr.

Regarding RIDF XXXI, it was informed that 139 projects amounting to 381 Cr had already been sanctioned, while another 40 projects worth 227 Cr are under process for sanctioning at NABARD.

The Chief Secretary also underscored the importance of timely submission of Project Completion Certificates (PCCs) and Project Completion Reports (PCRs) for completed works to facilitate the release of additional funds and enable approval of new projects.

Secy RDD reviews SASCI, SNA-SPARSH implementation Calls for fast-tracking projects to maximise rural impact

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 20: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, on Tuesday chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of projects funded under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) and implementation of SNA-SPARSH across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Secretary undertook a division-wise and project-wise review, appreciating the efforts of executing agencies while stressing strict adherence to timelines. He underscored that SASCI projects are critical investments aimed at strengthening rural infrastructure, local governance, and community welfare.

“Our priority is timely completion of these projects to unlock their full economic potential. Every rupee must be optimally utilised, and bottlenecks resolved on priority,” Secretary said.

While reviewing SASCI, he informed that loan assistance of 21.10 crore has been sanctioned for RDD projects in both divisions. He highlighted Finance Department directives

requiring utilisation of at least 75 percent of the sanctioned amount, with non-viable projects to be surrendered for re-allocation. Departments must demonstrate the capacity to incur a minimum expenditure of 2 crore during the financial year, failing which funds may be withdrawn.

In the Kashmir Division, four major infrastructure projects have been sanctioned, including residential accommodation for PRLs/Protected Persons at Bandipora and 2-BHK residential apartments with dormitory for BDC at Pulwama. The DDC Office Building at Baramulla has completed structural works, with electrical installations underway, and is targeted for completion by March 2026.

In the Jammu Division, six projects have been approved under SASCI, including construction of the DDC Building at Kishtwar and 2-BHK residential accommodation for DDC/PRI members at Jammu, Birwan (Udhampur), Kambal Danga (Reasi), Kathua, and Poonch.

To ensure smooth execution, the Secretary directed concerned agencies to expedite pending works, resolve land

and DPR-related issues, and maintain close coordination with the Finance Department for timely re-appropriation of funds to avoid lapsing of savings.

Reviewing the status of SNA-SPARSH for 2025–26, it was informed that out of 13 CSS/SLs schemes onboarded, mother sanctions have been received for 11 schemes, while two are pending. The Secretary stressed close monitoring to ensure seamless fund flow and directed officers to expedite pending sanctions, bill processing, system integration, FIO generation, and DSC enrolment.

He emphasised that efficient financial management and real-time expenditure tracking are essential to ensure transparency and effective delivery of development outcomes at the grassroots level.

The meeting was attended by DG Rural Sanitation Anu Malhotra; Directors RDD Kashmir and Jammu; Director Finance; COO Himayat; Joint Director Planning; Additional Secretary RDD&PR; Chief Engineer PW(R&B); Superintending Engineers REW Jammu/Kashmir; and other senior officers.

Greenland, threat of Trump tariffs loom over Davos

AP

Davos, Jan 20: The annual meeting of The World Economic Forum attracts corporate executives, academics, philanthropists and media to the Swiss Alps town of Davos for dialogue, debate and deal-making.

The Geneva-based think tank first hosted the event in 1971 with the goal to improve European management. Beginning Tuesday, 850 CEOs and chairs of the world's top companies are expected to be among 3,000 participants from 130 countries in the Alpine resort through Friday.

US President Donald Trump's third visit to Davos as

president comes as US allies worry about his ambition to take over Greenland, Latin America grapples with his efforts to reap Venezuela's oil and business leaders and lawmakers at home express concerns about his hardball tactics toward Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

Here is the latest: Zelenskyy won't travel to Davos unless there's a breakthrough in peace efforts Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he currently has no plans to travel to Davos, as he works with officials to restore power in the country after repeated Russian drone and missile barrages.

But Zelenskyy said Tuesday he

could change his plans if his delegation and US officials make a breakthrough at Davos in peace efforts aimed at ending the war.

“I choose the country over an economic forum. But everything can change at any moment, because it is very important to me, and to Ukrainians, to end this war,” he said.

Russia's full-scale invasion reaches its fourth anniversary on Feb. 24.

US House speaker seeks to 'calm the waters' over Greenland US House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson says he hopes to “calm the waters” as Trump roils the trans-Atlantic relationship with his desire to take over Greenland.

In a speech to lawmakers at

Parliament, Johnson said the US and the UK “have always been able to work through our differences calmly, as friends. We will continue to do that.”

Speaking after Trump also attacked Britain's decision to hand over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, Johnson said his mission in London is to “calm the waters... continue our dialogue and find a resolution, just as we always have in the past.”

Johnson was invited to Parliament by House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle as part of events marking 250 years of American independence.

Kremlin confirms its envoy will meet with US representatives in Davos

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday confirmed presidential envoy Kirill Dmitriev “has plans to meet with some representatives of the American delegation” in Davos.

Peskov's remarks followed media reports saying Dmitriev intends to meet with US envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner as part of the US-led effort to end the nearly four-year war in Ukraine.

Peskov refused to name specific people Dmitriev is planning to meet in Davos, saying only that it will happen “on the sidelines” of the forum “these days, today, tomorrow.”

Dmitriev earlier on Tuesday

said on social media platform X that he arrived in Davos.

Asked about whether ending the war in Ukraine or other issues were on Dmitriev's agenda, Peskov said Dmitriev's main focus is “trade, economic, and investment cooperation,” but “at the same time, Kirill Dmitriev is transmitting information to and from both sides regarding the peace process in Ukraine.”

Separately, the Kremlin spokesman said Russia has not received an invitation to a meeting in Paris on Thursday, which was referenced in a text message from French President Emmanuel Macron that Trump posted earlier Tuesday.

In the message, Macron suggested a meeting of members of

the Group of Seven industrialised democracies in Paris after the Davos gathering. The message also suggested inviting Denmark, Ukraine and Russia.

Trump posts text message from Macron on social media

An official close to Emmanuel Macron said a private message shared by Trump “shows that the French President, both in public and in private, takes the same views.”

Trump posted a text message Tuesday from Macron in which the French president suggested a meeting of members of the Group of Seven industrialized democracies in Paris after the Davos gathering. The message also suggests inviting Denmark, Ukraine and Russia.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Smart cities

Lal Chowk and MA Road redevelopment, Polo View High Street, Souq Market Batmaloo, Foreshore Road walkways, Ghats improvement and Shehr-e-Khaas facade restoration reflect this vision of harmonising tradition with transformation.

He said these initiatives are reviving Srinagar's traditional urban character while enhancing its commercial pulse, thereby generating new economic momentum for traders, craftsmen and tourism.

“By breathing new life into our cities through preservation of cultural heritage, we are honouring our roots. This commitment is not just about infrastructure, but it is about building a brighter, more resilient tomorrow for the young generation,” the LG added.

Interacting with local traders and residents, Sinha said the new pedestrian bridge will enhance accessibility, improve tourist experience and boost business vibrancy in the city centre.

Prominent attendees included Ahsan Pardesi, MLA Lal Chowk; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; V. K. Birdi, IGP Kashmir; Akshay Labroo, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar; Faz Lul Haseeb, CEO Srinagar Smart City Limited, along with senior officials, trade representatives and citizens. (KNO)

Unity of J&K

Sakina Itoo, Javed Ahmad Rana, Javid Ahmad Dar, Satish Sharma, Hon'ble MPs Choudhary Mohammad Ramzan, Sajjad Ahmad Kichloo, AGS Ajay Kumar Sadhotra, Provincial President Rattan Lal Gupta, Hon'ble MLAs Ajaz Jan, Sajjad Shaheen, Javid Iqbal Choudhary, Er. Kursheed Ahmad, Provincial Secretary Sheikh Bashir and Sardar Harbans Singh, Advisor to Hon'ble Party President Dr Farooq Abdullah.

The convention witnessed extensive deliberations on improving the quality of life of the people, ensuring social justice, and reaffirming the National Conference's historic and continuing role in shaping a peaceful, democratic, and secure future for Jammu and Kashmir.

Senior leaders reiterated that the National Conference carries a long and proud legacy of sacrifices in defence of democracy, secularism, and human rights. Several senior leaders and party workers also addressed the gathering, stressing the need for stronger organizational cohesion and grassroots-level empowerment.

The convention concluded with a firm resolve to continue the struggle for the welfare of the people and to work tirelessly towards the establishment of a democratic, secular and just society in Jammu and Kashmir. A detailed report of the deliberations and recommendations will be presented to Party President

Dr Farooq Abdullah and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, the NC said.

CM holds

Information, Revenue, Information Technology and Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs, besides senior officers of the Finance Department and other concerned officials.

The consultative process will continue on January 21 and January 22 with another 15 key departments.

The Budget for 2026–27 will be presented by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in the Assembly on February 6. This will be the second budget to be presented by the Chief Minister.

Police intensify

Republic Day celebrations. “The security arrangements are intact and they are ready to face any eventuality.” (KNO)

Cold conditions

while Qazigund remained nearly steady at around minus 2.3 degrees Celsius.

Several south Kashmir areas recorded colder conditions. Pulwama and Shopian reported minimum temperatures of minus 5.5 degrees Celsius and minus 4.8 degrees Celsius, respectively, compared to minus 5.1 degrees Celsius and minus 4.7 degrees Celsius on Monday.

Budgam cooled to minus 4.3 degrees Celsius from minus 2.4 degrees Celsius, while Beerwah in Budgam district dropped sharply to minus 4.9 degrees Celsius from minus 2.9 degrees Celsius.

In north Kashmir, Baramulla recorded minus 2.1 degrees Celsius, lower than Monday's minus 1.4 degrees Celsius, while Bandipora dropped to minus 2.9 degrees Celsius from minus 1.4 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, temperatures remained largely stable with minor fluctuations. Jammu city recorded a minimum of 7.4 degrees Celsius, almost unchanged from Monday's 7.3 degrees Celsius.

Banihal saw a sharp fall to minus 1.6 degrees Celsius from 0.7 degrees Celsius, while Bhaderwah cooled slightly to minus 1.2 degrees Celsius from minus 0.5 degrees Celsius. Katra remained steady at 7.4 degrees Celsius.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded minus 9.0 degrees Celsius, colder than Monday's minus 8.0 degrees Celsius. Hanle showed a marginal improvement at minus 13.3 degrees Celsius compared to minus 14.5 degrees Celsius a day earlier.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department warned of the possibility of heavy rain or snowfall over a few districts of the Jammu and Kashmir divisions on January 23 and 27.

The Met office said there is also a likelihood of landslides and gusty winds at some

vulnerable locations during the period.

Farmers have been advised to suspend farm operations, while all concerned have been asked to plan their activities accordingly, the Met office in Srinagar said. (KNO)

DGP Prabhat reviews

meeting, the DGP reviewed law and order management, counter-terrorism preparedness, crime control measures, and security arrangements for Republic Day celebrations.

Prabhat stressed heightened alertness, foolproof security planning, intensified area domination, and robust intelligence-based operations to ensure peaceful and incident-free celebrations.

Addressing the officers, the DGP directed them to deal firmly and decisively with anti-national elements who pose a threat to public safety, peace, and tranquility.

He also stressed zero tolerance towards activities inimical to national security and urged officers to intensify operations against such elements while maintaining a people-friendly approach.

The DGP lauded the efforts of Ganderbal Police and exhorted them to continue working with dedication, professionalism and commitment to uphold the rule of law and ensure a secure environment for the citizens, the spokesperson said.

Addiction treatment

treatment services in south Kashmir.

Doctors working at these centres revealed alarming trends in substance use. “Nearly 95 per cent of the patients visiting the ATFs are opioid users, predominantly heroin,” they said, adding that around 70 per cent of these heroin users are intravenous drug abusers (IVDAs). This puts them at a high risk of life-threatening infections such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.

In addition to opioids, doctors noted a growing abuse of Pregabalin, a prescription drug often misused for its sedative and euphoric effects. “The misuse of pharmaceutical drugs alongside heroin is a disturbing trend and complicates treatment,” a senior doctor said.

Data from the centres indicate that the 15–40 age group constitutes the majority of drug abusers seeking treatment.

Experts attribute this to a combination of peer pressure, easy availability of drugs, unemployment, stress and imitation or ‘modelling’ behaviour.

“Most of these young individuals start experimenting casually, but addiction sets in quickly,” doctors explained. “Without timely intervention, it destroys not just the individual but entire families.”

While the number of patients visiting

treatment centres is increasing, doctors stressed that this represents only a fraction of the actual problem. “Those who come to us are just the tip of the iceberg,” they said, pointing out that social stigma and fear of judgment prevent a large number of addicts from seeking professional help.

“Despite repeated efforts to project addiction as a medical condition rather than a moral failing, stigma continues to dominate societal attitudes,” doctors said. “Many families prefer silence over treatment, which often worsens the condition.”

They added that although the availability of drugs has shown some decline due to enforcement measures, “much more needs to be done to cut supply chains and address demand through education and awareness.”

Health experts emphasised the role of families in the recovery process. “Family support is not optional—it is essential,” doctors said. “Patients who receive emotional, psychological and moral backing from their families show far better recovery outcomes.”

“The reassurance that they are not alone, that their families believe in them, often becomes the strongest motivation to quit drugs,” they added, urging parents to remain vigilant, engage openly with their children and educate them about the dangers of substance abuse.

Doctors appealed to society at large to adopt a more compassionate approach. “Addiction should be viewed through the lens of empathy, not judgment. Only then will affected individuals feel safe enough to seek help without fear of social exclusion,” they said.

Experts called for establishing Indoor Patient Department (IPD) facilities in every district, stating that many severe cases require supervised detoxification and round-the-clock medical care, which is currently unavailable in some districts.

“There is also an urgent need to launch large-scale awareness campaigns, especially in schools and colleges,” doctors said, stressing that teachers and educational institutions must be actively involved in identifying early signs of substance abuse and guiding students toward counselling and treatment.

“With better infrastructure, manpower and outreach, ATF centres can significantly scale up their impact,” experts said.

The gravity of the drug abuse crisis in Jammu and Kashmir can be understood by the report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment, which estimates that there are around 14 lakh drug abusers, with over 5 lakh people in the Union Territory using opioids, including 95,000 children in the 10–17 age group.

According to the report, among 1,68,700 minor drug abusers, around 95,000 use opioids,

46,000 inhalants, 19,000 sedatives, 8,000 cannabinoids, while smaller numbers use cocaine, amphetamines and hallucinogens.

The report also estimates 11.8 lakh adult drug abusers (18–75 years), with 4.47 lakh opioid users, 3.54 lakh alcohol users, 1.51 lakh sedative users, 1.36 lakh cannabis users, and significant numbers abusing inhalants and other substances.

Despite the grim statistics, doctors believe addiction treatment centres represent a crucial turning point in Kashmir's fight against drugs. “These centres are proof that recovery is possible,” they said. “With community cooperation, family involvement and stronger government support, they can truly transform lives and safeguard the future of our youth.” (KNO)

Anti-terror op

Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

The injured personnel are undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital, the official said.

He added that the hideout discovered during the operation was fortified and stocked with winter rations, including pulses, blankets, and utensils sufficient to support at least four people for months.

Some locals have been detained for questioning to help identify overground workers (OGWs) who may have assisted the terrorists in procuring and transporting supplies, the official said.

Senior officers, including IGP Jammu Zone Bhim Sen Tuti and IG CRPF Jammu R. Gopala Krishna Rao, were supervising the ongoing operation at the site.

The Army, along with police and paramilitary forces, will continue the cordon and combing operations in the area until the objectives of the mission are achieved, the officials added.

A wreath-laying ceremony for Havildar Gajendra Singh was held in Satwari, attended by Army and police officials. His mortal remains were later dispatched to his hometown in Uttarakhand for last rites.

“Havildar Gajendra Singh, a Special Forces soldier, was killed “while gallantly executing a counter-terror operation” as part of the ongoing Operation Trashi-I on the intervening night of January 18 and 19,” the Army said.

In a post on X, the White Knight Corps said, “The #GOC, White Knight Corps and all ranks pay solemn tribute to Havildar Gajendra Singh of the Special Forces, who made the supreme sacrifice while gallantly executing a Counter Terrorism operation in the Singpora area during the ongoing Operation TRASHI-I on the intervening night of 18-19 Jan 2026.”

“We honour his indomitable courage, valour and selfless devotion to duty and stand firmly with the bereaved family in this hour of profound grief,” the post further read. (KNO)

Nitin Nabin takes over as BJP president



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 20: Nitin Nabin was on Tuesday formally declared as the BJP national president, succeeding J P Nadda and beginning a new chapter for the party as it seeks to tighten its grip on politics in the country. K Laxman, Returning Officer for BJP organisational polls, declared the results of the organisational elections and handed over the certificate of election to 45-year-old Nabin, the youngest ever to occupy the top party post. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, Nadda, senior ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, among others, were present at the BJP headquarters to witness the leadership transition. Nabin became the 12th president of the BJP, which was founded in 1980, the same year he was born. The low-profile and unassuming Nabin had resigned as the minister for law and justice, urban development and housing in the Bihar government after he was appointed working president of the BJP on December 14. "This election shows that in

the BJP, leadership rises from hard work and dedication, not from dynastic privilege," Laxman said, announcing the outcome of the elections. "Today is a very historic occasion, when our young, energetic, and talented Nitin Nabin is taking charge as the National President of the world's largest political party, the BJP. I extend my heart-felt congratulations to him on my behalf and on behalf of crores of workers," Nadda said, addressing the gathering.

Celebrations erupt in Bihar

PTI

Patna, Jan 20: Celebrations erupted across Bihar on Tuesday upon Nitin Nabin assuming charge as the BJP national president, the first instance of a son of the soil making it to the top party post. Nabin, 45, a fifth-term MLA from Bankipore assembly constituency falling in the state capital, is the youngest leader to head what is described as "the biggest political party in the world".

Gigantic digital boards, for live streaming of the function in Delhi where Nabin took charge, were put up at three places in the state capital, 3 Taylor Road, the government bungalow he was allotted in Bihar while a minister in the state, besides Maurya Lok and New Market, both vantage points in his assembly constituency.

Party workers danced to drum beats, lit earthen lamps and distributed sweets to express their elation.

A female party worker said, "There are no bounds to our happiness. Today is our holi, diwali and dussehra. There could have been no better day for all Biharis."

AI guides to smart parking: Tech-driven traffic plan to steer Republic Day crowd to Kartavya Path



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 20: In a first, the traffic police has prepared detailed animated videos with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI), depicting the arrival, alighting, departure and parking plans for invitees. Officials said the videos are aimed at familiarising visitors with the movement and parking arrangements well in advance.

The videos are available on the Ministry of Defence website and can also be accessed through the QR code-based parking system issued to invitees. They explain in detail how arrival, alighting and parking will be managed on the day of the event, a senior police officer told PTI.

The parking management system covers 22 designated parking lots and has been designed to accommodate around 8,000 vehicles. Every year, nearly 77,000 passes are issued to spectators for the Republic Day parade, of which about 8,000 are earmarked for those arriving by private vehicles, the police said.

Another first this year is the introduction of shuttle services for security personnel deployed for Republic Day arrangements. Shuttles will operate from four locations—Khan Market, Amrita Sher-Gil Marg, Patel Chowk Metro Station and HC Mathur Lane—to ferry personnel to their respective destinations. The shuttles will run at a frequency of 10 minutes, he said.

To assist commuters in reaching their designated parking areas on Republic Day, invited guests and ticket holders can use Google Maps or Mappls for real-time navigation support. A senior police officer said the platforms will provide details of appropriate routes to Kartavya Path and the exact location of allotted parking spots.

On Mappls, a dedicated Republic Day tab has been created, while Google Maps will display specially marked parking locations along with entry and exit routes to help visitors reach their destinations without confusion, he said.

Apart from digital assistance,

the traffic police has significantly expanded on-ground support by setting up 12 help desks at key locations—up from just two in previous years. Personnel deployed at these help desks will guide commuters on parking facilities, pedestrian movement routes and security arrangements, the officer said.

The help desks will be located at Moti Lal Nehru Place roundabout, Sunehri Masjid roundabout, Man Singh roundabout, Jaswant Singh roundabout, GPO roundabout, Windsor Place roundabout, Mandi House roundabout, Q-point, Teen Murti roundabout, Crossing Janpath/ Dr Rajendra Prasad Road, Gate number 14 of Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium and Palika Parking, they added.

Car-calling systems have also been introduced this year to avoid crowding after the conclusion of the programme and to ensure smooth dispersal of invitees. Under the system, invitees can inform an officer stationed at the exit gate, following which announcements mentioning the car number or the driver's name will be made.

The information will be relayed through loudspeakers installed at parking areas, enabling drivers to reach the exit gate in a timely manner.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Rajiv Kumar said technology is being leveraged on a large scale this year to ensure smooth movement of vehicles and pedestrians and to make the experience seamless for those attending the national celebrations.

To ensure effective coordination among various agencies, a control room will remain operational on January 26. Officers from the police, traffic police, fire services and other emergency agencies will be deployed at the facility to monitor the situation and respond promptly to any exigency, the police said.

The traffic police has advised people to follow official advisories, use public transport as far as possible and rely on digital navigation tools for a smoother commute to Kartavya Path.

Abu Salem will flee if granted parole: Maharashtra govt tells HC

PTI

Mumbai, Jan 20: Gangster Abu Salem will abscond if granted parole and this could cause serious issues between India and Portugal, the country from where he was extradited, the Maharashtra government told the Bombay High Court on Tuesday.

The government, in an affidavit filed before the court, opposed Salem's petition seeking 14 days of parole, citing his elder brother's death, and said that at the most, he can be granted two days' emergency parole.

When the plea came up for hearing before a bench of Justices A S Gadkari and Shyam Chandak, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said it was the prosecuting agency and hence, it should be impleaded as a respondent in the petition.

If Salem is granted bail, then it would lead to law and order problems, the CBI said.

The bench said it would hear the plea on January 28.

The affidavit, filed by Inspector General of Prisons Suhas Warke, said Salem was an international gangster who had been indulging in criminal activities for decades.

Salem was extradited from Portugal on an extradition treaty, along with other conditions agreed upon by both countries, it added.

"If the petitioner (Salem) is granted parole, then he will abscond again, as even in 1993 he fled the country," the affidavit pointed out.

It further said the Government of India is under an obligation to stick to the conditions and assurances given by it to the Government of Portugal at the time of Salem's extradition.

"If the petitioner absconds now, then there will be serious issues between the two countries (India and Portugal) as well as a threat to society," the affidavit said.

In Portugal, Salem had been convicted of travelling on a fake passport. He was arrested in Lisbon, Portugal, and extradited to India in November 2005.

As per the affidavit, after Salem sought parole from the jail authorities, a report was sought from the Uttar Pradesh police, where he intends to travel.

Indian pacer Mohammed Shami appears for SIR hearing in Kolkata

PTI

Kolkata, Jan 20: Indian pacer Mohammed Shami on Tuesday appeared before poll officials in Kolkata for his scheduled hearing under the ongoing SIR exercise in West Bengal, an official said.

Shami appeared before the poll officials with the necessary documents at a school in south Kolkata's Bikramgarh area, he said.

The enumeration form filled up by Shami had discrepancies in some places, because of which he was summoned for the hearing, a senior official in the office of the state CEO said. Shami, who hails from Uttar Pradesh, has been residing in Kolkata for several years due to his cricketing career. The cricketer is registered as a voter of ward number 93 of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, which falls under the Rashbehari assembly constituency.

The Indian pacer and his brother Mohammed Kaif have been issued notices by the Election Commission to appear for a hearing. "Shami could not turn up for the hearing on an earlier date as he was in Rajkot, representing Bengal in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. So, a new date was issued," the poll official said.

Higher edu regulator must oversee Article 15(5) implementation: Congress

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 20: The Congress on Tuesday demanded that any regulator set up for higher education should be mandated to oversee the implementation of Article 15(5) of the Constitution, which allows the government to mandate reservations for SC, ST and OBC students in private institutions.

Congress general secretary in charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, said Article 15(5) was inserted by the Manmohan Singh government through the 93rd Amendment that came into effect exactly 20 years ago today.

He said the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtthan Bill, 2025, to set up a single regulator for higher education in the country was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 15, 2025, and referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee the next day.

"Any such regulator should be mandated to oversee the implementation of Article 15(5) of the Constitution that came into effect exactly twenty years ago today. Article 15(5) was inserted by Dr Manmohan Singh's Government through the 93rd Amendment," Ramesh said on X.

It was a historic moment which allowed the introduction of 27 per cent reservation for OBC students in centrally-funded higher education



institutions (HEIs), including the IITs, IIMs, central universities, and NITs, Ramesh said.

Since then, lakhs of OBC students have availed of this reservation, bringing economic and social mobility to millions, he said.

"Article 15(5) also allows the Government to mandate reservations

‘New blood biomarker test with imaging can help early Alzheimer's detection’

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 20: The Alzheimer's diagnosis with the help of a new blood biomarker test, coupled with imaging, can enable detection well before severe cognitive symptoms become evident, a diagnostic centre chain said on Monday.

Introducing Artificial Intelligence-integrated blood biomarker test, supported by structured PET and MRI imaging pathways, Mahajan Imaging and Labs said the new approach supports a shift from symptom-led assessment to a biology-first diagnosis in Indian clinical practice.

The new method uses the pTAU/Aβ1-42 blood biomarker test, which has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration and Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation. The expanded diagnostic approach employed by the chain was formally introduced and discussed during a scientific symposium in Gurugram on Sunday.

Globally, Alzheimer's diagnosis increasingly depends on amyloid PET imaging and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) testing.

Dr Harsh Mahajan, founder

and chairman of Mahajan Imaging and Labs, said in India, limited availability and high costs -- as much as Rs 2 lakh per scan -- have restricted widespread access to amyloid PET, leaving many clinicians dependent on symptom-based assessments.

"A key differentiator of our approach is the integration of laboratory diagnostics with imaging. The combination of blood biomarkers with 18F FDG (a PET scan) can be a game-changer not only in early diagnosis of Alzheimer's, but also in follow-up of patients on the new treatments to assess for treatment response," he said.

The conclusions from the symposium will be sent to the Neurological Society of India to help in formulating guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of the disease in India, he said, adding that this may even have implications on the approach to early diagnosis of Alzheimer's in other parts of the world.

Dr Shelly Mahajan, lab director, Mahajan Imaging and Labs, said Alzheimer's diagnosis has traditionally relied on the appearance of clinical symptoms, often delaying meaningful

intervention.

"Blood-based biomarkers allow clinicians to identify Alzheimer's pathology at a much earlier stage, when patients and families still have the opportunity to plan, intervene, and make informed care decisions. Bringing this testing and analysis to India removes a major access barrier and aligns Indian diagnostics with evolving global standards," she said.

Dr M V Padma, chairperson, Neurology, Paras Health, Gurugram, stated that by integrating blood-based biomarkers with MRI and PET-CT imaging, this package supports timely detection, appropriate referral, and better planning of care.

"It strengthens our healthcare system's ability to respond proactively and reduces the long-term burden on families and society," she said.

Until recently, Alzheimer's biomarker testing relied on cerebrospinal fluid samples, which

meant a more invasive procedure for patients.

"Today, with plasma-based testing, we can obtain the same critical information through a simple blood test. This makes diagnosis easier, safer, and far more acceptable for patients," a statement by the diagnostics company said.

Recent estimates indicate that



over 8.8 million Indians aged 60 and above are living with dementia, with Alzheimer's disease accounting for the majority of cases.

"This number is projected to nearly double over the next decade, highlighting the growing need for early and accurate diagnostic tools that support timely intervention and care planning," the company said.

'Fake' GST ITC case: ED raids in multiple states

PTI

New Delhi/Kolkata, Jan 20: The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday conducted multi-state searches in connection with an alleged fake GST input tax credit case of Rs 658 crore that originated in Arunachal Pradesh, officials said.

Multiple premises of individuals and companies linked to the case located in Jharkhand, West Bengal and Manipur are being searched as part of an investigation being undertaken as per the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

Input Tax Credit (ITC) is a legal mechanism in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system that allows business entities to reduce their tax liability by claiming credits on GST paid for business-related purchases.

The ED Itanagar office in Arunachal Pradesh is conducting the operation in coordination with various state police forces.

The money laundering case stems from an FIR of Itanagar Police where it was alleged that individuals named Rakesh Sharma and Ashutosh Kumar Jha availed "fraudulent" ITC through fake invoices without any actual supply of goods or services.

A "non existent" company named Siddhi Vinayak Trade Merchants, where ITC of Rs 99.31 crore was availed on the strength of bogus invoices valued at 658.55 crore, and 58 shell entities spread across different states are under the scanner of the ED.

EU leaders take stage in Davos as Trump rocks global order

AFP

Davos, Jan 20: European leaders take the stage on Tuesday ahead of Donald Trump at the gathering of global elites in Davos, as the US president dangles tariff threats in a bid to pressure the EU over Greenland.

Trump is set to dominate the week at the Swiss ski resort, with a US delegation already on the ground to promote an American agenda that has unsettled the global order cherished by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen and French President Emmanuel Macron will address the forum on Tuesday, along with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, whose countries have their own disputes with Trump.

Trump will deliver a speech on Wednesday and participate in other events on Thursday.

Europe is weighing countermeasures after Trump threatened to impose tariffs on eight European countries over the Greenland standoff.

The US president said he did not think European leaders would "push back too much"



on his attempt to buy the vast Arctic island, telling reporters on Monday: "They have to have this done. They can't protect it."

Trump has flagged wanting to protect Greenland from perceived Russian and Chinese threats as a key justification for taking over the strategically-located territory, though analysts suggest Beijing is a small player in the region.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who is leading the US contingent in Davos, warned that EU retaliation "would be very unwise." Von der Leyen met with

a bipartisan US congressional delegation in Davos on Monday and said on social media that she had "addressed the need to unequivocally respect the sovereignty of Greenland and of the Kingdom of Denmark."

While Macron will leave on Tuesday without seeing Trump in Davos, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said he would seek to meet the US president at the forum on Wednesday.

Merz said Germany and other European countries agreed "that we want to avoid any escalation in this dispute if at all possible."

Trump's relations with Macron hit a new low Monday when the US president threatened 200 percent tariffs on French wine over France's intention to decline an invitation to join his "Board of Peace."

Analysts have likened the board aimed at resolving international conflicts to a pay-to-play version of the UN Security Council — and Trump confirmed Monday that Russian President Vladimir Putin was one of various world leaders invited to join.

European Union leaders will hold an emergency summit in Brussels on Thursday to discuss their response to the Greenland crisis, one of the gravest in years to hit transatlantic ties.

At a news conference in Davos, Finland's President Alexander Stubb said "tariff threats at the allied level are unacceptable. They weaken our transatlantic relationship and, in the worst case, can lead to a vicious cycle."

When asked if the United States might use force, Stubb said: "I don't believe that the United States will take control of Greenland militarily."

Denmark has proposed that NATO start surveillance

operations in Greenland to confront security concerns.

- 'USA House' -

Other prominent foreign leaders addressing the WEF on Tuesday include Carney, who has sought to reduce his country's reliance on the United States as Trump has raised tariffs on Canadian products.

As US ties fray, Carney turned the page on years of diplomatic tensions with China during a visit to Beijing last week, securing a preliminary trade agreement to reduce tariffs.

Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, whose country has had long-running trade spats with Trump, will also address the WEF.

Other flashpoints on the WEF agenda include the crises in Venezuela, Gaza, Ukraine and Iran.

The United States has sent an unusually large delegation to Davos, in a sign that it wants to make its presence felt at the gathering for global economic and political leaders.

Bessent and other US officials will attend panels at the forum's congress center but also at the "USA House," a venue inside an old church on the glitzy promenade of the mountain retreat.

Danish PM draws line on sovereignty amid US tariff threat over Greenland



IANS

Oslo, Jan 20: Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Tuesday that her country will not negotiate over its sovereignty, responding to US threats of tariffs in a dispute over Greenland.

Frederiksen noted that Denmark has never sought any conflicts. However, Denmark is now being threatened by its closest ally, both in terms of Danish territory and Greenlandic self-determination, she told the parliament, Xinhua News Agency reported.

On the tariffs, the United States has threatened to

impose, Frederiksen said a trade war would cost jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. "As much as we must warn against it, we must also prepare for it," she said.

In a social media post over the weekend, Trump said the United States would impose a 10 per cent tariff from Feb 1 on goods from eight European countries opposing his ambition to control Greenland. He warned the tariff rate would rise to 25 per cent on June 1 and remain in place until a deal is reached for the "complete and total purchase" of Greenland.

Sports Ministry showcases AIU for admin deficiencies, lapses at World University Games

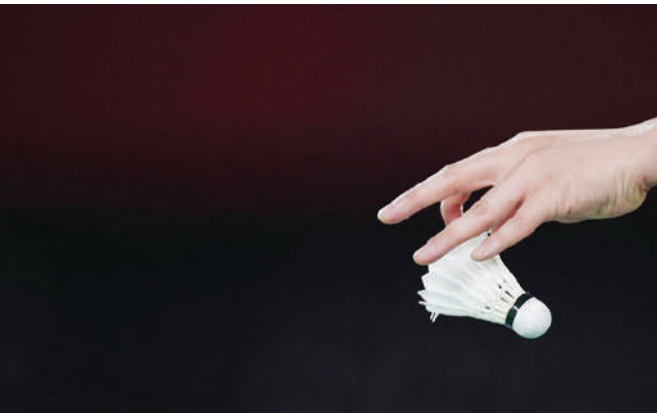
PTI

New Delhi, Jan 20: Pointing out administrative deficiencies afflicting university-level sport in the country, the Sports Ministry has issued a show cause notice to the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), saying the body has failed to carry out its duties related to athlete development and planning.

The AIU had drawn severe criticism during last year's World University Games in Rhine-Ruhr, Germany where six of the 12 badminton players in the contingent were barred from participating due to an alleged administrative lapse.

Officials failed to submit all names correctly during the managers' meeting causing a massive furore as the affected players called it "career sabotage due to AIU mismanagement".

"Athlete discomfort will not be tolerated at any level. Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya is very clear that such lapses would



have consequences," a well-placed source told PTI.

The AIU, which is the nodal body for university-level sports in the country, formed an inquiry committee which admitted to the botched handling of the Games entries and suspended its joint secretary Baljit Singh Sekhon, who had travelled with the contingent.

AIU secretary Dr Pankaj Mittal later said that the AIU had

managed to secure medals and certificates for the affected athletes from the world governing body (FISU). The badminton team had won a bronze medal at the Games.

Mittal did not respond to PTI's repeated calls on what the AIU's response to the ministry notice, issued on January 8, would be even though a source said it has sought more time after the initial 10-day deadline expired.

The notice issued to AIU mentions the World University Games fiasco and observes that the overall quality of Indian athletes emerging from the university sports system has not been up to the expected level.

India had won two gold, five silver, and five bronze medals, to finish 20th in the World University Games.

The ministry feels there are serious deficiencies in planning, coordination, athlete development and the administrative set-up of the AIU.

Citing the mega-event last year, the ministry said the failure to ensure participation of selected athletes caused avoidable hardship to them and adversely impacted India's image in international university sports forums.

During the embarrassing episode, a ministry source had even hinted that the possibility of a national federation to handle university sport could also be considered.

Internet shutdown squeezes Iran's ailing businesses already hurt by crashing currency



AP

Dubai, Jan 20: Iranians have been struggling for nearly two weeks with the longest, most comprehensive internet shutdown in the history of the Islamic Republic — one that has not only restricted their access to information and the outside world, but is also throttling many businesses that rely on online advertising.

Authorities shut down internet access on Jan 8 as nationwide protests led to a brutal crackdown that activists say has killed

over 4,000 people, with more feared dead. Since then, there has been minimal access to the outside world, with connectivity in recent days restored only for some domestic websites.

Google also began partially functioning as a search engine, with most search results inaccessible.

Officials have offered no firm timeline for the internet to return, leading to fears by businesses across the country about their future.

One pet shop owner in Tehran, who spoke on the condition

of anonymity like others for fear of reprisals, said his business had fallen by 90% since the protests.

"Before that, I mainly worked on Instagram and Telegram which I don't have access to anymore. The government has proposed two domestic alternatives. The point is our customers are not there — they don't use it."

The internet outage compounds economic pain already suffered by Iranians. The protests, which appear to have halted under a bloody suppression by authorities, began Dec 28 over Iran's rial currency falling to over 1.4 million to \$1.

Ten years ago, the rial traded at 32,000 to \$1. Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, it traded at 70 to \$1.

The currency's downward spiral pushed up inflation, increasing the cost of food and other daily necessities. The pressure on Iranians' pockets was compounded by changes to gasoline prices that were also introduced in December, further fuelling anger.

Ishan will bat at No. 3, he deserves game time before T20 World Cup: Suryakumar

PTI

Nagpur, Jan 20: Ishan Kishan will play ahead of Shreyas Iyer in the series against New Zealand as he is a part of India's T20 World Cup squad and a like-for-like replacement for an injured Tilak Varma being a left-hander, skipper Suryakumar Yadav said on Tuesday.

Tilak, an automatic choice at number three has undergone an abdominal surgery and is ruled out of the first three games, starting here on Wednesday. This has allowed Iyer to make a comeback to the national squad for the first three games.

However, the skipper made it amply clear that Iyer is being looked at as a No. 5.

"Ishan will bat at number 3 because he is a part of our T20 World Cup team and he was picked in the squad first so it's our responsibility to give him a chance," he said in the pre-match press conference.

"He hasn't played for India for past one and half year and in the mean time consistently performed in domestic cricket," the Indian skipper did not leave any room for guess work.

"Since he (Ishan) has been picked for World T20, he deserves to play ahead (of Shreyas). Had it been a question of batting slots Nos 4



or 5, it would have been a different question altogether. Unfortunately, Tilak isn't there so Ishan is our best bet," he added.

The T20 World Cup starts February 7 and will be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

When asked if he himself has any chance of batting at No.3 where he got a lot of success, the skipper indicated that he would like to be flexible.

"I have batted at both positions for India. My stats at No. 4 are slightly better although they are good at No. 3 also. But then we are flexible with that," he said.

"We will see and if the situation demands that we have to send a right-hander

(in case right hander Sanju Samson gets out), then, I will go in, otherwise Tilak (now injured) has been doing really well at number three."

With a strike rate of 113 and an average of less than 15 in 2025, Suryakumar has endured a prolonged rough patch but he intends to change nothing in his batting that has so far given him success.

"I've been out of runs. But I can't change my identity. I have decided to keep doing what I have been doing in the last three or four years so that has given me a lot of success."

"If the performance comes, I'll take it, if it doesn't, it's back to the drawing board. I'm still batting in the nets the way I always have," said

Suryakumar.

While most questions predictably were about his form, the skipper very diplomatically spoke about how individual form doesn't matter in the bigger context of the team.

"Had I been playing a single (individual) sport like TT or tennis, I would have worried about my form. But this is team sport and my first responsibility is to ensure that my team does well."

"If team wins, I am happy and if I can contribute in team's success then fine and if not, doesn't matter as it can happen. But I have to look at 14 other players also and there is no place for looking at personal milestones."

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