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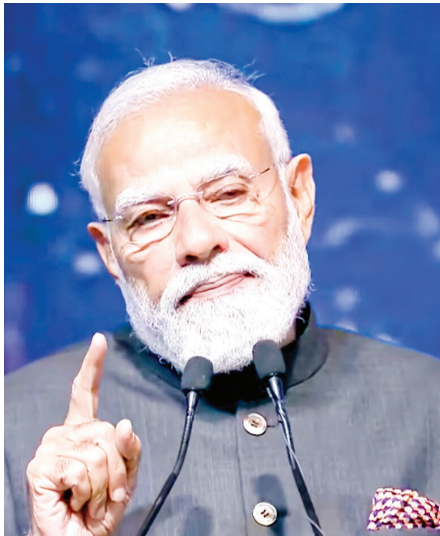
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Buddha's Sacred Relics Are Living Symbols of India's Civilisational Soul: PM Modi

Inaugurates rare exhibition in Delhi, says relics reflect India's timeless bonds of faith, spirituality and global Buddhist heritage

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asserted that the sacred relics of Bhagwan Buddha are not mere archaeological artefacts but an inseparable part of India's revered heritage and living civilisation, as he inaugurated a special exhibition showcasing ancient gems



and bone fragments associated with the Enlightened One.

Speaking at the inauguration of "The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One" at the Qila Rai Pithora Cultural Complex in south Delhi, Modi said the relics embody India's enduring spiritual legacy and its deep emotional and cultural connections with the Buddhist world.

"For India, the sacred relics of Bhagwan Buddha are not objects of the past. They are a living heritage, a civilisational treasure that continues to inspire humanity," the prime minister said, addressing Buddhist scholars, diplomats and guests from India and abroad.

Recalling the recent return of the Piprahwa Relics to India after more than

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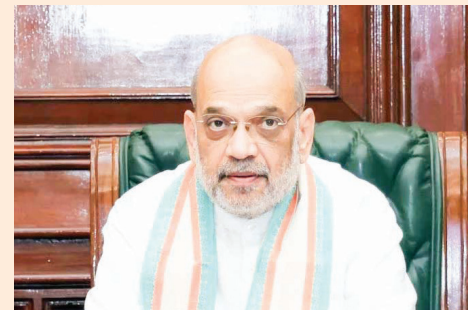
By 2029, Justice Will Be Swift, Scientific and Certain: Amit Shah

HM Announces Nationwide Forensic Revolution in Near Future

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JAN 03: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday unveiled an ambitious vision to remake India's criminal justice system, asserting that by 2029 the country will achieve a time-bound justice mechanism where cases are concluded within three years, from the filing of an FIR to the final verdict by the Supreme Court.

Chairing a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs at Sri Vijaya Puram in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Shah said the transformation rests on a scientific, technology-enabled forensic framework backed by massive public investment and sweeping legal



reforms.

The meeting was attended by Union Ministers of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, members of

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LG summons J&K assembly for budget session from Feb 02

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JAN 03: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has summoned the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly to convene for its upcoming budget session beginning February 02, 2026.

The summon was issued by the LG in exercise of powers vested in him under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

"I, Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, in exercise of the powers conferred upon me under Section 18(1) of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, do hereby summon the Legislative Assembly for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to meet at Jammu on Monday,

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Canal System Approved With Ujh Project: Jitendra Singh

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 3: Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday announced approval for a canal system alongside Ujh multipurpose project in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district to check uncontrolled water flow to Pakistan.

He also informed that the centre has allocated over Rs 1,400 crore for the Union Territory to mitigate

damage to public property and other infrastructure during last year's floods.

The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office was speaking at a review meeting in Kathua district, part of his Udhampur parliamentary constituency, with the district administration on the developmental projects.

Singh said a canal system on the Ujh River has been approved to

check infiltration and harness the uncontrolled flow of water towards Pakistan, with the proposal cleared by the Ministries of Defence and Home Affairs.

He announced that over Rs 1,400 crore has been allocated for Jammu and Kashmir, including Rs 10 crore for temporary repairs in Kathua, and minimal more than Rs 2 crore for each of the damaged public assets and structures, subject to



assessment by the district administration.

He said funds for restoration of permanent infrastructure would be provided by the respective departments.

The minister also held a public durbat at Kathua and pointed out that long-pending projects such as the Ujh Multipurpose Project and the Shahpur Kandi Dam, which

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Sub-Zero Cold Persists Across Kashmir

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 3: Cold conditions persisted across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on Saturday, with several places in the Kashmir Valley recording sub-zero minimum temperatures, while Ladakh continued

to experience intense cold, officials said.

According to data compiled by Kashmir Weather, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 1.5 degrees Celsius, while the nearby Srinagar Airport registered a low

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Tourists Throng Guldanda After First Snow

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BHADERWAH/JAMMU, JAN 3: The season's first snowfall, followed by bright sunshine, has transformed Guldanda in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district into a picturesque winter hotspot, attracting a large

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Budget session 2026-27

Each MLA can submit 20 questions, 4 resolutions and two bills

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JAN 03: Each MLA can submit twenty questions, four resolutions, and two bills for the upcoming Budget Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly beginning February 02, 2026.

As per a bulletin issued by the Legislative Assembly Secretariat, a copy of which is in possession of news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), each MLA may send notices of not more than ten starred and ten unstarred questions by or before January 12, 2026. They may also submit notices of not more than two bills by or before January 15, 2026, the bulletin states.

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J&K Proposes Incentives to Revive Sick Industries

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JAN 03: The Jammu & Kashmir Government has unveiled a draft amendment to its industrial policy 2021-30, proposing a slew of incentives aimed at transforming the Union Territory's indus-

trial landscape.

The Industries and Commerce Department has placed the proposed incentives in the public domain to seek suggestions from various stakeholders.

According to the proposed amendments, a copy of which is in possession of news

agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), sick industries under revival will receive the same incentives as new industrial units under the policy. "A special mechanism will identify and rehabilitate sick SME units (as per the Reserve Bank of India definition), and such units under revival will receive

the same incentives as new industrial units in the current policy," the draft states.

The amendments further provide that MSME units in Zone A shall be eligible for 30% financial assistance, subject to a ceiling of Rs 50 lakh, while units in Zone B

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Sopore Mandi, Infra Proposal to CM

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, JAN 03: Cabinet Minister Javid Ahmad Dar on Saturday chaired a high-level meeting in Baramulla to review issues related to urban infrastructure, mandi expansion and decongestion of Sopore.

The meeting was attended by MLA Sopore Irshad Rasool Kar, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla Minga Sherpa, and officers from the Housing and Urban Development, Planning, Marketing, Horticulture and other concerned departments.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the proposed expansion of the mandi, availability of land, development of a truck terminal, four-laning and two-laning of roads, creation of multi-level parking facilities, construction of new roads and installation of street lighting in Sopore. Officials said the deliberations lasted for over 90 minutes with inputs taken from all stakeholder departments.

Later talking to reporters, Cabinet Minister Javid

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ACB Nabs Tehsil Clerk for Bribe

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 03: The Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Saturday said to have trapped and arrested a clerk of the Tehsil Office Central Shalteng, Srinagar, for demanding and accepting a bribe of rupees 2,000 from a complainant in exchange for erasing his detention record from official registers.

According to a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Jammu and Kashmir Anti Corruption Bureau received a written complaint wherein the

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JKEDI rolls out 5th & 6th MDP batches in 18 districts: 504 participants including 479 women begin training under RAMP scheme

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, JANUARY 03: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) on Saturday launched the fifth and sixth batches of Management Development Programmes (MDPs) across 18 districts of the Union Territory under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme. The programme is funded by the Union Ministry of MSME and implemented in Jammu and Kashmir by the Industries & Commerce Department.

The MDPs were inaugurated simultaneously in Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal, Srinagar, Samba, Jammu, Pulwama, Ramban, Rajouri, Reasi, Doda, Poonch, Kulgam, Kupwara, Kathua, Kishtwar and Udhampur. A total



of 504 entrepreneurs, including 479 women, have enrolled for the 30-hour training programme scheduled over a period of six days.

At Udhampur, the programme was inaugurated by Sh. Jugal Kumar Sharma (JKAS), Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), while at Nagam, Budgam, the inaugural session was presided over by Sh. Irshad Ahmad Dar, Block Programme Manager, NRLM. In the remaining districts, the MDPs were inaugurated by the respective District Nodal Officers and their teams.

The district-level programmes have witnessed enthusiastic participation from local MSMEs, who will receive hands-on training in modern business management practices. The initiative aims to strengthen managerial, financial and operational capabilities of

entrepreneurs, enabling them to scale up their enterprises, improve competitiveness and adopt sustainable business models.

The MDP curriculum covers business planning, marketing strategies, digital tools, financial literacy, statutory compliance, innovation and leadership, supplemented by case studies, mentorship sessions and experiential workshops for practical exposure.

Over the next six days, participating entrepreneurs and MSME operators will interact with industry experts, certified trainers and JKEDI faculty. The simultaneous rollout of MDPs across 18 districts underscores JKEDI's commitment to inclusive entrepreneurship development, particularly in remote and underserved areas of the Union Territory.

DC Ramban reviews progress of development works, discusses disaster mitigation plan

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

RAMBAN, JANUARY 03: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress of development works currently under implementation in District Ramban and to deliberate on the Disaster Mitigation Plan.

The Deputy Commissioner took a detailed review of physical and financial progress of works being executed under the District Capex Budget 2025-26, Constituency Development Fund, SANYJ 2025-26, Tribal Affairs, District Road Safety, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), SDRF 2025-26, APDP, ABDP, Untied Funds and SASCI Scheme.

The meeting also reviewed progress related to the revival of heritage sites, financial inclusion initiatives, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, PM-KISAN Scheme and SDRF.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Dr. Shakeeb Ahmed Rather; Executive Engineers of PWD Ramban and Banihal, Jal Shakti, JPDCL and REW, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council, Lead District Manager and other concerned officers.

The Deputy Commissioner set timelines for the completion of all development works under the District Capex Budget and other schemes. He directed the officers of executing departments to submit daily progress reports to ensure effective monitoring and timely completion of all ongoing and new projects, with a focus on achieving 100 percent physical and financial targets.

The DC specifically directed the Executive Engineers of PWD, REW, Jal Shakti and JPDCL to ensure completion of works related to Education, Health, Minor Irrigation, Water Supply Schemes, Youth Services & Sports, Urban Local Bodies and other key sectors. The CEO, CMO and other concerned officers were instructed to closely follow up on the progress of projects under their respective jurisdictions.

The Deputy Commissioner also resolved several issues on the spot that were hindering the pace of progress and issued necessary directions to the concerned officers.

Further, the Disaster Mitigation Plan was discussed in detail and directions were issued to submit the plan within the prescribed timeline, strictly adhering to the laid-down guidelines.

Officers of all departments were directed to expedite the implementation of schemes and ensure that the benefits reach the intended beneficiaries in a timely and effective manner.

JKEDI Udhampur launches 5th batch of Management Development Programme under RAMP scheme

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 03: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute Udhampur today commenced the 5th batch of the management development programme under the RAMP scheme of the Ministry of MSME, Government of India here at its District Centre.

The programme was inaugurated by Additional District Development Commissioner, Jugal Kumar Anand as the chief guest.

The inaugural function was also attended by the Deputy Director Employment, Mohinder Kumar Sharma along with officials from JKEDI and the Employment Department.



The chief guest interacted with the participants of an ongoing Hybrid mode capacity building programme under Mission YUVA.

The ADC shared valuable insights on scaling up business ventures and highlighted the immense opportunities available for MSMEs and startups under the J&K Startup Policy.

He encouraged aspiring entrepreneurs to effectively utilize various government support mechanisms to ensure sustainable and inclusive business growth.

On the very first day of the programme, 20 candidates registered reflecting strong enthusiasm and growing entrepreneurial interest among local youth, MSMEs and aspiring business owners in the district.

The one-week-long management development programme aims to strengthen managerial capabilities and promote entrepreneurship in the region.

MLA Bahu chairs RKS meeting at Gandhi Nagar Hospital

Emphasises top notch patient care facilities, infrastructure

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, JANUARY 03: Member of Legislative Assembly Bahu, Vikram Randhawa today chaired a Rogi Kalyan Samiti (RKS) meeting at Gandhi Nagar Hospital to discuss the initiatives aimed at enhancing patient care services.

The meeting reviewed a series of quality improvement measures including upgrading hospital infrastructure and extending support to patients admitted without attendants.

At the outset, the Medical Superintendent Dr. Narinder Singh Bhatial apprised the chair about the agenda of the meeting which included post facto sanctions regarding the procurement, repair works, payment of outsourced staff etc.

Other key issues discussed were the implementation of patient safety protocols, introduction of dress code for hospital staff and addressing workforce shortages across



departments.

The MLA Bahu, who also serves as the Chairman of the Committee, pitched for creating top notch health care facilities and infrastructure to provide the best possible treatment to the patients.

Acknowledging the Hospital's critical role in serving both urban and rural population, the Committee emphasized the importance of strengthening its healthcare capabilities to meet public needs effectively.

Later, the Chairman took a detailed tour of the hospital complex and inspected the Paediatrics Ward, OPD Block, Blood Bank, Maternity Ward and NICU.

Interacting with the patients and their attendants, he sought feedback on services and encouraged hospital staff to continue working with dedication and enthusiasm.

The meeting was attended by senior officials and doctors of the hospital along with representatives from PWD, PDD, PHE, AYUSH, NHM, Information and ICDS.

ADC Bhadarwah reviews progress of digitization initiatives; Mission YUVA

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BHADARWAH, JANUARY 03: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bhadarwah Sunil Kumar Bhutyal chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of ongoing digitization initiatives.

The meeting was held in both offline and online modes with some officers joining virtually.

The meeting focused on reviewing the current status of digitization works and streamlining processes to ensure better efficiency and transparency in public service delivery.

Tehsildars of Bhadarwah and Bhalla along with other revenue staff presented detailed updates



on digitization of land records, online services and the working status of digital platforms. Emphasis was laid on timely completion of pending tasks, resolving technical

issues and ensuring accuracy of data.

The meeting concluded with a resolve to further strengthen digital infrastructure and regularly

monitor progress to achieve the set objectives within the stipulated time frame.

Meanwhile, the Additional District Commissioner chaired a

review meeting of officers to review the implementation of Mission YUVA schemes.

Officers from stakeholder departments, Manager J&K Bank, Office Associate JKEDI, Coordinator NRLM and others briefed the chair about ongoing activities, target achievements and challenges faced in implementation.

Emphasis was also laid on proper monitoring, transparent selection of beneficiaries and speedy disposal of cases. The ADC urged the officers to work with dedication to make Mission YUVA a success in Bhadarwah and contribute towards youth empowerment and employment generation in the region.

Labour Department Kathua organises awareness programme on New Labour Codes

DLC Jammu highlights significance of labour law reforms

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KATHUA, JANUARY 03: The Labour Department Kathua today organised a one-day awareness-cum-interactive programme on New Labour Codes here at the SIDCO Complex Ghatti. The event formed part of the ongoing IEC campaign aimed at sensitising stakeholders about labour law reforms.

Deputy Labour Commissioner Jammu, Sukhpal Singh was the chief guest of the programme, attended by Human Resource professionals from the industrial units of the Ghatti Industrial Area and contractors.

The Deputy Labour Commissioner highlighted the significance of the New Labour Codes in the context of the evolving industrial scenario. He highlighted the reforms introduced to foster transparency, improve industrial relations and ensure balanced growth.

Assistant Labour Commissioner, Piyusha Khajuria in her welcome



address, outlined the objectives of the programme and emphasised

the need for spreading mass awareness about the New Labour

Codes to ensure industrial harmony and statutory compliance.

Labour Officer (Prosecution) Jammu Sanjay Bhat presented an overview of all four Labour Codes, elaborating on their scope, objectives and the transition from the existing labour laws to the new legal framework.

Technical sessions were held on the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code-2020 by the Labour Inspector, Ravinder Krundu who explained the key provisions related to safety, health and welfare of workers.

A dedicated session on the Industrial Relations Code-2020 was conducted by the Assistant Labour Commissioner. The ALC explained key reforms introduced under the Code in a simple and lucid manner.

An open house discussion was also held, during which queries and suggestions raised by the participants were discussed in detail.

MVD, Ayush Department organise free medical camp for drivers, cleaners and transporters at Drabshalla

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KISHTWAR, JANUARY 03: To promote the health and well-being of the transporter community and as part of the ongoing National Road Safety Month 2026, a free medical checkup camp was today held at BDO Office Drabshalla for drivers and cleaners including drivers engaged at the Ratle Hydro Electric Power Project.

The camp was organised by Motor Vehicle Department Kishtwar under the supervision of ARTO Tasleem Wani and in collaboration with the Health & Ayush Department with the support of Traffic Police and J&K Police Drabshalla.

About 150 drivers and cleaners availed free medical check-up and health screening conducted by trained medical staff. The beneficiaries were also provided free medicines.

Dr. Varun, Dr. Shabir and Vidya Lal, Pharmacist examined the patients in presence of MVI Robin Parihar; DTI Karan Singh; Sub-Inspector Deepak Mandlia and other officials.

Rapid drug tests of 70 drivers were also conducted during the camp along with



imparting awareness on safe driving practices and hazards of drug abuse. Besides, the dumper drivers engaged with the Ratle Power Project were directed to drive at limited speed, carry material within the permissible limit and dump the material at designated sites only.

The ARTO underscored the importance of drivers as major stakeholders in road safety and the need for conducting their regular health check-up. He emphasised that ensuring the physical fitness of drivers not only safeguards their personal health but also contributes to overall road safety.

He thanked the CMO and District Officer Ayush as well as DTI, Sub-Inspector Police Post Drabshalla and the transporters of Drabshalla for providing the necessary support for the success of the programme.

Rana inaugurates community langar at Bahu Fort Jammu

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, JANUARY 03: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today inaugurated a Community Langar at the historic Bahu Fort, Jammu.

On the occasion, the Minister interacted with the visitors and the devotees visiting Bahu Fort and the adjoining revered Kali Mata Temple.

He extended greetings to the visitors and enquired about the facilities being provided to them, emphasizing the importance of ensuring comfort, cleanliness and accessibility for all devotees.

The Minister also undertook a detailed tour of the fort and temple premises along with yatis and concerned officials to assess the existing civic amenities and infrastructure available for the



pilgrims. He reviewed the arrangements related to sanitation, drinking water supply and general upkeep of the premises.

During the visit, Rana stressed the need for systematic beautification of the Bahu Fort area besides creation of enhanced civic amenities to

improve the overall experience of the tourists.

He stated that issues pertaining to infrastructure development, sanitation, drinking water facilities and aesthetic enhancement would be taken with the concerned departments to ensure timely and effective implementation.

The Minister reiterated that sustained and focused efforts would be made to develop Bahu Fort as a major religious tourism destination in Jammu, while carefully preserving its rich cultural, historical and religious heritage.

The Minister was accompanied by the Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti Department, concerned Superintending Engineer and Executive Engineer besides other senior officers.

Mandeep Kaur leads sanitation drive in Jammu city under “Swachh Republic Day” campaign

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, JANUARY 3: In a major push to enhance cleanliness and civic hygiene ahead of the Republic Day celebration, Commissioner Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Department, Mandeep Kaur, today conducted an extensive sanitation drive in Jammu city under the “Swachh Republic Day” campaign.

The initiative aims to ensure a clean, safe and healthy urban environment in the run-up to January 26.

Under this special campaign, comprehensive cleanliness drives are being carried out across all wards under the jurisdiction of the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC).

The sanitation drive primarily focused on removal of legacy waste dumped in vacant plots, cleaning of Garbage Vulnerable Points (GVs), lifting of Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste from roadsides, removal of overgrown bushes, tree pruning and grass cutting, desilting of deep drains to prevent water logging, cleaning and maintenance of public toilets and addressing the persistent menace of stray animals in residential areas.

On the first day of the drive, focused sanitation activities were conducted in Ward Numbers 20, 21, 22, 23 and 73.

Mandeep Kaur personally inspected various locations along with Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation, Dr. Devansh Yadav and concerned officers of the Corporation.

The officers briefed the Commissioner Secretary on the ongoing sanitation measures and challenges on the ground.

Several prominent localities, including Gandhi Nagar, Valmiki Colony, Sanjay Nagar, Shastri Nagar, Nai Basti and Nanak Nagar were covered during today's drive.

During the inspection, the Commissioner Secretary issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned officers for the immediate removal of GVPs, C&D waste and garden waste. She also instructed the officers to



initiate compounding and enforcement action against the defaulters found violating sanitation and waste management norms. About 10 such drives have been scheduled till 26th of January 2026 and all the concerned officers were directed to be personally present during the drives.

As part of the drive, encroachments on footpaths and public spaces in the form of extensions, rehries, fencing were also removed.

The Commissioner Secretary further directed that all encroachments on lanes and footpaths across the city be identified and removed without delay, emphasizing zero tolerance towards violation of civic norms.

The Commissioner Secretary exhorted upon the officers and field staff of the Jammu Municipal Corporation to carry out sanitation drives with zeal, dedication and a sense of responsibility. He stressed that the impact of these efforts must be clearly visible at the ground level. She underscored that sustained cleanliness requires regular monitoring, strict enforcement and coordinated efforts from all stakeholders.

She called upon the citizens to actively cooperate with the Jammu Municipal Corporation by maintaining cleanliness in their surroundings, avoiding littering, segregating waste at source and refraining from encroaching upon public spaces. She emphasized that public participation is crucial for making Jammu a cleaner, healthier and more livable city.

MD NHM reviews progress on 50 bedded Critical Care Block, Integrated Public Health Lab at GMC Kathua

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, JANUARY 3: Mission Director, National Health Mission, Jammu & Kashmir, Baseer UI Haq Choudhary, visited Government Medical College, Kathua to review progress on 50 bedded Critical Care Block and District Integrated Public Health Lab being constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM).

The Mission Director conducted a detailed inspection of the construction works and assessed the status of civil, electrical and allied components of the project. He emphasized complete adherence to the prescribed timelines, quality standards and compliance with the technical specifications. He asked the executing agency to expedite the pace of work and ensure completion of the project within the approved



timeframe.

The Mission Director stressed that the Critical Care Block is a vital healthcare infrastructure project aimed at strengthening the emergency and critical care services in the region. Once completed, the facility will significantly enhance the capacity of GMC Kathua to manage critical patients and improve overall healthcare delivery.

Director Health Services Jammu, Principal Government Medical College Kathua, officials from GMC Kathua and representatives of the executing agency accompanied the Mission Director during the visit.

A brief review meeting was also held at the site, wherein bottlenecks affecting the progress of the project were discussed and directions were issued for their immediate resolution.

ARTO Rajouri sensitizes driving aspirants to road safety at Nowshera Trial Ground

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

RAJOURI, JANUARY 03: As part of National Road Safety Month, the Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Rajouri Rajesh Gupta today conducted a road safety awareness drive for new driving aspirants at the Nowshera Trial Ground. During the programme, the aspirants were imparted essential tips on safe driving practices to minimize road accidents and promote responsible road behaviour. The ARTO emphasized the importance of avoiding over-speeding, refraining from the use of

mobile phones while driving and mandatory use of helmets while riding two-wheelers. Rajesh Gupta stressed that adherence to traffic rules and safety norms are crucial not only for the safety of drivers but also for pedestrians and other road users. He urged the aspirants to imbibe disciplined driving habits from the very beginning and to act as ambassadors of road safety in society. The initiative forms part of a series of awareness activities being organized across the district to inculcate a culture of safe and responsible driving under the aegis of National Road Safety Month.

Labour Deptt Samba hosts one-day awareness camp on New Labour Codes

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SAMBA, JANUARY 03: The Labour Department Samba organised a one-day awareness and interactive programme on the New Labour Codes today in the Baribrahmana Association Hall.

The programme was aimed at sensitising Human Resource (HR) professionals from industrial establishments and other stakeholders about the four new Labour Codes introduced by the Government of India.

The focus was on generating awareness regarding the salient features, compliance requirements and additional benefits of the four Labour Codes, which seek to simplify existing labour laws, improve compliance mechanism, enhance ease of doing business and strengthen the social security and welfare framework for workers.

The programme was graced by the Deputy Labour Commissioner Jammu Sukhpal Singh, who attended the event as the Chief Guest.

In his address, he highlighted the significance of the new Labour Codes in promoting transparency, streamlining compliance and balancing the interest



of employers and employees.

The event was also attended by President Baribrahmana Industrial Association Lalit Mahajan, who emphasised the importance of awareness and collaboration between industry stakeholders and the Labour Department for smooth implementation of the new labour reforms.

Assistant Labour Commissioner Samba Himani Jerath delivered a detailed presentation and guided the participants on the four new Labour Codes- The Wages Code; The Industrial Relations Code; The Code on Social

Security; The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code.

She elaborated on their practical implications, compliance procedures and the benefits offered to both industries and workers under the new legal framework.

The programme concluded with an interactive session during which participants raised queries and shared their experiences. The session was well appreciated by the attendees and proved to be a valuable platform for enhancing awareness and understanding of the new labour law regime.

JKAACL Operationalizes Guru-Shishya Parampara Scheme, reviving endangered art forms

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, JANUARY 03: The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) has operationalised the prestigious Guru-Shishya Parampara Scheme from January 1, 2026, marking the commencement of structured training classes by three selected Gurus at their respective locations across the Union Territory.

The initiative aims to preserve, revitalize and pass on rare and endangered traditional art forms of Jammu and Kashmir through the time-honoured Guru-Shishya tradition.

The scheme seeks to identify eminent masters of traditional art forms and engage them in the systematic training of young disciples, ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the region's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Under the programme, each selected Guru imparts training to a group of five to eight Shishyas in a specific art form. To ensure sustained engagement, a monthly honorarium of 10,000 is provided to the Guru, 7,500 to the accompanist or assistant and 5,000 to each Shishya.

The duration of training has been fixed at one year and is extendable by another year subject to the performance review.

The scheme received an overwhelming response from across the Union Territory with nearly 200 applications, including 63 from Kashmir and 137 from Jammu.

After detailed scrutiny and evaluation by a panel of experts, three traditional art forms on the verge of extinction were identified and eminent practitioners were appointed as Gurus to revive and safeguard these cultural expressions.

Salochna Devi has been selected as Guru for the Ghuria folk dance of Paddar, Dev Raj for the Massadey folk tradition of Bani and Abdul Rashid Mir for the Dastan folk tradition of Kashmir.

All three Gurus have commenced imparting structured training to their respective groups of Shishyas, ensuring authenticity, discipline and continuity of these traditions.

Massadey is a vibrant Dogri folk performance deeply rooted in storytelling, music and movement, reflecting local legends, myths and social values. Dastan-e-Goi is a classical oral storytelling tradition renowned for its elaborate narratives and dramatic expression, representing a rich legacy of oral literature. Ghuria, a women-led folk dance of Paddar in Kishtwar district, blends flute, dhouns and call-and-response singing and is deeply embedded in community life, though presently facing the threat of extinction.

Through the Guru-Shishya Parampara Scheme, JKAACL is continuing its efforts to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir by ensuring its transmission to future generations in its most authentic and traditional form.

MLA Ajaz Ahmed Jan reviews implementation of RDD schemes in Poonch

Stresses timely completion, visible on-ground impact

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

POONCH, JANUARY 03: Member of Legislative Assembly Haveli, Ajaz Ahmed Jan chaired a meeting held today at the Dak Bungalow Poonch to review the implementation and progress of the Rural Development Department (RDD) schemes in the district.

The meeting was attended by the Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Assistant Commissioner Planning (ACP), Executive Engineer REW, Block Development Officers of all Blocks, along with district-level RDD officers and staff. Former Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members and representatives from civil society also participated.

Taking a comprehensive review of flagship schemes including MGNREGA, PMAY-G, Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM-G), District Capex and UT Capex, he inquired



about physical and financial progress, ground-level implementation, fund utilization and execution challenges. Emphasis was laid on ensuring transparency, adherence to quality standards, convergence and timely completion of works.

The MLA appreciated the effective and efficient administration of the Rural Development Department under the leadership of the Commissioner Secretary RDD. He further acknowledged the department's sustained efforts in extending benefits to the grassroots level, especially in far-flung and border areas. He stressed the need to plan development works with an optimum cost-benefit approach and advised to avoid fragmented and small works to create need based, durable and high-impact assets.

The MLA further emphasized the need for early completion of

ongoing works and directed the department to prepare a comprehensive, realistic and inclusive development plan for the upcoming financial year by taking all stakeholders on board. He also appealed to the members of civil society to extend full cooperation to the department to ensure smooth execution of developmental activities at the Panchayat and block levels.

During the interactive session, public representatives and participants raised issues related to timely issuance of job cards under MGNREGA, delays in the tendering process and drinking water scarcity in certain Panchayats.

The MLA assured that the genuine concerns and developmental demands highlighted during the meeting would be examined and taken up with the concerned authorities for early and appropriate resolution.

HT EDITORIAL

Let people pay revised transport fare without fuss

Last month a group of transporters called on the transport minister Satish Sharma and projected multiple demands before the minister. The most important demand was the increase in fare with respect to the passenger transport vehicles operating in both Kashmir and Jammu divisions of the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. Before this meeting the transporters had threatened to go on strike and in fact they had given a strike call in support of their demands.

Over the past few years, the transporters have alleged that the union territory government has been turning a blind eye towards their genuine concerns. At the end of the meeting the transporters called off their strike and they decided to carry on with their operations without any disturbance. It was decided that there would be a hike of 18 percent in the existing fare of the passenger transport vehicles. The hike has been made effective from January 1, 2026.

Given the fact that not much coverage was given to the decisions taken during the meeting between the transport minister and the transporters most of the people are not aware about the hike in the fare. It is due to this reason that over the past three days or so there have been arguments between the passengers and the transporters. While on one side the transporters have been pleading with the passengers to pay a new rate, the people on the other side are not ready to do the same.

In the past whenever there was a hike in the passenger tariff the same was given publicity through the print media and mainstream media in the form of radio and television. The leading newspapers will carry out the information in the form of advertisements with the people getting to know about the revised fare. In such a scenario there were less skirmishes between the commuters and the transporters with people willing to pay the new rate even though there were some exceptions.

There is no denying the fact that the circulation of newspapers has come down drastically but that does not mean that publicity of matters relating to people would be shelved. As on date it has been observed that government departments make use of the different social media platforms in making people aware about the various programmes. Social media platforms are also used to inform the masses about the government orders and decisions. These can be used in this situation as well.

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Kashmiri Youth Revives Mother Tongue Online



■ MOHAMMAD ARFAT WANI

In the valleys of Kashmir, where the river sings and the mountains bear silent witness to the passage of ages, an undercurrent runs through the life of the people, an ancient river that bears the river of history, culture, and identity, and the heart-beat of this river is an ancient language that is as old as the first songs of the shepherds and the verses of its mystic poet. The language that is thus aptly described is the ancient language of the people of this heaven on earth, the language known variously as "Koshur" or "Kashmiri," an ancient language that is one of the oldest spoken languages of the world, belonging to the ancient "Dardic" language "group" that is known to belong to the "Indo-European stock" of languages.

For many centuries, the language had prospered, being the language of "Sufi poetic and philosophic expression," with literary giants such as "Lal Ded" and "Sheikh Noor-ud-Din" inspiring the "audacious, whimsical, and rebellious" poetic expressions that dwelt on "love, logic, and mystic visions." But this great language today finds itself in an "apathetic future" that "sways listlessly" somewhere "between the abyss of survival and the quicksand of oblivion," with the "youth of today" "enthusiastically" urged to "speak Urdu or English, the two languages that hold the keys to progress and advancement." The "words that once vibrated with the echo of wisdom, love, mirth, and history" today "resound only in memories that linger like mellow moonlight on the hills of the past" with UNESCO classifying the language "as an endangered language that is on the verge of becoming an 'ex'.

Amidst this decline, a young poet and languages enthusiast, Touqeer Ashraf from Pulwama, is a ray of hope and refuses to treat Kashmiri as if it is something that exists only within the pages of ancient historical texts. Touqeer is conversant in Kashmiri, Urdu, and English and chose the



digital medium not as a means to earn fame or make money but as a way to breathe life back into a dying language. Kaeshur Praw is the name of Touqeer's digital venture that he created in the year 2021, which is essentially an ever-expanding classroom and cultural hub that disseminates words and phrases, linguistic and cultural lessons and historical anecdotes, pronunciation lessons, and poetry, all within short and catchy video formats on his social handles such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Through his innovative digital initiative, Touqeer is able to reach out to the younger generation who may be language ambidextrous by upbringing, and provides an opportunity for kids and adults alike to renew their connection and affiliation with Kashmiri and its language and culture that they had somewhere lost along the way, and also provides a window to Kashmiri language and culture that always found itself standing at the crossroads of various civilizations and cultures.

Secondly, and equally important, is the impact of Touqeer's work, which is less about what happens in his poetry and more about how it remedies. Kaeshur Praw recognizes in language more than is sometimes

thought, and it is not only this aspect of language Kaeshur Praw is trying to move away from, but it's how such uncertainties impact what he does. A people's reticence or apology about what amounts to their voice stunts a people's culture, and Kaeshur Praw's work is to start this movement of identification with and appreciation of Kashmiri speech in particular. Based in poetics inspired by spiritual and literary luminaries like Lal Ded, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din, Rasool Mir, and Wahab Khaar, Touqeer's projects in digital media turn language into life itself, where understanding is less about abstract study and more about actual experience.

The initiative initiated by Touqeer is a reflection of the new trend emerging among the youth in Kashmir to reclaim their language. Seerat Hafiz, for example, created Yikvot, a virtual reading group that reads original and translation-based Kashmiri literature each week, making the stuff interesting for the new generation of learners in the gen Z population. The online communities Kaeshur Praw and Yikvot use trends, engagement activities, and social interactions to bring the focus to the Kashmiri language that cannot otherwise engage the population in the classroom or

general media.

However, the following are some of the difficulties that Kashmiri faces: There is only a small presence of Kashmiri in mainstream publishing and media, and it is often excluded from the curriculums of schools except in the early classes, and because of financial considerations, the use of languages that would help in achieving success and mobility in life is preferred. There are also difficulties related to the use of these platforms in that YouTube and other platforms are restricted in recognizing the Kashmiri content on these platforms. The Perso-Arabic script has traditional design constraints when it comes to advanced technologies, and the Romanized Kashmiri scripts also lack standardized design. The importance of Kashmiri matters because language is not simply a list of words, but culture, tradition, and worldview too, which is lost with each passing song, proverb, and story when each language is lost in itself. Therefore, as reminded by the effort of Touqeer Ashraf, preserving is not only hard but is creative and social as well because with each and every utterance in the language, there is an affirmation of identity and continuity in whatever way and form it happens because when it comes to the long and rich past of Kashmir, languages have been protected in the sense of their being in houses, markets, and farms, and in today's world, there is hope in cyberspace as well.

In conclusion, Touqeer Ashraf and efforts such as "Kaeshur Praw" are more than just online endeavors and symbolize a "cultural renaissance," proving what a "Touqeer believes"—that Kashmiri is a language of the past and instead represents a "breath of life," a "beating heart," and a "pulse of identity," and its "resurrection is in our hands," requiring dedication and a shared "dream of giving a new life to a language through technology and innovation," proving "passion and technology and tradition and languages and voices and culture and more can add up to a lot more than just a sum of parts of something!"

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Teaching; A Less Traveled Road



■ MOOL RAJ

In Jammu and Kashmir, teaching is often seen as the road less traveled because it lacks the recognition, prestige, and respect it truly deserves. While civil and military bureaucracies enjoy status, power, and privileges, teachers, the very architects of those officers, are left struggling for survival on meager salaries without authority, protocol, or social esteem. It is an undeniable irony that those who illuminate the paths of others live in the shadows of neglect and deprivation.

In our society, teaching has unfortunately become the last resort when it comes to choosing a profession. Talented and bright youth, who could have revolutionized the education system, hesitate to opt for teaching because it fails to offer financial security, social recognition, or opportunities for advancement. The very profession that shapes minds, molds characters, and builds nations is treated as insignificant. When a teacher, the backbone of the nation, cannot afford a dignified life, how can we expect him or her to nurture a generation of dreamers, doers, and leaders?

It is high time Jammu and Kashmir redefines the stature of teachers. Teachers must be

regarded as the true nation builders, far more respectable than any civil or military officer. They are the ones who polish raw minds into refined gems. They must not be confined to classrooms only; they should be included in the process of national decision making. Their knowledge, wisdom, and experience should guide educational, social, and even economic policies, for they understand the pulse of the nation better than anyone else.

Imagine a Jammu and Kashmir where teachers not live in well furnished government accommodations, not commute in official vehicles, and not enjoy the same protocol as senior bureaucrats. Imagine a society where every professional, regardless of rank or position, salutes the teacher, not as a mere formality but as a heartfelt gesture of gratitude. Such respect would not corrupt the teaching profession but would elevate it. These privileges would inspire competent and brilliant individuals to enter the field of education with pride and passion.

The real tragedy lies in the mindset that teaching is for those who fail elsewhere. This perception has crippled the dignity of the profession. In truth, teaching demands intellect, creativity, patience, and empathy, qualities that not everyone possesses. If doctors heal bodies and soldiers protect borders, then teachers build the very souls of a nation. They deserve not only respect but also authority and comfort to perform their duties effectively.

If we can offer blue sirens, lavish residences, and countless perks to those who manage the state machinery, why can we not offer the same to those who create the minds that operate that

machinery? Teachers must not be seen as replaceable or secondary. They are the foundation upon which all other professions stand. The doctor, the engineer, the officer, the judge, and the soldier all pass through the nurturing hands of teachers. To neglect them is to weaken the very roots of our national strength.

Providing teachers with power, prestige, and privileges is not an act of generosity. It is an investment in the nation's destiny. When teachers are empowered, motivated, and honored, they will produce thinkers, inventors, and reformers who can lift Pakistan to new heights. But when they are humiliated, underpaid, and ignored, mediocrity becomes the fate of the nation.

Jammu and Kashmir's destiny can change only when we dare to travel this less traveled road, the road of uplifting teachers. It is time to make teaching not a refuge for the helpless but a dream for the talented. The uniform of a teacher should command the same respect as that of an army officer. The government vehicle with a blue siren should remind everyone that this person carries the nation's future in his hands.

Let us salute our teachers. Let us grant them their rightful place in society. Let us build a Jammu and Kashmir where teaching becomes the most desired and dignified profession. Because every soldier, every judge, every minister, and every leader first learns to hold a pen from a teacher, the silent guardian of the nation's destiny.

THE AUTHOR IS A REGULAR COLUMNIST AND FREELANCE WRITER

India strengthens its global space standing

The satellite deployed during the mission, BlueBird Block-2, forms part of a next-generation communication constellation aimed at enabling direct cellular broadband connectivity from space to standard mobile smartphones.

Unlike traditional satellite communication systems that require specialized ground terminals, this architecture seeks to integrate seamlessly with existing mobile devices. If implemented at scale, such technology could redefine global connectivity by extending network coverage to remote and underserved regions, maritime zones, and areas affected by natural disasters or infrastructure disruptions



■ **MOHAMMAD HANIEF**

India achieved a significant milestone in its expanding space programme with the successful launch of the LVM3-M6 mission, a heavy-lift operation that placed the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite into low Earth orbit. The mission represents the most ambitious commercial deployment yet undertaken by an Indian launch vehicle and marks a decisive step forward in the country's evolving role as a trusted global provider of space launch services.

The Launch Vehicle Mark-3, India's most powerful rocket, lifted off smoothly from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, executing its flight sequence with precision and reliability. By successfully carrying the heaviest satellite ever launched by an indigenous Indian vehicle, the mission highlighted the growing sophistication of India's launch infrastructure and the technical confidence that has been built through years of methodical development and operational experience.

The successful flight of LVM3-M6 reflects the steady momentum of India's space programme under sustained political and institutional support. Over the past decade, the Indian Space Research Organisation has transitioned from a primarily national mission-oriented agency to a globally competitive space organization capable of delivering complex commercial missions. The LVM3 platform has played a central role in this transition, evolving from a developmental heavy-lift launcher into a mature system trusted for high-value payloads.

This mission assumes added significance as it marks the third fully commercial deployment using the LVM3 vehicle. Conducted under a commercial arrangement between NewSpace India Limited, the government-owned commercial arm of ISRO, and the United States-based company AST SpaceMobile, the launch underscores India's growing integration into the international space economy. The success of such missions enhances confidence among global satellite operators seeking dependable, cost-effective alternatives for launching large and technologically advanced spacecraft.

From a technical perspective, the LVM3-M6 mission demonstrated a high degree of precision in orbital insertion, reinforcing the vehicle's reputation for accuracy and consistency. The flawless execution of all mission phases, from lift-off to satellite separation, further consolidates the LVM3's standing among contemporary heavy-lift launch vehicles worldwide. This reliability is particularly crucial at a time when demand for heavy payload launches is rising sharply due to the proliferation of large communication satel-



lites and constellation-based systems.

The satellite deployed during the mission, BlueBird Block-2, forms part of a next-generation communication constellation aimed at enabling direct cellular broadband connectivity from space to standard mobile smartphones. Unlike traditional satellite communication systems that require specialized ground terminals, this architecture seeks to integrate seamlessly with existing mobile devices. If implemented at scale, such technology could redefine global connectivity by extending network coverage to remote and underserved regions, maritime zones, and areas affected by natural disasters or infrastructure disruptions.

India's role in supporting such advanced communication missions highlights the increasing technological confidence of its space sector. By facilitating the deployment of cutting-edge satellites, ISRO and its commercial partners are contributing to the broader transformation of how space-based services are delivered worldwide. The successful launch of BlueBird Block-2 is therefore not only a technical achievement but also a strategic contribution to the future of global telecommunications.

The LVM3-M6 mission also reflects India's long-

standing emphasis on self-reliance in critical technologies. The launch vehicle, its propulsion systems, avionics, and ground support infrastructure have been developed largely through indigenous efforts, supported by a growing ecosystem of domestic industries and research institutions. This emphasis on indigenisation has allowed India to build complex systems while maintaining cost efficiency and operational control, attributes that have become hallmarks of the country's space programme.

As the LVM3 continues to demonstrate its heavy-lift capabilities, its importance extends beyond commercial launches. The vehicle forms the backbone of India's human spaceflight ambitions under the Gaganyaan programme and is expected to play a pivotal role in future deep-space and planetary missions. Each successful mission strengthens confidence in the vehicle's ability to meet the stringent safety and reliability requirements of crewed spaceflight and long-duration missions.

On the global stage, India's space achievements are increasingly being viewed through the lens of strategic capability and economic opportunity. The international launch market is becoming more competitive, with established and emerging players vying for a share of the growing demand for satellite deployment. In this environment, India's combination of technological reliability, competitive pricing, and a strong record of mission success positions it as an attractive partner for governments and private companies alike.

The success of the LVM3-M6 mission reinforces India's image as a spacefaring nation capable of executing complex, high-stakes operations with consistency. It also signals a broader shift in the country's space policy, which now places greater emphasis on commercialization, private sector participation, and international collaboration. These elements are expected to drive the next phase of growth in India's space sector, expanding its contribution to both national development and the global space economy.

Looking ahead, the experience gained from the LVM3-M6 mission is expected to inform future enhancements to India's heavy-lift launch capabilities. As satellite technologies evolve and payload requirements become more demanding, continued innovation in launch systems will be essential. The demonstrated performance of the LVM3 provides a strong foundation for such advancements and reinforces confidence in India's ability to meet future challenges in space exploration and satellite deployment.

In many ways, the LVM3-M6 mission encapsulates the broader trajectory of India's space programme—marked by incremental progress, technological self-reliance, and an increasingly outward-looking orientation. By successfully executing one of its most demanding commercial missions to date, India has not only strengthened its position in the global launch market but also reaffirmed its long-term commitment to excellence in space science and technology.

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Bodybuilding: One of the Most Addictive Sports Activities



■ **SAHIL MANZOOR BHATTI**

According to biological science, human life passes through different stages, and each stage has its own importance. One of the most critical and sensitive stages of life is adolescence. During this period, many biological, physical, and psychological changes take place naturally in the human body. Adolescence is the stage when hormonal changes begin, and these hormones play a vital role in shaping the body structure of both males and females. Because of these changes, the body starts developing strength, height, muscle mass, and emotional maturity.

Adolescence usually starts at the age of 9 years in females and around 11 years in males. This stage is considered very crucial because teenagers are highly influenced by their surroundings. Their behavior, thinking pattern, and lifestyle choices are shaped during this time. If this stage is not handled properly, teenagers may get involved in negative activities such as drug abuse, smoking, alcohol consumption, aggressive behavior, arrogance, stubbornness, impatience, and other harmful habits. These issues not only damage their health but also affect society as a whole.

Therefore, teenagers need proper guidance, counseling, motivation, and

positive engagement during this period. Parents, teachers, society, and government institutions must work together for the upliftment of young minds. Our society has produced many great personalities who have contributed enormously to the nation through discipline, dedication, and hard work. These role models should be introduced to the youth so that they can learn the value of a healthy and purposeful life.

Despite various efforts by the government and administration at different levels, we are still facing challenges like drug addiction, crime, and unhealthy lifestyles among the youth. Although many awareness programs are being conducted, the results are not fully satisfactory. This shows that we need stronger and more practical solutions to engage young people in positive activities. One of the best and most effective solutions is promoting sports and physical fitness, especially bodybuilding.

Life is a mixture of positive and negative experiences. Every event in this world has its own story and lesson. Today, in this article, I want to motivate people of all age groups towards bodybuilding, which is one of the most trending and beneficial sports activities in the country. Bodybuilding is not just about developing muscles; it is about building discipline, confidence, and a healthy lifestyle.

India is among the countries that have a rich history of sports and physical culture. From ancient times, physical fitness has been given great importance. Today, India has good sports infrastructure and actively participates in international sports events. Bodybuilding has gained immense popularity in recent

years, especially among the youth. Gyms are opening everywhere, and people are becoming more conscious about their health and appearance.

From my personal experience, bodybuilding is one of the best and most addictive sports activities. Once you start exercising regularly, you feel energetic, confident, and mentally relaxed. Bodybuilding gives an attractive shape to the body and helps in maintaining overall fitness. It improves strength, stamina, flexibility, and endurance. More importantly, it keeps a person away from unhealthy habits.

There are many benefits of bodybuilding, some of which I would like to highlight based on my own experience:

■ **Boosts Immunity and Keeps Diseases Away:**

Regular bodybuilding exercises strengthen the immune system. A strong body can fight infections and diseases more effectively. People who exercise regularly fall sick less often and recover faster.

■ **Helps in Temperature Regulation:**

Bodybuilding keeps the body warm during winters by improving blood circulation. During summers, regular exercise helps the body stay relaxed and reduces stress levels.

■ **Reduces Obesity and Burns Extra Fat:**

Bodybuilding is very effective for obese people. It helps burn excess fat and brings the body weight to an optimal level. Regular workouts improve metabolism and reduce the risk of lifestyle diseases like diabetes and heart problems.

■ **Reduces Belly Fat and Improves Digestion:**

One of the major benefits of bodybuilding is the reduction of belly fat. Exercise improves digestion and increases appetite in a healthy way, which helps in maintaining a balanced diet.

■ **Improves Mental Health:**

Bodybuilding keeps the mind happy and relaxed. Exercise releases stress, anxiety, and depression. Whenever you feel low or stressed, a good workout can refresh your mood and improve mental clarity.

All these benefits have motivated me to adopt bodybuilding as a regular part of my life. First of all, one must develop a positive mindset and say to oneself: "I want to look good, stay disease-free, and live a healthy life. I will not fall into drug addiction. I will motivate my friends to engage in sports and fitness activities, and I will remain fit and active."

Nowadays, gym centers are available almost everywhere. These gyms are equipped with modern machines, advanced equipment, music systems, and hygienic environments. Trained and experienced trainers are also available to guide beginners properly. This provides a great opportunity, especially during winter days, to burn extra fat and build strength.

However, joining a gym alone is not enough. One must follow discipline, consistency, and a balanced diet. Diet plays a very important role in bodybuilding. A healthy diet should include proteins, carbohydrates, healthy fats, fruits, vegetables, and sufficient water. Junk food, excessive sugar, and oily items should be avoided. Natural food is always

better than artificial supplements.

Gym trainers should be followed sincerely to avoid muscle cramps, injuries, and bone-related problems. Beginners should start slowly and gradually increase the intensity of workouts. Proper warm-up and cool-down exercises are also very important.

I strongly suggest everyone, especially youth, to join gym centers or engage in some form of physical activity. It will not only improve physical fitness but also bring mental peace and self-confidence. A fit body leads to a fit mind, and a fit mind leads to a successful life.

The government and local administration should also take initiative by providing gym centers at the Panchayat and village levels. This will encourage more people to participate in fitness activities, especially those who cannot afford private gyms. Community fitness centers can play a vital role in building a healthy society.

One important suggestion I would like to share is to focus on machine exercises for at least six months in the beginning. This helps in giving proper shape and cutting to the body. People should believe in natural diets and avoid unnecessary supplements, as they may have side effects in the long run.

In conclusion, bodybuilding is not just a sport; it is a lifestyle. It keeps people physically fit, mentally strong, and socially responsible. It helps in fighting negative habits and promotes a positive approach towards life. If our youth adopts bodybuilding and fitness as a habit, we can build a healthier, stronger, and more disciplined society.

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The Mystic Herb: Cinnamon



■ DR. (H.C.) SURINDERPAL SINGH

Cinnamon is one of the most ancient and revered spices known to humanity, derived from the inner bark of trees belonging to the genus *Cinnamomum*. Its use dates back several centuries, where it occupied an important place not only as a flavoring agent but also as a medicinal substance in traditional systems such as Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Unani. Across cultures and civilizations, cinnamon has been valued for its warm aroma, distinctive taste and healing potential. Even today, its acceptance as a household spice, particularly in kitchens, remains widespread and unquestioned. In recent decades, however, cinnamon has moved beyond traditional wisdom and attracted significant scientific attention due to its diverse bioactive compounds and promising health benefits.

Spices have historically played a dual role in human societies, serving both culinary and therapeutic purposes. Among them, cinnamon holds a distinctive position because of its global use and well-documented medicinal attributes. Botanically, cinnamon is obtained from the dried inner bark of evergreen trees, and among the many species of *Cinnamomum*, two are most commonly used. *Cinnamomum verum*, also known as Ceylon cinnamon or true cinnamon, is considered milder and safer for long-term use, while *Cinnamomum cassia*, commonly referred to as Cassia cinnamon, is stronger in flavor and more widely available. Although both types share aromatic and medicinal qualities, they differ considerably in their chemical composition, especially in coumarin content, which has implications for safety and dosage. Understanding these differences is essential for the rational and safe use of cinnamon in modern healthcare and daily life.

The medicinal value of cinnamon is largely attributed to its rich phytochemical composition. It contains a wide range of bioactive compounds, including cinnamaldehyde, eugenol, cinnamic acid, procyanidins and various polyphenols. Cinnamaldehyde is the principal compound responsible for cinnamon's characteristic aroma and taste, and it has been shown to possess strong antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Polyphenols present in cinnamon contribute significantly to its ability to scavenge free radicals and improve insulin sensitivity, making it particularly valuable in metabolic disorders. Eugenol, another important constituent, is known for its analgesic and antiseptic properties and has traditionally been used in dental care and pain relief.

These bioactive compounds exert their effects through multiple biological mechanisms. Cinnamon has been found to modulate inflammatory cytokines, thereby reducing chronic inflammation



that underlies many modern diseases. It improves insulin receptor signaling, which enhances glucose uptake by cells and supports better glycemic control. Cinnamon also inhibits the growth of various pathogenic microorganisms, including bacteria and fungi, while its antioxidant properties help neutralize oxidative stress and protect cellular structures from damage. The multifaceted mechanisms of action explain why cinnamon has such a wide range of therapeutic applications.

One of the most extensively researched health benefits of cinnamon relates to metabolic health and glycemic control. Several clinical studies suggest that cinnamon can improve insulin sensitivity and help reduce fasting blood glucose levels in individuals with type 2 diabetes when used as an adjunct to standard medical therapy. Cinnamon appears to slow gastric emptying and enhance glucose metabolism, thereby preventing sharp spikes in blood sugar levels after meals. Although it should not be viewed as a standalone treatment for diabetes, its supportive role in glycemic management has been widely acknowledged.

Cinnamon also plays a role in promoting cardiovascular health. Research indicates that regular consumption of cinnamon may lead to modest reductions in total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol and triglycerides. These effects are particularly important in reducing the risk of atherosclerosis and other cardiovascular disorders. The antioxidant properties of cinnamon help protect the vascular endothelium from oxidative damage, while its anti-inflammatory actions may further support heart health. Together, these benefits highlight cinnamon's potential as a natural adjunct in cardiovascular risk reduction.

Chronic inflammation and oxidative stress are central contributors to many non-communicable diseases, including

arthritis, cancer and neurodegenerative disorders. Cinnamon's polyphenolic compounds play a crucial role in neutralizing free radicals and down-regulating inflammatory pathways. By reducing oxidative stress at the cellular level, cinnamon supports overall cellular health and may slow the progression of chronic diseases. This anti-inflammatory and antioxidant synergy makes cinnamon particularly valuable in preventive healthcare.

Another important aspect of cinnamon's therapeutic profile is its antimicrobial and immune-supportive properties. Cinnamon has demonstrated broad-spectrum activity against a variety of bacteria, fungi and even some viruses. This antimicrobial action explains its traditional use in treating respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. By inhibiting the growth of harmful microorganisms, cinnamon supports the body's natural defense mechanisms and contributes to immune modulation. In traditional medicine, it has often been used to manage coughs, colds and digestive infections, reflecting its role as a natural immune enhancer.

Cinnamon has also been traditionally associated with digestive and gastrointestinal health. It has been used for centuries to relieve indigestion, bloating and flatulence. Cinnamon stimulates the secretion of digestive enzymes, improves gut motility and helps maintain a healthy balance of gut microorganisms. Its carminative properties reduce gas formation, while its antimicrobial effects may help suppress pathogenic bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract. As a result, cinnamon continues to be a popular remedy for various digestive complaints.

In recent years, emerging research has explored the neuroprotective and cognitive effects of cinnamon. Preliminary studies suggest that certain cinnamon compounds may inhibit the aggregation of tau proteins, a key path-

ological feature in neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Additionally, by reducing oxidative stress in neural tissue, cinnamon may help protect brain cells from damage. While these findings are promising, more extensive human studies are required to establish definitive conclusions. Nevertheless, the potential role of cinnamon in supporting cognitive health adds another dimension to its medicinal value.

Cinnamon can be incorporated into daily life in several practical ways. Dietary inclusion is the most common and simplest method, with cinnamon powder added to tea, milk, cereals, fruits, soups and curries. Cinnamon infusion or tea, prepared by boiling cinnamon sticks in water, allows for the extraction of active compounds in a gentle and traditional manner. In some cases, standardized cinnamon extracts are available as nutraceutical supplements and may be used under medical guidance, particularly for metabolic support. Cinnamon has also been used topically in diluted forms for its antifungal or antiseptic properties, although such applications require caution to avoid skin irritation. For regular and long-term use, Ceylon cinnamon is generally preferred because of its lower coumarin content and better safety profile.

The advantages of cinnamon use are numerous. It is a natural, affordable and widely available spice with multifunctional health benefits that span metabolic, cardiovascular, digestive and immune systems. Its rich antioxidant profile and long history of traditional use, now increasingly supported by scientific research, make it an appealing choice for health-conscious individuals. However, like all natural substances, cinnamon is not without limitations and precautions.

One of the primary concerns associated with cinnamon consumption is coumarin toxicity, particularly with

One of the most extensively researched health benefits of cinnamon relates to metabolic health and glycemic control. Several clinical studies suggest that cinnamon can improve insulin sensitivity and help reduce fasting blood glucose levels in individuals with type 2 diabetes when used as an adjunct to standard medical therapy. Cinnamon appears to slow gastric emptying and enhance glucose metabolism, thereby preventing sharp spikes in blood sugar levels after meals. Although it should not be viewed as a standalone treatment for diabetes, its supportive role in glycemic management has been widely acknowledged.

Cassia cinnamon, which contains higher levels of this compound. Excessive intake of coumarin may lead to liver toxicity and other adverse effects, especially when consumed over long periods. Cinnamon may also interact with certain medications, including antidiabetic and anticoagulant drugs, potentially enhancing their effects and increasing the risk of side effects. Although rare, allergic reactions to cinnamon can occur, especially with topical exposure. It is important to emphasize that cinnamon should not be considered a substitute for medical treatment but rather a complementary approach that supports evidence-based therapies. Moderation, informed selection of cinnamon type and awareness of individual health conditions are essential for safe consumption.

In conclusion, cinnamon represents a compelling example of how traditional dietary elements can offer significant health benefits when examined through the lens of modern science. Its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and metabolic effects make it a valuable adjunct in preventive and supportive healthcare. At the same time, responsible use guided by scientific evidence, appropriate dosage and awareness of potential risks is crucial. With continued research and mindful consumption, cinnamon can truly be regarded as a natural boon for human health, bridging the wisdom of ancient traditions with the rigor of contemporary science.

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Dr. Tasaduk Awarded Prestigious EACCME Certification

Eminent J & K physician, Dr. Tasaduk Hussain Itoo has been awarded the prestigious European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME) certification in Clinical Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism.

The certification was conferred by the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) following his successful participation in the 34th European Society of Endocrinology (ESE) International Postgraduate Course in Clinical Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, held virtually live from the United Kingdom.

Dr. Itoo was awarded 10 European CME Credits (ECMECs) for successfully completing the five-day intensive academic pro-

gramme, which focused on advances in diabetes technology and management; thyroid disorders; adrenal disorders; hormone abuse, and polyendocrine syndromes.

The certificate bears the signatures of Prof. Vassilios Papalouis (President UEMS) and Dr. Joao Grenho (Secretary General, UEMS). The achievement reflects Dr. Itoo's continued commitment to internationally accredited medical education and excellence in patient care.

Pertinently, the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) is a reputed professional organization of doctors of the European Union that promotes high levels of medical training and practice, to improve and guarantee the highest level of patient care.



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Air pollution in Delhi: How to save a throttled city!

■ BY DEBAPRIYA MUKHERJEE

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 : Air pollution in Delhi has reached a critical and almost irreversible stage, turning the city into one of the most polluted capitals in the world and posing a serious threat to public health and environmental sustainability. For a significant part of the year, especially during winter, the air becomes a toxic mix of PM2.5 and PM10, vehicular emissions, industrial pollutants, construction dust, and smoke from biomass and stubble burning, often pushing the Air Quality Index into the "severe" category.

Dense smog reduces visibility, disrupts daily life, and leads to a sharp rise in respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, particularly among children, the elderly, and outdoor workers.

Though regulatory agencies issue notices, they rarely translate into closures, penalties, or long-term deterrence, especially against powerful industrial and infrastructural violators. This air pollution is treated as an episodic inconvenience and invoked loudly during winter smog or after court interventions and quietly ignored when elections, economic optics, or corporate interests take precedence.

Successive governments publicly endorse clean-air targets while simultaneously diluting enforcement, extending compliance deadlines, and prioritising short-term growth narratives over the right to breathe clean air. Worse still, corruption is not an aberration but an enabling mechanism, inspectors vulnerable to pressure or inducement, data manipulation to underreport emissions, and selective enforcement that spares influential polluters while penalising small, visible actors, creating an ecosystem where non-compliance is cheaper than compliance.

Nepotism and patronage further corrode the system, as appointments, transfers, and regulatory decisions are influenced by political proximity rather than expertise or integrity, hollowing out agencies that should be science-driven and autonomous.

Even ministries tasked with stewardship,



such as the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, appear constrained by inter-ministerial politics and industrial lobbies, resulting in fragmented policies that lack accountability, transparency, and measurable outcomes.

Under national frameworks like the National Clean Air Programme, targets are announced, but accountability is missing, funding is skewed toward short-term technological fixes rather than sustained regulatory action, and structural reforms, such as strict industrial audits, continuous emission penalties, urban planning corrections, and public transport expansion, are indefinitely postponed.

This pattern reflects a deeper political failure, where the Government of India appears willing to finance visible winter-time interventions that generate headlines, but unwilling to confront powerful polluters or invest consistently in preventive measures that may be politically inconvenient. As a result, public money is repeatedly spent on treating symptoms during a few months of crisis instead of curing the disease through continuous, science-based governance, leaving citizens trapped in an annual cycle of emergency, expenditure, and abandonment, with clean air promised every winter and denied for the rest of the year.

Control of air pollution in Delhi will never be truly effective unless strategies are framed around the geographical reality of the region, its adverse meteorological conditions, and the actual distribution of pollution sources, with a strong emphasis on preventive, ground-level action.

Delhi's landlocked location in the Indo-Gangetic Plain, weak wind circulation, frequent temperature inversion, and high winter humidity trap pollutants for long durations, making the city a permanent receptor of both local and regional emissions. It demands coordinated field action, strict enforcement on roads, construction sites, industries, landfills, and agricultural regions, along with sustained public awareness so that citizens become active participants rather than passive sufferers.

Equally essential is a strong political will to take scientifically guided but often unpopular decisions, instead of relying on short-term announcements and media-driven publicity that highlight political visibility rather than real outcomes. It is pertinent to mention here that PM2.5 can be generated within an already polluted atmosphere, and this secondary formation is one of the most underestimated reasons for persistently high pollution levels in cities like Delhi.

Even when direct emissions are reduced, polluted air rich in precursor gases such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ammonia, and volatile organic compounds can chemically react in the atmosphere to form new fine particulate matter.

Under conditions common to Delhi, high humidity, low wind speed, fog, and temperature inversion, these gases undergo complex photochemical and aqueous-phase reactions, producing secondary PM2.5 such as sulfates, nitrates, and organic aerosols. In such stagnant conditions, pollution effectively "self-generates," meaning the atmosphere itself becomes a factory for fine particles rather than just a carrier of emissions.

This explains why PM2.5 levels often remain critical even when visible sources appear limited or temporarily controlled. This PM2.5 formed within a polluted atmosphere (secondary PM2.5) is often more harmful, or at least equally harmful, than PM2.5 emitted directly from point sources. Secondary PM2.5 is rich in sulfates, nitrates, ammonium, and secondary organic aerosols, which are often more acidic and oxidative.

These particles can trigger stronger inflammatory and oxidative stress responses in the lungs and bloodstream. It is important to note that during the COVID-19 lockdown, when most transport systems and industries were shut down, AQI levels in Delhi often remained high, which clearly demonstrates that air pollution is not controlled by emission sources alone.

Secondary formation tends to produce ultrafine and highly hygroscopic particles that grow in humid air, allowing them to penetrate deep into the alveoli and even enter the bloodstream, and in some respects, it can be more dangerous.

Therefore, focusing only on direct emission sources without reducing precursor gases and unfavourable atmospheric conditions fails to address this hidden but powerful mechanism of pollution build-up, reinforcing the need for preventive, year-round control strategies. UNI

Congress announces 45-day 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram'

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 : In a major political offensive against the government, the Congress on Saturday announced a 45-day nationwide protest titled "MGNREGA Bachao Sangram."

The campaign, scheduled to run from January 8 to February 25 aims to force the withdrawal of the newly enacted VB Gram G Act, which the Congress party claims "silently kills" the legal right to work.

Speaking at a press briefing at the AICC headquarters, party general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal and general secretary Jairam Ramesh described the new law as a "destructive" centralization of power that dismantles the world's largest poverty alleviation scheme.

The Congress leaders cited several "dangerous" provisions in the new legislation such as financial burden on states, Centralization of authority and wage suppression.

The party said under the previous MGNREGA framework, the Centre bore 100% of wage costs. The new law introduces a 60:40 funding formula, requiring states to provide 40% of the funds from their own budgets.

Jairam Ramesh noted that a state like Rajasthan would now have to find Rs 4,000 crore from its own resources, which he termed a violation of Article 258 of the Constitution.

The party also said the "guarantee" in the new Act is only a "guarantee of centralization." Instead of being demand-driven at the village level, Delhi will now decide which panchayats are "notified" to receive work, converting a constitutional promise into a government permission.

Party leaders said the law removes the link between wages and inflation. There is no longer a guaranteed national wage rate; instead, the Centre will fix rates per panchayat, which the Congress fears will lead to underpayment and increased rural distress.

The party strongly condemned the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme, stating that Gandhi represented the "dignity of labour" and "village self-rule."

It said the 'Sangram' campaign is designed as a multi-tier grassroots movement. As per the party schedule, on January 8, preparatory meetings will be held at all Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) headquarters. District-level press conferences will be held to launch the struggle on Jan 10.

The next day, a one-day fast will be organised at district headquarters, near statues of Mahatma Gandhi or Dr B R Ambedkar.

Between Jan 12 and 29 panchayat-level chaupals will be held. A personal letter from Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and LoP Rahul Gandhi will be delivered to gram pradhans and workers.

On January 30 (Martyrs' Day), peaceful sit-ins at ward and block levels be organised to emphasize non-violence and the right to work.

Between Jan 31 and Feb 6, massive "dharnas" are planned at district collector offices. Between Feb 7 and 15, state-level protests outside state assemblies or Raj Bhavans will be conducted.

The party said between Feb 16 and 25, the campaign will culminate in four mega zonal rallies organized by the AICC.

Jairam Ramesh drew parallels to the historic farmers' protest against the three farm laws. "The farmers' movement was Delhi-centric; this Sangram is Panchayat-centric," he said. He expressed confidence that just as the Prime Minister was forced to repeal the farm laws in 2021, the government would be compelled to restore MGNREGA to its original "right-based" form.

The Congress also indicated it is exploring legal challenges in court and will coordinate with other Opposition-ruled states to take a unified stand against the implementation of the law. UNI

Security forces kill 14 Maoists in Chattisgarh's Bastar

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 : In the first encounter of the year between security forces and Maoists, 14 members of a proscribed Naxalite outfit have been killed till early Saturday in two different incidents, security sources said.

The gunfight took place in Sukma and Bijapur, which remain among the most Maoist-affected districts in the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh.

At least 12 Naxals, including Mangtu, a Divisional Committee Member of the CPI (Maoist) group, were killed following an exchange of fire with Maoists in the forest of district Sukma.

In another operation, dead bodies of two Maoists were recovered along with two rifles from the forest area of village Gaganpalli in Bijapur district, official sources said.

Officials said during the course of the operation "one SLR and one 12 bore rifle were recovered from the forest of Ganapalli village."

A team of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) had launched the operation in the forest area late Friday evening.

Earlier on December 25, security forces had killed six Maoists in an encounter in Kandhamal district, Odisha. Maoist Central Committee member Ganesh Uike (69), who carried a bounty of more than Rs 1 crore, and two women rebels were among the dead.

Last year in May, government forces had shot border dead 31 alleged Naxalites on the Chhattisgarh-Naxalite border. The constant attacks on Naxalites have also seen many of them surrendering, officials said. Some 258 Naxalites surrendered in Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra in October last year.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has vowed to eradicate the menace of left-wing extremism by end-March this year.

Delhi CM holds meeting with automobile and aggregator companies, pushes for adoption of EVs

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 : Delhi CM Rekha Gupta on Friday held an important meeting with automobile manufacturers and aggregator companies such as Ola and Uber, in order to encourage greater adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in the capital and to promote shared mobility. The Delhi Government has agreed in principle to allow privately owned EVs to operate as shared taxis.

Rekha Gupta stated that to realise this objective, the government would amend the relevant rules and develop an effective mechanism to address the concerns of the companies.

Rekha Gupta reiterated that the Delhi Government is fully committed to permanently reducing pollution in Delhi NCR through all possible policies, technologies and partnerships. She emphasised that effective and sustainable control of pollution in Delhi is possible only by reducing the number of vehicles on the roads. She further said that transport-related companies

must actively support the government's mission, as only then can the capital quickly transform into Viksit Delhi.

The meeting, held at the Delhi Secretariat, was attended by the transport minister and senior officials from the Transport Department, representatives from automobile manufacturers including Tata Motors, Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, Toyota, and Honda, as well as representatives of aggregator companies Ola, Uber, and Rapido. Addressing the meeting, the CM stated that the government is in principle willing to provide facilitation to companies, resolve their issues and introduce flexibility in rules, so that people are encouraged to purchase EVs and use aggregator services for commuting. However, she added that these companies must also take decisions and provide concessions that increase public inclination towards their services. During the meeting, vehicle manufacturers informed the CM that complete control over pollution would require full-scale deployment

of electric vehicles and the introduction of a people-centric EV policy. They expressed expectations of certain concessions to strengthen infrastructure in the capital, including the establishment of charging stations, stating that these measures would accelerate EV adoption. In response Rekha Gupta stated that the government is prepared to provide land for setting up charging stations, but companies must also explore the possibility of charging vehicles through solar energy. She further emphasised that companies themselves would have to manage battery waste, so that another source of pollution does not emerge.

Rekha Gupta reiterated that while the government is ready, in principle, to extend concessions, companies must also provide benefits to vehicle buyers to increase public interest in EVs.

She asked the companies to submit a plan outlining the timeline within which they would be able to meet demand-based supply of electric vehicles across Delhi. UNI

HP student's death: UGC takes suo moto cognizance, orders probe

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 : Taking suo motu cognizance of the death of a 19-year-old second year college student of a government college in Himachal Pradesh's Dharamsala on December 26 following alleged ragging, the University Grants Commission

(UGC) on Saturday constituted a fact-finding committee on Saturday.

The UGC said culprits would not be spared and that stringent action would follow while confirming that a detailed probe has been ordered.

The girl student was admitted to Dayanand Medical College and

Hospital where she died on December 26 while undergoing treatment. The UGC's anti-ragging helpline has registered a suo motu complaint.

The fact-finding committee will submit recommendations which will ensure "accountability and preventing similar incidents" in future.

Though a police investigation is currently underway in the case, the family of the deceased has alleged that the student was harassed on the college campus which impacted her mental and physical stability.

Acase has been registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Himachal Pradesh Educational

Institutions (Prohibition of Ragging) Act, 2009.

Three senior students identified as Harshita, Aakriti and Komolika have been charged with ragging and voluntarily causing hurt, while a college professor, Ashok Kumar, accused of inappropriate conduct has been booked for sexual assault. UNI

Rahul Gandhi pays tribute to Savitribai Phule and Rani Velu Nachiyar on their birth anniversaries

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 : Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday paid tribute to Savitribai Phule, India's first female teacher, and Rani Velu Nachiyar, a revered Indian freedom fighter, on their birth anniversaries. In separate posts on handle X, Gandhi remembered the contributions of the two remarkable women to India's struggle for independence and social justice.

"On the birth anniversary of India's first female teacher, Savitribai Phule ji, I pay my humble respects to her. Her struggle for the rights of the deprived and oppressed, and her contribution towards social justice,



will forever continue to guide us," Gandhi said. Savitribai Phule was a pioneering social reformer and educator who worked tirelessly to promote education and empowerment of women and marginalised communities. Alongside her husband Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, she played a crucial role in shaping India's social and educational

landscape.

Paying tribute to Rani Velu Nachiyar, the queen of the princely state of Sivaganga, who is celebrated for her bravery and leadership in the fight against British colonial rule, Gandhi said: "Humble tributes to Rani Velu Nachiyar of Tamil Nadu on her birth anniversary. She fought fiercely against the British and was among the first Indian queens to challenge British colonial rule. Her courage, leadership, and sacrifice continue to inspire generations," he said.

Rani Velu Nachiyar's legacy as a fearless leader and a champion of Indian independence continues to inspire generations. UNI

Dense fog disrupts flights at IGI, passengers suffer

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 : A dense fog reduced visibility during the early hours of the day in the national Capital, affecting flight services at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) on Saturday.

Several flights were delayed due to poor visibility, causing fog-related disruptions for the passengers. Authorities are working to manage the situation, but the fog is expected to persist, further impacting air travel in the region.

Earlier, aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has announced that the official fog window will start from December 10 and continue till February 10.



As many as 66 flights were cancelled in Delhi on Friday following dense fog and low visibility, causing problems to hundreds of passengers. Poor weather conditions during the early hours have severely affected

air traffic movement, with airlines forced to suspend several services to ensure passenger safety.

Multiple carriers were impacted by the adverse conditions. Airport authorities and airlines issued advisories urging passengers to check flight status before heading to the airport.

DGCA's flight operation norms state that during dense fog, airlines mandatorily have to assign pilots specially trained to fly during low visibility situations.

DGCA further asks for deploy a CAT-IIIB-compliant aircraft fleet for such operations. Fog related disruptions are common during the winter season and can lead to delays, diversions, and cancellations, which affect passengers scheduled travel. UNI

Rabada to Spearhead SA Pace Attack at T20 WC

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CAPE TOWN: Kagiso Rabada, who returned to action on New Year's Eve after almost ten weeks on the sidelines with a rib injury, will lead South Africa's attack at the men's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka in February-March. Rabada, who took 2 for 48 on comeback for MI Cape Town (MICT) in the SA20, has been named alongside five other quicks: Anrich Nortje, Marco Jansen, Corbin Bosch, Lungi Ngidi and Kwen Maphaka complete South Africa's pace battery.

Maphaka and Bosch are among seven players who will appear at a World Cup for the first time. The others are batters Dewald Brevis, Tony de Zorzi and Jason Smith, and allrounders George Linde and Donovan Ferreira.

South Africa will be led by regular T20 skipper Aiden Markram and will have only seven members of the squad that reached the final of the 2024 T20 World Cup. Quinton de Kock is back at the top of the order after making himself available for South Africa in October, while David Miller, Keshav Maharaj, Jansen and Nortje were all in the XI that lost to India in Barbados in June 2024.

Of those not in the squad, Heinrich Klaasen has retired from international cricket while Reeza Hendricks, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs, Ottneil Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Bjorn

Fortuin and Tabraiz Shamsi have missed out. All eight of these players are currently in action in T20 franchise leagues, with the first seven at the SA20 and Shamsi at the ILT20 and then the BBL.

"We have had to make some big calls, but we feel this group is the strongest and has every chance of succeeding in India and Sri Lanka," selection convener Patrick Moroney said in a statement. "We have assembled a world-class squad with some of the finest and most experienced players in the game, together with some of the best T20 youngsters coming through."

Among the biggest talking points in the current squad is the addition of de Zorzi, who has not played in a month, since injuring his hamstring in an ODI against India in Raipur. De Zorzi had been in good form prior to that match, and is seen as someone who is suited to subcontinent conditions. He is part of the Durban's Super Giants (DSG) squad in the SA20 but has yet to play a game.

Similarly, Smith, who only has five international caps to his name, is somewhat of a surprise inclusion. Smith has recently enhanced his reputation as a finisher after an unbeaten 68 off 19 balls to send Dolphins into the playoff of the CSAT20 Challenge, and the 14-ball 41 for MICT against DSG in the SA20 opener. Smith also offers a seam-bowling option, though he has not

bowled since October as he recovers from a niggle. MICT coach Robin Peterson confirmed Smith may start bowling towards the end of the competition.

In the spin department, South Africa have stuck to their two left-arm spinners in Maharaj and Linde, while Markram and Ferreira (who also keeps wicket) will be the offspin options. The international career of left-arm wristspinner Shamsi, who recently won a case for a no-objection certificate against Cricket South Africa and is no longer centrally contracted, appears to be over.

The T20 World Cup will be the first white-ball tournament under all-format coach Shukri Conrad, who took over the limited-overs sides in July last year. His regular support staff of Ashwell Prince (batting coach), Piet Botha (bowling coach) and Kruger van Wyk (fielding coach) will be enhanced by Albie Morkel as a specialist T20 consultant. Morkel is currently part of the management team of Joburg Super Kings at the SA20.

All South Africa's players will be involved in the SA20 for most of this month. They will then host West Indies for three T20Is before heading to India for the T20 World Cup. Their campaign starts against Canada on February 9. South Africa will also play Afghanistan, New Zealand and the UAE in the group stage.



Matthew Potts set to make Ashes appearance at SCG

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SYDNEY: Matthew Potts is set to make his first appearance at the Ashes in the final Test in Sydney, after England named a 12-man squad that also features Shoaib Bashir.

Potts has been a unused member of the party for the entirety of the tour, but is poised for an 11th cap after Gus Atkinson was ruled out with a hamstring injury picked up in the fourth Test, which England won to make it 3-1. Matthew Fisher is the only other seamer on the ground, having been called in from the Lions set-up to replace the injured Mark Wood (left knee), with Jofra Archer also having departed with a side strain.

Given the fallout from the Boxing Day Test, with plenty of scorn reserved for a spicy MCG pitch that contributed to a two-day finish, England anticipate a flatter surface this week at the SCG. It bore a slight green tinge on Friday, and Stokes is waiting to have another look at the pitch on Saturday ahead of the Sunday start before naming an XI.

Stokes is usually game for announcing a team 48 hours before the start of a Test, but has been more cautious on this trip amid general uncertainty over conditions. A 12-man squad was also announced for the first Test in Perth, with Bashir the one to miss out on that occasion as England opted for an all-pace attack. Bashir is likely to miss out again, particularly given the forecast for the Test, with rain scheduled for the first two days. It is unlikely England will see the need for two off-spin options with Will Jacks present as a slow-bowling allrounder, or that Bashir, a No. 11, will replace Jacks given England want the extra batting.

All Potts' Test appearances have come since Stokes and head coach Brendon McCullum took the reins of the side at the start of the 2022 summer. The seamer impressed with his relentlessness with the ball, taking 20 wickets at an average of 28 in his first five Tests. However, he was parked for the final two Tests of that summer - against South Africa - as Ollie Robinson returned to the fray. Potts subsequently earned five more caps over the next three years.

Speaking on Friday at the SCG, opening batter Zak Crawley championed the Durham quick, particularly his work-rate and attitude in the nets over what has been a long two months in Australia. "Every time I face him he impresses me," Crawley said of Potts. "He's got the heart of a lion, a lot of skill, and if he gets the nod this week, he thoroughly deserves it."

Potts' place on this Ashes tour was certainly not guaranteed, with England seemingly moving on from him as both an out-and-out quick and accurate, highly skilled seamer. His last Test appearances came against New Zealand in December 2024 and he has benefitted from Jamie Overton's red-ball retirement and the shoulder injury to Chris Woakes, both coming at last summer's final Test against India.

Gleeson's Calm Wins SA20 Thriller

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

JOHANNESBURG: In a high-scoring match at a high-scoring ground at a high altitude, nobody wanted the ball more than Richard Gleeson, who stepped up to deliver the first Super Over in SA20 history for Joburg Super Kings (JSK) against Durban's Super Giants (DSG) on Thursday. With scores tied at 205 after 40 overs, the new year's day crowd at the Wanderers enjoyed an unexpected treat as Gleeson conceded only five runs in the Super Over and JSK then surged to victory and to the top of the points table.

"You don't want easy wins each game. They are great but it's moments like these where you are under pressure and you

have to fall back on your skills, which gives you great confidence as a bowler," Gleeson said afterwards. "That's the big bit: trying to execute under pressure. You can practice as much as you want but when you get wet conditions, with the dew and you're under pressure with the crowd, it is difficult. I've got a few techniques that we use with the psychologist and I've done it quite a bit in the past. I just call on that experience to try and keep calm and keep a clear mind."

It was, in fact, the first time Gleeson has bowled a Super Over but he does have plenty of experience and success at the death. In 2022, he delivered the last over for Lancashire against Yorkshire in a Blast game that was tied because he dismissed Har-

ry Brook off the final ball. Overall, since 2022, of bowlers who have delivered more than 400 balls in T20 cricket, Gleeson is the fifth best at the death (overs 17 to 20) in terms of economy rate (8.60) with 47 wickets at 13.82. Bear in mind that Jasprit Bumrah leads this list (6.65) and you have to understand how impressive Gleeson's numbers are.

At the Wanderers, Gleeson took 3 for 41 in DSG's chase in the regular game, which included bouncing Jos Buttler out for 15, removing Aiden Markram with DSG needing 38 runs off 21 balls, and bowling David Wiese with a yorker in the penultimate over. He was then tasked with the Super Over and could have had a wicket first

ball when Evan Jones hit him to long-on but Matthew de Villiers put the chance down. That could easily have put Gleeson off and though he had fleeting thoughts that the dropped catch could cost JSK, he quickly put those aside. "[I thought], you've just dropped the match," Gleeson joked. "But I backed myself. I knew I was executing and the next ball was the most important."

As he delivered his second ball, Gleeson saw Buttler backing away and banged it in short and wide, away from where Buttler could connect with it well. He followed up with a yorker which Buttler could only squeeze away for one. Jones kept trying to swing big and inside-edged the next ball for one before Glee-

son went short again to Buttler. He finished off with a yorker as DSG totalled just five and things had worked out exactly as Gleeson hoped they would.

"The plans going into the Super Over were really simple: to try and execute the yorkers, try and get them to hit to the longer part of the boundary but not be too predictable," he said. "I knew I had the short ball I could go to, pace off, so I just wanted to try and keep them guessing and have the batter thinking about two deliveries instead of just one."

That Jones, who had earlier brought DSG back into the match with personal highest SA20 score of 43 off just 17 balls, could not get Gleeson away was testament to the bowler's skills.

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