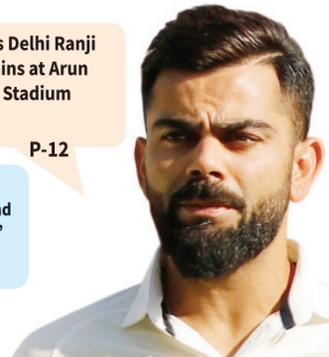


Kohli joins Delhi Ranji team, trains at Arun Jaitley Stadium

P-12

'Only 21 Pc Govt school students of Class-V can read 2nd class textbooks in JK'

P-5



NEWS BRIEF

'In 2024, over 13% students enrolled in Grade-I were underage'

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

In Jammu and Kashmir more than 13 percent of students enrolled in Grade-I were underage in 2024.

Besides, the enrolment in early childhood education programs or preschool was high with over 90 percent for ages 3 and 4.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

62 BDO posts vacant across Kashmir

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 27

As many as 62 key posts of Block Development Officers (BDOs) are lying vacant in the Rural Development Department (RDD) in Kashmir.

As per the details available with the news agency the highest number of BDO posts i.e. 17 are lying vacant in Kupwara district, only eight have been appointed against the total of 25 key positions.

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DGP reviews operational preparedness of Reasi, Ramban

HT NEWS NETWORK
JAMMU, JAN 28

Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat, along with ADGP Jammu Zone, Anand Jain and senior officers conducted an extensive review of the

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

DySP, firefighter injured in Jawahar Nagar blaze

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

A fire incident in the government residential quarters at Jawahar Nagar, Srinagar, this morning left a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) from the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and a firefighter injured, officials said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

Despite all the differences, people share a common origin and a common destiny: LG

HT NEWS NETWORK
JAMMU, JANUARY 28

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today felicitated the recipients of 'Maharaja Hari Singh Peace & Harmony Award', organised by Gulistan News Network at Jammu.

The Lieutenant Governor paid tributes to Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, Pandit Girdhari Lal Dogra and Shri Devender Singh Rana, who

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2



J&K's First Budget Session post abrogation Art 370

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

As the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir prepares for its first "Budget Session" in March 2025, the legislators may not be allowed to discuss matters pertaining to All India Services, the Police, Law and Order, and Security.

As per the news agency this session, about the presentation of the

2025-26 annual budget, will be the first since the assembly was reconstituted in October 2024.

Jammu and Kashmir, reorganized into two Union Territories on October 31, 2019, has operated without a legislative assembly for many years.

Sources from the Assembly Secretariat said that there is every possibility that written questions on All India Services like IAS,

Police, Law and Order, and security matters will not be permitted during the session, nor will these topics be debated unless allowed by the Speaker under special circumstances.

Additionally, issues related to All India Services are also likely to be excluded from the discussion.

Opposition leaders have said that if such restrictions are

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

27 test positive for jaundice in Anantnag village

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 27

At least 27 people, mostly children, were tested positive for jaundice in Gutligund village in South Kashmir's Anantnag district, raising concerns among

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Mehraj-ul-Alam: Thousands throng Hazratbal shrine, participate in special prayers

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

Thousands of devotees thronged Dargah, Hazratbal shrine on Tuesday to mark Mehraj-ul-Alam, commemorating the ascension of

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to the heavens.

The holy occasion, observed with night-long prayers and spiritual fervor, drew men, women, children, and the elderly in

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

J&K braces for wet spell from today

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

Jammu and Kashmir would likely witness a week-long wet spell from January 29 with the weatherman predicting a series of Western Disturbances till February 05.

According to the news agency, Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that there is a forecast of light snow and rain from January 29 afternoon under the influence of a Western Disturbance, affecting J&K from tomorrow.

"Fresh spell of light rain and



snow is expected at scattered places during 29th night and 30th morning & at isolated places during 31st January," he said, adding

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

Pahalgam to get gondola facility to boost year-round tourism

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

Pahalgam, one of Kashmir's most iconic tourist destinations, is set to receive a state-of-the-art gondola service, designed to rival the renowned Gulmarg Gondola.

The proposed

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

Rajouri mysterious deaths: All patients out of danger, to be discharged soon



HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

The situation in the Badhaal area of Rajouri district is improving as no new cases have been reported in the past seven days. Authorities are awaiting forensic reports to determine the exact cause of the mysterious deaths that claimed 17 lives, including 12 children, since December 8, 2024.

Speaking to the news agency, Dr Shamim Ahmad, Medical Superintendent at Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri said no fresh cases have been reported in the last week. "Cur-

rently, 11 patients admitted last week are under observation at GMC Rajouri, but all of them are out of danger," he said.

Dr Ahmad added that none of the patients are on ventilators and their discharge will be decided soon after consultations with experts.

Following the mysterious deaths in Budhal village, authorities declared it a containment zone, with hundreds of close contacts relocated to an isolation centre at the Government Nursing College in Rajouri.

Initial investigations suggest that the deaths may be

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Only Allah can protect Waqf properties: Dr Farooq

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

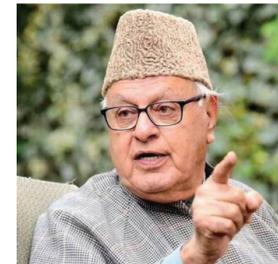
National Conference (NC) President Dr Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday said that only Allah can protect the Waqf properties and people should seek forgiveness from the Almighty.

Talking to reporters here, Dr Farooq, as per the news agency, said, "We are Muslims by name only not by actions. That's why the situation is worsening for Muslims. People should seek forgiveness from the Almighty."

Asked about the statement made in Mahakumbh over Waqf, Dr Farooq said that "Almighty is the guardian of the properties and only Allah can protect the Waqf properties."

Urging the people to wake up before it's too late the National Conference (NC) President said that "Kashmiris themselves were responsible for drug abuse becoming a menace in the Valley."

Replying to a query about New Delhi blaming Pakistan for send-



ing drugs into Kashmir, he said, "I don't know who is to be blamed. We Kashmiris are responsible for ruining the Valley. The problem is drugs are a big money and a lot of people are involved in this money, but unless we Kashmiris wake up, we will never be able to eliminate this menace from society."

"Drugs have destroyed the Valley. Peddlers are Kashmiris and those getting addicted are also Kashmiris. I am happy that Police have been acting tough against the criminals involved in the drug trade."

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HT BOTTOM STORY

The Unseen Death: When the Play field of Children turned into the Grave yard in Budhaal Rajouri!

MS NAZKI
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

A haunting silence grips the desolate village Budhaal in Kotranka subdivision in Rajouri district where an eerie shadow looms over the surrounding mountains, trees, animals, and people. The very air of this once lively village is now thick with mourning, sorrow, and terror. The scent of life has vanished, replaced by an overwhelming weight

of grief. Death has firmly settled within the humble mud houses, and the sounds of sobs and groans rise from every home.

The death of families occurred on a hill, at the edge of the village. This was once the place where children's laughter echoed, where six siblings would quarrel over pieces of bread lovingly prepared by their mother. Today, at the very doorstep of these homes, the mother sits motionless on the ground.

There are no tears in her eyes; perhaps she has cried so much that even tears have abandoned her. She silently gazes at her hands—the same hands that once tenderly cradled her children, but now have lowered them into the earth, one by one.

Nearby, the loyal dog, Mohd Aslam, sits dejectedly on the ground. Once, this dog had been an inseparable part of the family. He had played with the children in the street,



happily accepting pieces of bread from their hands, and had slept in their laps at night. But now, he remains eerily silent. Lying on the ground with moisture in his eyes, he gazes at the door, unable to comprehend that the small hands that once lovingly caressed his head are now silent forever.

Shera, as the dog was named, had gone hungry for many days, but food no longer mattered to him. Each day, he would

return to the places where the children once played, as if hoping to relive those joyful moments. But now, there is only silence. His speechless eyes reveal the sorrow he carries within. At times, Shera would bark silently, then lie down, emitting a sound akin to crying—as if he too was mourning the loss of the children.

The entire village of Budhal is shrouded in mourning. Seventeen lives have been claimed by this

mysterious death. No one knows the cause, and the officers who arrived to console the villagers could only offer empty assurances that everything would be fine. But for the families who have lost their loved ones, nothing can undo their pain. Some patients are in critical condition, adding to the anxiety that hangs in the air.

The women of the village gathered, offering their condolences.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

'Only 21 Pct Govt school students of Class-V can read 2nd class textbooks in JK'

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

In a worrisome development, only 21 percent of fifth standard students in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir government schools can read text level of second class.

On the contrary, more than 60 percent of 5th standard students studying in private schools of Jammu and Kashmir can read text level of second class.

The latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), survey while assessing the learning 'recovery' since COVID in reading and arith-

metic has revealed that "In government schools of Jammu and Kashmir, 18.1 percent of 5th standard students were able to read text of 2nd class level in 2022. However, in the year 2024, only 21.8 percent 5th standard students of government schools were able to read the text of 2nd class."

According to the news agency, the report states that there was an improvement of 3.7 percent in reading from 2022-2024 in government schools.

The study further states that in private schools of Jammu and Kashmir, at least

54.9 percent students of 5th standard were able to read the text of 2nd class in 2022 and in 2024, at least 60.3 percent of students were able to read the text of 2nd class.

It said that there was an improvement of 5.4 percent in the 5th standard with regard to reading of text of 2nd class.

In the meantime, the report while highlighting the reading levels of 3rd standard students said that India has shown improvement in reading levels, but Jammu and Kashmir remains relatively low

"While learning levels

across India are showing significant improvement, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir presents a contrasting trend. The region has experienced a learning loss of 2.3 percentage points in reading and 2.1 percentage points in Arithmetic," it reads.

The sampling of the survey is based on selection of 30 random villages in each district, 20 households in each village. It also surveyed all children of age 3-16 in household and assessed all children of age 5-16 in household. The sampling method has remained consistent over time. KNO

'Only 16% Govt, 37% Pvt Students of Class-V can solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit'

HT NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, JAN 28

In Jammu and Kashmir only 16 percent 5th class students in government schools of rural areas can solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit.

Similarly, at least 37 percent students of 5th class enrolled in private school in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir can solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit.

The latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) in a latest survey

while assessing the learning 'recovery' since COVID in reading and arithmetic has revealed that "In government schools of Jammu and Kashmir, 14 percent of 5th standard students were able to solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit in 2022. In the year 2024, at least 16.3 percent 5th standard students of government schools were able to solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit."

The news agency has learnt that in private schools, at least 32.1 per-

cent students of 5th class were able to solve division problems of 3-digit by 1-digit in 2022 and 37.6 percent in 2024.

The ASER survey states that there was an improvement of 2.3 percent in government schools and 5.5 percent in private schools since 2022-24 with regard to learning 'recovery' since COVID in reading and arithmetic.

The report states that since 2022, reading and arithmetic levels for Standard-V students have improved, with a more

significant increase among children in private schools compared to those in government schools. "This pattern contrasts with the national trend."

Pertinently, the sampling of the survey is based on selection of 30 random villages in each district, 20 households in each village. It also surveyed all children of age 3-16 in household and assessed all children of age 5-16 in household. The sampling method has remained consistent over time. KNO

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Despite all the...

were honoured with the award posthumously for their leadership qualities and tenacity and dedicating the life for the welfare of people.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor paid homage to Maharaja Hari Singh and spoke on the revolutionary reforms introduced by him that had made a profound impact on the society and the development of J&K.

"Maharaja Hari Singh Ji was a key architect of modern Jammu Kashmir. He also played a major role in shaping its destiny during a critical period in history and ensured the dream of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' becomes a reality," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that Maharaja Hari Singh Ji was unflinching in his concern for the poor and the disadvantaged and he championed the cause of women empowerment, education, healthcare and upliftment of the marginalised. His entire life was a great saga of courage and conviction for betterment of society.

The Lieutenant Governor further highlighted that it is the responsibility of people at the helm of affairs to ensure that different segments and sections have a stake in Viksit Bharat.

He said the prestigious Maharaja Hari Singh Awards are the recognition of the work done for promoting peace, inclusive development, achievement in different sectors and a feeling of oneness between communities.

"As India moves forward on the path of rapid economic growth, your work in literature, social services, sports, education and business strengthens the fabric of our society. It is your duty to ensure that weaker sections of society and empowerment of women are given top priority," the Lieutenant Governor told the Awardees.

Speaking on India's emergence as an economic super power, the Lieutenant Governor said the progress we achieved in the last 10 year, have assured that the nation will certainly accomplish the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

He emphasised that the government alone cannot achieve its goals and the citizens need to work together.

"It is true that despite all the differences, people share a common origin and a common destiny. I urge the people from all sections of the society to lead India into a developed nation and become the active partners in this developmental journey," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the J&K Government, under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has fulfilled the long pending demand of declaring holiday on the birthday of Maharaja Hari Singh ji.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor was conferred with 'Maharaja Hari Singh Award in Reforms and Planning'.

Sh Jugal Kishore Sharma, Member of Parliament; Sh Sham Lal Chaudhary, former Minister; Sh Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; members of Gulistan News Network; senior officials and prominent citizens from different walks of life were present.

J&K's First Budget...

put in place these would undermine their ability to represent their constituents effectively.

Sheikh Khurshid of the Awami Ittehad Party and Waheed ur Rehman Para of the PDP criticized the move, stating that security and law and order are central to the daily lives of people in Jammu and Kashmir. "From passports to jobs, police verification is mandatory here. If we cannot address issues related to law and order, we are doing a disservice to our voters," said Para.

National Conference MLA Salman Sagar echoed similar views, pointing out the inherent challenge. "When the police and law and order are outside the purview of the state government, what answers can the state government provide on these issues? This limits our ability to hold meaningful discussions," he said.

A senior BJP leader said, "In a Union Territory, security and law and order are controlled by the Centre. This arrangement has reduced political interference in police operations, allowing them to function more effectively. In the past, political pressure often hampered the police from acting decisively."

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, however, is reportedly in discussions with the Centre to push for the restoration of full statehood. Though no definite timeline has been given, it is hoped by the ruling dispensation that the statehood will be announced in near future. KNO

Rajouri mysterious...

linked to the consumption of contaminated food or water. Symptoms observed in the affected people include irritability, drowsiness, profuse sweating and respiratory distress, which are consistent with neurotoxicity or exposure to organophosphorus compounds. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said the deaths

were caused by toxins rather than an infectious disease, adding that investigations are on to identify the source of the contamination.

An official involved in the probe said the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report from Chandigarh is expected within two days. "The FSL report will provide a clearer picture of the toxins responsible and enable authorities to establish the necessary protocols," the official said.

Law enforcement agencies are exploring the possibility of any criminal angle to the incident to rule out deliberate contamination or foul play.

Authorities have intensified surveillance in the region, while medical teams continue to monitor the health of affected persons. Health officials are coordinating with toxicology experts to ensure a swift response to any emerging symptoms. KNO

Mehraj-ul-Alam: Thousands...

large numbers, seeking blessings and spiritual solace. According to the details available with the news agency, the Hazratbal Shrine, situated on the banks of Dal Lake, became the focal point of devotion as thousands of worshippers flocked to witness the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

As the relic was displayed to the crowd, cries of devotion echoed, with men and women overwhelmed by emotion as they sought blessings.

Ghulam Nabi, a 68-year-old resident of Ganderbal, who made the journey despite the winter chill told KNO, "I have never missed night-long prayers on the occasion of Shab-e-Mehraj at Hazratbal in my life. For me, it's not just a tradition but a deep spiritual connection."

The night-long prayers also resonated with the faithful's supplications for peace, prosperity, and blessings for Kashmir. "I feel blessed to be part of this gathering," shared Shabir Ahmad from Anantnag, who attended the prayers with his family.

Pertinently, Shab-e-Mehraj holds deep significance for Muslims around the world. It is believed to be the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and his ascension to heaven. "This is remembered as a moment of divine guidance when the Prophet (SAW) interacted with other prophets and received instructions from Allah." KNO

27 test positive...

the locals. An official told the news agency that the screening process is underway and so far 27 mostly children have been tested positive for jaundice in the area.

He said that medical teams along with Asha workers have been carrying out door to door awareness campaigns to educate people how to keep themselves safe. "The situation is under control as all the patients are stable and recovering well," he said.

Meanwhile, the local residents alleged that contaminated water is the main reason behind the outbreak with officials stating that water samples have already been taken, and the report is yet to come.

An official of Jal Shakti department said that water is being supplied to them after proper treatment and they are getting the water from the source, which supplies water to 30 villages.

He said some parameters have been already checked while some others are underway. Meanwhile, the Government Medical College (GMC) Anantnag has formed a five-member investigation team after a jaundice outbreak.

According to an order, a copy of which lies with KNO, the probe team will look into the possible source, preventive and control measures.

The team has been directed to visit the village and submit an action plan to Principal GMC Anantnag by the end of this month. It has also been directed to provide necessary health care interventions to affected people.

The team will be headed by Dr Mahbooba Rasool, Associate Professor, Community Medicine GMC Srinagar, while Dr Abiroo Jan, Associate Professor Microbiology, Dr Irfan Gul Associate Professor General Medicine, Dr Asif Aziz, Consultant Pediatrics and Aijaz Ahmad, Health Educator (UHTC Brakpora) will be its members. KNO

J&K braces for...

that the weather would remain generally cloudy on February 01 and 02 with the possibility of light rain and snow at scattered to fairly widespread places during the period.

Sharing further details, the Director stated that generally cloudy weather is expected on February 03 with the possibility of light snow at isolated higher reaches.

Also, on February 04 and 05, there is a possibility of light rain and snow at scattered places, he said.

Giving further details, the Met Director said that the minimum temperature is expected to rise from January

29 by some degrees while the maximum temperature would dip by some degrees and would settle around normal.

Pertinently, Jammu and Kashmir is presently witnessing the prolonged dry spell with the first three weeks of this month recording the deficit rainfall of 81 per cent from January 01 to January 22. KNO

Pahalgam to get gondola...

cable car project aims to enhance the region's tourism potential and attract visitors year-round, particularly during the winter months.

According to details obtained by the news agency, the proposed aerial route will span approximately 2 kilometres, connecting Yatri Nawas to the scenic meadow of Bai Saran, which is surrounded by snow-capped mountains and dense pine forests.

An official from the J&K Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC) said the Detailed Project Report (DPR) is in its final stages, with the Board of Directors expected to make a decision soon. "While a few No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from forest and other concerned departments are still pending, efforts are underway to expedite the process," the official added.

The project, designed with environmental sustainability in mind, ensures no deforestation will occur during construction. A drag lift is planned for Aru Valley to promote winter sports and adventure tourism, which will further enhance the region's appeal as a hub for adventure activities, the official said.

"These initiatives are expected to transform Pahalgam into a year-round tourist destination," he added.

Local stakeholders, including hoteliers and travel agents, have warmly welcomed the move.

Uzair Ahmad, a local hotelier, told KNO, "Pahalgam sees a steady flow of tourists during the summer, but winter months witness a significant decline. Facilities like the gondola and drag lift will keep Pahalgam vibrant throughout the year."

He said most hotels in the area currently lack central heating systems, as many remain closed during the winter due to low tourist numbers. "If the winter footfall increases, hoteliers can upgrade facilities, which will benefit the local economy," Ahmad added.

The gondola project is being described as a "game-changer" for Pahalgam by local authorities and stakeholders. It is expected to reduce congestion at Gulmarg by offering tourists an alternative adventure site while establishing Pahalgam as a premier destination for both summer and winter activities.

The drag lift at Aru Valley is particularly aimed at promoting winter sports, attracting adventure enthusiasts and hosting potential sporting events in the future.

With the completion of these projects, Pahalgam is set to see a boost in tourist footfall, particularly during the winter months. KNO

Only Allah can protect...

About his recent statement on Article 370, Dr Farooq said the provision was aimed at safeguarding the identity of J&K people. "It was not meant for a single community, but the Maharajas had brought this provision in 1927 amidst the apprehensions that the jobs will be secured by the outsiders here."

Asked about the delay in Statehood restoration, the NC President said that this question should be posed to those who are delaying it, adding that "We are waiting for its restoration and will continue to wait for it." KNO

The Unseen Death: When...

But the words of one mother echoed the collective heartbreak: "My children have left me, and with them, my courage has been buried."

Shera, who had been listening to these mournful words, sat quietly at the feet of the grieving mother, his moist eyes reflecting his sorrow. Though animals cannot speak, his pain was evident in the silent tears that dripped onto the ground. It was as if he too was missing the children he had once played with.

The once vibrant mud houses are now silent, their doors locked, and the village deserted. The place that was once filled with children's laughter is now engulfed in stillness. The loyal animals, like Shera, come and lay before the closed doors, as if waiting for the children to return. But there is no movement. The village, nestled at the foot of the hills, has become a witness to a tragedy beyond comprehension.

As night falls and the chill sets in, the villagers retreat into their huts, their hearts heavy with fear, knowing that tomorrow might bring their own turn to suffer. Shera, too, feels the weight of this mourning. He goes to the children's graves and sits there, his head bowed, as if paying his final tribute to those he loved. Alas, this village will forever be marked by the silence of grief and

the unspoken sorrow of those who remain.

'In 2024, over...

According to the news agency, the main finding of the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) of 2024 reveals, "Enrolment in early childhood education programs or preschool is high with over 90 percent for ages 3 and 4."

"Underage" (under-age 5) children enrolled in the first standard is declining. In 2024, in the first standard, 13.4 percent of children are underage," it reads.

It also said that of Age 6-14, overall enrolment in school for the age group remains very high at 99.4 percent.

The survey further reveals that there were improvements in basic reading and arithmetic seen in all grades, especially in early grades.

"Learning gains in most cases higher for children enrolled in government schools as compared to private schools," it reads. KNO

62 BDO posts...

Srinagar is the only place where no posts are lying vacant, reveals a document available with KNO. In Anantnag and Bandipora, seven BDO positions are lying vacant respectively, it reads.

A total of 11 administrative positions are lying vacant in Baramulla while 6 are unfilled in Budgam district.

According to the document, four key positions each are lying vacant in Pulwama and Kulgam districts while five are vacant in Shopian. In Ganderbal, one key post of BDO is also lying vacant.

Meanwhile, Minister for Agriculture Production and Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Departments, Javed Ahmad Dar while speaking to KNO, said that the vacant posts will be filled soon.

"In the next 10-15 days, the issue related to the vacant posts of BDOs will be resolved," he said. KNO

DGP reviews operational...

operational preparedness in the area.

As per a statement issued to the news agency, the primary objective of the visit was to assess the security arrangements and operational readiness of the various security forces deployed across the region.

The DGP visited multiple forward operating bases (FOBs), ensuring the forces were adequately prepared and equipped to handle any potential security challenges.

This visit was part of the ongoing efforts to strengthen security measures in view of the strategic importance of the area. A detailed briefing was made to the DGP regarding the existing security setup, challenges being faced and countermeasures.

The DGP also interacted with personnel from all the security forces. He stressed on total operation coordination and efficient resource utilization.

The DGP also took the opportunity to engage with Special Operations Group personnel, discussing strategies and the way forward. KNO

DySP, firefighter...

He said the injured individuals are currently undergoing treatment and the fire was later brought under control.

An official from the Fire and Emergency Services (F&ES) Department told the news agency that a fire broke out in a double-storey government residential building, which houses two quarter sets (29 and 30).

He said fire tenders rushed to the scene shortly after the incident was reported, and an operation was launched to douse the flames.

He said in the incident Hilal Ahmad, a DSP of the ACB residing in one of the quarters, sustained burn injuries and was shifted to a hospital before the arrival of the Fire and Emergency Services.

"During the firefighting operation, Basit, a firefighter, was also injured. Both are now receiving medical attention, and their condition is stable," he said.

Meanwhile, the official added that the fire caused extensive damage to the first floor of Quarter 29, destroying the roofing, ceiling, wooden paneling, furniture, bedding, clothing, household goods, and other items.

"The ground floor of the same quarter sustained partial damage to its wooden paneling and staircase. Also, Quarter 30, suffered damage, with the roof partially affected and indirect damage caused by water," he said, adding that a Maruti Brezza car bearing registration number UK08AN 0500, parked nearby, was partially damaged in the incident.

Meanwhile, the cause and circumstances of the fire are under investigation. KNO



MD KPDCL reviews power scenario, progress on implementation of RDSS works and PM Surya Ghar-Muft Bijli Yojna

Directed officers to ensure all applications received are pursued and installations completed by end of March 2024

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 28:- In order to review power scenario and implementation of various Centrally Sponsored Schemes MD KPDCL Mehmooh Ahmed Shah today visited district Budgam and chaired a meeting of Engineers of Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) here.

Besides Superintending Engineer Shurjeel Ghani Lala the meeting was attended by Executive Engineer Ishtyaq Ahmed and other Engineers/Officers of KPDCL.

At the outset, MD KPDCL took a firsthand appraisal of the power scenario and directed the officers to ensure smooth power supply to all the major towns and far flung areas.

The MD was apprised about the damages of the transformers and replace-



ments made thereof. The officers were directed to ensure swift restoration of power in case of inclement weather and replacement of damaged transformers as per the set timelines.

The MD was informed about the IEC/

awareness camps organised at various locations across the district for promotion of PM Surya Ghar-Muft Bijli Yojana and the targets set. The chair was also informed about the progress made in this regard. A total of 3275 applications have

been received in the district with installation of 45 units till date.

The MD directed the officers to ensure that all the applications received be pursued and installations completed by the end of March 2024 with daily progress reported and weekly reviews. He further directed for handholding of the applicants in completing the installations and continuing the campaign for maximum benefits to the consumers of the district. During the visit, MD also inspected Transformer repair workshop, various receiving stations, work sites and Budgam Grid Station. The MD took an on-spot review of the ongoing RDSS distribution works besides other works to ensure reliable power supply to the district. On-spot instructions were given for speedy execution of the RDSS and other works to ensure maximum benefits to the consumers of the district.

Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards in India announced

Lehangir Malik



SRINAGAR, Jan 28: The International Education group at Cambridge University Press & Assessment (Cambridge) is delighted to announce the winners of the Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards in India. The awards celebrate the outstanding academic achievements of secondary school learners in India in the November 2023, March and June 2024 Cambridge examination series.

In total 228 students in India received awards for exceptional performance in Cambridge IGCSE™ and International AS & A Level examinations across a wide range of subjects. The winners, felicitated at a ceremony in Mumbai, include 82 students who won 'Top in the World' awards for achieving the highest mark in the world in a single subject, and 110 students who attained the highest mark in India in a single subject. The awards show that students in India are performing particularly well in Mathematics followed by English.

In India, 88 percent of the students who have excelled in the 'Top in World' Award category are from Mathematics and English disciplines, with Mathematics alone accounting for 80 percent. The Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards programme celebrates the success of students taking examinations awarded by Cambridge International Education in over 40 countries around the world. Cambridge qualifications prepare and equip learners with the skills they need to thrive at university and beyond.

The world's best higher education institutions recognise Cambridge qualifications and value the critical thinking skills, independent research abilities and deep subject knowledge that Cambridge learners bring to university. Vinay Sharma, Sr VP, Cambridge International Education South Asia, said: 'Congratulations to our learners who have achieved remarkable success. Cambridge learners are at the heart of everything we do. Every element of a Cambridge education – the curriculum, teaching and learning, resources and assessment – is carefully designed to help learners reach their potential and thrive in life. We also sincerely thank parents and educators for their unwavering support towards our learners.'

The awards also celebrate the achievements of those learners who have been recognised for 'High Achievement', based on outstanding performance in subjects which are not yet so widely taken in India, and learners who have achieved the highest cumulative marks across a number of subjects. The winning students outperformed thousands of candidates worldwide who sat Cambridge examinations.

Cambridge has over 160 years' experience in delivering international exams and provides education to nearly one million students every year. Cambridge International Education is the awarding body of the International Education group at Cambridge University Press & Assessment, part of the University of Cambridge. Our International Education group works with schools worldwide to build an education that shapes knowledge, understanding and skills. Together, we give learners the confidence they need to thrive and make a positive impact in a changing world.

KU Holds Social Service Camp for Hazratbal Devotees

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, January 28, ANB: The University of Kashmir (KU) organized a special social service camp at its Sir Syed Gate to facilitate devotees visiting the Hazratbal shrine on the eve of Shab-i-Mehraj.

The camp, managed by the University's Proctorial Wing, provided refreshments to the large number of devotees who gathered for the sacred occasion.

Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, personally served refreshments to the devotees and supervised the arrangements at the camp.

"It is a part of our social responsibility," Prof. Khan said while appreciating the efforts of the Proctorial Wing in ensuring smooth arrangements and dedicated service to the devotees.

"Such initiatives help strengthen our connection with the local community and reflect the University's commitment to serving society beyond academics," she further remarked.

Prof. Khan also emphasized the need to continue such community-oriented initiatives, adding that the University looks forward to organizing more such camps in the future as a gesture of support and engagement.

Chief Proctor KU, Prof. Imtiyaz Khan and Special Secretary to the VC KU, Dr. Ishfaq Zarri were also present on the occasion.

The devotees expressed their gratitude and appreciated the thoughtful arrangements made by the University and also acknowledged the hospitality extended to them. (ANB)

Srinagar Police Busts Inter-State Drug Trafficking Module arrests 02 Narcotic dealers from Delhi & UP

HT News Network

Srinagar January 28 (KNS): Srinagar Police has dismantled a major inter-state drug trafficking network while investigating Case FIR No. 136/2024 under sections 8/22-29 NDPS Act. This breakthrough underscores the Police department's commitment in combating the drug menace.

Based on evidence from the investigation, including bank transactions and communication records, two key drug suppliers Raju Gupta from Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, and Mohammad Abrar from Bhajanpura, Delhi were identified as major sources of narcotics supplied to local drug peddlers.

A Srinagar police team led by SI Amandeep Singh, of Police Post Noorabagh, conducted extensive operations in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi over 10 days with the assistance of local police. Raju Gupta was apprehended on 23-01-2025 in Bareilly, and



Mohammad Abrar was arrested on 24-01-2025 in Bhajanpura. Both suspects were presented before the respective courts, transit remands were obtained, and they are now in police custody.

Moreover, a suspicious courier parcel linked to the accused has been identified in Loni, Ghaziabad, and steps are being taken to retrieve it with court approval. The financial transactions and properties of the accused are under scrutiny for potential attachment under the NDPS Act. (KNS)

This case originated on 08-11-2024 during routine police naka checking at Tarbal Chowk, Srinagar. A motorcycle was intercepted, leading to the arrest of 03 drug peddlers Aijaz Ahmad Ganie (Athwajan Pantha Chowk), Owais Ahmad Gojri (Brari Pora), and Mir Roman (Ali Masjid Eidgah). Police seized 140 bottles of Codeine Phosphate, 738,530 in suspected drug proceeds, 03 mobile phones, and a drone camera allegedly used to monitor drug buyers.

The backward linkage that emerged during investigation of this case led police to the aforementioned 02 drug dealers from Delhi & UP.

Srinagar Police remains committed to dismantling drug networks and ensuring the safety of society and would go the last mile to bring to justice everyone involved in peddling drugs, be he or she located in any part of the world. Investigations are ongoing, with more arrests and seizures expected in the coming days. (KNS)

Shiksha Manch Kashmir and Ladakh UT Online Mushaira Concludes Successfully.

Abid Rasool Alaie

January 26, 2025 – Shiksha Manch, an international literary and educational unit of Kashmir and Ladakh UT, organized an online poetry symposium on Sunday, January 26, 2025. Teacher poets from both Union Territories participated, recited their poetry in multiple languages, including Urdu, Kashmiri, Hindi, and English.

The event was presided over by Mr. Naresh Naz, Patron of Shiksha Manch Kashmir Ladakh UT, while Dr. Shabnam Showkat, President of SMKL, also graced the occasion. The Mushaira was hosted by Dr. Reyaz Rabbani Kashmiri Vice President (SMKL), Syed Rubeena General Secretary (JKSM) presenting the welcome address and vote of thanks.

The distinguished Chief Guest was Dr. Sameena Wani, an eminent scholar, author, poet, and Principal of

a Higher Secondary School. Mr. Sachin Kumar, a teacher and poet from Haryana, was the Special Guest. The participating teacher-poets included:

- Dr. Sameena Wani (Chief Guest)
- Dr. Reyaz Rabbani Kashmiri (Vice President, SMKL)
- Syed Rubeena (General Secretary, SMKL)
- Sachin Kumar
- Jahangir Ayaz Hali
- Azhar Nazir
- Tariq Munawar
- Mufti Sheeba
- Raashid Manzoor

Each poet presented their work with exceptional fluency, artistic eloquence, and rhythmic mastery, making the session highly engaging.

The Chief Guest, Dr. Sameena Wani, lauded the poets for their profound expressions and unique styles. She also encouraged them to continue their literary journey. Dr. Reyaz Rabbani Kashmiri emphasized the need to organize such events both online and offline to nurture young poetic talents within the Department of Education, ensuring that aspiring writers and poets have a platform to showcase their artistry.

The program concluded successfully, with Syed Rubeena extending gratitude to all participants, guests and poets acknowledging their valuable contributions to the event.

शिक्षा मंच कश्मीर लद्दाख

रविवार गोष्ठी
26 जनवरी 2025
समय: शाम 7:30 बजे



EDITORIAL

Clear the air
about operation
of Z-Morh tunnel

On January 13 this year Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Z-Morh tunnel near Sonamarg amid much fanfare. Following the inauguration of the tunnel it was expected that there would be round the year connectivity to Sonamarg. Following this development it was expected that the tourists would be able to visit this beautiful place round the year and the vagaries of the weather would not deter them in this regard.

Two weeks on there is confusion since there are reports that the Srinagar-Sonamarg road is closed for vehicular traffic. The same gets substantiated in the morning when the information is shared by the news readers of the All India Radio's Srinagar station during the news bulletin broadcast early in the morning. If the information shared through the news bulletins is correct then what is the fun of throwing open the Z-Morh tunnel. Since the tunnel was inaugurated by no less than the Prime Minister the matter needs to be investigated so that the truth comes out.

The people have a right to know the correct situation on this front and if the information that the road is closed is not correct then the people who have dished out the same needs to be accounted for the same. It is also important since the Sonamarg area is one of the important tourist places of Kashmir and people wish to visit the same irrespective of the time of the year. Once wrong information is given to the tourists how can we expect them to visit this tourist place during the months of winter.

As Sonamarg has a great potential for adventure sports more so the winter adventure sports it is important to connect this place with the rest of the world throughout the year. In this regard the operation of Z-Morh tunnel holds key and this tunnel needs to be open round the year. All the obstacles need to be removed in this regard and once this is done then the people would heave a sigh of relief.

Since the tourism players have been pitching for round the year connectivity for Srinagar it is important that all the necessary steps are taken in this regard. The whole Sonamarg area and the adjacent ones will see a revolution on the infrastructure front and the same should be in tune with the environment and ecology of the area. As such it is important to clear the doubts about the operation of the Z-Morh tunnel.

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather: A Visionary Scholar and Selfless Advocate for Change



ROUF YATOO

To write about a person requires true emotions flowing straight from the heart, the steadfast support of pen and paper. It is not just about narrating their story; it demands delving into their life, understanding their essence, and blending one's own thoughts and feelings to create a vivid tapestry of their journey. This process takes time and reflection, as pen and paper must come to an agreement with one's emotions before the ink can truly weave. After much contemplation, the story of a remarkable individual has taken shape—a story of inspiration, sacrifice, and dedication.

The person I am about to present to you is a visionary, a beacon of hope and compassion, hailing from Narvaw, Baramulla. His name is Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather, a distinguished Ph.D. scholar, affectionately known as Narvaw Walla. What sets him apart is his resolute commitment to uplifting young minds whose creativity has been shrouded in darkness. Driven by a profound sense of purpose, Dr. Rather has vowed to dedicate his life selflessly, without any monetary pursuits, to uncover and nurture hidden talents. Through his efforts, he has created a platform of love, respect, and encouragement for the youth to bloom and shine.

But his contributions do

not stop there. Dr. Rather has consistently extended a helping hand to the poor and needy, alleviating their struggles during difficult times. Whether through social work or raising awareness about pressing societal issues, he has been a tireless advocate for positive change. For years, he has been a guiding light, inspiring others through his actions and reminding us all of the transformative power of selflessness and compassion.

From Narvawok to Narvaw Walla

It carries a profound and heartfelt story, as he has often shared, most recently during an interview with Kashmir Headlines News. Recalling his childhood, he spoke about the joy of visiting his nanihaal (maternal home), where he was affectionately called "Narvawok" by the elders and loved ones around him. The name became a symbol of warmth, belonging, and nostalgia for him.

Years later, during a moment of deep introspection, he found himself drawn back to those cherished memories. It was then that inspiration struck, and he decided to preserve those emotions through the art of storytelling. Translating the essence of those moments into Urdu, he titled it Narvaw Walla.

Academic Journey of Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather (Narvaw Walla)

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather, also known as Narvaw Walla, was born in the small village of Malpora Narvaw in Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir, India. He completed his early education in

this serene region. His academic pursuits were vast, earning him Postgraduate degrees in English Literature, History, and Sociology, as well as an M.Phil. in English Literature and a B.Ed. He later went on to achieve a Ph.D. in English Literature. His research focus centers on the Partition of India and its social impact on women, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which these events affected women's lives.

Dr. Rather's research interests also extend to the region of Kashmir and the ongoing issue of violence against women. In addition to his scholarly work, he founded the Narvaw Literary Society, a platform dedicated to fostering Kashmiri literature, offering poets and scholars an opportunity to share their work and ideas. He has also been associated with the Partition Museum in Amritsar, India, contributing to the exploration and preservation of the region's history.

Dr. Rather is not only a dedicated academic but also a writer. In a personal conversation, I learned that he has written hundreds of pages on various topics and plans to publish his work in book format in the future. His interests are wide-ranging, finding solace in History, Literature, Oral History, Art, and Culture. Additionally, he is an accomplished filmmaker.

Challenges Faced by Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather's journey to success reflects his unwavering dedication and hard work. It took years to build the legacy and goodwill of the Narvaw

Literary Society, a platform now central to Kashmiri literature. In the early years, he faced limited support and harsh criticism. Despite these challenges, he stayed true to his mission, embodying the words of Denis Waitley: "The price of success is to bear the criticism of envy."

Instead of succumbing to negativity, he used these obstacles to fuel his passion. His commitment to the society's vision led to its success today. Dr. Rather's perseverance is a powerful reminder that with dedication and resilience, even the toughest challenges can be overcome.

Why Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather Chose This Field

In a recent interview, Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather (Narvaw Walla) reflected on the formative moment that set him on his academic path. He recalled an annual school event where one of his teachers assigned him the topic "Surkhiyan" (News). Dr. Rather believes that this was the seed his teacher unknowingly planted in his mind, a seed that would later grow into a passion.

Although he was unaware of its significance at the time, he now recognizes how that early experience shaped his academic journey. Later, when Dr. Rather had the opportunity to document the lives of emigrants from neighboring countries, he made a decisive choice to raise awareness about their stories. This experience not only deepened his sense of responsibility but also fueled his commitment to the field, further solidifying his desire to explore the complexities of history, culture, and social impact through academic research.

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather's Future Goals

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather humbly refers to himself as a student of literature, with a deep commitment to guiding and inspiring the next generation of literature students. He believes in the transformative power of books and has firmly dedicated himself to supporting and nurturing those who share his passion for literature. For him, books provide not just knowledge, but refuge, a sanctuary where one can always find solace and wisdom.

To express his dedication, I would like to share a couplet:

"You have an urge to decorate my room,
There is nothing in my room but books."

This couplet reflects Dr. Rather's profound connection with literature. For him, books are the true treasures that adorn his life, much more valuable than any material possession. His future goals center around creating an environment where students can find the same refuge in literature that he has.

Other Achievements of Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather has a deep interest in history, particularly in documenting and exploring archaeological sites. He has dedicated much of his work to uncovering these historical treasures and sharing them with the public. His documentaries provide a rich understanding of our past, offering insights into the cultures and civilizations that shaped our history.

These works not only edu-

cate but also help preserve our heritage, ensuring that the stories of our ancestors are remembered and appreciated by future generations. Dr. Rather's passion for history drives him to continue exploring and sharing these important narratives.

Wishes of Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Rather hopes that, after his departure from this world, his legacy will live on through the dedication and love he has offered to society. He desires to be remembered for the positive impact he made and the contributions he made toward the betterment of his community. Above all, Dr. Rather humbly credits all his achievements to the Almighty, recognizing that his success is ultimately a blessing and grace from God. His deep sense of gratitude and devotion reflects his belief that all accomplishments are a gift from a higher power. During the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic, he emerged as a beacon of hope and creativity, organizing a myriad of enriching activities. From hosting talk shows and insightful discussions to arranging painting and stone art competitions, his efforts fostered a spirit of resilience and togetherness. Through roadshows, awareness campaigns, and career guidance programs featuring esteemed IAS and KAS officers, he inspired many to dream beyond their circumstances. With an unwavering vision, he aspires to expand these endeavors on a grander scale, creating platforms for empowerment, learning, and transformation in the near future.

Redefining Heart Care With Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery

DR. AKHIL KUMAR RUSTAGI

Heart disease is a leading cause of death in India, with cases rising due to factors like sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy diets, and high stress. However, advancements in medical technology, such as Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery (MICS), are transforming the way cardiac conditions are treated, offering safer procedures with faster recovery and better outcomes.

What is Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery

MICS involves performing complex heart procedures through small incisions, typically made between the ribs, rather

than the large chest incisions required in traditional open-heart surgery. This advanced technique utilizes high-definition cameras and specialized surgical tools, allowing surgeons to operate with enhanced precision while minimizing trauma to the patient's body. Common procedures performed using MICS include coronary artery bypass grafting, valve repair or replacement, and corrections of congenital heart defects.

Benefits of MICS

One of the most significant advantages of MICS is its impact on recovery. Smaller incisions mean less pain and blood loss, enabling patients to heal faster. Unlike traditional open-heart

surgery, where recovery can take weeks or months, MICS patients often resume their daily lives within a much shorter time.

The smaller incisions used in MICS result in fewer post-operative complications, such as infections. This is particularly beneficial for patients with conditions like diabetes or obesity, where the risk of infection is higher.

With minimal scarring, MICS offers an additional benefit for patients concerned about the cosmetic effects of surgery, making it an appealing option for younger individuals and those seeking less visible surgical marks.

Advanced Technology in MICS Minimally Invasive Cardiac

Surgery relies on cutting-edge techniques, such as thoracoscopic surgery, where a tiny camera provides a clear view of the heart to guide the surgeon. In some cases, robotic-assisted surgery is employed, enhancing precision and enabling surgeons to perform delicate procedures through even smaller incisions.

These innovations have expanded the scope of cardiac care, offering new hope to patients who might not have been candidates for traditional surgery.

The Importance of Timely Diagnosis and Specialist Care

While MICS offers numerous benefits, its success depends on proper patient selection

and early diagnosis. Consulting with an experienced cardiac surgeon is crucial for determining the most appropriate treatment plan and ensuring the best outcomes. MICS represents a groundbreaking leap forward in the treatment of heart disease. By combining state-of-the-art technology with a patient-centered approach, it offers a safer, less invasive path to recovery. As awareness of MICS grows, more patients in India and across the globe can benefit from this revolutionary technique, paving the way for a healthier future.

Dr. Akhil Kumar Rustagi is Director & Head of Department - Cardiothoracic & Vascular Surgery, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida

Swamitva Yojana is changing the story of rural India

DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

The need for ownership India has lacked rural land survey and settlement for decades. Many states lacked maps and documentation of village abadi areas. Due to the absence of official records, property owners in these areas were unable to upgrade their homes or use their property as a financial asset for loans and other financial assistance, making it difficult for them to access institutional credit. The lack of such documentation hindered the economic development of rural India for over 70 years. It became clear that a contemporary solution was needed in light of the importance of legally recognized property records for economic empowerment. The ownership

scheme was developed to use state-of-the-art drone technology for surveying and mapping village abadi areas. PM ownership soon proved to be a turning point in this direction.

A central sector initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is called SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Rural Areas). It was introduced across the country on April 24, 2021, National Panchayati Raj Day, after the successful completion of the pilot phase (2020-2021) of the program in nine states. The program uses drone technology to map pieces of land and provide a "record of rights" to village household owners. Legal ownership cards, also known as property cards or title deeds, are then issued to property

owners, a reformative step towards establishing clear ownership of property in rural abadi (abadi) areas.

A memorandum of understanding between the Survey of India and the respective state governments is the first step in the multi-step property card creation process provided by the framework for implementing the Swamitva Yojana. The scheme uses technology for topographic mapping at various scales, such as satellite imagery, unmanned aerial vehicles or drone platforms, and aerial photography drones, to prepare a national topographic database at all scales. After the completion of the MoU, a continuously operating reference system is established. A virtual base station that provides long-range, highly accurate network

Key Highlights of the SVAMITVA Scheme

- India lacked proper rural land surveys and documentation for decades, hindering property owners in accessing financial resources and institutional credit.
- Launched on April 24, 2021, by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj after a successful pilot phase (2020-2021) in nine states.
- Employs drone technology for high-resolution mapping of rural land parcels.
- A memorandum of understanding (MoU) is signed between the Survey of India and state governments.
- Empowers rural households to use property as collateral for loans and financial assistance.

RTK (Real-Time Kinematic) corrections is provided by this network of reference stations. The next step is to determine which villages will be surveyed and to inform the public about the property mapping process. Each rural property is marked with limestone (chunna), which delineates the abadi kshetra (inhab-

ited area) of the village. This is the conclusion of the investigation/objective process, also known as conflict/dispute resolution. Then the Sampatti Patra, or final property cards/title deeds, are prepared. You can buy these cards.

The benefits of this program include an inclusive society. The socio-econom-

ic status of vulnerable populations in villages is positively correlated with their access to property rights. The Swamitva scheme attempts to make this possible. The number of land-conflict cases is very high due to the lack of a clearly defined boundary of the population. The Swamitva scheme aims to address the underlying causes of conflicts at the local level. Better gram panchayat development plans that use high-resolution digital maps lead to improvements in roads, schools, community health facilities, rivers, streetlights, and other infrastructure. Through more accessible resources and effective financial management. The main goal is to help people monetize their assets as collateral. Additionally, simplifying property tax in

states where it is imposed encourages investment and makes it easier to do business, thereby boosting India's economic growth.

By transforming long-standing issues related to land ownership into opportunities for growth and empowerment, the SVAMITVA scheme is changing the story of rural India. The scheme, which includes digital property cards and sophisticated drone surveys, is about possibilities and dreams rather than just boundaries and maps. SVAMITVA has become more than just a government program as villages embrace this change; it is a driving force behind increased freedom, smarter planning, and a more united, powerful rural India. Rural India is changing as a result of the SVAMITVA scheme.

Long-standing difficulties related to land ownership are turning into opportunities for growth and self-determination. Innovation and inclusiveness are being added to remove barriers, resolve disputes, and turn property into a powerful tool for economic advancement. Digital property cards and sophisticated drone surveys are two examples of how the scheme goes beyond simple boundaries and maps. It is full of opportunities and aspirations. Villages are embracing this change, and SVAMITVA is moving beyond just a government program. Self-reliance, better planning, and a more cohesive rural India are all gaining momentum through this.

Poet, freelance journalist and columnist, radio and TV panelist,

Why Does The World Misunderstand The Pheran?

MAHOOR HAYA SHAH

Not of the fabric, not the wool, not the thread—but the soul of it. They dragged it from the dusty alleys of downtown Srinagar, from its smoky kangris and the whispers of grandmothers by the fire, into boutiques with names like 'Artisanal Kashmir' and 'Rustic Reverie'. Suddenly, this winter armour of the valley, this shapeless, timeless robe of resilience, had price tags and runway struts, slapped with labels that read 'Bohemian chic' or 'Ethnic elegance.' And it burned. Like the ember hidden in a kangri basket—it burned.

The Pheran was never meant to be glamorous. It wasn't meant for billboards or Instagram hashtags. It was meant for survival. It's what you wore when the snow suffocated the world outside. When the mountains turned white, and the air cut like knives, the Pheran was what saved you. It carried the smell of home: smoke from wood fires, the sharp musk of almond oil, and the faint tang of survival. But now? Now it reeks of appropriation.

I remember my grandmother's Pheran. It hung off her small, hunched frame like a second skin. The cuffs were frayed, the fabric patched in places where time had gnawed at it. She'd sit by the window, cradling her kangri like it was a living thing, the fabric patched in places where time had gnawed at it. She'd sit by the window, cradling her kangri like it was a living thing, the fabric patched in places where time had gnawed at it. She'd sit by the window, cradling her kangri like it was a living thing, the fabric patched in places where time had gnawed at it.

But then came the outsiders with their cameras and notebooks. Tourists called it "exotic." Designers called it "versatile." Influencers called it "#SustainableFashion." They stripped it of its quiet dignity, stuffed it with sequins and embroidery, and called it art. They forgot—or perhaps never knew—that the Pheran wasn't just a piece of clothing. It was a rebellion. A refusal to freeze, to falter, to disappear under the weight of snow and time.

The Pheran wasn't just a garment—it was a way of life. It was what you pulled over your shivering shoulders as you prayed for the snow to stop. It was what you wore to funerals, to weddings, to the fields, and to the markets. It was what the poets wrote about and what the labourers worked in. It was both the armour of the Kashmiri man and the sanctuary of the Kashmiri woman, a home within a home, stitched with secrets and strength.

But now, the Pheran stands in glass display cases, sold to those who will never understand

its weight. It's paraded in places where it doesn't belong, worn by those who will never feel the sting of Kashmiri winter. It has been renamed, rebranded, and resold—but what they sell isn't the Pheran. It's a hollow shell of what it once was.

I saw a fashion show once, online. The models walked down the runway in their bastardized versions of the Pheran—tailored at the waist, bedazzled with rhinestones, worn over skinny jeans and stilettos. And the crowd clapped. They clapped for something they didn't understand. I sat there, staring at the screen, thinking of the old man in Sopore who wore his faded, soot-streaked Pheran as he sold walnuts on the roadside. I thought of the young girl in Anantnag who hid her kangri beneath hers, warming her hands as she walked to school. I thought of the artisans in Rainawari, their hands raw from spinning wool in the dead of winter, who crafted these robes not as fashion statements but as shields.

To wear a Pheran is to carry the history of a valley that has known too much pain and too little peace. It's to wrap yourself in the memories of those who fought to keep their culture alive in a world that seems determined to erase it. It's to wear Kashmir.

The Pheran isn't just fabric; it's a battlefield. It carries the whispers of revolution, the prayers of survival, the songs of a land caught between heaven and hell. It is as much a casualty of war as the houses burnt to ash or the orchards razed to the ground.

And yet, despite it all, the Pheran survives. It endures. Because that's what it was always meant to do—endure. It's a quiet rebellion against the cold, against the theft of culture, against forgetting.

So if you must wear it, wear it with respect. Wear it with the knowledge that it doesn't belong to you. Wear it knowing that it carries stories too heavy for your shoulders. And if you can't do that? Leave it alone. Let it stay in the valley, where it belongs, hanging off the shoulders of people who carry the weight of history in every thread.

The Pheran doesn't need sequins. It doesn't need a rebranding campaign. What it needs is what it has always needed: to be left alone, to keep its people warm, and to hold its stories close, far away from the spotlight.

Because the Pheran isn't a trend. It's a testament. A reminder that, in the coldest of winters, Kashmir still finds a way to survive.

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THE LIFELINE OF LJHP: EXPLORING THE BALANCING RESERVOIR OF BARAMULLA



Sheikh Nazir

The Lower Jhelum Hydel Power Project (LJHP) has a distinction. It is the last power project that PDC owns on the Jhelum. Beyond this, it is a roaring Jhelum that NHPC at Uri-I and Uri-II, shortly before it gushes across the LoC. Even since the project was commissioned in 1978, LJHP has stopped generations only once for a prolonged duration. That was in April 2001 when its forebay was damaged and within a year it was back to work. There have been some minor snags that disrupted generation; the last one was in May 2011 when two of the three units stopped working for a few days. Conceived in late sixties, the LJHP was taken up for implementation in 1970. With an installed capacity of 105 MW, its three units of 35 MW each are currently generating only 90 MW. The first one was commissioned in February 1979 and the last unit in November 1979. While the locals managed most of the civil works, mostly by the Tirath Ram Ahuja Construction Company and Continental Construction Projects Ltd, the electro-magnetic part of the project was managed by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL). Housed on Jhelum's gorgeous banks, the powerhouse is situated in between lush green mountains. The journey towards the power house starts at the right side of river Jhelum at Gantamulla where from the 9-km water conductor takes off. The 7700 Cusecs canal snakes around the foothills till it reaches the barrage. Its length is 371 feet and has the capacity of holding 80000 cusecs of flood discharge. Inside it is a spillway, a fish pan and under knives which function as garbage cutters. It has 10 bays of 13 meters each. A silt ejector is located



around 2.5 km away. A few kilometres ahead is the balancing reservoir used for maintaining the requisite level of discharge. It is an earthenware water reservoir 1036 meters long with an average width of 183 meters. The canal then travels three more kilometres to reach the forebay where from the penstocks take off. The project has a head of 202.72 meters. It has three penstocks feeding three units. Prior to the fall of water, part of the discharge - not more than 10 cusecs, is diverted for irrigation purposes to Bimyar village and many other surrounding areas. It has revolutionized the mountain belt that lacked irrigation facilities. The project employs scores of locals who manage the canal and take care of the asset that is so crucial to the surging energy requirements of the state. Currently it has 312 individuals on its rolls. The Balancing Reservoir of LJHP (Lower Jhelum Hydroelectric Project) in Baramulla is a critical infrastructure component that plays a key role in the generation of hydroelectric power for the valley. This reservoir is an essential part of the power generation process, ensuring a steady and controlled supply of water to the LJHP power plant, which contributes significantly to the local energy grid. The water for the Balancing Reservoir is sourced from

the Jhelum River at Gantamulla Colony. The water is transported through a meticulously engineered canal that spans approximately 7 to 9 kilometers (7kms. upto Reservoir and 9 Kms. upto power plant) in length. The canal features both underground and open sections, strategically designed to optimize efficiency and durability. Some segments of the canal are constructed underground to protect it from potential damage caused by large stones and debris, which could lead to blockages or structural failures. Other parts of the canal remain open, allowing visitors and passersby to observe the flow of water. These sections have become a popular attraction, drawing numerous people from nearby and distant areas, especially in the evening when the ambiance is serene and picturesque. The canal not only serves a functional purpose but also acts as an important water management system to regulate the flow and maintain the ecosystem balance in the surrounding areas. Seasonal changes, such as heavy rainfall or dry spells, are effectively managed through this canal to ensure an uninterrupted water supply to the reservoir. These dimensions provide a substantial capacity to store and manage water, ensuring that fluctuations in

river flow do not impact the power generation process. The reservoir's storage capacity helps mitigate the impact of seasonal variations in water levels and provides a buffer to maintain optimal power generation conditions. The primary function of the Balancing Reservoir is to supply water to the LJHP power project, which consists of three turbines. Each turbine has a capacity of 35 megawatts (MW), collectively contributing to a total power generation capacity of 105 MW. This power plant plays a crucial role in meeting the energy demands of the region, supporting both residential and industrial needs. The consistent water flow from the reservoir ensures that the turbines operate efficiently, minimizing power outages and fluctuations. Additionally, the plant contributes to the reduction of reliance on non-renewable energy sources, promoting sustainable development in the region. The LJHP Balancing Reservoir not only supports power generation but also offers several environmental and economic benefits. The reservoir aids in flood control by temporarily holding excess water during peak flows, preventing downstream flooding and soil erosion. Moreover, the regulated water release supports agricultural activities in the area by ensuring

a steady water supply for irrigation purposes. Economically, the hydroelectric power generated from the LJHP project contributes to the region's development by providing an affordable and reliable energy source. It reduces dependency on fossil fuels, thereby decreasing the carbon footprint and promoting eco-friendly energy solutions. Additionally, during the winter months, the reservoir becomes a temporary habitat for various migratory bird species. These birds travel from colder regions to the relatively milder climate of Baramulla, making the reservoir an important site for bird watchers and nature enthusiasts. The presence of these birds enhances the ecological value of the reservoir and contributes to the local biodiversity. Apart from its technical and economic significance, the canal and the reservoir have become popular spots for locals and tourists alike. The scenic beauty and engineering marvel of the canal system attract visitors who enjoy spending their evenings in the tranquil environment provided by the flowing water and the surrounding natural landscape. The area around the reservoir has become a favored spot for recreational activities such as picnicking, photography, and nature walks. The lush greenery, coupled

with the calming effect of flowing water, provides an ideal escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Despite its numerous benefits, the Balancing Reservoir requires regular maintenance and monitoring to ensure its efficient operation. Silt deposition, debris accumulation, and potential structural wear and tear pose ongoing challenges that need to be addressed through periodic dredging and repairs. The authorities in charge have implemented stringent maintenance protocols to prevent disruptions in water flow and power generation. The Balancing Reservoir of LJHP Baramulla stands as a testament to effective water resource management and hydroelectric engineering. Its well-planned canal system, thoughtful design to prevent damage, and contribution to the power sector make it an invaluable asset. Moreover, its appeal as a local attraction highlights the harmonious blend of functionality and aesthetic appeal, making it a prominent landmark in the valley. Through careful management and ongoing maintenance, the reservoir will continue to play a pivotal role in sustainable energy production and regional development, ensuring a brighter and more energy-efficient future for Baramulla and beyond.

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Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Completes 10 Years: Driving Women-Led Development for a Viksit Bharat



Annpurna Devi

MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

As India marches confidently toward its vision of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047, the transformative impact of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is a testament to how far we have come in our transition from women's development to women-led development. Swami Vivekananda once said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of

women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing." Inspired by this time-less vision, the Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme on January 22, 2015, in Panipat, Haryana. This landmark initiative sought to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in India and ensure that girls and women across the nation have the opportunities, care, and dignity they deserve.

The 2011 Census revealed a deeply concerning Child Sex Ratio of 918, a stark reflection of societal biases and the misuse of diagnostic tools. Through targeted, lifecycle-focused interventions, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao was launched to not only reverse this trend but also lay the foundation for a future where women lead and thrive.

Over the past decade, the

scheme has catalyzed significant progress. According to the Health Management Information System, the national Sex Ratio at Birth has improved from 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24. Institutional deliveries have surged from 61% in 2014-15 to 97.3% in 2023-24, while first-trimester ante-natal care registrations increased from 61% to 80.5%. Gross enrolment ratios for girls at the secondary level rose from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 79.4% in 2021-22. Additionally, the gap in infant mortality rates between male and female newborns has nearly disappeared, reflecting our commitment to equity in survival and care.

Under the visionary leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister, The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao movement has gone beyond improving statistics; it has

redefined the narrative around women's empowerment. Initiatives like the Yashaswini Bike Expedition, a 10,000-km journey by 150 women bikers in October 2023, symbolized the indomitable spirit of India's daughters. The Kanya Shiksha Pravesh Utsav in 2022 re-enrolled nearly 100,786 out-of-school girls, showcasing the power of education in transforming lives. The National Conference on Skilling emphasized the importance of women's active participation in the workforce, bringing us closer to our vision of women-led development.

As we celebrate ten years of this transformative initiative, it is clear that the mission is far from over. If we are to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat, it is imperative to ensure that girls and women remain at the heart of our

nation-building efforts. India cannot develop till her girls and women are able to live out their full potential. This is the time for us to take decisive action. We must strengthen the implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act of 1994, address dropout rates in education, expand skill development programs, and provide targeted interventions at every stage of a girl's life.

For the Financial Year 2023-2024, Female Labour Force Participation in India stood at 41.7%. While this is a significant increase from previous years, it is still below the Labour Force Participation of Men. Noteworthy also, is the fact that Female Labour Force Participation in the Urban areas is lower than Female Labour Force Participation in the Rural areas of

the country. A large number of women in India, are involved in unpaid domestic care work. Our endeavour should be to not only foster an environment for more women to leave the folds of their domestic spheres and take up employment outside the house, but also to create a means to promote care work as a valid career and a profession, so women who are trained in care work, and want to pursue it, can do so while also gaining financial independence and seeing their efforts contribute to the economic growth of the country. According to the World Economic Forum, closing the workforce gender gap could increase global GDP by 20%. For India, this is not just an opportunity—it is a necessity. Women-led development is central to achieving our goal of a trillion-dollar economy and

becoming a developed nation by 2047. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is not just a program; it is a movement that has inspired millions and positioned women at the forefront of India's progress.

Under the visionary leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister, we are witnessing a historic transformation. From women's development to women-led development, the daughters of India are rising as change-makers, entrepreneurs, and leaders. They are transforming into the leaders of their own growth story. Together, let us nurture their dreams and empower their journeys, ensuring that when India completes 100 years of independence, it does so as a nation where every woman plays a central role in shaping its destiny.

Union Minister chairs review meeting on Aspirational District Programme in Baramulla

Inaugurates MRD Registration Center at GMC, Hi-Tech Polygreen House under HADP

HT News Network

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 28: Union Minister of State (MoS) for Union Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Labour and Employment, Shobha Karandlaje, today chaired a meeting at Baramulla to review progress on various indicators of NITI Aayog's Aspirational District Programme (ADP).

The meeting was attended by Member Legislative Assembly Baramulla, Javed Hassan Beig; Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa; officers from the Ministry of MSME, Labour and Employment and other officers from the concerned departments. She was apprised that the district has made remarkable progress in its Delta Ranking, issued by NITI Aayog, moving from the 108th position to 46th out of 112 districts, achieving a composite score of 59.3 as on September 2024.

The Minister was further informed that the education sector in Baram-

ulla has witnessed wholesome progress, with a substantial increase in student enrolment, especially among girls, a significant decrease in the dropout rate, with efforts to improve the quality of education through skill upgradation for teachers, upgrading school infrastructure, and promoting digital learning with the implementation of smart classrooms.

The Union Minister had a comprehensive review of district under Agriculture and Financial Inclusion besides Skill Development and Infrastructure. She expressed her appreciation over the progress achieved by Baramulla administration.

Speaking during the meeting, the Union MoS directed the officers from the Health Department to conduct comprehensive research to identify the underlying causes of infant and maternal mortality in the district. She asked for implementing targeted interventions to ensure further reductions in mortality rates, thereby improving overall healthcare outcomes.



The Union Minister instructed the administration to plan for implementation of food processing units in the region through various government schemes. This will ensure efficient utilisation of locally produced apples and prevent any wastage during transportation over long distances, thereby boosting the local economy and benefiting the farmers.

Shobha Karandlaje asked the officials to accelerate the execution of developmental projects, particularly

those that support MSMEs, employment generation and livelihood enhancement. She reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment to holistic development in Aspirational Districts through data-driven governance and targeted interventions.

During the meeting, Shobha Karandlaje distributed various essential resources including computers, smart boards and other amenities to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and

schools, aimed at enhancing their overall functionality for betterment of the community.

During the visit to Baramulla, Shobha Karandlaje inaugurated a hi-tech polygreenhouse with a total area spanning 500 square meters at Chakloo, which was sanctioned to the local farmer Dr. Mudasar Ali through HADP scheme at an estimated subsidy of 95%.

Later, the Union Minister visited Government Medical College Baramulla, where she inaugurated the Endo-Urological Equipment at the Associated Hospital as part of the Aspirational District Programme. The newly introduced equipment will support advanced urological procedures, enhancing healthcare options for patients in the region.

The Union Minister also inaugurated the newly constructed Medical Registration Department's (MRD) Registration Centre at GMC Baramulla, aimed at streamlining the patient registration process.

During her visit, the Minister inter-

acted with the attendants and sought feedback on the healthcare facilities being provided to the patients.

Meanwhile, Javed Beigh also raised several concerns related to water scarcity and other developmental challenges in the region and sought the intervention of the Union MoS for their timely resolution.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Minga Sherpa, presented a comprehensive overview of the district's performance under 5 key indicators of ADP including Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development besides Infrastructure.

DC Baramulla highlighted significant improvements in health and nutrition, including upgradation of existing facilities and establishment of new health centres, maternal and child healthcare, reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates, reduction in TB cases, and effective implementation of Poshan Abhiyan in combating malnutrition.

Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Visits Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah, also Meets Tableegi Jamaat Ameer.

HT News Network

New Delhi, Jan 28: Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir, Dr. Moulvi Muhammad Umar Farooq, today visited the revered Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya in New Delhi, where he offered Fatiha (prayers) at the shrine of the great Sufi saint. The Mirwaiz was warmly received by the Sajada Nasheen and Incharge of the Dargah, Syed Anis Nizami, and others who extended their warm hospitality.

Later, the Mirwaiz called on the Ameer of the Tableegi Jamaat, Moulana Saad Syed Kandhlavi, at their Markaz in Bengla Wali Masjid. He commended the Tableegi Jamaat for their tireless efforts in promoting dawah (Islamic outreach) and islah (reformation) within the Muslim Ummah. The discussions highlighted the shared mission of strengthening faith and spirituality among Muslims through peaceful propagation of Islamic teachings.

BJP Kashmir Unit Felicitates Newly Elected National Council Members from Kashmir

HT News Network



Srinagar, 28 Jan 2025 - The BJP Kashmir unit felicitated the newly elected National Council Members (NCM) from Jammu and Kashmir - Arif Raja, Mohammad Anwar Khan, and Sunita Raina at the Party Headquarters in Jawahar Nagar, Srinagar.

Senior leaders, workers, and party karyakartas from across the region attended the felicitation ceremony to honor the newly elected NCM members.

Addressing the karyakartas, a senior BJP leader remarked, "The BJP is the only party in the world where every member, from the Party President to the Booth Presidents, is elected through a democratic electoral process."

He further added, "The BJP is also unique in that a booth-level member holds voting rights to elect the party president."

Appreciating the efforts of the workers, karyakartas, and senior leadership, the BJP Media Incharge Kashmir said, "The BJP is growing in Jammu and Kashmir. People are responding and joining hands with the BJP to express their trust in the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji.

The rise in the vote share in the assembly elections is a clear indication of the party's rapid growth in Jammu and Kashmir."

Four-Day Program on Participatory Extension Approaches Begins at SKUAST-Kashmir

DR. AB QAYOOM

Srinagar, Jan. 28: A four-day collaborative program on "Participatory Extension Approaches for Extension Functionaries" commenced today at SKUAST-Kashmir. The event was jointly organized by the Directorate of Extension, SKUAST-Kashmir, and the Extension Education Institute (EEI), Nilokheri, with the aim of equipping extension workers with innovative strategies for sustainable agricultural development.

Inaugurating the program, Honorable Vice Chancellor of SKUAST-Kashmir, Professor Nazir Ahmed Ganai, highlighted the importance of adopting bioeconomy-driven extension strategies and the pivotal role of participatory approaches in achieving sustainable agricultural practices. He emphasized the need to focus on secondary agriculture to ensure long-term benefits for farmers and rural communities. Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Regional Director of EEI Nilokheri, underlined the significance of collaborative efforts in agricultural extension. He stressed the necessity of organizing such programs to foster knowledge sharing and build the capacity of extension functionaries to meet emerging agricultural challenges.

The event was coordinated by

Dr. Ajay Kumar from EEI Nilokheri and Professor Farhanaz Rasool from the Directorate of Extension, SKUAST-Kashmir. Speaking at the inaugural session, Professor Purshottam Singh welcomed the participants and expressed gratitude for their involvement in the program. The opening day concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Rusheeba Manzoor, who acknowledged the contributions of organizers, speakers, and participants in making the event a success. The program, running until January 31, 2025, features interactive workshops, discussions, and hands-on training sessions. These activities are designed to enhance the professional skills of extension workers and encourage the adoption of participatory extension models that prioritize community engagement and localized solutions. The initiative is expected to strengthen the extension services in the region, providing a robust platform for addressing agricultural challenges and promoting sustainable farming practices. Participants from across various districts are attending the program, which aims to bring transformative changes to agricultural extension for the benefit of farmers and rural communities.

Govt grants stipend to foreign medical graduates in J&K

HT News Network

Srinagar January 28 (KNS): In a landmark decision, the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Minister H&ME Sakina Itoo and Secretary H&ME Syed Abdi Rasheed Shah have approved the long pending stipend file for Foreign Medical Graduates (FMGs) interning in Jammu and Kashmir.

This monumental decision underscores the power of perseverance, dedication, and effective leadership, revitalizing faith in governance and paving the way for a brighter future for healthcare interns across the region.

This milestone serves as a testament to the unwavering commitment of FMGs and their supporters, who stood resilient in the face of overwhelming setbacks and disappointments.

Their tireless advocacy and determination have finally yielded results, bringing relief to those who have tirelessly contributed to the healthcare system while awaiting justice.

Special Thanks are extended to the Team of FMG interns (Jan 2024):- Irfan Ashraf,

Tabinda Farooq, Nyanza, Yawar Hamid, Irfan Rashid, Musamat Qadri



and Sareer Ahmad Bhat who have been tirelessly invested in the cause and have bravely weathered the storm together. Their unwavering resilience and dedication, despite overwhelming setbacks and disappointments, have been invaluable in achieving this historic milestone.

Sincere Gratitude is also extended to Tehleel Sathoo for his exceptional Pro-bono services rendered towards the issue alongside guidance, from providing applicable legal precedents, NMC orders, and drafting formal documents / Representations navigating the complex intricacies of the stipend file, played a pivotal role in this achievement.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Seniors:- Dr. Qurat ulaine Bhat, Dr. Arsalan Shabir and Dr. Majid Shafi

Bhat who laid the basic foundation for us to continue working on and fight for. Their selfless efforts and determination paved the way for our success today. Thank you for blazing the trail!

We also express our sincere appreciation to the media outlets, Kashmir News Service (KNS), for their unwavering support in amplifying our plea to the larger public, a mention to the few dedicated officials and clerks at the secretariat who went above and beyond to assist us in our journey to stipend approval. Your willingness to help and provide guidance you was invaluable, these efforts haven't gone unnoticed.

Additionally, we thank the Jammu and Kashmir Medical Student's (Association) (JandK Medical Ass) and the All FMG Association (AFA) for their efforts in spreading awareness about our cause through their verified social media platforms.

A Collective Effort. This victory is a reflection of the unwavering dedication of countless FMGs, students, and doctors who have been steadfast in their efforts for years. Their unity and determination to address this long-standing grievance have brought much-needed relief and justice to the healthcare community.

DPIIT and JKEDI sign MoU to strengthen startup ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir

HT News Network

New Delhi:- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering collaboration, mentorship, and support for startups in the region.

The signing took place during "Jammu Kashmir Connect," a special startup-focused program organized at JKEDI's Baribrahma campus, where startups, incubators, and key-way stakeholders gathered to discuss innovation and growth opportunities. DPIIT and JKEDI formally signed the MoU marking a significant step toward strengthening startup support systems in J&K.

The MoU between DPIIT and JKEDI paves the way for greater branding, outreach, and accessibility to Startup India's ecosystem, fostering mentorship, knowledge exchange, and infrastructure support. It also focuses on market linkages, funding networks, and international expansion opportunities, aligning with India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

During the program, Director



DPIIT and Director JKEDI held one-on-one interactions with all incubators, discussing their challenges, needs, and future plans. The session provided a unique platform for incubators to share insights, suggest improvements, and seek policy-level support for enhancing the startup ecosystem.

During the event, Shri Rajinder Kumar Sharma, JKAS, Director JKEDI highlighted the impact of the JK Startup Policy, launched in March 2024, which has led to over 250 new startup registrations on the DPIIT portal taken the total to 988 in a short span. He also emphasized the sig-

nificant outreach efforts undertaken by JKEDI, stating that during the current financial year, the institute has successfully conducted 601 Entrepreneurship Awareness Programs (EAPs) across Universities, Colleges, Higher Secondary Schools, and IITs in 20 districts of J&K—without incurring any expenses.

The "Jammu Kashmir Connect" program, coupled with the signing of the MoU, marks a major milestone in J&K's startup ecosystem, ensuring that aspiring entrepreneurs receive the mentorship, funding opportunities, and ecosystem support needed to thrive.

Mohd Hussain Wani Honored for Outstanding Contributions to Youth Services and Sports

DR. AB QAYOOM

Kupwara, Jan. 28: Mohd Hussain Wani, a dedicated physical education teacher from the Department of Youth Services and Sports, has emerged as a shining example of excellence and commitment in the education and sports sectors. Currently serving at B/H/S/Supernaghama, Mr. Wani has been instrumental in leading his institution to significant achievements at state-level competitions, earning multiple accolades and bringing pride to the district. In recognition of his tireless efforts and exceptional contributions, Mr. Wani was honored by the District Development Council (DDC) Chairman on Republic Day in Kupwara town. This prestigious award reflects his unwavering dedication to the growth and development of youth through sports, both within and beyond the state. Under his guidance, B/H/S/Supernaghama has seen remarkable progress, with students excelling in various state and inter-state competitions. His efforts have not only elevated the school's status but also highlighted the talent of Kupwara district



on a broader platform. The head of the institution, along with the entire staff of B/H/S/Supernaghama, expressed their immense pride and gratitude for Mr. Wani's accomplishments. His work has brought widespread recognition to the school, district, and the field of youth services and sports. "Mr. Wani's dedication and talent have made us all proud. His contributions are truly remarkable, and we congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition," said the school administration. This honor serves as a testament to Mr. Wani's unwavering passion and commitment to nurturing young talent, making him a true asset to the education and sports sectors in the region.

Steps underway to transform Jammu and Kashmir: Dy CM

Attends Gulistan News Network's Conclave Badalta Jammu & Kashmir

HT News Network

JAMMU, JANUARY 28:- Elaborating the people friendly measures initiated by the present government, Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today said that steps are underway to ensure transformation of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister was speaking at a conclave "Badalta Jammu and Kashmir" organised by Gulistan News Network here.

The conclave was attended by Minister for Health and Education, Sakeena Itoo, Minister for Agriculture and Horticulture, Javid Dar, Minister for

FCS&CA, Satish Sharma, Legislators, DDC members, Intellectuals, Academicians, Media persons and people from different fields.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that ever since the present government has taken over several steps have been taken to ensure Jammu and Kashmir comes up as most developed part of India. "These flagship programmes would ensure that the socio-economic and developmental initiatives get a fillip and people get benefitted", he maintained.

While responding to a query, the Deputy Chief Minister said that we are committed to restoration

of special status to J&K. He said that both Prime Minister and Home Minister have already promised restoration of the statehood and we are looking forward for fulfilment of the promise.

While referring to the initiatives undertaken to streamline the Mining operations, the Deputy Chief Minister said that strict enforcement has been ensured to stop illegal extraction of minerals. He said that mechanism has also been devised for safeguard the ecology of the region while undertaking such activities.

Responding to another query, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the Gov-

ernment would take necessary steps for revitalising the local industry by way of necessary interventions. "We are committed towards revitalising and catalysing the local industrial sector, so that the economy of the region gets requisite boost. This would also go a long way in ensuring creation of jobs to our skilled and non skilled youth", he emphasized.

Referring to increasing the connectivity in rural and far flung areas, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government is actively perusing the provision of 4 lane roads to the Pir Panchal road network so that the travelling time gets reduced and people

Adopt latest technologies for best agriculture produce: Javed Dar to farmers

Says Govt committed towards Agricultural reforming

HT News Network

JAMMU, JANUARY 28: Minister for Agricultural Production, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives, and Election Departments, Javed Ahmad Dar, today said that all efforts are being made for best use of available agricultural land through adoption of the latest technologies.

Speaking at 'Gulistan News Conclave' in Jammu, the Minister emphasised the importance of modernising agriculture and addressing the challenges posed by decreasing land holdings. He outlined that, despite limited land resources, the government



is focused on increasing agricultural productivity by integrating modern techniques and fostering innovation in the sector. He highlighted the significant role of universities in driving reforms over the past three months, contributing towards prosperity of agriculture in the region.

The Minister urged the farmers to adopt latest and modern technologies for best produce in agriculture and allied sectors. He acknowledged the challenges posed by urbanisation, as many people aspire to move to cities for better facilities and exposure for their children. However, he

assured that all central and UT level schemes including Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADD), are being implemented to revolutionise the agriculture sector and enhance livelihoods in rural areas.

Meanwhile, the Minister urged the citizens to maintain trust in the administration, assuring the public that the government, under the leadership of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, remains dedicated to fulfil its promises. He assured that the government would continue its efforts to improve rural livelihoods and agricultural development, meeting the expectations of the general public to the best of its ability.

Army Unveils Monolith To Pay Homage To '71 War Heroes Near Indo-Pak Border In Jammu

HT News Network

JAMMU, Jan 28: The Indian Army on Tuesday unveiled a monolith commemorating the historic victory of its Chenab Brigade in the 1971 war with Pakistan near the Pargwal border along the Line of Control here, a defence spokesman said.

The Chenab Brigade under the aegis of the Jammu-based Tiger Division established and inaugurated the monolith as a testament to the bravery and sacrifice displayed by Indian soldiers in the Battle of Phuklian (Chenab enclave) in Jammu and Kashmir, the spokesman said. Jammu travel guide

He said the aim of



installing the monolith is to educate the border residents, especially the youth, about the heroic victory of the Indian Army and the great valour of its troops.

The commander of Chenab Brigade unveiled the monolith in the presence of ex-servicemen, commandants and officers of Border Security Force (BSF), police personnel,

civil administration representatives and school children from the border villages of Pargwal, the spokesman said.

At the inaugural ceremony, the commander of the Chenab Brigade engaged with civilians and veterans, encouraging them to strengthen military-civil cooperation in facing future challenges and threats.

Maharaja Hari Singh Peace and Harmony Award Conferred on Late Shri Ram Sahai

HT News Network

JAMMU:-The prestigious Maharaja Hari Singh Peace and Harmony Award in the field of business and entrepreneurship was posthumously conferred on Late Shri Ram Sahai Ji, a visionary leader and a towering figure in Jammu's trade and industry community by Gulistan channel. The award was presented by Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha Ji in a ceremony that celebrated Shri Ram Sahai Ji's extraordinary contributions to the region. The award was received on his behalf by his son, Shri Rahul Sahai Ji, Chairman of the Indian Chamber of Commerce Jammu. Late Shri Ram Sahai Ji was a dynamic leader whose efforts left an indelible mark on Jammu's industrial and economic landscape. He served as the President of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry



Jammu many times, and was the founder of several transformative institutions, including the Citizens Cooperative Bank Jammu, the J&K Institute of Public Opinion, and the Tax Payers Association J&K. These establishments stand as enduring symbols of his commitment to

public service and his vision for a progressive and united society.

Among his many landmark achievements was the allotment and construction of the Jammu Chamber of Commerce Bhawan at Bahu Plaza, a monumental step in providing a dedicated hub for trade

and industry. Additionally, Shri Ram Sahai Ji was instrumental in the pioneering initiation of LOC trade between Jammu & Kashmir and POK, fostering economic ties and promoting peace through commerce. Known as the heartbeat of Jammu's trade and industry, his relentless efforts not only supported businesses but also improved the lives of countless individuals, earning him immense respect and admiration.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Rahul Sahai Ji expressed heartfelt gratitude for the honor bestowed on his late father and reaffirmed his commitment to carrying forward his father's vision of growth and harmony. He remarked, "This recognition is a testament to my father's unwavering dedication to the betterment of society. I am humbled to receive this on his behalf and will continue striving to uphold his values and legacy."

JKAACL organises All India Urdu Mushaira to mark 76th R-Day celebration

HT News Network

JAMMU, JANUARY 28: The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages (JKAACL) today organized the prestigious All India Urdu Mushaira here this evening at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu, in the presence of galaxy of writers intellectuals of different languages.

Principal Secretary, Culture and School Education, Suresh Kumar Gupta was the chief guest at the event.

In his address, Suresh Gupta stated that the primary objective of the Mushaira is to celebrate the diversity of India through the universal language of poetry, which serves as a bridge connecting

people from varied backgrounds and regions. He emphasized that poetry is a powerful medium to promote unity, harmony and cultural exchange in a multilingual nation like ours. He also stated that 31 new schemes are being introduced in JKAACL for overall promotion of regional art, culture and languages.

Harvinder Kour, Secretary JKAACL, welcomed the veteran poets, literary luminaries and esteemed guests. In her address, she stated that this event, began in 1960, has become an annual tradition and continues to be a significant platform for promoting Urdu literature and poetry.

This year's Mushaira was organized as part of the 76th Republic Day celebrations, bringing together

renowned poets from across Jammu and Kashmir and other states and Union Territories of the country. She further highlighted the vital role of literary events like this Mushaira in fostering creativity, nurturing fresh ideas and preserving our cultural and linguistic heritage.

The Mushaira featured mesmerizing performances by celebrated poets from across the country including Chander Bhan Khaal (Delhi); Rajesh Reddy (Mumbai); Manish Shukla (Lucknow); Dr. Sunita Raina (Delhi); Mohan Muntazir (Uttarakhand); Monika Dehlvi (Delhi); Amjid Khan Amjid (Dehradun); Deepak Gupta (Faridabad); Asad Mehtab Asad (Mumbai) and Krishen Kumar Toor (Dharamshala).

Local poets also enriched the Mushaira with their captivating verses. Notable participants included Pritpal Singh Beetab (Jammu); Dr. Liaqat Jafri (Jammu); Sohail Siddique (Bhaderwah); Mumtaz Ahmad (Rajouri); Dr. Shafaq Sopori (Srinagar); Gulzar Jaffar (Kupwara); Shabeena Ara (Kulgam); Qazi Akhter (Srinagar) and Dr. Tahir Tanveer. Each poet enthralled the audience with their thought-provoking poetry, blending traditional themes with contemporary insights and reinforcing the timeless charm of Urdu poetry.

As part of the Republic Day celebrations, JKAACL will also host the Dogri Kavi Sammelan at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu, on 30th January 2025.

Fire Devours Joinery Mill in South Kashmir's Kulgam, Massive Losses Reported

Farooq Rather

Kulgam, Jan 28, CNS: A devastating fire broke out in a joinery mill in Chanapora Bhakhan village of South Kashmir's Kulgam district, reducing the entire structure to ashes and causing significant financial losses.

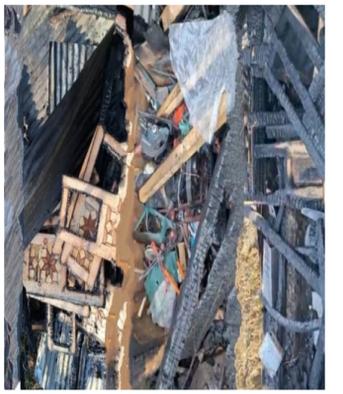
The mill, owned by Shabir Ahmed Najar, son of Ghulam Mohammad Najar, housed valuable construction timber, finished doors, windows, and machinery, all of which were destroyed in the blaze. Estimates suggest that items worth lakhs of rupees were lost.

Witnesses told CNS that the fire erupted suddenly and rapidly engulfed the facility, leaving no time to salvage the materials. "The machines and all the finished products were completely destroyed," Shabir Ahmed said, expressing his devastation at the loss.

The fire services personnel, police, and local residents acted promptly to contain the fire, preventing it from spreading to

nearby structures. Their coordinated efforts averted what could have been an even greater disaster.

A case has been registered by the police, and an investigation is underway to determine the cause of the fire. (CNS)



Kissan Mela cum Exhibition organised at Kathua under HADP

Dr. Bharat Bhushan hails govt's initiatives for developmental of farming sector

HT News Network

KATHUA, JANUARY 28: A one-day Kisan Mela cum Exhibition was inaugurated today at Kathua by Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Kathua Dr. Bharat Bhushan and Director Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu Arvinder Singh Reen.

The event, organised under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) 2024-25, focused on the development of seed and seed multiplication chains and aimed to empower farmers with knowledge of modern agricultural practices.

MLA Dr. Bharat Bhushan was the

Chief Guest, while S. Arvinder Singh Reen presided over the event organised by the Chief Agriculture Officer Sanjeev Rai Gupta.

Different stakeholders including farmers, agricultural experts and representatives from Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), NGOs, self-help groups and private companies attended the event.

The exhibition featured a diverse range of stalls showcasing agricultural innovations, farm machinery, organic products and the latest advancements in seed production.

Among several displays were sections dedicated to agriculture inputs, seed procurement, farm mechanization and integrated farming prac-



tices. Dr. Bharat Bhushan, in his address, emphasised that such events provide farmers with a valuable opportunity to interact with agricultural experts, gain insights into cutting-edge technologies and apply these innovations to enhance farm

productivity and income. He encouraged farmers to take full advantage of the opportunities presented in the Kisan Mela.

Director Agriculture Jammu S. Arvinder Singh Reen, urged farmers to explore different schemes available

under the HADP and other centrally sponsored programs for adopting modern farming techniques.

He highlighted the benefits of organic farming, exotic vegetable cultivation, integrated farming systems, and farm mechanization in driving sustainable agricultural growth. Furthermore, he underscored the importance of developing community-based seed procurement centers and strengthening FPOs to enhance seed multiplication chains and ensure food security.

As part of the event, the farmers participated in live demonstrations at various stalls, where they were educated on the latest agricultural innovations through electronic medi-

ums. The unique approach, as instructed by the Director Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Jammu, enabled farmers to engage with the content in smaller, interactive groups.

The exhibition also showcased the diverse activities of the Agriculture Department, including Plant Health Clinics, Agriculture Engineering, Apiculture, Mushroom and Spawn Production, Agronomy, Floriculture, Seed Analytical Laboratories, and Soil Testing Labs. These displays provided valuable insights into the department's ongoing efforts to improve agricultural practices and promote sustainability in the region.

Maha Kumbh Over 15 Cr Devotees Take Dip; Another 10 Cr Expected On Mauni Amavasya

HT News Network

Mahakumbh Nagar, Jan 28: The Uttar Pradesh government has stepped up security as it gears up for the 'Amrit Snan' on 'Mauni Amavasya' on Wednesday, which is expected to draw around 10 crore pilgrims to the Maha Kumbh in just a day.

The Maha Kumbh 2025 has already witnessed over 15 crore pilgrims taking a holy dip in the past 17 days, the state government said on Tuesday.

Security measures have reached unprecedented levels for the day with deployment of personnel at every nook and turn along with installation of AI-powered CCTV cameras and drones keeping eye on the Mela area, spread over several hectares along the Triveni Sangam – the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati.

While the Mela area has already been declared a no-vehicle zone for the next few days, the Prayagraj administration has also made a fervent appeal to local residents to avoid using four wheelers and opt for two wheelers only if carrying senior citizens to the Sangam.

"Residents are requested to use two-wheelers or walk to facilitate the movement of pilgrims from across the globe," District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Mandar said.

According to the Uttar Pradesh government, on Makar Sankranti (January 14) alone, 3.5 crore devotees, saints, and Kalpwasis participated in the Amrit Snan.

Over 45 lakh devotees had taken the holy dip by 8 AM on Tuesday, it added.

The state government said it has also planned a flower-petals shower from helicopters on Wednesday at 6.45 am to mark the auspicious occasion of 'Mauni Amavasya.'

The Amrit Snan' (formerly called Shahi Snan) is the grandest and most sacred ritual of the Maha Kumbh Mela, attracting millions of pilgrims from around the world to the banks of the Triveni Sangam.



The main attraction of the Amrit Snan is the magnificent procession of saints and ascetics from the various akharas. The dates for the Amrit Snan are determined based on astrological combinations of the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter, which are believed to enhance the spiritual power of the sacred rivers.

Mauni Amavasya falls on the Hindu calendar day of Magh Krishna Amavasya. This is considered the most auspicious date among all the special bathing dates. It is believed that on this day, the water of the holy rivers turns into 'Amrit.'

Mauni Amavasya is also referred to as the 'Amavasya of the Saints.' The bath on Mauni Amavasya is traditionally performed in silence.

Meanwhile, the Prayagraj administration has intensified measures to ensure smooth operations, deploying police at strategic points to maintain order across the Kumbh grounds.

To accommodate the massive crowds, schools for Classes 1 to 8 across all boards in Prayagraj will remain closed on January 28, 29, and 30. The Allahabad High Court has also declared a holiday on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya.

The Maha Kumbh, being held after 12 years, kicked off on January 13 and will continue till February 26. The Uttar Pradesh government, which is hosting the mega event, expects a footfall between 40 and 45 crore during the period. (Agencies)

Police Can't Serve Accused Notice Via WhatsApp, Other Electronic Means: SC

HT News Network

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Supreme Court has said police cannot serve notices to accused persons through WhatsApp or other electronic modes under the Criminal Procedure Code or Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal directed all states and union territories (UT) to issue appropriate directions to police for issuing notices under Section 41A of CrPC, 1973 or Section 35 of BNSS, 2023 only through the mode of service permitted under the law.

"All the states/UTs must issue a standing order to their respective police machinery to issue notices under Section 41-A of CrPC, 1973/Section 35 of BNSS, 2023 only through the mode of service as prescribed under the CrPC, 1973/BNSS, 2023," the bench said on January 21.

The top court went on, "It is made amply clear that service of notice through WhatsApp or other electronic modes cannot be considered or recognised as an alternative or substitute to the mode of service recognised and prescribed under the CrPC, 1973/BNSS, 2023."

The direction came when the court accepted a suggestion by senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appointed amicus curiae in the matter.

Luthra flagged instances where a notice under Section 41-A of CrPC, 1973 was sent through WhatsApp, but the accused did not appear before the investigating officer. He said the police machinery must not circumvent the mandate of Section 41-A of CrPC, 1973 or Section 35 of BNSS, 2023 by serving notices via WhatsApp or other electronic modes, instead of following the normal mode of service. The court passed the directions in the case of Satender Kumar Antil. The bench further directed all high courts to hold its respective committee meetings to ensure both its past and present decisions were implemented on a monthly basis "at all levels" and monthly compliance reports were submitted by the authorities concerned. The apex court directed the registrar generals of high courts and chief secretaries of all the states and UTs to ensure compliance within three weeks. (AGENCIES)

The direction came when the court accepted a suggestion by senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appointed amicus curiae in the matter.

NIA team likely to visit USA soon for extradition of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks mastermind Tahawwur Rana - International Geographic Day

HT News Network

New Delhi, Jan 28: A team from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) is likely to visit USA very soon to complete the formalities for the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, who is wanted in India for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, sources said.

The move is learnt to be taken considering the US Supreme Court's recent decision rejecting a review petition filed by Rana challenging his extradition to India. The decision has cleared a significant legal hurdle, allowing Indian authorities to accelerate the process of bringing him to justice.

As per sources, a team of Inspector General and Deputy Inspector General rank officers are likely to visit the USA by the end of this month, the move regarding it has been shared with the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as the Ministry of External Affairs.

Rana, a former doctor and businessman, is a Canadian citizen of Pakistani origin. He is accused of facilitating the reconnaissance activities of David Coleman Headley, the main planner of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

He allowed Headley to use his immigration business as a front to travel to India and identify potential attack targets. Rana was arrested in 2009 in Chicago by the FBI for his role in a Pakistan-supported terror network. He was convicted in the US for supporting the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the terror group behind the attacks, but acquitted on charges directly related to the Mumbai attacks.

India has been pursuing Rana's extradition to hold him accountable for his involvement in the attacks that left 166 people dead and hundreds injured.

Budget Session Begins On Jan 31 With President's Address

HT News Network

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will take up discussion on President Droupadi Murmu's address to Parliament on Monday as the Budget Session begins on January 31.

The President will address both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber on Friday and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the General Budget on Saturday.

The Finance Minister will table the Economic Survey on Friday when both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will convene briefly after the President's address.

Lok Sabha has provisionally allotted two days (February 3-4) for discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, while Rajya Sabha has earmarked three days for the debate.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reply to the debate in Rajya Sabha on February 6.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju has convened a meeting of floor leaders of political parties in Parliament on January 30 to ensure smooth functioning of the Budget Session.

The first part of the Budget Session will have nine sittings from January 31 to February 13.

Parliament will then break for recess to examine the budget proposals on February 13 and meet again from March 10 to discuss the demands for grants of various ministries and complete the budgetary process. The session will conclude on April 4. The entire Budget Session will have 27 sittings. (Agencies)

Jaishankar says India sees Middle East region as 'crucial passage to world beyond'

HT News Network

ABU DHABI, Jan 28: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday highlighted the significant expansion of India-Middle East engagement in the past decade, driven by strong trade, connectivity, and people-to-people linkages, saying India sees the Middle East as a crucial passage to the world beyond.

Addressing the inaugural session of Raisina Middle East here, Jaishankar said the Middle East region, which India calls West Asia, is crucial to India's strategic interests. The country's trade in the Gulf region amounts to about USD 160 to USD 180 billion.

"Our presence in the Gulf is both pervasive and crucial. More than 9 million Indians live and work here, but the Gulf also serves as a gateway to the MENA region and the Mediterranean," Jaishankar said.

"Our annual trade with the Mediterranean, incidentally, is another USD 80 billion, and the Indian diaspora there is close to half a million," the minister said, adding that India's projects in the region include airports, ports, railways, phosphates, green hydrogen, steel and submarine cables.

Jaishankar said the endeavours of India and the Middle East can be projected further into Africa, Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.



"Perhaps there is no domain that has a stronger case for such plurilateral cooperation than that of connectivity... Maritime security and safety is another issue where understandings and mechanisms will have to step in to fill global deficits."

In conclusion, Jaishankar said the Middle East is an extended neighbourhood with which India has fully reconnected, and New Delhi needs to deepen its engagement with the

region. The Minister here also met Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Advisor to UAE President, on Tuesday morning and discussed the special partnership between India and UAE and its further progress. "Perhaps there is no domain that has a stronger case for such plurilateral cooperation than that of connectivity... Maritime security and safety is another issue where understandings and mechanisms will have to step in to fill global deficits. (PTI)

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi visits family of tiger attack victim

HT News Network

WAYANAD (Kerala), Jan 28: Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday visited the family of the woman who was killed by a tiger last week in this high-range district in Kerala.

Priyanka, also the Congress general secretary, arrived at the Kannur airport and then travelled to Wayanad by road, a party source said.

She reached the home of Radha, who was killed by a tiger when she was out collecting coffee beans at the Priyadarshini Estate in Mananthavady village here on January 24, at around 1.15 pm and consoled the victim's family.

The 'man-eater' tiger that killed Radha was found dead in Kerala's



high-range district of Wayanad on Monday and an autopsy on the dead cat revealed the presence of the victim's hair, dress, and a pair of earrings in its stomach, forest officials said.

The Wayanad MP will also be visiting the family of NM Vijayan, former district office-bearer of the party, who, along with his son, died by suicide.

Seventy-eight-year-old Vijayan, who was the Wayanad District Con-

gress Committee (DCC) treasurer, and his son Jijesh, 38, died at Kozhikode Government Medical College Hospital on December 27, 2024 after attempting suicide.

The incident has triggered a political controversy, with the ruling CPI(M) alleging that a cooperative bank job scam involving MLA I C Balakrishnan pushed the duo to take such drastic action.

Prominent Congress leaders in the district, including Balakrishnan and DCC president N D Appachan, were, thereafter, arrested in connection with the case and released on bail as they had obtained anticipatory bail from court.

After visiting Vijayan's family, Priyanka will hold a meeting at the collectorate in the afternoon, the source said. (PTI)

Those infamous for appeasement politics now taking dip at Triveni Sangam: Adityanath

HT News Network

Lucknow, Jan 28: In an obvious attack on Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, without naming anyone, said on Tuesday that even those infamous for their politics of appeasement are now taking a dip at the Triveni Sangam. He, however, added that it will be a mistake to expect that those who have never respected the faith of India will respect the faith in Sanatan Dharma. Speaking at the Mahakumbh Samagam organised by Times Now-Navbharat, Adityanath said, "I am pleased that those who once disrespected India's faith and were infamous for their appeasement politics are now eager to take a dip at the holy Sangam of the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati to seek 'punya' (virtue)."



Responding to a question on whether opposition parties have appreciated his government's organisation of the grand Maha Kumbh, the chief minister said, "Prayagraj belongs to everyone and faith transcends all." He added that the growing participation of people in the Maha Kumbh from diverse political ideologies demonstrates the enduring influence of Sanatan Dharma. Adityanath's remarks came after Yadav took a dip at the Sangam on Sunday. The SP chief also advised BJP leaders to

visit the Kumbh with "sahanshilta" (patience).

Asked if opposition leaders joining the Kumbh is a victory for Sanatan Dharma, Adityanath said, "This is not a question of victory or defeat. It is a testament to the eternal presence and power of Sanatan Dharma, which continues to thrive and inspire." He, however, added that "to expect that those who have never respected the faith of India will respect the faith in Sanatan Dharma will be a mistake".

"Those who did not believe in Sanatan and only did appeasement were not only forced to take a dip but were also forced to install the statues of their stalwarts (at the Sangam) to show that this is also a place, it also has importance. If we ignore this faith, then this faith will ignore who knows how many people." SP workers have installed the statue of party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav.

PM Modi Will Do 'What Is Right' On Illegal Immigrants, Likely To Visit US In February: Trump

■ HT News Network

Washington, Jan 28: US President Donald Trump has said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will do "what is right" on illegal immigrants, underlining that discussions are going on with India.

President Trump made these remarks on Monday while talking to reporters aboard Air Force One on his way back to Joint Base Andrews from Florida. He also mentioned that Prime Minister Modi is likely to visit the White House in February.

Separately, in a readout of a phone call between both leaders, the White House said that Trump had a "productive" phone call with Modi and sought a move towards a "fair" bilateral trading relationship and deeper India-US cooperation.

While talking to House Republicans at a Florida retreat on Monday, President Trump said that the US would impose tariffs on the countries that "harm" America as he named China, India and Brazil as high-tariff countries.

"We're going to put tariffs on outside countries and outside people that really mean harm to us... Look at what others do. China is a tremendous tariff maker, and India and Brazil and so many other countries. So we're not going to let that



happen any longer because we're going to put America first," he said.

Meanwhile, during their phone call, the two leaders also discussed plans for Modi to visit the US, the White House said in the readout.

While talking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump was asked "Did he (Modi) agree to take illegal immigrants?"

"He (Modi) will do what's right. We are discussing," said the president.

"I had a long talk with him this morning (Monday). He is going to be coming to the White House, over next month, probably February. We have a very good relationship with India," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One.

The president was responding to a question on the phone call he had with Modi on Monday.

"Everything came up (in a phone call with Modi)," Trump told reporters when

asked about the details of his call with the Prime Minister.

The prime minister's trip to the US, the first under Trump 2.0 was finalised during the call. Trump's last foreign trip as president was to India during his first term.

Trump and Modi enjoy a good friendly relationship. The two addressed thousands of people at two different rallies in Houston in September 2019 and in Ahmedabad in February 2020.

Modi was among the top three world leaders to speak with Trump after his stunning electoral victory in November 2024.

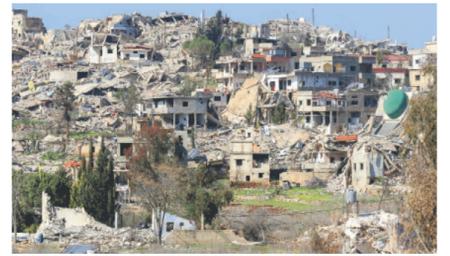
In a readout of the call, the White House said the two Trump sought India to increase in US-made security equipment and move towards a fair bilateral trading relationship.

"Today, President Donald J Trump held a productive call with Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India. The two leaders discussed expanding and deepening cooperation. They also discussed a range of regional issues, including security in the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and Europe," it said.

"The President emphasised the importance of India increasing its procurement of American-made security equipment and moving toward a fair bilateral trading relationship," the White House said.

Israel fires at Lebanese returning home, kills two

■ HT News Network



BURJ MULUK: Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli fire killed two people on Monday and wounded 17 others in the south, in a second day of violence as residents tried again to return to border villages.

The bloodshed, which one analyst said was unlikely to re-spark war between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah, came hours after the extension of a deadline for Israeli forces to withdraw from south Lebanon under a November ceasefire deal. The ministry said Israeli fire killed 24 returnees on Sunday.

"Israeli enemy attacks as citizens attempt to return to their towns that are still occupied have led... to two dead and 17 wounded," the health ministry said in a statement, updating an earlier toll of one dead.

It said the wounded included a child and a rescuer from the Risala Scouts association, affiliated with Hezbollah ally the Amal movement.

Under the ceasefire deal that took effect on November 27, the Lebanese military was to deploy in the south alongside United Nations peacekeepers as the Israeli army withdrew over a 60-day period, which ended on Sunday.

Hezbollah was also to pull back its forces north of the Litani River — about 30 kilometres from the border. Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said that Lebanon had agreed to an extension of the ceasefire deal between Hezbollah and Israel until Feb 18, after the Israeli military missed Sunday's deadline to withdraw.

In south Lebanon, residents accompanied by the army were again trying to return to their villages, official media and correspondents reported.

In the village of Burj al-Muluk, a photographer saw dozens of men, women and children gathering in the morning behind a dirt barrier, some holding yellow Hezbollah flags, hoping to reach the border town of Kfar Kila, where the Israeli military is still deployed.

Convoy of oil tankers attacked by unidentified armed men in northwest Pakistan

■ HT News Network

PESHAWAR, Jan 28: A convoy of oil tankers was attacked by unidentified armed men in the troubled northwest Pakistan to disrupt the supply of diesel and petrol to Kurram district, police said.

Gunmen opened fire on the convoy in the Bagan area on Monday. However, no damage was reported, with oil carriers reaching the Alizai area in the district afterwards.

When the convoy reached Bagan Bazaar under police and security forces escort, the miscreants opened heavy fire from the nearby Talu Kunj area, police said.

Officials said three convoys transported food and other essentials from the Thal area in the Hangu district to Kurram.

They said the first convoy had 62 vehicles, while the second comprised 58 large cargo trucks.

The officials said the third convoy, including five tankers, successfully delivered petroleum products to Kurram on Monday for the first time since the closure of routes.

Members of the peace jirga said that they would discuss violations of the recent peace agreement, especially the firing on oil tankers in Bagan, and finalize a course of action against troublemakers.

Member of the Provincial Assembly from the area, Ali Hadi Irfani, condemned the attack, saying vested interests were bent on creating unrest in Kurram.

China flags handling differences, maintaining stable ties in talks with FS Misri

■ HT News Network

BEIJING, Jan 28: China said it stressed on properly handling differences, and promotion of India-China relations on a stable track in the just concluded talks with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri while highlighting decisions to resume Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and direct flights.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri who arrived here on Sunday for a two-day visit held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Sun Weidong on Monday to stabilise and rebuild relations stalled for over four years due to the military standoff at Eastern Ladakh. Misri was the former Ambassador to Beijing, while Sun was the former envoy to Delhi. The External Affairs Ministry issued a press release on Monday stating that the two sides reviewed the state of India-China bilateral relations comprehensively and agreed to take certain people-centric steps to "stabilise and rebuild ties". In its readout in Mandarin issued on early Tuesday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said the dialogue focussed on promoting the implementation of the important consensus reached by the leaders of China and India in the Kazan meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit last year and discussed measures to improve and develop China-India relations. It highlighted the consensus reached



between the two sides during the talks which included the resumption of direct flights, the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra for Indian pilgrims and a meeting of the India-China Expert Level Mechanism to discuss the resumption of the provision of sharing hydrological data pertaining to trans-border rivers.

In the talks, China emphasised that the two sides should proceed from the fundamental interests of China, India and adhere to the strategic height and long-term perspective of China-India relations, the readout said.

Both sides should actively promote dialogue, exchanges and practical cooperation with a frank and constructive attitude, positively guide public opinion, increase trust and resolve misgivings, properly handle differences, and promote the development of ties on a healthy and stable track, it said.

Awami League won't be allowed to contest Bangladesh polls: Yunus' key adviser

■ HT News Network

DHAKA, Jan 28: Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League would not be allowed to participate in elections, a key adviser of Muhammad Yunus's interim government said on Saturday. The elections will be contested among pro-Bangladesh groups only, said Mahfuz Alam, a top leader of the Anti-Discrimination Movement, which spearheaded the mass uprising that toppled Hasina's Awami League regime and forced her to flee the country on August 5 last year. Addressing a street rally at central Chandpur district, Alam said only former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamaat-e-Islam and other "pro-Bangladesh" groups would carry on their politics in the country. He added that either of these "will establish future governance through a fair electoral process." "But Awami League's rehabilitation will not be allowed in this country," said Alam, a de facto minister without portfolio in Chief Adviser Yunus's administration. Alam stated that no election would take place until "minimum reforms"



were implemented and institutions, allegedly destroyed by the "fascist Hasina government," were restructured. Initially appointed by Yunus as a special assistant in his government, Alam later served as an adviser in his interim cabinet. At a function on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly last year, Yunus introduced Alam as the "main brain" behind the "meticulously" designed student-led movement that toppled the past regime.

The Awami League has been virtually out of the open political landscape since August 5, 2024, with most of its leaders and Hasina's cabinet members either in jail on murder and other criminal charges or on the run at home and abroad.

Colombian president denies entry of U.S. military deportation flights

■ HT News Network

BOGOTA, Jan 28: Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Sunday said he will not authorize the entry of U.S. military flights carrying deported Colombian migrants, which is part of a new immigration policy put into effect by U.S. President Donald Trump. Noting that the United States cannot

treat Colombian migrants as criminals, Petro said in a post on X that Washington must establish a protocol for the dignified treatment of migrants. "I cannot make migrants stay in a country that does not want them. But if that country returns them, it must be with dignity and respect for them and for our country. We will receive our compatriots in civilian planes, without treating them like criminals.



Colombia must be respected," he said. On his inauguration day on Jan. 20, Trump signed an executive order that declared a national emergency along the U.S.-Mexico border, called for mass deportations of undocumented migrants, deployed military forces to the border and denied U.S. citizenship to those born to illegal immigrants. (UNI)

Eight hostages due to be freed in first phase are dead: Israel

■ HT News Network

JERUSALEM, Jan 28: Israel says eight of the remaining 26 hostages due to be released by Hamas during the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal are dead, media reports said.

Government spokesman David Mencer told reporters that Israel had received a list from the Palestinian armed group overnight that provided information on the status of the hostages, the BBC reported.

"The list from Hamas matches Israel's intelligence, so I can share with you that... eight have been killed by Hamas," he said, without naming them. "The families have been informed of the situation of their relatives."

Seven women have already been freed alive in exchange for more than 290 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails since the ceasefire began on 19 January.

On Sunday night, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office

announced Hamas had agreed to release female civilian Arbel Yehud, female soldier Agam Berger and one other hostage on Thursday.

Three additional hostages would be released by the group on Saturday, he said.

According to reports, the Israeli military launched a campaign to destroy Hamas in response to an unprecedented cross-border attack on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 were taken hostage.

More than 47,310 people have been killed in Gaza since then, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

Israel says 87 of the hostages remain in captivity, 34 of whom are presumed dead. In addition, there are three Israelis who were abducted before the war, one of whom is dead.

One of the hostages who Israel says should be released in the first phase is Or Levy, 34, who was attending the Nova music festival with his wife Eynav on 7 October 2023, the report



said. The couple, whose son Almog is now three years old, fled to a roadside bomb shelter after Hamas gunmen attacked. Eynav was killed inside the shelter while Or was kidnapped and taken back to Gaza.

Over the weekend in Tel Aviv's Hostage Square, Or's brother Michael told the BBC that waiting to hear about the statuses of the remaining 26 hostages was like being plunged into "a reality the devil himself invented and

part of an evil reality show that Hamas is enjoying."

He also said he had received no indication about when Or would be freed and there would be what he described as "an end date to this taken back to Gaza."

Michael also said he feared that Hamas could yet delay his brother's release.

"We cannot just be calm and hope for the best. We have to keep going. And until he's here, I won't believe it

actually happened."

On Saturday, following the release of four female Israeli soldiers in the second exchange of the ceasefire, the Israeli military's spokesman said it was "extremely concerned" about the welfare of three hostages Shiri Bibas, 33, and her two young sons, Kfir, two, and Ariel, five.

Hamas claimed in November 2023 that they had been killed in an Israeli air strike. However, the Israeli military has not confirmed their deaths and the Israeli government has insisted they are among the 33 hostages handed over in the first phase.

Negotiations for the second phase — which should see the remaining hostages released in exchange for more prisoners, a full Israeli troop withdrawal and "the restoration of sustainable calm" — are due to start on 4 February.

The third and final stage will involve the reconstruction of Gaza, which could take years, and the return of any remaining hostages' bodies.

The Hostages and Missing Families Forum is demanding that the Israeli government implement all three phases and ensure the return of every hostage.

"We are not whole without them all. Our nation needs everyone at home, together. Until the last hostage," it said.

Meanwhile, the deputy chief of the Israeli military's medical corps said some of seven newly released hostages had spent "the entire time in tunnels underground" in recent months, the report said.

"Some of them were alone through the entire time they were there," Col Dr Avi Banov said, according to Reuters news agency. "Those who said they were together were in better shape."

The hostages had said their treatment improved in the days leading up to their release, when they were allowed to shower, change their clothes and received better food, he added. (UNI)



'High maintenance to be low maintenance': An expensive Skincare trend redefining beauty investments

The beauty and wellness industry is embracing the "high maintenance to be low maintenance" trend, which advocates investing in expensive, professional treatments to streamline and reduce daily skincare routines. These include laser hair reduction, advanced facials, and semi-permanent makeup, promising long-term convenience and cost savings. In the simplest of terms, it can be understood as a trade off — significant upfront investment in professional treatments to minimise daily grooming efforts. Win-win,

right? Indianexpress.com spoke to industry professionals and learnt more about the pros and cons associated with the trend. Ajit Marathe, founder and chief innovation officer at Skin Beyond Borders, said that while not new, social media has amplified this trend, framing these treatments as essential investments for a modern lifestyle. IV Drip therapy, for instance, has gained traction through influencer promotions. Krishna Vakharia, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Kumar Lifespaces, believes that taking the time to nurture her

skin through a high-maintenance routine isn't about extravagance, but empowerment and consistency. "I use Argireline, sunscreen, and moisturizer. My evening routine involving caffeine-infused under-eye serum and collagen sleeping masks work to preserve and enhance my natural glow," she shared. According to Dr Rashmi Shetty, aesthetic dermatologist, a one-time hyaluronic acid injection might be expensive, but it becomes a cost-effective alternative compared to layering on 25 creams and serums in a quest

for hydrated skin. Skin booster injections with popular names such as "skin weave," "profilo," and "skin booster" are all the rage in the market right now that aim to stimulate your collagen and elastin. "Proteins that you put on the skin, aka peptides to increase your cell turnover and keep your skin youthful, such as the retinol can now be supplemented by in-clinic treatments such as PDRN Peptides, available in the form of Salmon Sperm extracted PDRNs," Shetty said. While retinol were the gold standard for skin treatments, they required consistent daily use in a certain quantity, concentration, and formulation. They also carried risks of purging, sensitivity and flakiness. According to Shetty, hybrid lasers, including carbon dioxide and erbium glass combination, work brilliantly to give you more rejuvenated, refreshed, and even-toned skin with fewer visible pores. "It is expensive, but one shot in two or three months and you're good to go," she said. "Ultherapy, a machine using Ultera technology called Hifu — highly focused ultrasound — prevents the skin from becoming excess and coming down onto your jaw and

spoiling the jawline, and requires once a year session," she said. She also said, "fillers are always an option to get rid of lost volume from the face, a common result of ageing. Despite social media demonising filler migration, these are permanent till dissolved and are a worthwhile one-time investment." Dr Neha Khuraana, MD, a Board-certified dermatologist and founder of House of Aesthetics, Delhi, said, "People also tend to go for laser hair reduction (LHR) to reduce the need to shave or wax the body hair regularly, chemical peels to diminish the appearance of skin pigmentation, microneedling to reduce the occurrence of wrinkles and acne scars by boosting collagen synthesis, botox and fillers that aim to offer a youthful glow by reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, semi-permanent tattooing or makeup to reduce the daily hassle of makeup application." Khuraana considers skin treatments a worthy investment, provided a well-trained dermatologist executes them. "By cutting down the cost of routine salon visits and cumulative savings on the products, you actually save money.

What to Know About the New Nasal Spray for Tough Depression

After years of limited options, people with hard-to-treat depression finally have a new standalone treatment. The FDA's latest approval of the nasal spray Spravato (esketamine) CIII marks a major shift in how major depressive disorder is managed, allowing people who have tried at least two oral antidepressants to use the spray on its own — without the need for more medication. Until now, Spravato, which first hit the market in 2019, was only available with an oral antidepressant. Experts say this expansion could make the treatment more appealing to those who have been hesitant to try it before. People with major depressive disorder are less likely to respond to the first antidepressant they are prescribed. Several things can cause that to happen. "There's a certain number of patients who come to us for this treatment who either aren't on antidepressants, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), or really aren't interested in taking SSRIs, either because they've found those to be not helpful, or the depression doesn't respond, or they don't tolerate the side effects," said Robert K. McClure, MD, an associate professor and director of interventional psychiatry at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Department of Psychiatry.

The Trouble with Treatment-Resistant Depression

There is significant excitement about the new treatment, as options for people with treatment-resistant depression have been limited, despite the substantial unmet need and public health impact, according to Roger McIntyre, MD, a professor of psychiatry and pharmacology at the University of Toronto and executive director of the Brain and Cognition Discovery Foundation. Between 30% and 55% of people with depression have treatment-resistant depression, according to McIntyre's research. It's often defined as depression that doesn't improve with at least two different antidepressant drugs. Treatment-resistant depression is not only common but also more severe, often impairing personal and professional functioning, increasing the use of health care services, and raising the risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, he said. It's also under-researched. "We have had current treatments for depression going back to the 1950s, but up until recently, we have not had an emphasis looking at how to help people with treatment-resistant depression," said McIntyre. "Most of the studies have looked at people with non-treatment-resistant depression, and so this is huge." When medications don't relieve depression, the next options might include Spravato, transcranial magnetic stimulation, or electroconvulsive therapy, McClure said. Electroconvulsive therapy is highly effective, but it's invasive and can cause memory loss. Most people opt to try Spravato or transcranial magnetic stimulation — which involves stimulating nerve cells in the brain with magnets — first, he said. Transcranial magnetic stimulation is also time-consuming, requiring treatment five days a week for at least four weeks. With Spravato, you start with two weekly treatments for four weeks. Some people then continue with weekly or twice-weekly maintenance treatments. About one-third of people with depression don't seem to get better. Why don't antidepressants work for everyone?

How Esketamine Nasal Spray Provides Relief



A study by Johnson & Johnson, the company that makes Spravato, showed that 22.5% of people using esketamine nasal spray achieved remission from major depression in four weeks. Just 7.6% of people using a placebo did. The history of this drug traces back to the 1960s, when researchers discovered that ketamine, a pain-relieving, mind-altering drug, could curb depression. Ketamine molecules contain two parts: S-ketamine (esketamine), which is like the left hand, and R-ketamine, which is like the right hand, McClure said. "Standard ketamine is a mixture of the two left- and right-handed versions of the molecule, and the inhaled version is just the left-handed version," he said. Exactly how esketamine heals depression isn't completely understood, but it works differently than SSRIs. Research suggests esketamine works by targeting the neurotransmitter glutamate. Glutamate plays a role in altering brain plasticity — the way brain cells connect and fire together — a hallmark of depression, McIntyre said. Esketamine acts on the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor (NMDA), a glutamate receptor, which might help reverse processes that alter brain plasticity. Esketamine has been shown to affect glutamate signaling in a matter of days, while oral antidepressants can take weeks. Spravato isn't like the nasal spray you use when you have a cold. You get it at a doctor's office. You spray Spravato into your nostrils according to your health care provider's directions. Then, you stick around for two hours so they can watch for side effects like high blood pressure, nausea, dissociation, or changes in consciousness, McIntyre said. The spray might also temporarily leave an unpleasant taste in your throat. When the two hours end, someone else must drive you home. You can't drive until the next day. Since esketamine has mind-altering properties, it comes with warnings about risks of abuse and misuse. The fact that you can't take it home is good news for its safety. Research in *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* shows that when people overdose on ketamine or its analogs, it happens outside medical settings. "Some people have also wondered whether or not long-term use may predispose gateway activity; in other words, will this prime the person to maybe misuse other drugs?" McIntyre said. "We have not seen that." Research also suggests that esketamine nasal spray doesn't affect thinking skills the way high doses of ketamine do.

What's Next

Along with treatment-resistant depression, Spravato is approved along with an oral antidepressant for adults with major depressive disorder who have suicidal thoughts or behaviors. As this drug gets more popular, patients often ask whether it could be used for other conditions that cause depressive symptoms, McIntyre said. "I think that there is an appetite now to know, does it have application in other disorders such as bipolar depression?" More research is needed to answer those questions. Clinical trials are underway or being planned to test esketamine in postpartum depression, risk of suicide, sleep disturbances, and more.

Pharmacists in warning over weight-loss jab sales

Pharmacy leaders have issued a fresh warning over the online sale of weight-loss jabs insisting there is still a risk to patient safety. The National Pharmacy Association (NPA) has called for tougher rules in a letter to regulators, adding it was aware of people who previously had eating disorders or whose body weight was already low, being wrongly prescribed the drugs. They argue a two-way consultation with the patient lasting at least 20 minutes is needed rather than relying on online questionnaires to access drugs such as Wegovy or Mounjaro. "It is also important to ensure that clinical decisions regarding weight loss injections are not influenced by financial targets or incentives," NPA chairman Nick Kaye said. The NPA has written to the General

Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) saying current rules leave the door open for medicines to be supplied without appropriate checks "and the risk to patient safety remains". The call comes amid warnings of a boom in demand for weight-loss jabs this year as ministers look to expand the rollout of the medication on the NHS. Mr Kaye told the PA news agency: "Obesity is one of the biggest challenges facing our country and pharmacies want to play their part in helping patients lose and maintain a healthy weight. "Weight-loss injections can play an important role in efforts to tackle obesity when prescribed as part of a carefully managed treatment programme for patients who are most in need of

support." However, we are concerned that the current regulations allow some patients to inappropriately access weight-loss injections without proper consultation or examination of historical medical records. "Hundreds of thousands of people are estimated to get their prescriptions privately through online pharmacies. Weight-loss jabs, known as GLP-1 receptor agonists, work by reducing food cravings. The NPA has previously urged patients to avoid buying weight loss injections from unregulated online sellers, who may be selling fake drugs. A person's medical history should also be examined before sellers decide whether or not to dispense a weight-loss injection, and regular reviews must take place, it added.

Feeling the Winter Blues? Notice Nature for a Well-Being Boost

It's easy to lose sight of nature in winter, amid the rush to escape cold, wet, and gray weather. But there's another way to approach the season, one expert says: notice nature. Tuning into the natural world during the darkest, coldest months can give you a mental health boost, according to research by Holli-Anne Passmore, PhD, a nature and well-being expert at the University of Edmonton. You can reap the benefits without changing your behavior or routine — no ice skating or snowshoeing required. Spending just two hours a week outside in nature has so many health benefits, both mentally and physically. Now get out there in the wilderness! "This isn't people going out and looking at the Grand Canyon," Passmore said. "People are looking at a chickadee sitting on a branch eating frozen mountain berries. How pretty the snow looks. How the moon looks at night." Passmore previously found that noticing nature improves well-being. But she wondered if people could feel the same positive effects in the winter, a season that can deplete mental health. About 5% of people in the U.S. go through a type of depression typically triggered by the loss of daylight hours. To find out, Passmore separated people she studied into groups. For two weeks, one group followed their normal routine but also noticed how nature made them feel and took photos of scenes that sparked emotions. The other group did the same thing but noticed man-made objects instead. Afterward, she asked the people in the study questions to understand their experiences. Those who noticed nature had a bigger boost in life satisfaction, connectedness to nature, and "elevation" — a composite feeling of being elevated, vital, grateful, moved, and a sense of wonder.

People With ADHD May Face Shorter Life Expectancy



Living with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder comes with unique challenges, and new insights are shedding light on its potential long-term effects. The life expectancy of people with ADHD may be

significantly shorter than that of people who don't have the disorder, a new study suggests. The lives of men with ADHD may be about seven years shorter, and the difference for women may be nearly nine years. As

you grow into adulthood does ADHD go away? Is medication the only route to lessen symptoms? "It is deeply concerning that some adults with diagnosed ADHD are living shorter lives than they should," study author Josh Stott, PhD, a professor of aging and clinical psychology at University College London, said in a news release. "People with ADHD have many strengths and can thrive with the right support and treatment. However, they often lack support and are more likely to experience stressful life events and social exclusion, negatively impacting their health and self-esteem." The life expectancy calculations had some uncertainty about the exact duration; the shortened lifespan for men may be as small as 4.5 years or as large as nine years, and for

women the range is a reduction of 6.5 years to 11 years. It isn't clear what causes ADHD, but experts believe genetics, environment, and developmental problems involving the central nervous system may play important roles. Adults with ADHD may have a range of symptoms that can include impatience that can reveal itself, for example, while they're waiting in line or driving in traffic. Other symptoms are disorganization, poor time management, a hard time focusing on a task, restlessness, mood swings, poor stress management, and a hot temper. In their report, published this week in *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, the authors noted that people with ADHD often have reduced outcomes in the areas of education and work, as well as worse physical and mental health than people without the disorder.

Carbonated Water May Promote Weight Loss, but Effects Are Minimal

- New research suggests that drinking sparkling water might help with weight loss.
- Drinking fizzy water could lead to changes that help cells better utilize blood glucose, a researcher says.
- Experts note carbonated water may also help with satiety, hydration, digestion, and calorie reduction.
- Still, the effects of sparkling water on weight loss are quite small, meaning most people will still need to eat well and exercise often to maintain a healthy weight.
- Good sleep, stress reduction, mindful eating, and tracking progress can help with weight loss, too.

When people are seeking to lose weight, they may give up unhealthy sodas laden with sugar or artificial sweeteners. In doing so, some people may miss the "bite" of carbonation that comes with fizzy drink consumption. Beverages like sparkling water can fill the void without adding calories or undesirable chemicals. According to a new article published on January 21 in *BMJ Nutrition Prevention & Health*, a researcher evaluated how fizzy water could aid your weight loss efforts beyond filling the void left by ditching sodas. The discussion highlights how drinking carbonated water may induce certain physiological changes conducive to weight loss. Still, there are no shortcuts to losing weight. Weight loss is best achieved through a nutritious diet and regular physical activity. **Sparkling water may improve blood glucose** Study author Akira Takahashi, MD, PhD, of the Dialysis Center at Tesseikai Neurosurgery Hospital in Shijonawata, Japan, explained in a press release that carbonated water reportedly

speeds up digestion and helps decrease blood glucose levels. However, the mechanisms driving these effects were unclear. To better understand the effects, Takahashi compared the effect on glucose levels with hemodialysis, a treatment where blood is filtered outside the body. Hemodialysis treatment also alters carbon dioxide levels in the blood. During this process, blood glucose levels fall, which suggests that carbon dioxide helps in the utilization of glucose. Takahashi theorized that something similar might happen when people drink carbonated water. Carbon dioxide is released into the bloodstream, where an enzyme in the red blood cells converts it into bicarbonate. This conversion raises the pH within those cells, allowing the body to use glucose more effectively. Could these improvements in glucose usage lead to weight loss? Takahashi wrote that it likely could, but the effect overall would be quite small. **Sparkling water could aid weight loss in other ways**

While this review looked at what is happening at the cellular level, there are other known ways that drinking fizzy water may help you in your weight loss goals. Gabby Zeagler, clinical dietitian at Nourish, noted that carbonated water can create a feeling of fullness that may help reduce your appetite and allow you to be satisfied with less food at your next meal. Zeagler wasn't involved in the study. "If someone is drinking seltzer all day long, this will also increase their hydration level which helps support metabolism and will likely reduce the amount of times someone may mistake a



feeling of thirst for hunger and lessen the amount of snacking they might do," she said. Carbonated water is also a great substitute for soda, juice, and other sugary, high-calorie beverages, according to Zeagler, which will help you take in fewer calories over the course of the day. "For some people, carbonated water can help with digestion," she continued, "and when our stomach is feeling less bloated, we are more likely to follow a healthful eating pattern." However, she agreed with the study author, and noted fizzy water is not "a magical drink." **Balanced diet, regular exercise**

still best for weight loss "Drinking fizzy water is just part of the equation for effective weight loss," explained Josh Kaplan, MD, founder and CEO of Dr. Well by BuildMyHealth. "It could be used as an alternative to high-calorie drinks, but to achieve real progress, it must be used in conjunction with diet and exercise." Kaplan suggested eating a diet rich in lean proteins, fiber, and healthy fats. These will keep you full longer and help you maintain muscle while you are losing fat. "Strength training and regular aerobic exercise are essential for increasing metabolism and burning

calories," he added. Stress management and good sleep also play a vital role in your weight loss, according to Kaplan. This helps regulate the hunger hormones, such as cortisol and leptin. In addition to these measures, Zeagler suggested practicing mindful eating. "Pay attention to hunger cues, eat slowly, and avoid distractions during meals. Put your phone away while eating!" she advised. She also suggested tracking your progress, whether with a food journal, app, or wearable device. "This way, you can identify areas for improvement and improve upon them," said Zeagler. "Remember, you can't improve what you don't measure."

Takeaway

New research suggests drinking carbonated water could contribute to weight loss by creating physiological changes that allow cells to better use glucose. Additionally, it may aid weight loss by helping you feel more full and keeping you more hydrated. It can also help you cut calories by replacing high calorie beverages. It may also improve your digestion and reduce bloating. However, experts say the effect of carbonated water on weight loss is small, and fizzy water is not "a magical drink." To lose weight, follow the basics, such as eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly. Keeping your stress low and getting good quality sleep can help regulate the hormones that make you hungrier, like cortisol and leptin. Practicing mindful eating and tracking your progress can help you be more aware of what you are doing so you can improve and solidify your new healthy habits.

Head to replace Konstas as opener in SL Tests, confirms Smith



AGENCIES
GALLE, JAN 28

Travis Head will replace Sam Konstas to partner Usman Khawaja at the top of Australia's batting order for the first Sri Lanka Tests, starting from Wednesday, skipper Steve Smith confirmed.

Meanwhile, Australia have not confirmed their playing and Smith said finalisation of the line-up would be delayed because of the ever-changing nature of the Galle pitch.

Konstas impressed in his first two Tests to help Australia secure a first series win over India in a decade. But Head's efforts while filling in for injured opener David Warner in the final two Tests of Australia's most recent sub-

continent tour to India in 2023 won him an opener's spot.

"Travis will go to the top, outside of that I think it will be pretty stable. I don't see it being a great deal of change from that. The selectors liked what they saw in India when he (Head) had that opportunity. He got after the new ball, scored quickly and put the pressure on them straight away so I guess similar thinking here," Smith told reporters prior to Australia's final pre-Test training session.

It's unclear if Konstas will retain his place as a middle-order batter. Nathan McSweeney and Josh Inglis all appear in contention for the middle-order vacancy created by Head's promotion.

Kohli joins Delhi Ranji team, trains at Arun Jaitley Stadium



AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JAN 28

Former India captain Virat Kohli, who has confirmed his availability for Delhi's next Ranji Trophy match, has joined a practice session at the Arun Jaitley Stadium ahead of a match against Railways, starting from Thursday.

Kohli last played Ranji Trophy game in 2012, against Uttar Pradesh in Ghaziabad. During the practice session on Tuesday, Kohli took part in several group running and fielding drills, and also engaged in brief football sessions with his Delhi teammates.

Earlier, IANS reported that Kohli has confirmed

his availability for Delhi's next Ranji Trophy match and will play against Railways in the clash that will be played from January 30 to February 2 at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

Kohli himself has been very keen to play this match, which he communicated to the DDCA on Monday evening, sources had said.

There has been a lot of pressure on the Indian red-ball team members to play domestic matches after the abject batting failure in Australia as the Indian team barely crossed 150 runs in its first innings in most of the Test matches.

In five Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Kohli scored just 190 runs

and was dismissed eight times chasing deliveries outside the off-stump.

Delhi are currently in fourth place in the Elite Group D table with 14 points from five games and need wins in their remaining two games to have a chance at qualifying for the knockout stages.

The final round of Ranji Trophy group games will end four days before India's first ODI against England in Nagpur on February 6.

Kohli is part of the ODI squad for the three-match bilateral series in the lead-up to the Champions Trophy from February 19. Besides Kohli, wicket-keeper batter Rishabh Pant is also playing for Delhi in the Ranji Trophy games.

New Zealand's Amelia Kerr named ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year

AGENCIES
DUBAI, JAN 28

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced New Zealand's Amelia Kerr as the winner of the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year.

Acknowledging the outstanding female cricketer across all formats of the game during the calendar year, Kerr becomes the first New Zealander to win the coveted trophy after a momentous 2024 in which she inspired the White Ferns to their first ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

In T20Is alone, Kerr amassed 387 runs and took 29 wickets at an average of 15.55, yet it was during the World Cup campaign that her brilliance was most apparent - setting a new record for the most wickets in a single edition (15) and culminating in an unforgettable individual display in the final to secure the silverware and the Player of the Tournament accolade.

On the biggest stage, up against an in-form South African outfit, Kerr overcame challenging conditions to score a crucial 43 from 38 balls before



removing the dangerous Laura Wolvaardt and Anneke Bosch in figures of three for 24 with the ball to thwart the chase and set up a 32-win victory amid wild celebrations.

While her year will be best remembered for her historic feats in the shortest format, Kerr also impressed in ODIs, hitting 264 runs at an average of 33.00 and taking 14 wickets which included four-wicket hauls against India and Australia.

The 24-year-old overcomes South African skipper Wolvaardt, Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu and Australia's Annabel Sutherland to win the award, backing up her Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year success on Saturday.

"It's a huge honour to

win the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year. I guess for me individual awards aren't something you think about much, but this is an extremely special one," Amelia Kerr said.

"It's nice to be able to contribute for New Zealand, I guess that's all any cricketer wants is to work hard and put out performances for their teammates. There are so many people that have helped me achieve what I have, and I'm very grateful for the support network I have around me."

Announcements in the ICC Awards 2024 will conclude later on Tuesday, with the highly anticipated Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year revealed.

U19 WC: Trisha Gongadi becomes first player to hit century in the tournament

AGENCIES
KUALA LUMPUR, JAN 28

India opening batter Trisha Gongadi on Tuesday scripted history in the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup as she became the first player to smash a century in the tournament.

The 19-year-old swash-buckling batter reached the milestone during India's Super Six match against Scotland at Bayuemas Oval. The right-handed opener touched the three-figure mark off 53 balls. He remained unbeaten on 110 off 59 balls including 13 fours and four sixes at a strike rate of 186.44. Trisha was involved in a 147-run



opening wicket partnership with G Kamalini, who departed after scoring 51 off 42 balls. The opener again built an unbeaten 61-run stand with Sanika Chalka (29 not out) to guide India to 208/1 in 20

overs. With the history-making knock, Trisha has also become the top scorer in the tournament - amassing 230 runs in five matches. She also featured in India's title-winning campaign in

the inaugural Women's U19 World Cup. In that tournament, she scored 116 runs in seven matches.

Davina Sarah T Perrin of England holds second place with 131 runs from four matches. If Trisha manages to score at least 68 runs in the upcoming matches for the Niki Prasad-led India team, she will break Shweta Sehrawat's record for the most runs in a single edition of the Women's U19 T20 World Cup.

Sehrawat set the record during the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2023, held in South Africa, where she played seven matches and accumulated 297 runs.

Australia, England stars rise in ICC Women's T20I rankings

AGENCIES
DUBAI, JAN 28

Australia's unbeaten start to the ongoing Ashes series against England has seen a host of their best performers make good ground in the latest ICC Women's player rankings.

The Aussies have been in excellent form with six consecutive triumphs in white-ball fixtures against their arch-rival on home soil, and have already clinched the multi-format Ashes series ahead of the one-off Test that commences at the MCG on Thursday.

Experienced opener Beth Mooney has been one of the stars of the Aus-



tralian team during the white-ball component of the series and the in-form left-hander scored a total of 213 runs from three innings across the three T20I contests that were recently completed.

It saw Mooney increase her lead at the top of the rankings for T20I batters, with teammate Tahlia McGrath now her closest rival after the stand-in Australia skipper jumped one place to second on

the same list following her 75 runs across the three matches.

England captain Heather Knight finished the trio of T20I contests as her side's leading run-scorer with 101 runs and the veteran right-hander improved three spots to equal 22nd for the T20I batters, while Australia all-rounder Grace Harris also caught the eye with a nine-rung jump to 28th overall.

It's no surprise that Australia's bowlers have dominated the series too, with spinner Georgia Wareham improving five places to equal eighth after she picked up a series-high six scalps with the ball across the three T20I matches.

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