

# Kashmir Convener



Contractor death:  
BJP reiterates demand  
for CBI probe, Priyank  
Kharge's resignation

P/02



Can't ignore speeches  
to brainwash youth':  
Delhi High Court rejects  
appeal in UAPA case

P/02



"Repeating lies doesn't  
make them true": Hardeep  
Puri slams Kejriwal over  
Rohingya settlement claims

P/02



## Union Home Secy Asks Security Forces to Achieve 'Terror-Free' JK

➤➤➤ High-Level Security Review Meeting in Srinagar Reiterates Zero-Tolerance Policy on Terrorism <<<



KC NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan on Monday called on the top security brass to work towards achieving the goal of 'terror-free Jammu and Kashmir' at the earliest.

The Union Home Secretary arrived in Srinagar this morning and chaired a high-level security meet at SKICC on the banks of Dal Lake here.

The meeting was attended by the top officers, including General Officer Commanding of Srinagar based Chinara

Corps Lt General Prashant Srivastava, GOC of Nagrota-based 16 Corps Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva, Director General of Police, Nalin Prabhat, Additional Director General (Law and Order) Vijay Kumar, Additional Director General Jammu, Anand Jain, Inspector General of Police (IGP)-Kashmir, V K Birdi, top officers of Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Intelligence Bureau and other agencies.

Sources privy to the meeting, which commenced at 2:30 pm, told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the Union Home Secretary emphasized on the need to act tough against the terrorists, their supporters and anti-national elements.

He reiterated the government's resolve about zero tolerance towards terrorism.

>>>SEE ON P-7

### Union Home Secretary visits clock tower, Balidan Stambh in Lal Chowk

Ishtiyaz Kar

**SRINAGAR:** Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan Monday visited prominent landmarks in Srinagar, including the historic Clock Tower



at Lal Chowk and the Balidan Stambh at Pratap Park.

>>>SEE ON P-7

## Mastering Frontier Technologies Is Need Of The Hour: Rajnath

● Government Aims for Rs 50,000 Cr Defence Exports by 2029

KC NEWS NETWORK

**MHOW:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said that mastering frontier technologies in today's constantly-evolving times is the need of the hour, and the military training centres are playing a crucial role in equipping and readying the soldiers to deal with future challenges.

Addressing officers at the Army War College (AWC) here, Rajnath Singh highlighted the radical changes being witnessed in the ways of warfare, an official statement said.

He said that unconventional methods like information warfare, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based warfare, proxy warfare, electromagnetic warfare, space warfare and cyber attacks are posing a big challenge in today's times.

He stressed on the need for

military to remain well-trained and equipped to deal with such challenges, lauding the training centres in Mhow for their valuable contribution in these efforts. He



also commended the centres for constantly improving their training curriculum, in sync with the changing times, and striving to make the personnel fighting fit for every kind of challenge. Highlighting the government's vision of making the country Viksit

>>>SEE ON P-7

### 2024 Year-End Review

## Local Terror Outfits Wiped Out in 2024, Only 7 Youths Join Militancy in J&K

30 Civilians and 28 Security Personnel Lose Lives in Terrorist Attacks



Umairas Gull Ganie

**SRINAGAR:** The year 2024 saw the wiping out of local terror outfits in Jammu and Kashmir and predominance of Pakistani terrorists.

According to the official data accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the local recruitment dropped to less than 10 in 2024.

"The number of local terrorists operating in Kashmir is now in single digits. Local recruitment has declined since 2021, when 125 youths joined terrorist ranks. In 2022, the number of new recruits taking up arms dropped to 100. Last year, around 22 youths joined terrorist ranks, and this year, seven youth joined terrorist ranks," the data reveals.

42 FOREIGN TERRORISTS KILLED IN 2024

"Of 68 terrorists killed this year, 42 were foreigners, while 26 local terrorists were

eliminated," the data states, adding, "In the preceding years i.e. in 2019, 157, in 2020, 221, in 2021, 180, in 2022, 187 and in 2023, 73 terrorists were gunned down by the security forces in different encounters across Jammu and Kashmir."

Among the 42 foreign terrorists killed this year, 17 were eliminated during infiltration attempts along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB), while 25 were killed during encounters in the interior areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

The foreign terrorists were killed in Udhampur, Kathua, Doda, Rajouri, Kupwara, Bandipora, and Baramulla districts.

North Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded highest number of foreign terrorist casualties, with 14 being shot dead in nine encounters.

>>>SEE ON P-7

### TIMELINE

**June 9:** Terrorists attacked a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims from Shiv Khori to Katra, causing it to plunge into a gorge. Nine, including seven non-local pilgrims, were killed, and 41 were injured.

**June 11/12:** Two foreign terrorists and a CRPF jawan were killed in a gunfight after terrorists attacked a joint checkpoint in Kathua district. Five Rashtriya Rifles personnel and a Special Police Officer were also injured in a terrorist attack in Doda district.

**July 6:** Six terrorists were killed in twin encounters in Kulgam's Modergam and Chinigam villages. Two soldiers also lost their lives during the operations.

**July 8:** Five Army soldiers were killed in action and five others injured after terrorists attacked a military convoy in Machedi forest area of Billaوار, Kathua district.

**July 16:** Four Army soldiers, including a Captain, were killed in an encounter with terrorists in the Koti forests of Doda district.

**August 10:** Two Army jawans and a civilian were killed in a fierce gunfight with terrorists in the Ahlan area of Kokernag, Anantnag district. Another civilian was injured in the encounter.

**October 20:** Terrorists attacked a workers' camp near Gaganger, Sonamarg, killing seven employees, including a Kashmiri doctor, and injuring five others.

**October 24:** Terrorists attacked an Army vehicle six kilometers from Gulmarg, killing two soldiers and two porters, and injuring another soldier and porter.

**October 29:** Security Forces killed three foreign terrorists in Jammu's Akhnoor after they made an abortive attempt to attack the forces.

**November 7:** Terrorists kidnapped and killed two civilians serving as Village Defence Guards in Kishtwar, Jammu.

**December 19:** Five Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in Kadder, Behibagh area of Kulgam district. Two soldiers were also injured.

## LG Sinha Directs Jammu University to Strengthen Faculty, Fill Vacant Positions

● Chairs 88th University Council Meeting; Reviews Success of 'Design Your Own Degree' Program, Sports Policy



KC NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired the 88th meeting of the University Council of the University of Jammu at Raj Bhavan, today.

The University Council deliberated on various matters of academic and administrative

importance to further improve the overall functioning of the university.

The meeting accorded in-principle approval to various agenda items and proposals including adoption and inclusion of several provisions as per the guidelines and notifications

>>>SEE ON P-7

## CM Discusses Winter Tourism Preparedness with MLA Gulmarg

KC NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** With the winter season in full swing, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday held a crucial meeting with Gulmarg MLA Farooq Shah to review the preparations for the anticipated influx of visitors and skiers



at the picturesque ski destination of Gulmarg. During the meeting, according to news agency KINS, detailed discussions were held to ensure that Gulmarg, renowned for its pristine snow-covered

>>>SEE ON P-7

## World Bank's Rs 1500 Crore J&K Project Gets 6th Extension

Mubashir Aalam Wani

**SRINAGAR:** In a significant development, the World Bank has granted the 6th extension to the Rs 1500 crore project funded by it in Jammu & Kashmir for the reconstruction of infrastructure damaged by the devastating floods in 2014.



In a communique, a copy of which has been accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the World Bank has conveyed to the Union Finance Ministry that it has agreed to extend the project till August 31, 2026.

"We refer to the Financing Agreement between India ('Recipient') and the International Development Association ('Association'), dated January 21, 2016 ('Financing Agreement'), pursuant to which the Association has provided the above-captioned Credit ('Credit') for the Jhelum and Tawi Flood Recovery Project ('Project'). We also refer to the letter from the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, DO. No. 05/06/2014-FB.VIII/V, dated November 14, 2024, requesting

>>>SEE ON P-7

## J&K Braces For Another Moderate To Heavy Snowfall In First Week Of Jan

● Feeble WD on Jan 1-2, Moderate WD on Jan 3-6 to Affect J&K

Owais Gul

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir is all set to experience a moderate snowfall in the first week of New Year as two back-to-back Western Disturbances would likely affect the Union Territory from January 3 to 6, the weatherman said on Monday.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the fresh Western Disturbances would affect J&K after the moderate to heavy snowfall in the parts of Jammu and Kashmir on last Friday, which brought the life to standstill in the Union Territory due to the closure of all the major roads and also the suspension of the flight operations for two straight days.

Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad told KNO that the two WDs are set to affect J&K and adjoining areas from January 01 onwards.

According to the forecast, Ahmad said that on January

1st & 2nd, a feeble WD would affect J&K and under its influence, generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light Snow at scattered places during 1st evening or night to 2nd morning.

cold wave at isolated places till tomorrow.

"In view of snowfall, sub-freezing temp & icy conditions over roads plains and higher reaches, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to



He added that from January 3-6, a moderate WD would affect J&K and under its influence, generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light to moderate rain in plains of Jammu and snow at many places of J&K with peak activity on 4th & 5th January.

Meanwhile, in its advisory, the weatherman has predicted

follow administration and traffic advisory," it reads, adding that there is a possibility of heavy snow at isolated higher reaches during January 4th & 5th.

Furthermore, after the fresh snowfall, the night temperature continued to settle above the normal temperature in Srinagar and Kupwara.

>>>SEE ON P-7

### Winter Carnival Pahalgam to held on Jan 02 evening

Jahangeer Ganaie

**PAHALGAM:** The J&K Tourism department has decided to celebrate Winter Carnival Pahalgam on January 02 evening to attract more tourists to the picturesque destination in the Valley.

Officials said the winter carnival Pahalgam will be held at Pahalgam club from 4 pm on January 02 and it is expected to

>>>SEE ON P-7

## Dy. CM directs for adherence to rules, regulations during mining operations

KC NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary today directed the officers for strict adherence to already set rules and regulations during mining extractions and the need for following the environmental



concerns while carrying these activities.

The Deputy Chief

Minister, made these remarks

>>>SEE ON P-7



# Can’t ignore speeches to brainwash youth’: Delhi High Court rejects appeal in UAPA case

**NEW DELHI:** Speeches to brainwash innocent youth and recruiting them for illegal acts against the country cannot be completely washed away in the absence of a specific terrorist act, the Delhi High Court has said and dismissed the plea of a terror case accused.

A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Amit Sharma made the observation while rejecting the plea of Mohd Abdul Rehman, an alleged associate of Al-Qaida's Indian outfit, against his conviction and seven-year-five-month jail term by a trial court under the anti-terror UAPA law.

“Speeches which are given to brainwash innocent youth coupled with attempts to recruit them for committing unlawful and illegal acts against the country cannot be completely washed away on the ground that no specific terrorist act has been committed,” it said.

The appellant argued though he was held guilty of indulging in preparatory acts for the commission of a terrorist act and recruiting persons for terrorist act, there was no evidence to show he committed such acts.

The bench, however, said the terms terrorist act had a wide definition, enough to include “indulging in conspiracy with



terrorist organisations and associated with persons who are rendering support to terrorist organisations”, whereas the identification or existence of a specific act of terror was not required for punishment under the provisions.

The high court upheld the trial court conviction verdict, observing evidence to show he was in close connection with the other accused who were a part of a larger network.

The network was said to be carrying out inflammatory speeches, disseminating

material, having links with Pakistan-based organisations and travelling there for secret meetings,

recruiting persons for terrorist acts, collecting funds to help such travels and other activities fanning hatred against the country and its political leaders, among other things.

“In conspiracies of this nature specific covert acts would not be required but secretive and clandestine support to declared terrorist organisations would also be sufficient. The evidence and the

testimonies which have been recorded in the present case clearly disclose association with terrorist organisations for commission of conspiracy for committing a terrorist act. The appeal is, accordingly, dismissed,” the bench ruled.

The court said the planning to execute terrorist acts could extend over years and Section 18 of UAPA aimed to address such a preparation, even when a specific terrorist act was not identified.

It said it was “common knowledge” that terrorist organisations like Al-Qaida in the Indian subcontinent functioned in an extremely secretive manner and its associates often left no trail of evidence.

In February 2023, the trial court convicted the appellant and other accused persons for conspiracy to commit acts that constituted preparation towards commission of some terrorist act.

The trial court considered the evidence that indicated the existence of a conspiracy to commit a terrorist act, including their illegal travel to Pakistan, inflammatory speeches, various passports by creating false and fabricated documents.

The state said the material showed appellant's ideology professed violence against the country and the Prime Minister.

## “Repeating lies doesn’t make them true”: Hardeep Puri slams Kejriwal over Rohingya settlement claims

**NEW DELHI:** Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday attacked Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Chief Arvind Kejriwal over Rohingya settlement claims, saying, repeating lies doesn't make them true; it exposes your dishonesty.

He said that Kejriwal's MLA helped Rohingyas settle in Delhi and provided them with free rations, water, electricity and voter cards.

झूठ की घुप से तो बर्फ भी नहीं पघिलती, सच तो फरि भी चट्टान की तरह होता है!

एक ही झूठ को बार-बार फैलाने से वह सच में तो बदलेगा नहीं...हों आपके झूठे होने का बार बार प्रमाण जरूर देगा।

सच्चाई यह है कि आज तक कहीं भी किसी भी रोहिंगिया को कोई भी EWS फ्लैट नहीं दिया गया है।

केजरीवाल जी... <https://t.co/KpTLTO4gzy>

— Hardeep Singh Puri (@HardeepSPuri) December 30, 2024

In a post on X, Hardeep Puri said, “Repeating lies won't make them true; instead, they expose your dishonesty. The truth is, no Rohingya refugee has received EWS flats. Kejriwal's MLA settled them in Delhi, providing free rations, water, electricity and Rs10,000 each, creating voter cards. Because everyone knows which party the Rohingyas could be voters for. Their nature is such that there is no one they haven't deceived” aisa koi saga nahi jise Kejriwal ne thaga nahi”. Kejriwal's repeated support for the Rohingyas is like playing with the nation's security!”

Puri's remarks came after AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal earlier today claimed that Hardeep Singh Puri and Amit Shah have all the data on how and where they have settled Rohingyas.

Earlier today, Aam Aadmi Party Chief Arvind Kejriwal said “I request them to arrest Hardeep Singh Puri. He has all the data on where he settled Rohingyas and how. He tweeted and gave the information.

Hardeep Singh Puri and Amit Shah have all the data on how and where they have settled Rohingyas.”

On Sunday, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri dismissed the Aam Aadmi Party's allegations of operating “Operation Lotus” in Delhi for voter manipulation and challenged the notion that Rohingyas, whom AAP has accused the party of settling in Delhi for votes, would ever support the BJP.

In a sharp rebuttal to AAP's accusations of voter manipulation, Hardeep Puri questioned the credibility of the claims.

“Do you think that the Rohingyas, in any condition, will vote for the BJP? There is no chance that they will vote for us,” Hardeep Puri asserted, turning the tables on the accusations.

When asked about, AAP's charges that ‘Operation Lotus’ is being operated in Delhi from December 15 wherein BJP has cut out 5000 voters and added 7000 voters.

Replying to the allegations, Hardeep Puri said, “This is the same Arvind Kejriwal and the

same Aam Aadmi Party that were claiming that the BJP has brought Rohingyas to Delhi. We (BJP) have clarified everything in connection with this. Do you think that the Rohingyas in any condition will vote for the BJP? There is no chance that they will vote for us.”

“This has all been done by the AAP. These ‘illegal infiltrators’ have been brought and settled by them for votes. If you cut these votes, I say it will be very good for our democratic



process. Arvind Kejriwal says one thing and the very next moment changes his stance on that,” said Puri.

The BJP leader's response underscores the idea that the party believes allegations of settling Rohingyas in Delhi for electoral gain are baseless. They contend that any suggestion that the Rohingyas—whom AAP has painted as a vote bank for BJP—would vote for the party is far-fetched.

Puri on Sunday also attacked AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal over the party's welfare schemes and accused the former Delhi Chief Minister of ‘deceiving’ the people.

The Union Minister said, “Aisa koi saga nahi jise Kejriwal ne thaga nahi” (there is no one whom Kejriwal has not deceived).

Puri claimed that the Mahila ‘Samman Yojana’ and ‘Sanjeevani’ schemes lack proper budgetary provisions and cabinet approval. The Mahila Samman Yojana is aimed at providing women residing in Delhi with Rs 2,100 per month.

This comes after, former Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of running “Operation Lotus” in the New Delhi constituency since December 15 to delete voters from the voter list.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Kejriwal said, “In my New Delhi assembly constituency – their (BJP) ‘operation Lotus’ has been going on since December 15. In these 15 days, they have applied for the deletion of 5,000 votes and the addition of 7,500 votes. Why there is a need to conduct elections if you are manipulating approximately 12 per cent of total voters in the assembly? A kind of ‘game’ is being going on in the name of election.”

## Not present at ashes immersion of ex-PM to ensure privacy to family: Cong

**NEW DELHI:** With the BJP criticizing the grand old party leaders for not accompanying former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's family during the immersion of his ashes in the Yamuna, the Congress on Monday said it was to ensure privacy to them.

Congress leader Pawan Khara said the senior leaders did not accompany the family to gather



and immerse the ashes of Dr Singh “out of our deference to the privacy of the family”.

He said after the cremation of our beloved departed leader, senior leaders Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra met the family at their residence here.

“After discussing with them, it was felt that since the family did not get any privacy at the time of the cremation and some extended family members could not reach the pyre site, it would be appropriate to give them some privacy for the ‘Phool Chunana’ and the immersion of the ashes which is an emotionally painful and difficult ceremony for close family members,” Khara said in a statement.

## Contractor death: BJP reiterates demand for CBI probe, Priyank Kharge’s resignation

**BENGALURU:** Mounting pressure on the ruling Congress in Karnataka, the BJP on Monday reiterated its demand for a CBI inquiry into the contractor's suicide and resignation of Minister Priyank Kharge.

The party warned that if its demands are not met, they would lay siege to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in Kalaburagi in January.

“The Kharge family is very powerful and the state police cannot investigate them and there is no possibility of impartial investigation. Hence, the matter should be handed over to the CBI,” BJP state president BY Vijayendra told reporters.

Civil contractor Sachin Panchal on December 26 allegedly died by suicide by lying before a moving train in Bidar district.

In his suicide note, he accused Priyank Kharge's close aide Raju Kapanur of compelling him to take the drastic step. He alleged that he was receiving death threats to pay rupees one crore to Kapanur who rejected the charges.

Priyank Kharge too said he had no role in the case as the suicide note did not name him. He also demanded an inquiry into the case to bring out the truth.

The BJP further intensified its pressure on the government. Vijayendra said the entire police department in and



around Kalaburgi district is under the clutches of the Kharge family.

“Without further delay the Chief minister Siddaramaiah should get the resignation of Priyank Kharge. Our second request is, the matter should be handed over to the CBI,” he said.

Vijayendra also demanded that the Panchal family should be given protection and a compensation of rupees one crore.

## Nagarjuna, Naga Chaitanya, Sobhita Dhulipala thank PM for honouring ANR

**NEW DELHI:** Veteran actor Nagarjuna expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for remembering his father and Telugu cinema legend Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) during the 117th

episode of Mann Ki Baat, his monthly radio programme.

In his Sunday address, the prime minister honoured ANR in his birth centenary year, acknowledging his significant contribution to Telugu cinema through films that “beautifully portrayed Indian traditions and values”.

On X, Nagarjuna shared a clip from Mann Ki Baat and wrote a brief note of acknowledgement tagging Modi.

“Thank you, Hon'ble Prime Minister shri @narendramodiji, for honoring my father, ANR Garu, on his centenary year alongside such iconic legends.

“His vision and contributions to Indian cinema continue to inspire generations, and this recognition means the world to our family and countless admirers of his work. #ANRLivesON #IndianCinema,” the actor wrote.

Chaitanya also wrote to the prime minister on social media.

“Thank you Shri Modi ji @narendramodi for your wonderful words about ANR Garu's artistic merit and his efforts that have played a key role in shaping the brilliant Telugu film industry as we know it today. Means a lot to hear these words from a stalwart like you! Blessed and immensely grate-



ful,” he said.

His wife and actor Sobhita Dhulipala also shared the same statement in an Instagram post with a white heart as caption.

## AAP will give temple, gurdwara priest Rs 18,000 a month if returns to power: Kejriwal

**NEW DELHI:** AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said that if re-elected, his party would launch a ‘Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana’ to give a monthly allowance of Rs 18,000 to Hindu temple priests and granthis of gurdwaras.

The announcement comes ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, with AAP seeking to retain power for a fourth consecutive term.

“Pujaris and granthis are an important part of our society, but they are often a neglected section. For the first time in the country, we are introducing a scheme to support them, under which they will receive a monthly allowance of Rs 18,000,” Kejriwal said, adding, registration for the scheme will start tomorrow.

He also said he would visit the Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place on Tuesday to oversee the registration process for priests there. Registration will also be done at other temples and gurdwaras across the city by the AAP workers, he said.

Kejriwal also accused the BJP of trying to scuttle several of his party's welfare schemes.

“Just like the BJP tried to stop the Mahila Samman Yojana by sending police but couldn't,



similarly they shouldn't try to stop the ‘Pujari-Granthi Samman’ scheme. BJP will incur a great sin by doing this.

“This scheme is a tribute to their spiritual contribution to society and their efforts to preserve our cultural heritage,” he added in a social media post made after the announcement.

The former chief minister did not specify clear guidelines for

the registration process.

He said the number of registrations to avail of the proposed honorarium will be made public once the process is completed.

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, who also attended the press conference, lauded the initiative. “When Aam Aadmi Party forms the government in Delhi again, temple priests and Gurudwara granthis who have been preserving and carrying forward our culture and civilisation for generations will be given an honorarium of Rs 18,000 per month.

## Farmers’ Punjab Bandh Cripples Commuter Traffic; Rail, Bus Service Suspended

**CHANDIGARH:** Life was hit across Punjab due to a ‘bandh’ imposed by farmers who have been agitating against the Centre for a legal guarantee of a minimum support price for their crops.

Rail and road traffic was crippled and commercial establishments remained shut in several places of the state.

Farmers staged ‘dharnas’ on several roads and highways including in Patiala, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Pathankot as part of their bandh call from 7 am to 4 pm, throwing commuter traffic out of gear.

A call for a statewide shutdown was given over a week ago by Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha over the Centre not acting on the farmers’ demand for a legal guarantee for the MSP.

The bandh was also enforced to express solidarity with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal who has been on a fast for the last 35 days at Khanauri border protest site of farmers.

Farmers observed a sit-in at Dhareri Jattan Toll Plaza which affected vehicular movement on the Patiala-Chandigarh National Highway.

At Amritsar's Golden Gate, scores of farmers staged a dharna near the city's entry point. Police there assisted some



stranded foreign tourists by arranging auto rickshaws for them to reach the Golden Temple.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher told reporters in Amritsar that emergency and other essential services were allowed to operate.

He said anyone travelling to the airport to catch a flight anyone going to attend a job interview, or anyone needing to attend a wedding, was being allowed to go.

In some places, commuters were seen arguing with the protesting farmers blocking the roads.

“All establishments are closed. Punjabis have shown their unity today and they

are extending full support,” Pandher, however, claimed.

“We are seeing a successful bandh. Train services are also completely suspended and no train is entering Punjab,” he said.

Pandher also claimed their strike has received strong support from transporters, employee unions, traders and religious bodies.

Farmers squatted on tracks at many places, forcing the railways to cancel several trains passing through the state and short-terminated or short-originated some trains.

In Ferozepur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and

Bathinda, passengers were seen stranded at stations.

A cancer patient from Gujarat was stranded at a train station in Ferozepur. His wife said they had to go to Himachal Pradesh to get some medicines for him, but with train services hit, they were left in a lurch.

In Phagwara, farmers staged a dharna near the Sugarmill Crossing on NH-44, blocking the roads leading from Phagwara towards Nakodar, Hoshiarpur, and Nawanshahr.

A dharna was also staged at Behram toll plaza on Phagwara-Banga road.

Grain markets were shut in several places across the state.

In the Mohali district, farmers staged a dharna at a few points throwing normal movement of vehicular traffic out of gear.

Public transport remained off roads at several places, while most private bus operators suspended services abiding by the bandh call.

Many long-distance private buses and trucks carrying fruits and vegetables were held up due to the bandh.

In the Ludhiana district, markets like Chaura Bazar, Saban Bazar, Vishwakarma Chowk, Gill Road and Sarabha Nagar had few shops open. The city's main bus stand was completely bereft of any traffic.



## Post SnowFall: DC Bandipora conducts inspection of Bandipora- Gurez Road

**BANDIPORA:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, on Monday conducted a comprehensive inspection of the post-snowfall situation of Bandipora-Gurez Road and ongoing snow clearance efforts.

During the visit, the DC carried out inspections at various critical points, aimed at ensuring swift restoration of connectivity and addressing challenges posed by the snowfall.

Accompanied by Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Bandipora, Mohammed Maqbool Lone and other officials, the DC assessed on ground conditions along the Bandipora-Gurez route. During the visit, he interacted with the teams involved in snow clearance operations to gain first-hand insights into the progress and challenges faced during the process.

The DC emphasized the need to speed up the



process of clearance and directed the concerned authorities to continue operations in all affected areas to minimize disruptions. Availability of Anti-skid chains with vehicles travelling along the Bandipora-Gurez road was also inspected during the visit.

Highlighting the administration's commitment to addressing such challenges, the DC assured the public that all necessary resources and assistance have been mobilized. He informed that control rooms have been activated at district, sub-divisional, and field level for real-time monitoring and instant action.

The administration remains focused on maintaining seamless coordination among departments to ensure the safety and well-being of residents during this period of inclement weather.

## DC Bandipora Reviews Snow Clearance and Restoration of Essential Services

**BANDIPORA:** The Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, Sunday chaired a meeting to review and assess the ongoing efforts in snow clearance and the restoration of essential services across the



district, following the recent snowfall.

The meeting, held at Mini Secretariat Bandipora, was attended by Executive Engineers of PMGSY/ R&B, PHE, along with Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs) Chief Executive Officer MCB, besides officers from Mechanical Engineering Department, PDD and other concerned departments.

Senior officers from the Gurez and Sumbal sub-divisions joined the meeting virtually.

The key focus of the meeting was to assess the progress of snow clearance operations and discuss strategies for the prompt restoration of power and water supply across the district.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner M.A.Qadri emphasised coordination among various departments and stressed to ensure a smooth and effective response to the ongoing weather conditions.

M.A. Qadri emphasized the need for continuous coordination and close monitoring of snow clearance operations, urging all departments to work efficiently and ensure the timely restoration of vital services.

He also directed the concerned departments to remain alert and prepared for any further disruptions caused by additional snowfall in the coming days. The Deputy Commissioner reiterated the district administration's commitment to resolving public issues swiftly and ensuring minimal inconvenience to the residents.

## REC Limited Commits Rs. 2.92 Crore to Upgrade ITBP Medical Facilities Under CSR

**NEW DELHI:** REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Power, has signed a Mem-

orandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) to provide financial assistance of Rs. 2.92 crore for upgrading medical infrastructure at ITBP field hospitals under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.



orandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) to provide financial assistance of Rs. 2.92 crore for upgrading medical infrastructure at ITBP field hospitals under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

An official spokesperson said the funding will facilitate the procurement and installation of advanced medical equipment for

tar Pradesh). "The initiative, to be implemented by the REC Foundation, aims to benefit ITBP personnel, their families, dependents, ex-CAPF members, and civilians in these areas," he added.

The agreement was signed on December 30 by Pradeep Fellows, Executive Director (CSR) of REC Limited, and Shri S.C. Mangain, Inspector General (Admin) of ITBP. Speaking at the event, Shri Fellows

emphasized the importance of addressing healthcare needs in underserved regions. "This initiative supports the brave ITBP personnel while fostering healthier, more resilient communities. It highlights our commitment to improving lives in remote and often overlooked areas," he said.

The upgraded facilities will significantly enhance healthcare delivery in these challenging regions, enabling faster diagnostics, improved patient care, and timely medical interventions. The project is expected to benefit approximately 1.5 lakh ITBP personnel and civilians, including those in high-altitude and Naxalite-affected areas. The enhancements will reduce patient wait times, improve critical care services, and ensure the continuity of essential healthcare. By providing access to quality medical services, the initiative aims to improve health outcomes and bring peace of mind to both ITBP personnel and local communities.

## Indian Army Organizes Free Medical Camp for Gujjar, Bakkarwal Communities in Marha, Poonch

**POONCH:** In a bid to provide essential healthcare services to residents of the remote Marha village in the Balliaz area of Poonch district, the Indian Army conducted a free medical camp for the Gujjar and Bakkarwal communities on December 30, 2024.

The camp, staffed by Indian Army medical representatives and healthcare personnel, offered free health checkups, vaccinations, and medicines to 59 attendees, including 37 men, 13 women, and 9 children from Marha and nearby villages. The challenging terrain and harsh weather conditions in the region often make accessing medical care difficult, underscoring the importance of such initiatives.

In addition to medical consultations, the camp featured an awareness lecture covering immunization, family planning, child healthcare, hygiene, and sanitation. The session emphasized the

role of balanced diets and good eating habits in maintaining This initiative not only addressed the immediate healthcare



overall health, aiming to equip the local population with preventive measures against common ailments. The community expressed their gratitude for the Army's efforts to bring healthcare to their doorstep, with many appreciating the personal touch and dedication of the Army personnel.

needs of the residents but also reinforced the trust and bond between the Indian Army and the local population. It highlighted the Army's commitment to reaching out to underserved communities and enhancing their quality of life, even in the most remote corners of the country.

## IGNCA Jammu Revives Regional Heritage Through Art and Festivals

**JAMMU:** The inauguration of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) Regional Centre in Jammu has become a key milestone in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir.

Inaugurated by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, the Centre has quickly established itself as a vital institution, fostering both academic and artistic engagement. It aims to bridge the gap between the region's rich historical legacy and its contemporary relevance.

One of the Centre's prominent initiatives is the Basohli Festival, launched in 2023 and now held annually. The festival serves as a platform for reviving and celebrating the cultural traditions of Basohli, Bani, and Billawar regions. The 2024 edition featured exhibitions, workshops, and performances that highlighted the cultural vibrancy of these areas.

A key highlight of the festival was the 113th anniversary of the Basohli Ramleela, one of India's oldest adaptations of the Ramayana. In addition to this, the Centre has made significant strides in preserving Basohli painting, a unique Pahari miniature art form that was granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2023. Workshops have been organized to impart the skills of this traditional art form to students and scholars.

IGNCA Jammu has also participated in national initiatives, such as the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, hosting events like the National Tricolor Bike Rally to promote unity. In March 2024, the Centre will host the Tawi Lok Sahitya Utsav, focusing on the region's linguistic diversity and showcasing Dogra culture.

The Centre has also highlighted the contributions of women to the region's cultural landscape, with programs honoring historical figures like Lalleshwari and Rupa Bhawani, who made significant contributions as poets and spiritual leaders.

In December 2023, IGNCA Jammu organized a Pottery Tradition Workshop, reviving traditional clay-working techniques while blending them with modern innovations. Additionally, the Centre observed Partition Horrors Remembrance Day on August 14, fostering academic discussions on the region's history.

Further, the Nand Rishi Seminar and Kulgam Festival, conducted in collaboration with Kulgam College, have brought cultural and academic programs to remote areas, encouraging youth to reconnect with their heritage.

Through these initiatives, IGNCA Jammu has played a crucial role in fostering cultural revival in the region, helping preserve Jammu and Kashmir's diverse traditions while ensuring that future generations remain connected to their roots.

## Recent Snowfall Brings Relief To Saffron Farmers In Pampore

BILAL HABIB

**PAMPORE:** The recent heavy snowfall in Pampore has come as a welcome relief to saffron farmers in Pampore and surrounding areas of Pulwama district, offering hope for better saffron production next year after months of drought. Agriculture officials have emphasized that the lack of rainfall over the past three to four months had severely impacted saffron crops, but the snowfall is expected to provide the much-needed moisture and chilling conditions required for optimal growth.

Unlike other crops, saffron remains active during winter and requires 1,000 to 1,200 hours of chilling for optimal growth. The recent snowfall has alleviated moisture stress, particularly around the saffron corms, significantly boosting hopes for an improved harvest next year.

Speaking to Kashmir Convener, Agriculture Extraction Officer Pampore Ishtiyaq Ahmad Bhat said the snowfall has brought significant relief to saffron farmers who had



been concerned about the effects of drought on this year's crop. "While other crops enter their dormant phase, saffron enters its active phase during winter. Though there was some rainfall in September, we had none before that, and since then, there has been no significant rainfall, which resulted in a decline in saffron production this year."

Bhat explained that after flowering, saffron enters its vegetative phase, and the

development of saffron corms requires moisture, irrigation, and rainfall. He noted that the lack of rainfall over the past few months raised concerns of significant losses to the saffron industry. However, he expressed optimism, stating, "The recent snowfall has provided much-needed relief, giving us hope for the crop's recovery."

The saffron crop's chilling requirement, estimated at 1,000 to 1,200 hours, is crucial for its development. Bhat explained that as the snow melts, it will seep into the soil, providing much-needed moisture to the saffron corms and benefiting other crops like garlic, shallots, oilseeds, oats, and vegetables sown during the last rabi season, particularly in areas lacking irrigation.

Bhat concluded, "Our saffron crop enters its dormant phase from May to August, and its main active phase occurs in winter. It requires both chilling and moisture. The recent snowfall has addressed moisture stress, and we are hopeful that additional snowfall or rainfall will help improve production next year."

## Arrangements for celebration of Republic Day-2025 reviewed at Kupwara

**KUPWARA:** In order to ensure proper arrangements for ensuing Republic Day (RD) celebration in district Kupwara, the Deputy Commissioner (DC), Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today convened a meeting of all concerned officers, here and reviewed the arrangements.

Speaking at the occasion, the DC stressed upon the officers to ensure hassle free arrangements for smooth conduct of the national event and instructed them to maintain proper coordination and follow a timeline for ensuring arrangements well in advance.

The DC directed all the departments to display Tableaus on the eve of Republic Day Parade to showcase government schemes and achievements

of their respective departments. She said all efforts shall be made to make the National Function more attractive and informative.

She also stressed the need for maintaining protocol in seating arrangement and also issued directions to the police department for taking proper protocol of the National Flag and security arrangements.

The DC gave directions that Republic Day celebration functions shall also be held at Sub divisional, Tehsil and Block levels with the same fervour and enthusiasm.

Earlier, ACR Kupwara briefed the meeting about the programme and responsibilities of each officer and informed that the main function of the Republic Day will be held at District Police Lines (DPL) Kupwara, where National Flag will be hoisted and the



VIP will take salute on the March Past comprising the contingents of JKP, JKAP, CRPF, IRP, BSF, FPP, Home Guard, NCC cadets and school children.

The DC took segment wise review of all arrangements including power supply, water, sanitation, seating arrangements and directed the concerned departments to ensure these arrangements.

Other arrangements including refreshment, deployment of magistrates, arrangement of cultural programmes, barricading, facility of commentators and availability of fire-tenders were also reviewed.

The DC also directed Officers to ensure their presence including staff in the Republic Day functions.

ACR Kupwara, District and Sectoral Officers, besides senior officers of BSF, CRPF and Police were present in the meeting.



## Make in India

The Government has taken several policy initiatives in the past few years and brought in reforms to encourage indigenous design, development and manufacture of defence equipment, there by promoting self-reliance in defence manufacturing & technology in the country. These initiatives, inter-alia, include according priority to procurement of capital items from domestic sources under Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020; Announcement of 18 major defence platforms for industry led design & development in March 2022; Notification of four ‘Positive Indigenisation Lists’ of total 411 items of Services and three ‘Positive Indigenisation Lists’ of total 3738 items of Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), for which there would be an embargo on the import beyond the timelines indicated against them; Simplification of Industrial licensing process with longer validity period; Liberalisation of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy allowing 74% FDI under automatic route; Simplification of Make Procedure; Launch of Mission DefSpace; Launch of Innovations for Defence Excellence (IDEX) scheme involving start-ups & Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); Implementation of Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order 2017; Launch of an indigenisation portal namely SRIJAN to facilitate indigenisation by Indian Industry including MSMEs; Reforms in Offset policy with thrust on attracting investment and Transfer of Technology for Defence manufacturing by assigning higher multipliers; and Establishment of two Defence Industrial Corridors, one each in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu; Opening up of Defence Research & Development (R&D) for industry, start-ups and academia with 25 percent of defence R&D budget; Progressive increase in allocation of Defence Budget of military modernisation for procurement from domestic sources, etc. With focus on indigenisation and procurement from domestic industries, all the major areas of domestic defence production ecosystem such as weapons, ammunition, fighter aircrafts, helicopters, missile systems, warships, submarines, armoured vehicles, radars, communication systems, surveillance systems, etc. have benefited from the aforesaid initiatives and also given boost to the growth of domestic industries including MSMEs & start-ups. These initiatives not only create employment opportunities but also nurture a culture of innovation and technological advancement within the country. The concerted efforts and policy interventions undertaken by the Government to promote indigenous defence manufacturing under the Make in India initiative have yielded remarkable results. With a renewed focus on indigenisation and procurement from domestic industries, India is poised to emerge as a global leader in defence manufacturing, contributing to national security, economic growth, and technological innovation. As India continues its journey towards self-reliance in defence manufacturing, it is imperative to sustain the momentum generated by the Make in India initiative through continued policy support and industry collaboration. Government, industry, and academia should work hand in hand to leverage emerging technologies, nurture talent, and foster innovation in the defence sector.

# Restoring the Reverence: The Crisis of Educators and Faith Leaders in Modern Society



SHABEER AHMAD LONE

From the ink of scholars, sacred as stars' glow,  
To wisdom's spark, a fire that gently grows,  
"Teach me, involve me," King's vision soars,  
A river of knowledge, flowing eternally.

Mandela's words, a seed in the earth,  
Planting greatness, giving life its worth.  
"The staircase unseen," King's vision soars,  
A bridge of light, opening unseen doors.

Wisdom like baobab, roots deep in the soul,  
Nurturing hearts, making fragmented whole.  
Prophets and sages, like mountains that rise,  
Their voices thunder beneath boundless skies.

Through their hands, the world is a canvas anew,  
A tapestry woven in vibrant hue.  
They are the wind, the fire, the song,  
Guiding us where we all belong

- Anonymous

The devalued regard for educators and faith leaders (Imams) having key role in human resource development represents not only a crisis of recognition but a deep societal/cultural/systemic fracture that undermines the very foundation of human civilization. These figures, who once stood as the pillars of intellectual, spiritual enlightenment and practical wisdom, have become increasingly marginalized in a world dominated by utilitarianism, individualism, and consumerism/materialism. In a society where economic/material success and technological advancements are often prioritized above all else, the profound significance of education and spirituality is obscured, leaving teachers and faith leaders struggling for recognition and respect. This devaluation of those who shape minds and nurture souls is a reflection of the broader existential crisis we face, one in which the very values that once united humanity, transcending borders and belief systems, have been eroded. As societies across the globe grapple with the disintegration of traditional norms, it becomes increasingly vital to re-examine the roles of educators and faith leaders, not merely as occupational figures but as custodians of collective wisdom, moral fortitude, and the guiding principles that ensure societal well-being. To rekindle regard for these professions is not just a matter of justice but a moral imperative for the restoration of intellectual integrity, spiritual growth, and human flourishing. This humble attempt delves into the paradigms and strategies needed to restore these roles to their rightful place in society, drawing from diverse cultural, historical, and religious contexts, and offering insights for re-establishing their dignity, relevance, and centrality in the modern world. Starkly, we live in an era/culture where the names of Beauracrats/ District development commissioners and police/enforcement heads are widely recognized, but the identities of those heading educational institutions such as colleges/ITIs/higher secondary schools etc. remain mostly obscure in society. This unfortunate reality underscores the deep misalignment in societal priorities, where governance and enforcement are cel-

ebrated while the architects of human potential and ethical frameworks are neglected. The marginalization of educators and faith leaders is not only a reflection of misplaced societal values but a clarion call to realign with principles that elevate knowledge, wisdom, and spirituality over ephemeral pursuits.

It is a sobering testament to our misplaced priorities that while the honorarium of Imams-custodians of our religious, spiritual and moral compass-remains unpaid by many households, but smartphone balances are recharged with unflinching regularity. This glaring paradox reflects a societal mindset increasingly tethered to material indulgence over spiritual accountability. How have we come to value fleeting digital distractions above the timeless wisdom and guidance of those who nurture our souls and communities? This is not merely an oversight; it is a silent yet profound betrayal of our collective conscience, a signal that our moral fabric is fraying as we trade enduring obligations for ephemeral comforts.

Historically, educators and faith leaders have been revered as harbingers of wisdom and morality. Teachers, from the philosophers of ancient Greece to the scholars of Islamic civilizations, were instrumental in shaping intellectual traditions and cultural/societal norms. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle embodied the ideals of critical inquiry, laying the foundations for Western thought, while Islamic scholars like Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd synthesized



knowledge across disciplines, blending faith with reason. Faith leaders, too, commanded universal respect. Figures like Rumi, Confucius, and indigenous shamans served not only as spiritual guides but as community leaders, mediating conflicts and fostering social cohesion. These roles transcended mere occupations; they were callings that defined the moral and intellectual compass of societies.

The modern era, however, has witnessed the systematic erosion of their status. The advent of industrialization and capitalism reduced education to a tool for economic productivity, sidelining its transformative and holistic essence. Teachers, once seen as mentors and architects of the human spirit, are now viewed as mere functionaries within rigid bureaucracies. Faith leaders, similarly, have seen their influence wane in a world increasingly skeptical of organized religion and spirituality. Secularism, while fostering pluralism, has often marginalized their voices, equating faith with dogma and overlooking its potential for moral guidance.

This decline is further exacerbated by economic inequalities and political exploitation. According to UNESCO (2023), teachers in developing countries often work under dire conditions, with inadequate pay and little access to professional growth. Even in developed nations, educators report feeling undervalued, with their expertise overshadowed by administrative demands-socio-economic and election related surveys, MDM servings as additional assignments besides their cardinal duties of teachings and standardization. Faith leaders face similar struggles. A Pew Research Center study (2022) highlighted that imams in many parts of the world earn wages below subsistence levels, forcing them to take on additional jobs and compromising their ability to serve their communities. These economic vulnerabilities diminish their societal influence, reducing them to peripheral figures

in a landscape dominated by materialism.

Cultural shifts have also played a significant role. The global rise of individualism has undermined the communal ethos that once elevated teachers and faith leaders. In traditional societies, the respect accorded to these roles was rooted in collective values, where the pursuit of knowledge and spirituality was intertwined with community well-being. The erosion of such values in favor of personal success, materialism and consumerism has weakened the moral fabric that sustains reverence for these professions. Additionally, the digital age has commodified knowledge and spirituality, with online platforms and influencers often displacing traditional educators and faith leaders as sources of guidance.

Despite these challenges, there are paradigms within diverse cultures that offer a blueprint for rekindling regard for educators and faith leaders. Confucian philosophy places teachers at the apex of societal hierarchy, emphasizing their role in nurturing moral character and intellectual growth. Similarly, the Islamic tradition venerates scholars and imams, considering the pursuit of knowledge as a form of worship. Indigenous practices, such as those of Native American and African communities, view spiritual leaders as custodians of wisdom, deeply connected to the natural and metaphysical worlds. These traditions demonstrate that respect for educators and faith leaders thrives in societies that integrate their roles into the moral, cultural, and spiritual fabric of life.

Rekindling this regard requires a comprehensive revaluation of these professions, beginning with systemic reforms. Governments must prioritize equitable compensation and provide educators and faith leaders with resources to fulfill their roles effectively. For example, Finland's education system, renowned for its success, places teachers at the center of policymaking, offering them autonomy and respect comparable to medical professionals. Similarly, faith leaders should be empowered through institutional support with capacity buildings, trainings, educational tours etc. and at community level that acknowledges their spiritual and social contributions, ensuring their overall wellbeing.

Educational reform is another critical strategy. Curricula should emphasize the intrinsic value of knowledge and morality, countering the utilitarian mindset that dominates contemporary education. Introducing students to the legacies of great teachers and faith leaders can inspire a renewed appreciation for their roles. For instance, integrating the teachings of figures like Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Jesus Christ (pbuh), Buddha, socrates, William Blake, Langston, Milton, Walt Wittman, Heidegger, Ibn Arabi, Rilke, Holderlin, Meister Eckhard, Fritjof Schuon, Emily Dickinson, Mirza Ghalib, Guru Nanak, Laozi, Zarathustra, Imam Ali (A.S), Martin Luther King Jr., Pope Francis, Al-Ghazali, Saint Augustine, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Mother Teresa, Socrates, Confucius, Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Rabindranath Tagore, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, Jalaluddin Rumi, Saadi, Confucius, Plato, Nelson Mandela, Albert Schweitzer, Desmond Tutu, Avicenna, Thomas Aquinas, Hillel the Elder, Shankaracharya, Jalaluddin Surkh-Posh Bukhari, Al-Farabi, Hypatia of Alexandria, Anne Sullivan, Florence Nightingale, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Iqbal and scores of others into educational programs can foster respect for the interplay between intellectual, spiritual and experiential/practical wisdom.

At the community level, initiatives to celebrate the contributions of educators and faith leaders can foster a culture of recognition and respect. Public ceremonies, storytelling festivals, and interfaith dialogues can serve as platforms to highlight their impact and reinforce their significance. Grassroots movements that bring together teachers, faith leaders, and community members can create networks of mutual support, amplifying their voices and fostering collective action.

Technology, while a disruptive force, also offers opportunities to revitalize these roles. Online platforms can enable educators and faith leaders to reach wider audiences, share resources, and engage in meaningful dialogues. However, it is essential to ensure that technology as a tool complements/supplements rather than replaces their roles, preserving the human connection that defines teaching and spiritual guidance.

The psychological and emotional well-being of educators and faith leaders must also be prioritized. The demands of teaching professions, additional burdens of social, economic, elections related surveys etc. MDM servings, office/Admissions/examination charges burdens (RMSA- upgraded secondary institutions without nonteaching staff teachers have to perform further additional duties) compounded with societal neglect, often lead to burnout and disillusionment/anxiety depression, overall wellbeing and commitments towards students. Why are educators not actively involved in educational surveys designed to identify and address the root causes of student dropouts, failures, and poor academic performance? Their insights and experiences are crucial in diagnosing effective solutions and shaping remedial pathways. Support systems, such as staff strength, counseling services, capacity building trainings mentorship programs, and peer networks, can provide them with the resilience needed to navigate their challenges. Given the constraints of human resource availability, why aren't qualified, unemployed individuals utilized for such assignments? Their expertise could be an invaluable resource in addressing these challenges.

Extra burdens placed on teachers, such as administrative tasks, non-teaching duties, or excessive workload, adversely affect their core responsibility of teaching. These added responsibilities not only diminish the time and energy available for lesson planning and student engagement but also lead to stress, burnout, and a decrease in the overall quality of education. As teachers struggle to balance these demands, their ability to focus on fostering critical thinking, creativity, and individualized support for students is compromised, ultimately impacting student learning outcomes and teacher satisfaction.

Rekindling regard for educators and faith leaders is not merely a return to past traditions, but an urgent and necessary step toward creating a more enlightened, harmonious, and just global society. This effort is not merely about honoring individuals but about reinvigorating the intellectual and moral pillars that sustain societal harmony and progress.

The disregard they currently face is a manifestation of the deeper disconnections within our social structures-disconnections between knowledge and wisdom, between material gain and moral integrity, and between intellectual achievement and spiritual fulfillment. These leaders hold the key to bridging these divides, offering not only knowledge but also the moral compass that guides human progress and development. By reimagining their roles through the lens of both ancient wisdom and contemporary needs harmoniously, we can create models that respect the rich, multifaceted contributions of educators and faith leaders across cultures, while acknowledging the changing dynamics of the modern world. The reclamation of their status is not a nostalgic longing for a simpler time, but a forward-thinking, holistic approach to redefining the relationship between society, knowledge, and spirituality. Through thoughtful reform, cultural revitalization, and the strategic use of technology, we can restore their centrality in the fabric of our shared human experience. This restoration is essential not only for their dignity but for the well-being of society itself, as we seek to navigate the complexities of the 21st century with integrity, compassion, and wisdom.

shabirahmed.lone003@gmail.com

## Packaged Foods: A Threat to Health

Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

Multinational corporations often sell less healthy food in low-income countries than in rich countries. Health star ratings for food products averaged 2.3 for rich countries versus 1.8 for poor countries, reflecting a disparity bordering on exploitation. Coconut oil, once linked to heart disease, is now promoted for its neuroprotective properties. Seed oils, previously heavily promoted, are now known to be harmful. Traditional diets, used for generations and validated by gut microbiome studies, are rapidly gaining importance. Refined grains and polished foods have exacerbated health problems, including diabetes and obesity. Greenwashing and unfounded environmental claims by corporations further mislead consumers.

Recent reports allege that Lindt dark chocolate contains lead and cadmium above acceptable levels. The company attributes this to the inevitability of heavy metals in cocoa. In the US, a class-action lawsuit has been filed; however, the company continues its operations without any hindrance. In 2015, Nestle's Maggi noodles were temporarily banned after tests found excessive lead and monosodium glutamate content. This exposed deceptive marketing strategies where the highly processed product was advertised as a healthy option with the tagline "Taste bhi, Swasthya bhi." Two Nutrition Initiative studies show that multinational corporations often sell less healthy food in low-income countries than in rich countries. Health star ratings for food products averaged 2.3 for rich countries while 1.8 for poor countries, reflecting a disparity bordering on exploitation. This inequality reflects systematic exploitation and underlines the moral responsibility of global corporations to ensure uniform food quality standards. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India mandates labeling for ingredients, nutritional value, and expiry dates on packaged foods. Despite regulatory requirements, many companies make unverified claims such as being "eco-friendly," "organic," or "diet-friendly." Many consumers fail to check labels thoroughly, instead relying on front-pack health claims influenced by advertising. The National Institute of Nutrition of the Indian Council of Medical



Research identified that misleading labels contribute to the rise of non-communicable diseases and obesity.

High intake of ultra-processed foods such as soda, candy, pre-packaged meat, sugary cereals, and potato chips increases the risk of 32 health problems, including cancer, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and respiratory disorders,

depression, anxiety, and premature death, according to a new study published in the Journal of Cancer. The study found that consumption of ultra-processed foods in high-income countries accounts for up to 58% of daily calorie intake. Middle- and low-income countries have also seen significant increases in consumption in recent years. People

who consumed more of these foods had a higher risk of depression, type 2 diabetes, and fatal heart attacks. Many consumers fail to read food labels comprehensively. For example, berries marketed as "healthy" may contain added sugar, which is carefully mentioned in the ingredients but omitted from the nutrition facts. Hidden messages through

advertisements and health claims often circumvent rigorous scrutiny, misleading consumers. The food processing industry has improved food availability and shelf life but often lacks transparency. Additives, preservatives, and chemical processes in production are linked to metabolic disorders and diseases. The traditional understanding that food is equivalent to medicine has been undermined by modern practices. While organic foods are becoming popular, they remain a niche market due to high cost and limited access. Emphasis should be on local, seasonal produce, with sources facilitated by QR codes to provide detailed production and sourcing information. Considering the dilution of safety standards for profit, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's move to classify packaged water as a high-risk food is a welcome move. Regular audits and consumer vigilance are essential to ensure safety.

Coconut oil, once linked to heart disease, is now promoted for its neuroprotective properties. Seed oils, which were heavily promoted earlier, are now known to be harmful. Traditional diets, validated by generation-long use and gut microbiome studies, are rapidly gaining importance. Refined grains and polished foods have exacerbated health problems, including diabetes and obesity. Greenwashing and unsubstantiated environmental claims by corporations further mislead consumers. Consumer awareness and vigilance are needed for misleading claims by food companies. Nutritional literacy must go beyond label reading to understanding the broader implications of food production and marketing. Caveat emptor must guide consumers in making informed choices. Regulatory bodies such as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India must strengthen enforcement and enhance labelling standards. Companies must adopt ethical practices while ensuring uniform food quality across markets. Consumers must prioritize informed choices through caution and vigilance. Consumers must adopt a mindful approach to food consumption, balancing modern convenience with traditional wisdom. Increasing transparency, improving labeling accuracy, and promoting nutrition literacy are important steps toward ensuring food safety and better health outcomes.



# Chief Justice Inaugurates State-of-the-Art High Court Guest House in Leh, Additional Court in Srinagar

**SRINAGAR:** Justice Tashi Rabstan, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, today virtually inaugurated the State-of-the-Art High Court Guest House at Melongthang, Leh, UT of Ladakh.

The Guest House, constructed at a cost of Rs 12.42 crore has eight suites, eight deluxe rooms and three additional rooms with centrally heated features and in-house lounge, dining room and office with facility of air condition; ensuring comfort for its occupants. A separate accommodation for staff Guest House has been built in close proximity.

The facility is dedicated for comfortable lodging and boarding of not only visiting Judges of the Supreme Court, various High Courts, Judges of High Court of J&K and Ladakh but also other judicial officers from different States visiting the UT of Ladakh.

During his inaugural address, Chief Justice, Tashi Rabstan emphasized on the integral role of robust infrastructure in the efficient functioning of the judiciary. He expressed his gratitude to Lieutenant Governor and the officers of the UT Administration

for their unwavering cooperation and support in developing judicial infrastructure in both Leh and Kargil districts.

The Chief Justice highlighted that earlier there was no



suitable option for visiting judges of the Supreme Court, various High Courts or even judges of our own High Court and other judicial officers for comfortable stay in the region except for the Hotels.

He added that the newly constructed, State-of-the-Art High

Court Guest House will now cater to the lodging and boarding requirements of judges and judicial officers, ensuring a comfortable stay during their visits.

Chief Justice lauded the dedication and swift response of the UT Administration in completing this project and expressed hope that similar enthusiasm and efficiency would be demonstrated in completing other vital infrastructure projects within stipulated timelines.

Dr. Pawan Dev Kotwal, congratulated the judiciary on the inauguration of the Guest House. He credited the regular reviews and personal intervention of the Chief Justice for the timely completion of the project. Dr. Kotwal reiterated the administration's commitment to providing top-notch infrastructure to meet the needs of the judiciary.

Subsequently, Chief Justice also inaugurated an Additional Court at the High Court Complex, Srinagar. This initiative marks a significant step towards enhancing judicial accessibility and expediting justice delivery for the people of the region.

## District Administration Shopian prepares for maiden Winter Carnival

**SHOPIAN:** The District Administration, Shopian is gearing up for its maiden Winter Carnival in order to demonstrate the commitment of district administration to promote tourism, culture and community engagement in Shopian.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar has taken a hands-on approach to ensure everything goes smoothly. He chaired a meeting with officers to review the arrangements and preparations for the carnival.

Department wise arrangements were fixed on the occasion to make the Winter Carnival a success.

The event will be organised at Dubjan along the Mughal Road, and shall involve various activities, artistic performances, sports events, entertainment events for promotion of tourism, arts and culture of the district including snow crafts, snow igloos, ice sports and competitions for children, exhibition of local cuisine, foods and arts among a litany of diverse activities.

The meeting was attended by ADDC, ADC, ACR and other district and sectoral officers.

## Snow clearance completed up to Peer Ki Gali from Shopian side

**SHOPIAN:** Significant progress has been achieved vis-à-vis snow clearance up to the Peer Ki Gali via Shopian side, with Mechanical Engineering Department (MED), Shopian completing the job late last night, much before the expected deadline.

Following the Deputy Commissioner's visit to the Mughal Road yesterday instructing concerned for immediate snow clearance, strenuous efforts were made by the MED Shopian resulting in road clearance in a record time yesterday.

Subsequent to the snow clearance, Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar along with Chief Engineer, MED Kashmir, Manga Ram Kotwal and ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone today visited the Mughal Road axis and reviewed the snow clearance operations and assessed the road's traffic worthiness.

The DC assessed the situation of snow accumulation, assessment of avalanche areas and subsequent clearance along the strategic road and deliberated on its re-opening for traffic.

Some vulnerable spots were thoroughly taken care of and salt sprinkled to make the spots traffic worthy.

With the snow clearance operations progressing well along Poonch side, the Mughal Road is expected to be opened for traffic soon, said Shahid Saleem on the occasion.

# RECPDCL Hands Over Rajasthan IV 4A Power Transmission Project to Power Grid Corporation

**New Delhi:** REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of RECLimited,

the Company said Power Grid Corporation of India Limited emerged as the Transmission Service Provider (TSP) through



the Maharatna CPSU under the aegis of Ministry of Power, has handed over a project specific SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle), viz, Rajasthan IV 4A Power Transmission Limited to Power Grid Corporation of India Limited on 30th December, 2024 at Gurugram.

An official spokesperson of

Tariff-Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) process conducted by RECPDCL, the Bid Process Coordinator, for development of the transmission project on Build, Own, Operate & Transfer (BOOT) basis.

The transmission scheme is planned for evacuation of 3.5 GW of RE power from

Rajasthan Renewable Energy Zone, which covers establishment of 765/400 kV, 2 X 1500 MVA S/s near Ghoror (Uttar Pradesh), Augmentation of Barmer -I Pooling Station, 283.05 Kms of 765 kV line and 43.28 Kms of 400 kV line along with associated works. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 5378.03 Crores.

The SPV was handed over by T.S.C. Bosh, CEO, RECPDCL to Shri Satyaprakash Dash, Company Secretary, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited in the presence of Senior Officials of RECPDCL, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited and Central Transmission Utility of India Limited. The project is targeted for implementation in 24 months.

# DC Pulwama reviews preparations for Grand Republic Day-2025 celebrations

**PULWAMA:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom Monday chaired a comprehensive meeting to meticulously review the arrangements for the Republic Day, 2025 celebrations in Pulwama.

The meeting witnessed the participation of senior officials from various government departments and security agencies, emphasizing the collective commitment to ensuring a flawless and grand celebration. Dr. Qayoom emphasised on completing preparations promptly, while adhering to stringent security protocols to guarantee a safe and memorable event.

During the discussions, the DC directed all departments to work in close coordination to facilitate the smooth execution of planned events.

Special emphasis was laid on preparing the venue, alongside suitable arrangements for seating, sound systems and



illumination of government buildings and infrastructure. The Health Department was instructed to ensure robust medical preparedness, including first aid and ambulance services at the venue, particularly in light of the cold weather conditions.

Dr. Qayoom also called for a vibrant and culturally enriching celebration, tasking officials with

curating captivating cultural programs and a meticulously planned parade. He reiterated the importance of adhering to the Flag Code to ensure the respectful hoisting and handling of the National Flag.

Furthermore, Committees of officers have been constituted and assigned tasks for effective coordination and smooth preparations for the upcoming Republic Day celebrations. Highlighting the need for teamwork and timely execution, the DC urged officials to collaborate effectively and submit detailed action plans and progress updates. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to making Republic Day, 2025 a grand and memorable celebration, reflecting the unity and diversity of the nation.

# JKTPO organizes Onboarding Events for PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries across Kashmir

**SRINAGAR:** To empower artisans and craftsmen trained under the PM Vishwakarma program, the Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO) conducted a series of awareness and onboarding events within the Kashmir division on December 24th, 27th and 30th, 2024.

These events were hosted at government-authorized training institutes namely ITI Bemina, Government Polytechnic for Women and ITI Budgam, which are situated in the Srinagar and Budgam districts. The onboarding session was conducted by a team of consultants from the JKTPO, who presented a detailed overview of the benefits associated with the scheme.

The primary objective of the initiative is to substantially enhance the digital presence and market visibility of local artisans who are registered under the Vishwakarma scheme.

By facilitating their integration into e-commerce platforms, JKTPO seeks to establish valuable marketing channels that pave the way for meaningful business prospects for these artisans.

This initiative represents a significant advancement in creating new opportunities

for the PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries, with a strong focus on promoting growth and development among local craftsmen. The program included awareness and capacity building sessions that attracted over 140 beneficiaries, particularly those specialised



in masonry, carpentry, and tailoring. Furthermore, participants were provided with comprehensive support in the development of product listings, which encompassed creation of compelling descriptions, the selection of appropriate imagery, and implementation of effective pricing strategies. In addition, the Government

e-Marketplace (Gem), a national public procurement e-commerce platform, has successfully onboarded more than 80 beneficiaries trained under the PM Vishwakarma initiative.

Additionally, Kashmir Art & Craft Impex (KaCI), a local e-commerce entity in the valley, has integrated approximately 50 PM Vishwakarma-trained beneficiaries as sellers on its platform. In previous initiatives, the JKTPO has conducted various onboarding drives in collaboration with leading e-commerce partners.

These initiatives have successfully facilitated onboarding of sellers, artisans, retailers, small merchants, and traders onto their respective platforms, thereby enabling them to promote their products on a global scale. It has been planned to organize similar onboarding initiatives with prominent national e-commerce platforms and local enterprises across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

These efforts aim to promote self-reliance and support traditional artisanship within the region.

# DC Kupwara reviews preparations for implementation of Mission YUVA

**KUPWARA:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today reviewed the preparations in a meeting at D.C Office here for effective implementation of Mission Yuva Udhayami Vikas Abhiyan (YUVA) in the district. On the occasion, the DC emphasized the objectives of the Mission YUVA, a government initiative aimed at fostering sustainable employment opportunities in J&K by supporting the creation of new micro-enterprises, expanding existing businesses and encouraging innovative entrepreneurial ventures. She directed all the line departments to focus on the key action

points and understand their roles to ensure the Mission's objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently.

Ayushi took a detailed review of training/demonstration sessions to the nominated



Supervisors, Investigators to ensure smooth and proper conduct of the baseline survey under Mission YUVA. She directed the officers

to prioritize efficient planning for conducting the comprehensive baseline survey of existing and potential entrepreneurs in the district. The baseline survey is a critical initiative aimed at collecting accurate data to design and implement welfare programmes of the Government effectively. It was informed that 60 Supervisors and 1250 Investigators have been deployed to complete the month-long baseline survey starting from 01.01.2025. Meanwhile, the Tehsildars, Block Development Officers, Child Development Officers, besides, Lumberdars and Chowkidars have been directed to extend full cooperation and coordination with the investigators of Mission.

## Training for Enumerators under Mission Yuva held at Ganderbal

**GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 30:** A training program for enumerators under the ambit of 'Mission Yuva' was conducted today at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, Ganderbal.

The event, presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ganderbal, Gulzar Ahmad, aimed to equip enumerators with the necessary skills and knowledge

to carry out surveys and data collection under Mission Yuva. This initiative focuses on identifying the aspirations, needs, and challenges of youth in the district, ensuring effective implementation of youth-centric policies and programs.

Addressing the participants, the ADC emphasized the critical role of enumerators in accurately collecting data to form a

foundation for policy formulation. He encouraged the team to approach their responsibilities with dedication and professionalism.

The session included comprehensive presentations, demonstrations, and practical exercises designed to enhance the enumerators' technical and interpersonal skills.

# DC tours Zainapora, Shopian areas; takes stock of snow clearance operations

**SHOPIAN:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today visited various areas of the district including Chitragam (Kalan), Babapora, Zainapora, Turkawangam, Gugloora, Trenz and Pinjora to assess the provision of seamless services following recent snowfall.

He also assessed the snow clearance operations, and was intimated that all major and minor roads have been made through for traffic and efforts are on to widen the clearance wherever required.

The DC during his inspection found shopkeepers and residents at Gugloora and Pinjora dumping snow on roads. He warned them to desist from such unpleasant behaviours posing risk to commuters.

Shahid Saleem evaluated the effectiveness of snow-clearing measures enroute and interacted with residents of these areas to understand their concerns and responded positively for mitigating the concerns on priority.

The DC directed the officers to take strict action against individuals or establishments involved in obstructing roads by dumping



snow carelessly. These measures aim to ensure smooth movement for vehicles and pedestrians while minimizing disruptions caused by snow accumulation.

Many vehicles were found parked on roads which delayed the snow clearance process. The DC instructed for 'no parking on roads' as it hampers snow clearance.

Even at some places there was no space left for ambulances to move as people

had parked vehicles wrongly. During the visit, the involved persons in the dumping were asked to clear the road themselves and moral policing was done.

The Administration is committed to maintaining essential services and addressing challenges posed by harsh weather conditions in the district, said DC during the visit while reviewing the provision of water, electricity, road connectivity and healthcare services.

The DC was accompanied by DC ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, ACR and other concerned during the visit.

# DC Shopian reviews winter preparedness; calls for a coordinated approach to mitigate winter challenges

**SHOPIAN:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today chaired a meeting to review winter preparedness and emphasized the need for a coordinated approach to mitigate winter challenges.

He instructed concerned officers to execute mitigation plans efficiently, ensuring prompt responses to avoid inconvenience to the public.

Focus was given on publicizing the Action Plan mentioning the Priority 1, 2 & 3 roads so that the public is well aware of the snow clearance operations in order to arrest the distress calls for snow clearance. The meeting focused on interdepartmental coordination, evolving efficient mechanisms to address public grievances, and ensuring seamless services during the winter season. The DC instructed for setting up Integrated Winter Control Room, to be manned by R&B, MED, PMGSY, MC, Revenue, Jal Shakti etc. ADDC, Dr Nasir Ahmad Lone, ADC Dr Zakir Hussain Faaz, ACR, ACD, Tehsildars, ExEns of various Engineering Departments, CEO, DIO, ARTO, BDOS, Dy.CMO, DYSSO and other officers attended the meeting.

# ADDC Rajouri reviews implementation of HADP Projects

**RAJOURI:** A crucial meeting to review the implementation of the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP) in Rajouri district was chaired by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Rajouri, Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa here in the conference hall of the DC Office. The meeting aimed at assessing the progress of various projects under HADP and devising strategies for their effective execution.

During the proceedings, the ADDC conducted a detailed review of all projects initiated under HADP and expressed concern over the slow progress and low expenditure in certain areas. He directed the concerned departments to identify

bottlenecks, streamline operations, and ensure timely execution of the projects.

The ADDC underscored the importance of strengthening the functioning of Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs), which serve as one-stop centers for farmers to access agricultural and allied services. He instructed officials to focus on operationalizing these centers effectively to ensure their benefits reach the grassroots level.

Emphasizing the transformative potential of HADP, the ADDC reiterated the administration's commitment to improving the socio-economic conditions of the farming community. He urged

departments to focus on projects with a direct impact on enhancing agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.

The ADDC issued instructions to expedite implementation timelines, achieve expenditure targets and ensure that the benefits of HADP projects are realized by the district's farming community. He also assured regular monitoring of the projects to maintain momentum.

Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, District Agriculture Officer, Accounts Officer from the DC Office, Assistant Director Fisheries and Lead District Manager (LDM) Rajouri attended the meeting.

# Udhampur Admin imparts training to supervisors for baseline survey under Mission YUVA

**UDHAMPUR:** A day-long training programme for Supervisors deployed for the Baseline Survey under Mission YUVA, was held today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Saloni Rai here in the Conference Hall, DC Office Complex.

Additional District Development Commissioner Rajinder Singh, Assistant Commissioner Development Dr. Ranjeet Singh Kotwal, General Manager DIC, District Statistics and Evaluation Officer and other officers



from line departments were present. The DC issued necessary instructions to the Supervisors and concerned

departments to ensure the smooth conduct of the Baseline Survey scheduled for January 1, 2025. Highlighting the significance of Mission YUVA, the DC emphasized the need for active inter-departmental participation, with every department contributing to the program's objectives.

Assistant Director Employment, DE&CC Udhampur, Priyanka Gupta briefed the participants about the objectives of Mission YUVA.



# Ministry of Defence: Year End Review: 2024- Part-II

## INDIAN ARMY

**Operational Preparedness:** The Indian Army (IA) maintained a high state of operational preparedness to ensure stability & dominance along all the frontiers including Line of Actual Control (LAC) & Line of Control (LC). Relentless counter terrorist operations were also carried out while constantly reviewing emerging & future threats to National security. Infrastructure development in border areas being one of the key imperatives of operational preparedness was given impetus in consonance with the ‘Viksit Bharat Vision’ of the Government.

**Situation at LAC:** Overall situation along the LAC is stable but sensitive. Post prolonged negotiations at Diplomatic and Military levels, on 21 October 2024, broad consensus has been achieved to restore ground situation based on principles of Equal and Mutual Security. Consensus achieved includes disengagement and relocation of troops from the friction areas of Depsang and Demchok followed by joint verification. Currently, blocking positions have been removed by both sides and joint verification has been completed. Patrolling activity has commenced to traditional patrolling areas in Depsang and Demchok.

**LC & Counter Terrorist Operations:** Situation along the LC remains peaceful post the Director General Military Operations (DGsMO) Understandings of February 2021. However, Indian Army is monitoring the situation closely and remains prepared to respond to any escalation along the LC. Since the abrogation of Article 370, the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) continues to witness steadfast improvement despite intermittent spikes in violence.

## Infrastructure

**Infrastructure Development:** Development of essential infrastructure from operational perspective is being carried out in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Adoption of latest construction techniques is being ensured for timely completion and enhanced quality infrastructure. Concerted efforts are being made by Border Roads Organisation (BRO) & other construction agencies for construction of road infrastructure in border areas. The perspective plan of BRO has been finalised till year 2028, wherein, 470 roads of approximately 27,000 kms will be constructed. The perspective plan of other agencies roads is being synchronised with the plans of BRO.

**Operational Works:** The construction efforts are focused on development of defence related infrastructure including force preservation assets, operational logistics infrastructure, billeting of troops, establishment of forward connectivity, anti-infiltration system and development of aviation related infrastructure.

**Connectivity in Sikkim** was severely affected due to Glacial Lake Outburst Flood in October 2023. Further, flash floods in May 2024 also severely affected roads & borders in Sikkim. Actions are at hand with various stakeholders for restoration and construction of new infrastructure for redundancy.

Indian Army is undertaking infrastructure development in the Creek Sector. Infrastructure being constructed includes berthing facility, docking infrastructure and marine equipment repair & maintenance. Further, additional billeting and allied infrastructure is being constructed for housing troops during heightened security situations.

In sync with Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti National Master Plan (PM GS NMP), details of dual use infrastructure like border roads, Hospitals, important railway lines etc have been uploaded on GS NMP portal. The data layers will enhance visibility to all stakeholders for integrated planning and dual use of infrastructure.

## Tri-Services Synergy

**Operational Synergy and Jointness:** Exemplary conduct of Tri-Service Exercises, participation & pragmatic discussions during Front Level Operational Discussions are a testimony of enhanced Inter-Service integration. Formations along the International Border (IB) continued their training to maintain highest standard of operational readiness in conjunction with other services.

Exercise JAL PRAHAR-I, a joint amphibious training exercise with Indian Navy was conducted at Visakhapatnam in September 2024. This was followed by Operation Sea Test (OST) of INS JALASHWA, which was conducted at Kakinada in October 2024.

An integrated Tri-Service live demo and static display was conducted on 12 March 2024, wherein Indian Army was the lead service. The exercise was conducted in Pokhran Field Firing Ranges with the aim to validate joint all-arms, Air-Land Battle, in a Tri-Service setting, with indigenous equipment. Around 250 types of equipment in the wide range of tech domains such as aircraft, helicopters, ISR platforms, unmanned & counter-unmanned aerial systems, Artificial Intelligence/ autonomous systems/robotics, armament, ammunition, communication/5G/quantum, mobility, survivability, alternate power solutions, habitat, operational logistics, cyber, space applications and training equipment were showcased.

## Modernisation and Aatmanirbharta

Force modernisation through capability development is progressing at a steady pace. Cognisance is being taken of the hi-tech warfighting equipment being developed and used across the world especially in active war zones. Acquisition procedures are being reviewed and renewed to boost ‘Aatmanirbharta’. Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 is likely

to undergo a complete revamp in 2025 and efforts are being made to make it amenable to service requirements. More than five hundred schemes have been planned for acquiring potent fighting capability in next 15 years. The broad categories of acquisition schemes include Force Application, Battlefield Awareness, Command & Control, Sustenance



& Support, and Protection. Defence Procurement Board (DPB) has approved the Annual Acquisition Plan 2024-26 in May 2024. Based on prioritisation of schemes in AAP 2024-26, a total of 25 schemes costing approximately 40,695 crores have been identified and targeted to be concluded in FY 2024-25. To address any capability void and induct niche technology, a special provision was accorded in the form of EP-IV by DAC on 22 August 2023. A total of 73 Capability Development schemes were contracted in the domains of Drone/Counter-Drone, Weapon systems, Mobility & Protection, Survivability etc.

Out of 158 Capital Acquisition contracts worth Rs 70,028 crore concluded in last four Financial Years (2021-22 to 2024-25), 144 contracts worth Rs 68,121 crore (97.3%) have been signed with Indian vendors under Normal/ Emergency Procurement acquisition process. This year, 16 contracts have been concluded. Out of these, 14 are with Indian Industry, enhancing the force capability in important domains of small arms, long range vectors, communication and remotely piloted aerial systems.

96% of total Acceptance of Necessity accorded in Financial Years 2022-24 have been granted to indigenous defence industry. During this year, 23 AoNs have been accorded (worth Rs 1.22 lakh crore). Out of these, 21 are with Indian Industry worth Rs 1.19 lakh crore (98%).

Indian Army’s ammunition procurement under ‘Manufacture of Ammunition for Indian Army by Indian Industry’ for long term requirement of 10 years is in progress to establish at least one indigenous source for all types of ammunition. Through concerted and proactive efforts and in close coordination with other agencies, 154 out of 175 (nearly 88%) ammunition variants have been indigenised so far.

## Initiatives Taken to Promote Technology Infusion

Army Design Bureau (ADB) acts as a facilitator for technological R&D efforts and procurement of indigenously developed weapons and equipment. ‘Make Projects’ are being spearheaded by the Indian Army to compliment the vision of Government of India and to create a robust defence ecosystem. Out of 52 Make Projects, 35 Projects have reached prototype development stage and beyond. Number of projects under Army Technology Board (ATB) have risen from 17 to 62 in one year.

Technology Development Fund (TDF) has been launched by the Government for giving impetus to R&D projects beyond the proof-of-concept stage. At present five projects (approximately Rs 50 crore) are being progressed through TDF.

The Innovation in Defence Excellence (iDEX) platform was created to harness the innovation potential of startups and innovators in the country. Presently, 85 challenges of Indian Army (approximately Rs 500 crore) as part of iDEX, are being progressed.

In the fifth PIL promulgated in October 2023, out of 97 items, 37 are Indian Army items. Anticipated cumulative positive impact from PILs is 5 lakh crore over a period of next 5-10 years.

10 Intellectual Property Rights were filed by IA during this year, out of which three have been granted. The remaining IPRs are under progress. Details are as under:

Portable Multi Target Detonation Device, developed by Major Rajprasad RS (Engineers) has already entered production and is being inducted in the Indian Army.

Hexacopter Tactical Remotely Piloted Aircraft is developed by Major Rengarajan (EME).

Full Body Armour Suit, developed by Lieutenant Colonel Anoop Mishra (Engineers) overcomes the limitations of existing Bullet Proof Jackets and provides troops with higher level of protection.

MoU with Department of Science and Technology (DST) was signed in March 2024 for the utilisation of their expertise and access to Tech Evaluation & Tech Consultancy from the domain experts of the DST for evaluation of proposals received from the defence ecosystem.

MoU with Centre for Development of Advance Computing (CDAC) was inked in May 2024. It will enable IA to

utilise the expertise of CDAC to foster focused Research & Development and innovations towards finding solutions to address Indian Army challenges.

The following innovations developed by Service personnel have been inducted:

Transfer of Technology (ToT) of two innovations devel-

oped by service personnel namely ‘Xploder’- IED disposal and room intervention UGV and ‘Agniastra’- Multi Target Portable Detonation Device has been undertaken with two private industries. Both the innovations have extensive utilisation in conventional and sub-conventional operations. Another innovation by service personnel named ‘Vidyut Rakshak’ – Internet of Things Enabled Integrated Generator Monitoring Protection and Control System’, has already been inducted in Northern Command.

The ADB has mapped over 1,700 industries, contacted 200+ top academic institutions and 50 top R&D institutes/ organisations in the country. The outreach initiatives include Forward Area Tours, facilitating Internal Development Trials, Capability Demonstration (No Cost No Commitment) by providing access to Field Firing Ranges and Equipment and establishment of Regional Technology Nodes.

Project AKASHTER: First batch of Control Centre for the Air Defence Control & Reporting Systems, Project Akashter was flagged off from Bharat Electronic Limited, Ghaziabad in April 2024. This is significant development for automation of Air Defence Operations.

Digitisation and Automation

The declaration of Indian Army’s Theme of 2024 & 2025 as ‘Years of Technology Absorption’ has focused the thrust towards force modernisation by infusion of technology. It involves various initiatives in the fields of Automation, Digitisation, Development of Joint Applications for Tri-Services, Data management and Infusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI). 59 applications/ websites have been developed. The software/ applications aim to enhance situation awareness, generate comprehensive operational & intelligence picture, facilitate HR management and create quality MIS for multiple domains. Collaboration with industry, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), academia, ministries, domain experts and start-up ecosystem is being done while integrating efforts with India’s AI Mission, National Quantum Mission and IT Mission. A compendium of 100 applications showcasing Digitisation Initiatives undertaken by Indian Army was released by Raksha Mantri during Chanakya Defence Dialogue in October 2024.

Indian Army has prepared an AI roadmap which outlines the effort and timelines for implementation by various stakeholders to achieve tactical, operational and strategic goals. Indian Army has signed an agreement with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for joint technology incubation. An AI Incubation Centre for Indian Army will be established at BEL, R&D centre as part of the agreement.

## Military Diplomacy

In line with India’s rising global stature in recent years, there has been a considerable increase in diplomatic activity undertaken by the Indian Army. Presently, Indian Army is engaged with 118 countries through various defence cooperation activities.

As part of Phase-1 of reorganisation of defence wings, the number of Defence Wings have been increased from 45 to 52. Four additional new defence wings were established at Poland and Algeria in June 2024 and at Ethiopia & Mozambique in October 2024. For Phase-2 of reorganisation, raising of four additional Defence Wings is in process.

There are total 39 Joint Exercises in which IA participates. In addition, new bilateral exercises are being planned with Egypt, UAE, KSA and Cambodia. Yoga and Nari Shakti is being given emphasis during the conduct of these Exercises.

## Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief Ops

During this year, IA deployed 83 columns including Eco Task Force (ETF) in fourteen states, so far during which 29,972 civilians were rescued, medical aid provided to approx 3,000 civilians and relief material for over 13,000 civilians. Major relief operations were undertaken at Manipur (May 2024), Wayanad Landslide Kerala (July 2024), Uttarakhand Landslide (July 2024) and Gujarat Floods (August 2024).

## Women Empowerment

Women officers (WOs) are being provided equal opportunities to include career courses, foreign exposures and posting to challenging appointments in difficult areas akin to their male counterparts. Special Number 3 Selection Board has been conducted for WOs from 1992-2008 batches wherein 128 officers have been empanelled for promotion. 124 WOs presently are in various command appointments leading major units in difficult and challenging assignments. 507 WOs have been provided permanent commission similar to their male counterparts through Special Number 5 Selection Board. Commissioning of WOs into Corps of Artillery has led to an increase in their footprint across all arms and services, less combat arms. WOs are also being now commissioned as Non-Departmental Territorial Army Officers, as on date nine such officers have been inducted.

Appointment of DGMS (Army): On August 01, 2024, Lieutenant General Sadhna Saxena Nair assumed the office of DGMS (Army), becoming the first woman to be appointed to this prestigious position.

## Women Officers in UN Peace Keeping Missions

Presently 23% of appointment of Staff Officers/ Military Observers are being tenanted by WOs in various missions which is in accordance with UN Directives. In addition to Female Engagement Teams (FETs) already operational in MONUSCO, UNISFA and UNDOF an additional team has been inducted in UNMISS in July 2024. Another team will be inducted in UNIFIL by mid 2025 thereby ensuring FETs with each mission. Two women Psychological Counsellors from Military Nursing Service (MNS) have been inducted to mission area in July 2024 for outreach to local communities and to augment peace building efforts.

Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award: UN Headquarters constituted ‘Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award in the year 2016. The award recognizes a military peacekeeper who has best integrated a gender perspective into peacekeeping activities. Major Radhika Sen, Female Engagement Team Commander in MONUSCO, received the award for the year 2023 reflecting our steadfast commitment towards gender equality and promotion of rights of women and children in conflict-torn areas.

Equal Entry of Girl Cadets: The lateral entry of girl cadets in class XI of Rashtriya Military School has commenced from academic session 2024-25. As on date 90 girl cadets are studying in five Rashtriya Military Schools.

## UN Peacekeeping

Indian Army has deployed approximately 5200 military personnel in five Infantry Battalions and 11 Formed Units apart from Staff Officers/ Military Observers in ten UN missions in Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Abyei, Western Sahara, Central African Republic, Addis Ababa, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Cyprus. Female Engagement Teams, women psychological counsellors and Military Nursing Service (MNS officers) have been posted to various missions to ameliorate the suffering of women & children in conflict zone. In addition, trained yoga instructors also form part of contingents for conducting Yoga for both peacekeepers and local population.

In sync with ‘Aatmanirbharta’ and ‘Make in India’ mission, state-of-art Made-in-India equipment and vehicles are being inducted in all the missions.

Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) is the nodal agency for UN Peacekeeping training in the country. It trains more than 10,000 troops every year. The Centre excels in training Indian and international peacekeepers.

## Ecology Restoration & Conservation

IA has the unique distinction of being the only army which has undertaken ecological restoration task through its Eco Task Force (ETF) units. Solarisation is being given impetus and 84 MW of solar power is being generated through multiple solar projects. Under ‘Amrit Sarovar Pariyojna’ 450 Water Bodies have been created. Veterans are being incorporated to play a major role in nation building initiatives including environmental protection. ‘Atulya Ganga Initiative’ is one such initiative by the veterans to restore and preserve the ecological integrity of the Ganga river. Efforts are being made to popularise Electric Vehicles (EVs) & alternate fuel vehicles.

## Operation Sadbhavana

The IA continued to undertake large number of Military Civic Action projects under Operation Sadbhavana. These military civic action projects include a wide range of activities in the fields of National Integration Tour, Healthcare, HR development, Women Empowerment, Environment Protection, Education and Sports. With an annual financial outlay of approximately Rs 150 Crore, 75% of these projects are also being executed in the 100 Vibrant Villages as identified by the Indian Army under Vibrant Villages Programme. Total of 68 Projects amounting to Rs 4.43 crore are under execution in the ‘Vibrant Villages’ identified by Ministry of Home Affairs and prioritised by the IA along the Northern Borders. It broadly includes infrastructure development projects like construction of Community Halls, provisioning of Solar Power Plants, construction of Grazier Huts, construction of Toilet Blocks, Rain Shelters and provisioning of Hybrid Power Plants.







# India lose seven in the final session, Australia snatch 2-1 series lead

India 358 for 9 (Reddy 105\*, Washington 50, Boland 3-57, Cummins 3-86) trail Australia 474 by 116 runs

Australia 474 (Smith 140, Labuschagne 72, Bumrah 4-99) and 234 (Labuschagne 70, Bumrah 5-57) beat India 369 (Reddy 114, Jaiswal 82, Boland 3-57) and 155 (Jaiswal 84, Cummins 3-28, Boland 3-39) by 184 runs

Early in the final hour at the MCG, Australia won an epic Test that had been played in front of a record crowd to take a 2-1 lead in the Border Gavaskar Trophy, having snared seven wickets in the final session when it appeared India were on track to save the game. Yashasvi Jaiswal defied the home side for 208 deliveries before falling to the herculean Pat Cummins while hometown star Scott Boland made three key incisions to secure one of Australia's most significant victories of recent history.

Nathan Lyon claimed the final wicket, when he pinned Mohammed Siraj lbw, sparking wild celebrations for the home side: a margin of 184 runs did not do justice to the tension and drama of the final day and the importance of the result to this Australia team who have turned their fortunes around after the crushing opening defeat in Perth.

After India had slid to 33 for 3, Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant added 88 in 32 overs to take India into the final session with seven wickets in hand, but Travis Head burgled the wicket of Pant and Australia seized their moment as India lost 7 for 34. The quick bowlers were

immense, Mitchell Starc bowling in the mid-140kph region despite a back niggle, while Cummins and Boland added further chapters to previous MCG heroics. Cummins earned the Johnny Mullagh Medal as Player of the



Match for an outstanding all-round Test in which he also contributed 90 runs alongside his six wickets.

There was a dose of controversy, too, when Jaiswal's rearguard was ended via the DRS

after he gloved a pull down the leg side against Cummins. Snicko did not register anything, but third umpire Sharfuddoula ruled he had seen a clear deflection, which matched what was shown on TV. Jaiswal appeared to know

of their hands, but in terms of this series they can still retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with victory in Sydney. For Australia, a win in the final Test - and a 3-1 margin - would secure their spot in the WTC final alongside South Africa who qualified yesterday with their own gripping victory over Pakistan.

The final day dawned with Australia nine down and they opted to continue batting which added just a further six runs but removed four overs from the day's allocation. Lyon became the fifth wicket for Jasprit Bumrah, retaining his record of having the most Test runs without making a half-century. It all meant that India needed 340 in 92 overs and talk of the Gabba 2021 was never far away.

India were very cautious early on against some extremely testing new ball bowling; Rohit Sharma later said they set out wanting to lay a platform for a chase but it always looked a long shot. Australia were made to wait for their opening incisions before, as has so often been the case, it was Cummins who came to the fore. He had the struggling Rohit edging to gully, where Mitchell Marsh took a sharp catch, and five balls later squared up KL Rahul with a superb delivery which ended in the hands of first slip.

In the final over before lunch, Starc was rewarded for battling through the pain barrier when he lured Virat Kohli into his latest drive outside off, the edge reaching Usman Khawaja. The wicket ended a controversial time in Melbourne for Kohli, and made it clear that there was no realistic chance of India chasing down the target.

## Indian Army Hosts Cricket Tournament for Local Youth in Kotranka, Rajouri

**RAJOURI:** The Indian Army organized a Cricket Tournament for boys under 19 from local schools in Rajouri, held at Kotranka from December 23 to December 29, 2024. The tournament aimed to promote a healthy lifestyle, encourage physical fitness, and foster camaraderie among the youth while strengthening ties with the Indian Army.

The matches, played in a T-10 format, saw the participation of four local school teams competing in a league structure. The event generated enthusiasm among players and spectators alike, with the young participants displaying remarkable sportsmanship and zeal throughout the tournament.

In the final match, High Secondary School Budhal triumphed over Government Degree College Kotranka in a closely contested game, claiming the winner's trophy.

The initiative is part of the Army's efforts to channelize the energy of young minds in a positive direction, diverting them from issues such as drug abuse and unlawful activities. By providing such platforms, the Indian Army seeks to nurture competitive skills and encourage a sense of unity among the youth.

Local residents and participants expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Indian Army for organizing the event and applauded their commitment to youth engagement and community development.



**The defeat means India's hopes of reaching the World Test Championship final are now out of their hands, but in terms of this series they can still retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy** with victory in Sydney. For Australia, a win in the final Test - and a 3-1 margin - would secure their spot in the WTC final alongside South Africa who qualified yesterday with their own gripping victory over Pakistan.

TATA BLUESCOPE STEEL

TIME TO SHINE WITH

durashine

PRO

Available with

COOL ROOFING

CRDR

DIRT RESISTANCE

Advanced Coating Technology

Colour Coated Steel for Roof & Wall Cladding

Higher Scratch Resistance

Cool Roofing

Dirt Resistance

Superior UV Protection

Tested & Proven

BIS Approved

Leaders in Colour Coated Roofing and Cladding Solutions

#ShelterForAll

## Rohit: Pant needs to figure out the risk-reward game himself

India captain Rohit Sharma has said that Rishabh Pant needs to figure out "the right way to do things" for himself and the team, while acknowledging that his high-risk methods had brought spectacular success in the past.

Rohit was reacting to a question about Pant's dismissals in India's defeat at the MCG, where he was caught scooping to deep third in the first innings and pulled a long hop to wide long-on in the second when the team was fighting for a draw.

"It's [Pant's dismissal] just happened, there hasn't been any discussion about today," Rohit said. "Obviously we've lost the game, everybody is disappointed about how things panned out... But again, look, Rishabh Pant obviously he needs to understand what is required from himself."

"More than any one of us telling him, it's about him understanding and figuring out what's the right way to go about it. In the past, he has given us lot of success doing what he does. As a captain, there's a kind of mixed reaction to that."

"Sometimes you want to back that thought of him playing the way he plays, sometimes when things don't look good, it frustrates everyone. That is what it is, that's the reality. It's the success and failure - need to be balanced about it. As captain, it's hard to have a conversation when it has given him a lot of success as well. But it's about him figuring out what is the right way to do things, it's about situations as well. Certain situations of the game, if there's a risk percentage, do you want to take that risk? Do you want to let the opposition come back into the game? Those are the things he needs to figure out himself."

"I've known Rishabh for a long time, [I] understand his cricket as well... In terms of conversations, no way I can say I've not had a chat with him or he doesn't understand what the team expects. He understands that. But things that he does give him results as well, just the fine line between telling him not to do those things or telling him to do those things."

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar was severely critical of Pant's shot selection in the first innings of the MCG Test, when he holed out to deep third for 28 off 37 balls while attempting a scoop off Scott Boland. On Monday, Pant's dismissal for 30 off 104 balls while attempting to pull Travis Head broke a resolute partnership with Yashasvi Jaiswal. India had batted through the entire second session without losing a wicket, but lost seven in the final session - beginning with Pant - to collapse for 155 in the last hour of the day.

Rohit said Shubman Gill had not been dropped for the MCG Test but lost his place because India wanted to give themselves more bowling options while not sacrificing batting depth.

"I had a chat with him [Gill]. There's no way when you're leaving someone out, for whatever reason it is, you will not have a chat," Rohit said. "The chat with him was clearly he was not dropped. [We] just wanted to have extra bit of cushion in the bowling and we opted for an allrounder, which shouldn't weaken our batting line-up."

"Compromising a batter for a bowler is not something I wanted to do. We wanted to bat as deep as possible, along with that have a bowling attack which can take 20 wickets. We considered everything and we ended up compromising him, unfortunately."