TOP NEWS OF J&K

JAMMU, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2024

Daily Evening Newspaper



TENTH DAY KRIYA

With profound grief & sorrow, we inform the sad demise of our beloved Karmyogi Father Sh Som Nath Saproo, S/o Late Ram Chand Saproo, Originally Resident of Bul Bul lanker Nawa Kadal Srinagar Kashmir, at present Sec 2 House No 5 Pamposh Colony Janipur Jammu who left us for his heavenly abode on 14th of December.

TENTH DAY KRIYA will take place on Monday 23rd of December at Muthi Ghat at 9 AM.

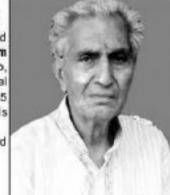
GRIEF STRICKEN:-

Kuldeep Saproo& Kiran Seproo(Son & Daughter in law) Manmohan Sapro & Anjali Sapros (Son & Daughter in law) Sunits Bhat & Rainder Bhat (Daughter & Son-in-law) D' Ankita Saproo & Kunai Grover (Grand Daughter & Grand Son-in-law)

Ankush Saproo & Ekta Pandita Saproo

(Grand Son & Grand Daughter in law) Shan Saproo, (Grand Son)

D. Pawni Shat Pandita & Akshay Pandita. (Grand Daughter & Grand Sorniniaw) Irshita Saoroo & Mansi Bhat -Grand Daughters



SH SOM NATH SAPROO

And Samast Saptoo Parivar... 7006344670, 9419114022, 9419144056

BARKHI

THE BARKHI OF OUR BELOVED LATE SH. VINOD KUMAR SHARMA WILL BE PERFORMED AT OUR RESIDENCE LAKSHMI NAGAR WARD NO 67 MUTHI JAMMU AT 12:00 NOON ON 19/12/2024.

FATHER & MOTHER LATE SHI CHARAN DASS & LATE SHIT, SHAKUNTALA DEVI WIFE: ANLIRAD-A EHARMA DAUGHTER: WASHALLY SHARMA BON: AMAN SHARMA

KUMAR SHARMA FATHER AND MOTHER IN LAW LATE SHI DWARKA NATH & LATE SMT. SWARN NATH

BROTHER AND SISTER IN LAW: ASHOR KUMAR & NEELAM SHARMA BH. DARSHAN KUMAR & RENU BHARMA

SISTER AND BROTHER IN LAW DARSHANA DEVI & SH. THORU RAN SVI. SUNTA SHAHMA & SH. COUTAVI KUMAH NEPHEW AND NIECE : NEHARIKA, SHRIYA, SHITAVI

OBITUARY

With profound grief & sorrow we are sad to inform the sudden and untimely demise of my father Sh. Kuldeep Ganjoo resident of Plot No 334-C Rajiv Nagar, Begampur Delhi on 13/12/2024.

TENTH DAY will be performed on 22/12/2024. GRIEF STRICKEN:

Smt. Lalita Shori (Mother)

Smt. Madhu Ganjoo (Wife)

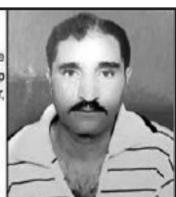
Anoop Ganjoo (Son)

Smt. & Sh. Ashok Ganjoo (Brother) Smt. & Sh. Ravi Bhat

Smt. & Sh. P N Pandita

Smt. & Sh. Rohit Sehgal

MOBILE: 7210009295, 9818859970



LATE SH. VINOD

SH. KULDEEP GANJOO

TENTH DAY / KRIYA With profound grief and sorrow we regret to inform the sad demise of our beloved mother Smt. Kanta Devi W/o Late Sh. Om Parkash Baria R/o W. No 8 H.No 153 near ISKCON Temple Dhar Road Udhampur,

Tenth Day Mourning Assembly will be held on Tuesday 17th Dec. at Jagriti Old Age Home Billan Bowl Road Udhampur upto 12 noon.

Kriya will be held on Friday 20th Dec. at Devika Ghat

Udhampur. **GRIEF STRICKEN**

Sons & Daughter-in-laws

Sh. Deepak Kumar Baria & Smt. Seema Gupta Sh. Sanjay Kumar Baria & Smt. Shally Gupta Sh. Pankaj Gupta & Smt. Rozy Gupta

Daughter & Son-in-law

Smt. Ruchi Gupta & Sh. Vipan Gupta Mob:- 7006179564, 9419175012, 9419214896



SMT. KANTA DEVI

REMEMBRANCE IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED NAME

It has been four years since you left up, set the love and one you showered upon to named after it every heartment. From our earlcal days, you remains to with towevering laws orders patterns. and timers devotion. You were out first tractur, our gentless protector, and the source of all our moviers. Your quette funds Alped every our loans, your first words uncovered as in every sless, and your excitions aid the fourterior of our fires. Today, as we rememberyos, an hold outs the numerics of your transfers care and the worth digoti predict about to rise when we are. Though you are no longer with us as a person, your agacy of love and selfless mean confinencia guide un. You ere forever in our invents. Hey your

word made in storm at pourse. Love And Gratitude From:ladban Rales And Brounds Rales



USHA KOUL (RAZDAN)

FOURTH YEAR REMEMBRANCE

four years have properly have you left us creating buy world n our life. The part of loving you will never fule, but h your bissoings are always with us one wa always fool your quadress oncomes around us. You will forever live in our hearts guiding and inspring us. Mas You Always.

Daughter & Son-in-law

Wis. Acity Rapdom (Raina) & Mr. Ajay Roina.

Son & Daughter-in-law

(4): Arun Raedan and Mrs. Shikha Raina (Raedan). Grand Childrene-

Aadrya Raina, Shaumik Raina, Arshik Rapcan, Sharun Rapcan

RAZDAN AND RAINA FAMILY



Usha Koul (Razdan)

LATE SMT. PUNAM GUPTA For yet another year your special day passes without your cherished presence. This day is filled with treasured memories of our family's togetherness. Though you are not here with us today. We can feel you, you are everywhere, living eternally within our hearts... Today we calabrate the life you lived, smile you shared and the lave you gave always. No words can ease our pain and grief. but you taught us to be courageous... We thank you far giving us the greatest values of life... Keep blessing us as our guardian angel... You are deeply missed ... DR. K. B. GUPTA (RETD HOD PAEDIATRICS, GMC JAMMU) - HUSBAND **DAUGHTERS- IN-LAW & SONS** DR. SHAVI MAHAJAN (LAB HEAD AND CONSULTANT PATHOLOGIST, SRL LAB (AGILUS DIAGNOSTICS) & DR. RISHABH GUPTA (ASSOCIATE PROF. ORTHOPAEDICS, SMC KATHUA) DR. DEEPIKA DEWAN (MEDICAL OFFICER, DHS) & DR. RAJAT GUPTA (ASSOCIATE PROF. PATHOLOGY, GMC Jammu) GRAND CHILDREN : SVADHI & RIDDHIT

10Th DAY KRIYA

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of our Revered father Sh. Makhan Lal Bhat (Educationist) S/o Late Sh. Mahadev Ram Bhat Erst while Delina Kashmir Baramulla. (Babapore Habbakadal, Srinagar). A/P H.No 132/2, Saraswati Vihar Bohri, Jammu who left for his heavenly abode on 10/12/2024.

10TH DAY KRIYA shall be held on Thursday The 19th day of Dec 2024 at

Akhnoor Ghat.

Mourning Assembly will be held at Muthi Ghat at 11.00 am.

GRIEF STRICKEN. Smt Santosh Bhat (Wife)

Smt Sunita and Sh Ravinder Koul (Daughter and Son in law) Vijay Bhat and Neeru Bhat (Son and Daughter in law) Sunil Bhat and Manju Bhat (Son and Daughter in law)

Deeply Missed by Samast Bhat Parivar

(9086159239, 7006129877)

OBITUARY/ 10TH DAY KRIYA

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of our beloved Smt. Phoola Koul W/o Late Sh. Diljeet Koul, originally from Akura (Mattan)/ H.No. 251, Sector F. Sainik Colony Jammu at Wagoli Pune on 12-12-2024.

The 10th Day Kriya will be performed at Wagoli Pune on 20th December 2024. GRIEF STRICKEN:-

Sister-in-law & Brother-in-law Subashni & Sunil Koul-9682190881 Daughters & Son-in-laws Ashwin & Anu Koul- 9923184220 Raja & Mannu Koul- 9561534661

(PANDITA'S, BHAT'S & BAMEZAI'S)

SAMAST PARIVAR



Heart still aches in sadness & in pang of separation tears flow. What it Means to lose you

> Mother No one can Know. Deeply Remembered By

Bhupinder Singh, Retd. XEN **Brothers and Family Members**



SMT. PHOOLA KOUL

Sh. Makhan Lal Bhat

(Educationist)

Sdr. Gurcharan Kour W/O S. Late S. Sujan Singh

10TH DAY KRIYA

With profound grief & sorrow, we inform the sad lemise of our beloved father Sh Swami Raj Shagat Sto Lt. Sh Hari Charan Bhagat (Rtd. Tehni Education Officert Rio Jalga Chinta, Teh. Bhadorwah Distit Doda.

10th Day Kriya will be hold at Jaiga Chinia Bhaderwah un 21-12-2024 (Saturday) at 10.00 AM. Grief Stricken Smt Shlv Dae -Wife Smt Shee's Day -Sister

Sons & Daughter In-laws Sh Satish Kumar & Smt Noolam Bhagat Sh Ravinder Kumar & Smt Santosh Kumar Nephews & Niece-in-laws Sh Cm Prakash Bhaget & Smt Shakuntle Devi Sh Ved Prakash & Utlama Devi Sh Bimai Kumar & Smi Neera Bhagat Sh Rien Kumar & Smi Neetu Neutyal Sh Sanjoy Kumar & Smt Usha Dovi

Naughters & Son-In-laws and Gree Davi & Sh Yesh Pai Sheget



With profound grief and somow, it is to

oform that Smt. Ration Ravi Mattee Wild Lare. Sh. Niranjan Nath Mattee Rio H.No. 21 Main Road Jawahar Nagar Srinagar

Kashmir (Al present) H.No. 38 Lane 24 Swaran Wher Jammu proceeded to heav eniv abode on 11.12.2024. The TENTH DAY KRIYA will be performed at Akhnoor Chat is on 20.12.2024 (Friday) The ASSEMBLY will be held at our

residence (Swaren Viher) at 12:00 Noce. Smt. Rattan Rani Mattoo

(Son & Daughter in law) avinder Mettoo & Usha Mettoo (Son-in law and Daughter) Lt. Sh Neresh Kumar Happa and Usha Happa (Son in law & Daughter) Sh. Ashok Ganiu & Veena Ganiu

MOB: 9796050738, 9797176837, 9717936650

'Asthi Visarjan'

IN GRIEF

With profound grief and sorrow we inform you about the sad demise of our beloved Dr. Netar Parkash Sharma (Retd. Professor) S/o Late Sh Prem Chand narma on the intervening night of 12-13th ecember, 2024. We will proceed towards faridwar for immersion of pious "Asthis" in noly Ganga from our residence Nai Bast lear Ward No 6, R S Pura, Jammu on 19t December 2024 at 3:30 pm. GRIEF STRICKEN

Smt Savitri Sharma (Wife) Daughter and Son-in-law Rekha Sharma (KCS) & Dr Atish Raina Amit Parkash Sharma (Son) Surbhi Sharma (Daughter) Brothers and Sister-in-law Sh Dharam Paul & Smt Sushma Sharma Sh Shashi Kant & Smt Seema Sharma Sister & Brother-in-law



Dr. Netar Parkash Sharma

Smt Kanta & Sh Chaman Lal Sharma **TENTH DAY**

With profound grief and sorrow we inform the sad and untimely demise of Sh. Ram Kumar Sharma S/o Sh. Chachu Ram on 14-12-24. TENTH DAY will be performed on 23-12-24 at R/o Seri Panditian.

GRIEF STRICKEN: Asha Devi (Wife) Komal Kerni (Daughter) Akshay Sharma (Son) Akhil Sharma (Son) MOBILE NO: 8493838801



SHARMA

Sh Amar Nath Pandita

(Ex. Principal)

OBITUARY With profound grief and sonow we inform

the sad demise of our beloved Karam yogi Ex.Principal Sh Amar Nath Pandita on eth Dec. Originally resident of Begh Shori Talah Tillo Jammu. MOURNING is at our residence 23,701 Essiand spertment Mayor Vilher Ext. Opp New Ashok Nagar Metro Station New Delhi. TENTH DAY KIRYA will be performed at Murad Nagar Chat Chazlabad UP on 24th

December (Tuesday). **GRIEF STRICKEN** One Short Part to Wife. Carl & New Worth .: Banglifer retire & See Urrile & Beit Vist -Beughter & Son-In-law

Young & Proce King - Compton & Bost in Law Such rus & Radina's Erro-Daughter & Son-In-law Ocean Challens Kinal Sharku, Tuhir Miati Arian Miati Turudesu Kadi Azir dak Maring, Makiko Kau, Seco Budako, Doegonya Logi, Arial Logi, Noora Kodi & Arial Kad

Creek Grand Children's Jayns, Upice, Licenser, Technologe, Desert, Selt & Aut AND ALL GAVAST PARMAR PANCETO'S, PATHWARES & SHALFS CIMERCIAC (1016057170 CICCE23717 (007053810) (041505413

TENTH DAY Ath protours grief and women, we regret to brium the se

charman of our ballowed makes Bret. Rance Bast VIII LC 68 But Diffe Rio Cudent Vigopus. 10th Day and Keiye studio will be performed on 19.12.2024 at 0 am at our Revierner Village, Gustadi Vijagou. Your presence means a let, let us pray together for estimal space to the departed seed. Son & Doughter-in-Law

St. Farryof Sharrie & Sert. Surits Un. Prited Sterres & Strf. Marge Sterre Sh. Darshan Kumar & Smit Sankuh Kuman Doughter & Son-in-Law Brir, Savita A Sir, Burinder Sharma Smr. Sustma & Sh. Suresh Shamra See, Elkan & Str. Parcent Kurner Share a

Grand Children: Vopestrant Street Streets, Sanatics, hibbl., 40 not., Natrock

SHRADANJALI

GOO SAW YOU ARE TIRED HE PUT UP HIS ARMS ARGUND YOU AND WHOSPERED "COME TO HE" WITH TEARFUL EYES, A NOBLE SOUL GOOD FROEND GLIDE LEAVE US ALONE, YOUR SYDLE WILL ADMY'S REMAIN IN OUR HEARTS, WE ARE CRATEFUL FOR HOW MUCH U STAND AND PROTECTED US, WE WILL NEVER FORGET HONGLE A SPECIAL LOVE ONE WHO HAS PASSED FOR OF GOOD MENORIES, MAY YOUR PLOUS SOUL REST IN VARIABLE CHAM BOBAN VITH TEXES IN 1915 LAST BREATH.

> **HISSING YOU ALWAYS** MATAMAL/SMAST BHAT PARIVAR GANESHPORA/AMAR COLONY MOB. NO. 7889655613



Lt Rano Devi

(BOBAA)

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TOP NEWS OF J&K

JAMMU, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2024

Daily Evening Newspaper

ENTERTAINMENT

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Shahid Kapoor all set to play an edgy '90s gangster



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Free treatment for senior citizens at all Delhi hospitals: Arvind Kejriwal **INTERNATIONAL**

Go Trudeau go, calls grow, Canada PM's job hangs by a thread



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RNI No. JKENG/2010/39369

Regd. No. JK-435

Cong demands resignation of Amit

Shah over Ambedkar remarks

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BRIEFLY

LG Manoj Sinha over loss of lives in Kathua fire incident

JAMMU, Dec 18 (Agencies): Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoi Sinha expressed sadness over the loss of lives in a tragic fire incident occurred in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir. In a condolence message, the Lt Governor

said: "Extremely saddened by the loss of lives due to a tragic fire in Kathua. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. I wish the injured a speedy recov-

Kashmir remains in grip of severe cold conditions

ery".

SRINAGAR, Dec 18 (Agencies): There was a slight improvement in the intense cold conditions in Kashmir as the minimum temperature rose across the valley, but continued to settle below the freezing point, officials said here on vvednesday.

Srinagar city recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.5 degrees Celsius " slightly up from minus 5.3 degrees Celsius the previous night, the officials said.

They said the intense cold conditions over the past few days led to the freezing of the fringes of several water bodies, including the Dal Lake here, while water supply lines in many areas of the city here and elsewhere in the valley were also frozen due to the cold.

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 5 degrees Celsius a degree down from the night before.

Tourist resort Pahalgam, which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a low of minus 5.8 degrees Celsius which was slightly up from the previous night's minus 5 degrees Celsius.

Konibal, a sleepy hamlet on the outskirts of Pampore town, was the coldest place in the valley as mercury settled at the low of minus 6.5 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature in Qazigund — the gateway to Kashmir — was minus 5 degrees Celsius, Kupwara in north Kashmir minus 4.4 degrees,

■Turn to page 9

Amit Shah hails reconstruction of Sharda Temple at Teetwal

NEW DELHI, Dec 18 (Agencies): Union Home Minister Amit Shah lauded the reconstruction of the Sharda Temple and the Sikh Gurdwara near the Line of Control (LoC) in Teetwal, Karnah, Kupwara.

In his adress, Shah described the effort as a "historic achievement after 75 years" and a testament to India's dedication to preserving its spiritual and cultural heritage.

Speaking about the temple's importance, Shah said, "The Sharda Temple is not merely



a place of worship; it stands as a beacon of our ancient heritage and learning. Its successful reconstruction has filled the nation with pride and rekindled the faith of devotees worldwide."

Dedicated to Goddess

Sharda, the temple holds immense historical and spiritual significance as a renowned seat of knowledge and learning.

The reconstruction, following decades of neglect, has been widely

celebrated by cultural and religious communities, who view it as a vital step in reviving Kashmir's rich historical and cultural identity.

The Save Sharda Committee, a key organization advocating for the preservation of the Sharda heritage, played a pivotal role in the temple's restoration. In a statement, the committee expressed gratitude to the government for its decisive action and highlighted the broader impact of this achievement in promoting unity

Sabha which it claimed were an insult to B R Ambedkar. The opposition party also demanded that

Shah should apologise publicly and in Parliament for the remarks. Referring to Shah's speech in the Rajya

NEW DELHI, Dec 18

(Agencies): The Con-

gress on Wednesday

demanded the resig-

nation of Home Min-

ister Amit Shah for his

remarks in the Rajya

Sabha on Tuesday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the Home Minister accused us of speaking about Ambedkar 100 times and "told us that had we remembered God so many times we could have achieved heaven seven times".

"The 'insult' caused to Babasaheb Ambedkar by Amit Shah is wrong. I demand his resignation," he told reporters in Parliament premises.

"Shah has insulted Babasaheb and the Constitution written by him," Kharge, who was flanked by other opposition leaders, charged.

"The ideology of Manusmriti and RSS shows that they do not want to give respect to Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Constitution. That is why we, all parties, demand his resignation and he should apologise to the country," the Congress chief

"If he continues to talk like this, there will be fire across the country if anyone insults Babasaheb Ambedkar like this. We parties would not accept such an insult of Babasaheb Ambedkar,"

Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said all Pradesh Congress Committees will be holding marches at all Raj Bhavans across the country on Wednesday over the Ambedkar remarks issue and also the Adani row.

he said.

"In protest against the Adani mega corruption scandal and the PM's complicity in shielding Adani, the deteriorating situation in Manipur

Turn to page 9

Employers can file wage details till Jan 31 for higher pension

NEW DELHI, Dec 18 (Agencies): Retirement fund body EPFO has extended time till January 31, 2025 for employers to upload wage details etc regarding 3.1 lakh pending applications for pension on

higher wages. An online facility was



made available by

EPFO for submitting

applications for validation of options/joint options for pension on higher wages, a labour ministry statement said.

eligible pensioners or members in compliance with the Supreme Court order on November 4,

The facility was for

Turn to page 9

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Former Deputy SP, 5 others suffocate to death as fire erupts in house ment in a hospital.



KATHUA/JAMMU, Dec 18 (Agencies): A former deputy superintendent of police and his three-year-old grandson were among six people who suffocated to death when their rented

fire in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district early on Wednesday, an official said. Four other people

injured in the incident were undergoing treat-

According to police, locals noticed the house on fire around 2:30 am and rushed to rescue its occupants. The house was filled with thick smoke, suffocating its occupants in their sleep, they said.

The victims were shifted to the Government Medical College (GMC) Hospital in Kathua where six of them, including two minors, were declared 'brought dead', officials said.

The deceased have ■Turn to page 9

Arms, ammunition recovered from forest area in Kupwara



SRINAGAR, Dec 18 (Agencies): Security forces have recovered a cache of arms, ammunition and narcotics from a forest area near the Line of Control in Kupwara

district of Jammu and

Kashmir, the army said on Wednesday.

Acting on a specific intelligence input, the army and police launched a joint search operation in Amrohi area of Tangdhar near the LoC on Tuesday. "During search, four Pistols, six Pistol Magazines, approx four Kgs of narcotics and other war-like stores have

been recovered," the ■Turn to page 9

EDITORIAL

PM-AASHA

he Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) is a significant initiative by the Government of India aimed at ensuring the welfare and financial security of farmers. Launched in 2018, PM-AASHA seeks to address the issue of inadequate income for farmers and provide them with a stable and assured income for their agricultural produce. This scheme is designed to protect the interests of farmers by ensuring that they receive a fair price for their crops, thereby improving their livelihoods and reducing the risk of exploitation in the agricultural market.

The PM-AASHA scheme primarily aims to safeguard farmers' incomes through a combination of direct interventions and market support mechanisms. It is a comprehensive initiative that encompasses three distinct sub-schemes, each targeting a specific aspect of the agricultural economy. These sub-schemes are:

Under the Price Support Scheme, the government ensures that farmers receive a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their produce. The MSP is a price set by the government for various crops, which serves as a safety net for farmers. If the market price of a crop falls below the MSP, the government intervenes by purchasing the produce from the farmers at the MSP, thereby preventing them from incurring financial losses. This system guarantees a price floor for farmers, ensuring that they are not exploited by middlemen or market fluctuations.

The MSP is determined by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), and it is revised periodically based on factors such as production costs, demand-supply dynamics, and inflation. The Price Support Scheme is implemented through the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other government agencies, which purchase the crops directly from the farmers.

The Price Deficiency Payment Scheme is an innovative approach introduced under PM-AAS-HA. Unlike the Price Support Scheme, where the government physically buys the produce, the PDPS provides financial assistance to farmers if the market price of their produce falls below the MSP. In this case, farmers are not required to sell their crops to the government. Instead, they receive the difference between the MSP and the market price as direct financial support.

This scheme has been particularly useful for crops that are difficult to procure directly from farmers due to logistical constraints or other reasons. By providing a direct payment to the farmers, the PDPS helps bridge the income gap caused by low market prices and ensures that farmers receive a fair compensation for their produce.

The Private Procurement and Stockist Scheme allows private traders and agencies to participate in the procurement process. Under this scheme, private players are encouraged to procure crops from farmers at the MSP and store them for future sale or distribution. The government provides a subsidy to these private entities to make it financially viable for them to participate in the procurement process.

This scheme helps reduce the burden on government agencies and enhances the efficiency of the procurement system. It also ensures that farmers have access to a wider market and are not limited to government procurement alone. By involving the private sector, the government aims to create a more competitive and dynamic agricultural market, which can benefit both farmers and consumers.

The scheme aims to ensure that farmers receive a fair price for their agricultural produce, which is crucial for improving their income levels and reducing poverty in rural areas.

By providing price security and income stability, PM-AASHA seeks to reduce the distress caused by fluctuating market prices, which often force farmers into debt traps.

The scheme aims to strengthen the agricultural economy by encouraging increased production and improving the financial condition of farmers. By involving both public and private players in the procurement process, PM-AASHA seeks to create a more efficient and transparent system

that benefits farmers.

The implementation of PM-AASHA has been largely successful, with the government making significant strides in ensuring that farmers receive MSP for their produce. The scheme has been especially beneficial for crops such as pulses, oilseeds, and coarse cereals, which have often been neglected in terms of market support. Through PM-AASHA, the government has expanded its procurement network, reaching more farmers

and covering a wider range of crops.

However, the scheme also faces challenges. One of the key issues is the inefficiency in the procurement process, which sometimes results in delays and logistical bottlenecks. Additionally, the scheme's impact has been uneven across states, with some regions receiving better benefits than others. There have also been concerns regarding the quality of produce procured under the scheme, as the MSP-based procurement system sometimes encourages farmers to sell substandard produce.

The Spiritual/Religious Significance of Chanting Om Namah Shivaya

By: Omkar Dattatray

he spiritual and religious importance of the cosmic mantra Om Namah Shivaya cannot be exaggerated as this mahamantra forms the core of Hinduism which sanatan Dharma is referred .It is the mantra recited at the birth and death of an individual and it is rightly called Aadi ta Annt .Every Sanatan ritual begins and ends with the chanting of Aum Namah Shivaya or Hari Om and it clearly shows the significance of this great and miraculous mantra .Chanting of Aum Namah Shivaya in fact leads to the salvation of the human beings and it is believed that this mantra liberates the man/women and one is destined to navigate the ocean of samsara and reach the safe and divine destination .Thus the chanting of this cosmic mantra results in the liberation of the human soul and therefore this mantra is the base, core and essence of sanatan Dharma .It is the primal, basic and root mantra and has utmost significance in Hinduism meaning thereby in Sanatan Dharma as any religious ritual is incomplete without the chanting of this principle mantra .Om Namah Shivaya symbolizes ,signifies and reflects four Vedas and all the three guna's in Sanatan Dharma .The chanting of Om has great cosmic and spiritual value and its vibration is full of spiritual content and meaning .Every religious ceremony and rituals starts and comes to close with this Vedic mantra .The ancient mantra 'Om Namah Shivaya' rooted in the Vedas is dedicated to Lord Shiva, and represents the five elements of which human body is formed and which also is the cause of the universe .Chanting it purifies the mind ,reduces the stress '.Om Namah Shivaya' is one of the oldest and most revered mantras in Hinduism, and it is believed to have been first mentioned in the ancient Vedic texts particularly the Rigveda and Yajurveda ."Om" is regarded as the primal sound of the universe representing the cosmic vibration that sustains all of existence

.The five syllables Na, Ma, Shi, Va and Ya, are said to represent the five elements earth, water, fire ,air, and ether .It is commonly dedicated to Lord Shiva and is widely chanted during religious ceremonies ,festivals like Maha Shivaratri, and daily prayers or meditation to remove obstacles and struggles from life and attain peace .In fact it also symbolizes the Sanatan Trinity of Bhrama ,Vishnu and Mahesh/ Rudra/Shiva. Shaivism was one of the earliest organized forms of Hinduism, and it found deep expression in the Tamil tradition ,where the mantra became an integral part of religious practices .In Kashmir also ,Shaivism flourished in ancient past and Kashmir was a seat of Shaivism as the Kashmiri Pandits were the worshippers of Lord Shiva and even in the present times KP's worship Lord Shiva and propitiate Rudra to please the great Lord of destruction and also to attain peace of mind and relief from the miseries and sufferings of temporal life .The Shiva Purana and other religious texts dedicated to Lord Shiva elaborate on the power of this mantra and talk very high of the mantra .Chanting this mantra is said to purify the mind of negative thoughts emotions ,and attachments, .Thus positivity among human beings is ensured by reciting this Vedic mantra .In Hinduism ,the mind is often the source of distractions and confusion .Regular chanting helps calm the mind reduce stress ,and foster clarity, ,creating space for spiritual practices and higher awareness. The sound frequencies of this mantra create resonant vibrations than can heal and realign the body's energies .Studies also reveal that particular frequencies can stimulate healing responses in the body ,providing emotional and psychological benefits .From a spiritual perspective chanting Om Namah Shivaya, is believed to cleanse the mind of negative emotions, distractions and attachments .By repeating these mantras daily devotees can foster a sense of inner peace and harmony ,allowing for a deeper connection with the divine also .It results in emotional and psychological benefits . As the body

and mind come into harmony through vibrations of the mantra ,practitioners may experience a reduction in anxiety, improved focus, and enhanced emotional well -being .In addition to its psychological benefits, the spiritual effects of chanting this mantra are wonderful .It is believed to elevate consciousness, helping individuals attain higher states of awareness and connect with the divine presence of Lord Shiva .The mantra, in its simplicity and power, serves as a bridge between the material and spiritual realms, guiding practitioners towards liberation, peace and self-realization. This mantra not only removes stress but promotes healing by aligning body and mind .It gives you a sense of direction and purpose in life .There are nine planets and 27 constellations in the world and this mantra integrates all these .Shiva is that nothingness ,the dark empty void of space ,from which all creation -the stars ,planets ,galaxies ,mountains ,oceans ,all living beings ,etc. manifest and into which all creation disintegrates .Shiva is not a person but a principle. It is called the Shiva Tattva, which is an allpervading consciousness that fills up this nothingness .Today even astronomy tells us that 99.99% of this dark matter and dark energy ,so called because they do not reflect ,absorb or emit light and hence cannot be seen -ever .Shiva means that which is innocent ,benevolent ,beautiful ,transcendental , and absolute .There is a certain correlation between the five elements, seven layers of our being ,and our consciousness .Shiva energy permeates through the universe and you will find that it is possible to experience the Shiva Tattva -absolute nothingness -within us .This mantra brings you back to your source .Chanting or listening to mantra produce vibrations, positive, life uplifting energy, and are universal .Om Namah Shivaya is one of the most powerful mantras .Chanting this mantra builds the energy in your system and also clears the environment .People have been chanting this mantra for thousands of years .Na Ma Shi Va Ya -these five syllables indicate the five elements {Known as Pancha Maha Bhoot in Sanskrit } -Earth , Water , Fire ,Air ,and Ether .The five elements are the building blocks of everything in creation, including the human body ,and Lord Shiva is the master of these five elements .Whereas ,Om is the sound of the universe .Om means peace and love .So the 'Om Namah Shivaya'chanting is done to harmonize the five elements in the environment .Where there is peace, love and harmony in all the five elements ,then there is bliss and there is joy not just within you ,but also around you. Chanting Om Namah Shivaya helps us to master the five elements within us ,leading the mind to silence .Silence leads to the experience of Shiva Tattva .In this way ,everyone can access Shiva through this mantra .The chanting of this mantra unites the different koshas or layers of our being and elevates the qualities of Shiva within us.It has the effect of quieting the mind and so is also a good way to prepare for meditation .This mantra infuses positive energy and removes negative energy .It is also a stress-buster helping you to relax and unwind .A restless mind becomes stable and peaceful with regular chanting .Om Namah Shivaya helps you to gain control over your senses .This helps you govern your mind eventually .It gives you a sense of direction and purpose in life .There are nine planets and 27 constellations .Since the Shiva Tattva is the presiding energy and governs the planets as well, chanting this mantra can help nullify the effects of malefic planets to a certain extent .In short Om Namah shivaya and its chanting transforms the human beings spiritually and helps in meditation as well as elevates the practitioners .There is no exaggeration in saying that this Vedic mantra is chanted in all religious ceremonies, festivals and rituals.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

Beyond the screen: The hidden truths of our social media lives

By: Vijay Garg

ocial media is a tool to make life more connected and interesting, it is not a measure to judge worth and success of family and friends

Ever since social media sneaked into our lives, we have made it a shelf to display our lives' wares. We paint our digital walls with milestones, memories, smiles, and sorrows. It's a vibrant collage of life's varied hues, yet what we post is often a curated version of reality. The smiles are brighter, the love is deeper, the vacations are grander, and the heartbreaks are more dramatic. But behind this veneer of filtered perfection, the raw and unfiltered truth often lurks quietly, hidden from the world's gaze.

For a month, I posted pictures from my holiday — pristine land-scapes, cheerful meals, and stylish getups — giving the impression that I was the happiest and luckiest person on earth. From the outside, it looked like life was a seamless tapestry of joy and contentment. But behind each post was a personal battle being waged in silence. While

my timeline radiated unbridled joy, I was working on myself to remedy a tough health challenge. Why did I choose to post happy pictures when my reality was tumultuous? Was I pretending? Was I seeking validation? No. I was trying to reassure myself. I was reminding myself that happiness exists, that moments of beauty and joy still punctuate my life. Those posts were not deceit; they were lifelines. Glimpses of joy that I clung to as I navigated the storm within. And in sharing those moments, I was also hoping to pass on slivers of hope to others who might be fighting unseen battles. This is the duality of social media.

The laughter we see might be tears in disguise. The grand celebrations could be cloaked in anxiety. The tears shed publicly may be crafted for effect. What appears authentic can be artifice; what looks carefree can be layered with burdens. This is why we should not judge others based on what we see on their profiles. Why do people disguise their struggles and present happy pictures? It's not necessarily deceit or a desire to mislead others.

Sometimes, it's a way of keep-

ing hope alive. When life's challenges weigh heavily, projecting happiness can feel like a selffulfilling prophecy. By sharing joy, even when it feels out of reach, we try to manifest it. We tell ourselves that happiness is not an illusion—it's around the corner and within our grasp. We also do it for others. Social media can be a dark and overwhelming place filled with negativity, comparison, and distressing news. By sharing moments of beauty, love and humour, we offer small doses of positivity to those who might need them. But herein lies the trap. When we view others' lives through the glossy lens of social media, we risk falling into the pit of comparison. We measure our own lives against the seemingly perfect lives of others and wonder where we went wrong.

We feel envious, resentful, or inadequate. But this comparison is unfair—because it's based on incomplete information. What you see on social media is a highlight reel, not a documentary. To compare your behind-the-scenes reality to someone else's carefully chosen highlights is to set yourself up for needless suffering. So,

how should we approach social media with clarity and kindness? First, partake in others' happiness without envy. Celebrate their joys as you would want them to celebrate yours.

Let their happiness be a reminder that good things are possible, even if they haven't yet arrived in your life. Second, lend support in difficult times without judgment. If someone shares their struggles, resist the urge to undermine or dismiss them. Behind their words could be a pain far deeper than what they've expressed. Offer empathy, not assumptions. Be the steady presence that reminds them they're not alone. Finally, take social media for what it is -a tool to make life more connected, more interesting and occasionally more fun. It's not a measure of worth, success, or happiness.

> (Vijay Garg Retired Principal Educational columnist street Kour Chand MHR Malout Punjab)

ICAR meeting in Leh focuses on preservation of Ladakh's **Unique Livestock and Animal Genetic Resources**

Top News Report

LEH, Dec 18: The Chairman/CEC Adv. Tashi Gyalson, LAHDC Leh, chaired a meeting organized by ICAR at the DC Conference Hall in the presence of Tashi Namgyal Yakzee, Executive Councillor Animal Husbandry and Dr. Raghavendra Bhatta. Deputy Director (Animal Science) ICAR.

The meeting focused on the preservation and promotion of Ladakh's unique livestock and animal genetic resources, particularly the Ladakhi cow and yak. It brought together herders, scientists, government officials, and stakeholders to discuss strategies for the characterization, registration, and value addition of these high-altitude breeds, while also exploring sustainable agricultural practices for the region.

The meeting was also graced by Dr. O.P. Chaurasia, Director of DRDO-Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR) ;Dr. Manishi Mukesh, Principal Scientist at ICAR; Dr. B.P. Mishra, Director of ICAR-National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources; along with the heads of the Leh Animal and Sheep Departments, team of doctors and scholars who visited from outside and local herders among others present.

Dr. B.P. Mishra, in his keynote presentation, discussed the importance of preserving



Ladakh's high-altitude animal breeds, including the region's indigenous cow and yak. He emphasized the role these animals play in maintaining biodiversity and building climate resilience, underlining their potential to contribute to India's national efforts to protect indigenous livestock.

Dr. Manishi Mukesh, Principal Scientist at ICAR, presented the unique attributes of Ladakhi cow and yak milk, which are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and have demonstrated anti-cancer properties. Mukesh emphasized the value addition opportunities within the dairy sector, particularly the production of highquality yak butter and cheese, which could gain greater recognition and market value with proper branding and a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Dr. Raghavendra Bhatta, Deputy Director General (Animal Science) at ICAR, reflected on the journey of promoting Ladakh's livestock sector. He spoke about the importance of preserving the region's indigenous breeds, free from pesticides and other chemicals, and stressed the need to avoid crossbreeding.

The event included the felicitation of local herders and livestock keepers, who received certificates of appreciation for their tireless efforts in preserving Ladakh's unique livestock heritage.

A significant moment during the event was the submission of a GI application for "Ladakhi Cattle Churpi," a local dairy product, to the Animal Husbandry Department of Ladakh.

The GI tag will help protect the authenticity of these products and enhance their marketability, ensuring that Ladakh's livestock and dairy offerings are recognized for their uniqueness.

Another highlight of the meeting was the release of a comprehensive documentation and publica-

term growth and resilience for Ladakh's agricultural sector, enhancing its self-sustainability and organic farming initiatives in line with the vision of the Government of India. The CEC expressed

his gratitude to all those who received certificates of appreciation, congratulating them for their dedication and hard work. He also thanked Tashi Namgyal Yakzee and Dr. Raghavendra Bhatta for giving him the opportunity to attend the meeting, describing it as both insightful and engaging. He emphasized that the Council has been closely working with farmers, directors, and other stakeholders to support sustainable agricultural practices.

Highlighting Prime Minister Modi's vision for making Ladakh self-sustainable and organic, the CEC reaffirmed that the Council has been committed to this goal since Ladakh became a Union Territory, and continues to work toward it with dedication and focus.

Executive counsellor Tashi Namgyal Yakzee, emphasized the significant contributions of Ladakhi herders and pastoralists. He highlighted the steady increase in the yak population in recent years, noting the growing importance of these animals to the region's economy and ecosystem.Additionally, he extended his gratitude to all the stakeholders for traveling all the way

to Ladakh.

ADGP Armed attends opening ceremony of SOG training program



Top News Report

JAMMU. Dec 18: Viiav Kumar, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Armed and Law & Order, graced the opening ceremony of the 4-week training program, organized by Zonal Police Headquarters Jammu, for the SOG personnel of Jammu Zone. The event took place in the presence of Sh. Anand Jain, IPS, Additional Director General of Police. Jammu zone, along with other senior officials and trainers at the Commando Training Centre, Sunjwan.

The training program aims to enhance the operational preparedness of the personnel of SOG. This intensive training will cover various aspects, including physical fitness, combat strategies, and specialized techniques crucial for counter-terrorism operations and public safety.

The ADGP, Armed & Law & Order, addressed the trainees and emphasized the importance of the specially designed training module, focusing on skill enhancement.

"In today's dynamic environment, such training is crucial to ensure readiness and resilience. It empowers our force to safeguard the lives of citizens and uphold law and order effectively," the ADGP Armed said.

ADGP Jammu Zone lauded the efforts of the Armed wing for all the logistic support towards organizing this training program and urged the trainees to make the

most of this opportunity. He expressed confidence that the training program would significantly enhance the operational capabilities of the SOG of Jammu zone.

Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG JSK Range; Joginder Singh, SSP Jammu; Abrar Ahmad Choudhary, Principal CTC Sunjwan; Sanjay Sharma, Dy. CO IRP 14th Bn; Dr. Surinder Choudhary, Dy. CO IRP 14 Bn; other gazetted officers; instructors and trainees were present on the occasion.

Heritageans excel at 68th SGFI basketball nationals



Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 18: Students of Heritage School showcased exceptional sportsmanship and talent at the 68th SGFI Basketball Nationals.

Maheshwar Singh of Class XI A represented the school and his team in the tournament held in Patiala, Punjab from 20th Nov -26th Nov 2024, where he demonstrated outstanding skills while competing against some of the best young basketball players from across the

Available

Accorded

Accorded/

Adding to the accolades, Sachit Singh of Class VIII E participated in the Nationals held in Chhattisgarh from November 18 to 22, 2024, delivering a commendable performance on the court. Both stu-

dents have brought

laurels to the school through their dedication and hard work.

Heritage Fraternity congratulates Maheshwar and Sachit on their commendable achievement and wish them continued success in their future endeavours.

Raman Suri backs CCTV mandate for school buses

Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 18: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) executive member Raman Suri has lauded the recent directive issued by Vishesh Transport Commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir, mandating the installation of CCTV cameras in school buses. He hailed this move as a significant step toward enhancing student safety and preventing tragic incidents involving school transport.

"Installing CCTV cameras in school buses will save many precious

lives, especially the lives of our children. In one heartbreaking incident, a young girl had lost her life under a school bus in her own school premises. Such tragedies can be avoided with stricter monitoring and safety

measures," he stated. This directive aligns with guidelines previously laid down by the Supreme Court of India, which emphasized the installation of CCTVs in school buses. Unfortunately, these instructions have yet to be fully implemented in the region. Parents often express concerns about the safety standards of school buses, and accidents caused by speeding or negligence are not uncommon. The installation of

CCTV cameras will not only monitor the activities of drivers and codrivers but also serve as a deterrent to over speeding and irresponsible behavior. Additionally, it will bring accountability to private buses and other vehicles hired by parents, which have so far operated without proper safety regulations, Raman Suri said.

He emphasised that further measures must be taken to ensure the safety of school children

including equipping all school buses with firstaid kits, emergency exit doors, and GPS trackers. He stressed upon phasing out the use of old and poorly maintained buses and also conducting regular safety audits of school

tion on Animal Genetic

Resources (ANGR) in

Ladakh. This initiative

marks a significant step

towards preserving the

region's unique livestock

breeds and their genetic

Additionally, the Indian

Council of Agricultural

Research (ICAR) to

established a dedicated

centre, aimed at facili-

tating farmer training,

exposure programs,

and providing technical

support to local herders.

Starting next year, the

center will also focus on

improving livestock feed

and providing better

animal shelter facilities,

further supporting the

sustainable develop-

ment of Ladakh's pasto-

As a gesture of appre-

ciation, Dr. Raghaven-

dra Bhatta presented a

memento to CEC Tashi

Gyalson and Executive

Councillor Tashi Nam-

gyal Yakzee for their

invaluable contributions

and leadership in pro-

moting Ladakh's unique

livestock heritage. This

collaborative effort is

expected to foster long-

ral economy.

resources.

transport systems. Children are the future of our nation. Ensuring their safety is a collective responsibility. While the Transport Commissioner's instructions are commendable, the traffic department must actively monitor their implementation. Schools, parents, and authorities must work together to

create a safe environment for our students," Raman Suri added.

The BJP also urged parents to remain vigilant and report safety violations to the authorities. By working together, society can ensure that every child travels to and from school securely and confidently.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Walk-In-Interview for Contractual Medical Practitioners over Firozpur Division

Walk-in-interview for the engagement of 07 full time Contractual Medical over Firozpur Division will be held on 08.01.2025 at Committee hall, DRM Office Firozpur, Candidates can download detailed Notification and Walk-in-interview application form from the website https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/3 News&recruitment info>Recruitment info>. For any query contact on 9779232631

For Divisional Railway Manager (P Northern Railway/Firozpu

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SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER Fresh E-NIT NO : 31 of 2024-25 (2nd Call)

DATED: 31.12.2024.

For and on behalf of the Lieutant Governor of UT Jammu & Kashmir e-tenders are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with Union Territory of J&K for the

| Construction of Protection work at Sump of LIS sohajana by way of RCC retaining wall section approved under UT Capex Budget 2024-25. | SL. | Name of Work | Advt. cost of work (Rs. in inos) | Sarant Money (in shape of CDR/FDR in Rej | completion (In days) | Class of Contractor | Cost of Tender Documents under MH 0702 in the shape of Try challan/DD |
|---|-----|---|---|---|-------------------------|------------------------|---|
| | 1 | of LIS sohajana by way of RCC retaining | 30.88 | 2% of the adv.cost. | 60 days | A&B | 1000.00 |

A) Position of Funds : Position of AAA Position of T.S

The Bidding documents Consisting of quailing information, eligibity criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities BOQ), set of terms and conditions of contract of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website http://jktenders.gov.in as per below schedule

| | Important Dat | es: |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Date of Issue of Tender Notice | 16-12-2024 |
| 2 | Period of downloading of bidding documents | From 16-12-2024 to 23.12.2024 ,1800 Hrs. |
| 3 | Pre-bid meeting shall be held in the office of the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Div.I Jammu. | 17.12.2024 at 12.00 Noon |
| 4 | Bid Submission Start Date | 17-12-2024 (1.00 PM) |
| 5 | Bid Submission End Date | 23.12.2024 upto 1800Hrs |
| 6 | Date and time of opening of Technical bids (online) | 24.12.2024 at 11.00 AM (Subjective) in the office of the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division No.I, Canal Road Jammu. |
| 7 | Date and time of opening of Financial bids (online) | To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed. |

2.Bid documents can be seen at and downloaded from the website http://jktenders.gov.in bid documents contain qualifying criteria for bidders, specifications, bill of quantity, conditions and other detail

No : JID-I/E-NIT No.31 of 2024-25/5660-72

DIP/J-8248/24

dated: 16.12.2024.

Sd/-Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division No: I, Jammu.

Dimple leads protest demanding PM Modi to restore J&K statehood



Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 18: Sunil Dimple, President of Mission Statehood Jammu Kashmir, led a strong protest against the BJP-led Union Government for failing to restore Jammu and Kashmir's statehood. The protest, which included blocking the Jammu-Kashmir National Highway at BC Road in Rehari Chungi, Jammu, saw the participation of traders, transporters, and local

residents.

Addressing the protestors, Dimple demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah announce the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, special status, and the reinstatement of Articles 370 and 35A in the ongoing Parliament session. He criticized BJP leaders, alleging that they are now denying any commitment by the Prime Minister to restore

statehood.

Dimple further condemned the Union Government for ignoring the Supreme Court's directive to restore Jammu and Kashmir's statehood at the earliest, accusing the Prime Minister and Home Minister of being non-committal on the issue.

To intensify the movement, Dimple announced plans to convene an all-party meeting in Jammu soon to strategize for the early

special status, and Articles 370 and 35A, as he claimed the BJP is unwilling to take action on these demands.

restoration of statehood,

Dimple demanded that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the alliance government halt the installation of smart meters in Jammu and Kashmir until free electricity is provided to the people. Additionally, Dimple urged the government to grant 12 free LPG cylinders and double ration distribution to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, starting January 1, 2025.

Prominent leaders supporting Dimple's demands include Sanjay Sethi, Narender Chowdhry, Tilak Raj, Sanjay Kumar, Sourav Kumar, Happy, Rocky Kapoor, Aman Singh, Bitu Kumar, Ashok Sharma, Tarsem Lal, Sanjee, and several others.

India's official entry 'Laapataa Ladies' out of Oscars 2025 race

The final Oscar nominations will be announced on January 17

"Laapataa Ladies", India's official entry in the Best International Feature category at the 97th Academy Awards, is out of the Oscars race.

The Hindi film, directed by Kiran Rao, is not part of the shortlist of 15 features that will be vying for a spot in the final five, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) announced on Wednesday morning.

However, British-Indian filmmaker Sandhya Suri's "Santosh", starring Indian actors Shahana Goswami and Sunita Rajwar, representing the UK, has made it to list that also includes France's "Emilia Pérez", "I'm Still Here" (Brazil), "Universal Language" (Canada), "Waves" (Czech Republic), "The Girl with the Needle" (Denmark), and "The Seed of the Sacred Fig" from

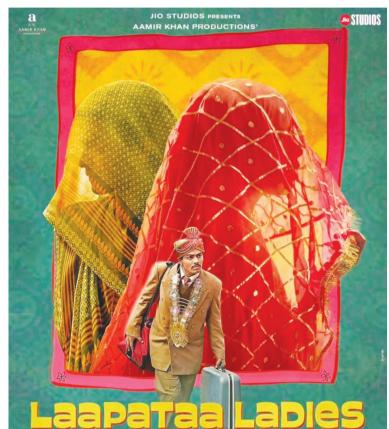
The other contenders in the category are "Touch" (Iceland), "Kneecap" (Ireland), "Vermiglio" (Italy), "Flow" (Latvia), "Armand" (Norway), "From Ground Zero" (Palestine), "Dahomey" (Senegal), and "How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies" (Thai-

The final Oscar nominations will be announced on January

According to the Academy, 85 countries or regions had submitted films that were eligible for consideration in the International Feature Film category for the 97th Academy Awards.

"Santosh", which marks Suri's feature directorial debut, revolves around a newly widowed housewife (Goswami) who inherits her late husband's job as a police constable and becomes embroiled in the investigation of a young girl's

India's official entry "Laapataa Ladies" ("Lost Ladies" in English) is a gently subversive feminist drama which is set in rural



India in the early 2000s. Sneha Desai wrote the screenplay and dialogues of "Laapataa Ladies", based on a story by Biplab Goswami. Divyanidhi Sharma penned additional dialogues.

It follows two brides who get swapped on the day of their wedding during a train ride. It stars Nitanshi Goel and Pratibha Ranta as the brides Phool and Jaya, respectively, with Sparsh Shrivastav playing the hapless groom in search of his

Chhaya Kadam, Ravi Kishan, and Geeta Agrawal Sharma also round out its cast.

"Laapataa Ladies", which had its world premiere at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), released in theatres on March 1 to great reviews. It is backed by Rao's Kindling Productions, Aamir Khan Productions, and Jyoti Deshpande of Jio Studios.

In September, the Film Fed-

eration of India (FFI) unanimously chose "Laapataa Ladies" as India's official entry to the Oscars from a list of 29 films, including Bollywood hit "Animal", Malayalam Nation-

al Award winner "Aattam" and

Cannes winner "All We Imagine

As Light". At the time, the 13-member all-male jury of FFI courted controversy on social media for their citation about the film. Many on social media said the brief went against the message the film was trying to convey.

The citation by the federation read: "Indian women are a strange mixture of submission and dominance. Well-defined, powerful characters in one world, a Laapataa Ladies (Hindi) captures this diversity perfectly, though in a semi-idyllic world and in a tongue-incheek way." Besides "Santosh", "Anuja" is another film with an Indian connect that has

advanced to the next stage of the Oscars. It is one of the 15 films to be selected in the Live Action Short category.

The New Delhi-set short film follows a gifted nine-year-old Anuja, who must make a choice between education and factory work alongside her sister - a decision that will shape both their futures. It stars Sajda Pathan and Ananya Shanbhag.

"Anuja" is directed by Adam J Graves and Suchitra Mattai, and has two-time Oscar winning producer Guneet Monga on board as executive producer and Hollywood star-writer Mindy Kaling as producer.

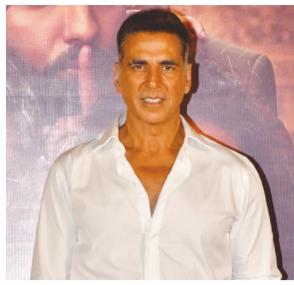
On Wednesday morning, the Academy also announced shortlists in eight other categories: Documentary Feature Film, Documentary Short Film, Makeup and Hairstyling, Music (Original Score), Music (Original Song), Animated Short Film, and Sound and Visual Effects.

"Lagaan", set in the pre-independence era, was the last Indian film to enter the top five nominations in the best international feature film category (formerly called best foreign film) at Oscars 2002.

Only two other films have previously made it to the final five and they are the Nargis-starrer "Mother India" and Mira Nair's "Salaam Bombay!" Last year, "Naatu Naatu", the peppy, foot-tapping chartbuster from SS Rajamouli's Telugu period action film "RRR", won the Academy Award in the best original song category along with "The Elephant Whisperers", directed by Kartiki Gonsalves and produced by Monga's Sikhya Entertainment, winning the Oscar in the Best Documentary Short Film cat-

egory. Late night host and comedian Conan O'Brien will host the Academy Awards on March 2 at the Dolby Theatre at Ovation Hollywood, Los Angeles.

Under Akshay Kumar-funded initiative, over 1,250 monkeys fed in Ayodhya



Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar usually garners headlines for his philanthropic works. In his latest social media post, the actor announced that he fed over 1,250 monkeys in Ayodhya with the help of his team and Anjaneya Seva Trust. Taking to Instagram, Akshay highlighted the issue of the increasing population of monkeys in the holy city of Ayodhya. In the video shared by the actor, a bunch of monkeys were seen wandering around the temple premises and the surrounding areas. Under this initiative, Akshay claimed that the monkeys in Ayodhya were fed clean and nutritious food daily.

To keep waste management at a minimum, the team of Akshay Kumar collects the banana peels discarded by the monkeys. They are then fed to the

cows, whose dung is then used as manure for the plantation of banana trees. Akshay called it a chhoti si koshish (a small effort) while sharing the video on Instagram. Earlier this year, the actor had donated Rs 1 crore to feed monkeys in Ayodhya. Pushpa 2 fever

As Pushpa 2 fever continues to take over, Akshay Kumar has joined the frenzy by recreating the film's most iconic dialogue, 'Wildfire hu'. In a video circulating on the internet, Akshay is seen delivering Allu Arjun's iconic line, 'Wildfire hu'. Soon after the video surfaced online, fans couldn't help but gush over Khiladi Kumar. One netizen commented, "Wow, amazing @ akshaykumar sir, wildfire pose of mega superstar @alluarjun from #Pushpa2TheRule,

great!" Another said, "I

remember he supported

Pushpa 1 also."

Shahid Kapoor all set to play an edgy '90s gangster

Shahid Kapoor says it is 'prep time' as he is all set to play an 'edgy and nasty' gangster from the 1990s. Shahid took to Instagram, where he shared a monochrome selfie post his workout. In the image, he is seen flaunting his pumped up biceps and sporting a rugged beard. For the caption, he wrote, "Prep time... Next character, next film what can I do that I haven't before...Lost in the woods..." Shahid is all set to play Hussain Ustara, a notorious gangster in the upcoming action thriller directed by Vishal Bhardwaj. The film also stars Triptii Dimri.



Deepika Padukone inspired me as an actor to make a change: Ananya Panday

Actor Ananya Panday very polite way. has praised Deepika Padukone and called her "Gehraiyaan" costar an inspiring personality who stands up for every person on set in a "polite way".

Recalling their time working on Shakun Batra's 2022 relationship drama, Ananya said Deepika has since helped her speak her mind in a more confident and assured manner.

"When I started out in the industry, I didn't really know that one could really stand up and reinforce what they want. I used to simply do what I was asked to do. Deepika is a woman

who stands up for every person on the set, in a "Whenever a girl

speaks up she is called bossy, or difficult to work with, but she used to convey her needs in a very polite and empathetic way, which made me realise that there is a way in which you can do this," the "Call Me Bae" star said during the 'O Womaniya! 2024' roundtable.

Going forward, Ananya said the experience of closely working with Deepika empowered her to become "more conscious" about her choices.

"Deepika inspired me as a younger female actress to go on further to make a change.

Now I do speak up



when I am not comfortable doing certain things or saying certain things, because I don't want a young girl to be spoken to in a certain manner because I am being shown like that on-screen," she added. The star-studded

roundtable also featured actors, Richa Chadha, Parvathy Thiruvothu, filmmakers Batra, Nikkhil Advani, writer Ishita Moitra, and Stuti Ramachandra, director & head of production, International Originals, Prime Video, India.

Jonita Gandhi relished crooning the remix Noorie in three different languages

spans multiple languages and genres, something which allows her to transition seamlessly from Bollywood hits to independent music projects. Singer Jonita Gandhi is indeed charting her own unique course in music, blending her Indo-Canadian heritage with a fierce dedication to experimentation and versatil-

Since her debut in 2013 with Chennai Express, Jonita has become the voice behind several charttopping hits, including The Breakup Song, Arabic Kuthu and What Jhumka? Her latest remix number Noorie is making quite a mark too. "The original song, sung by legends Lata Mangeshkar and Nitin Mukesh, is extremely popular and has a special place in everyone's heart. I wanted to pay a tribute to the classical elegance of the original song while adding modern elements to it. I have also been attached to the version of Noorie that was crooned by Bally Sagoo and Gunjan," she says. In the song, Jonita

has simultaneously sung is three different languages-Hindi, English and Punjabiand that too with equal flair. Must be quite a task, right? "Singing in multiple languages is challenging, but it's also a lot of fun. Since every language has a unique rhythm and feel, I focus



on understanding the emotions expressed in the lyrics. I try to ensure that blending languages in my music doesn't feel forced or take away from the emotion of the

Having been into music since childhood, it soon became her calling in life. "It's been a rollercoaster ride and a journey of self-discovery. The more experienced I become as an artiste, the more I feel the need to learn and grow," she

Jonita has been a part of some remarkable collaborations in 2024, including her work with Darshan Raval and Rochak Kohli on the song Soni Soni, as well as her duet with Arijit Singh in Amar Singh Chamkila, a film starring Parineeti Chopra and Diljit Dosanjh. Singers in Punjabi cinema often take to acting-is she going the same route? "Acting is such a fascinating field, and I deeply admire artistes who can excel in both singing and acting. But, right now, my focus is entirely on music—it's my first love and where I feel most at home. That said, I'm open to new possibilities. If the right opportunity comes along in acting and it feels like something I can connect with, I would definitely consider exploring it in

It's a world of OTT out there and no dearth of opportunities. "OTT platforms have completely transformed how we consume content. For creators, these now present a new way to reach out to a global audience. I believe OTT is not just a medium for

the future.

entertainment, but also a space for innovative storytelling.'

Jonita loves to perform live, as she believes there's nothing like the energy of a crowd, the way people sing along and cheer. "There's an unspoken bond that forms in those moments with my audience and it's incredibly fulfilling to see how my music resonates with people. The spontaneity and raw emotion of live performances make them truly special."

Currently working on several exciting projects, including a mix of singles and collaborations with incredibly talented artistes, she is looking forward to the future with much hope. "Each project has its own distinct flavour and I can't wait to share them with my fans. Some of these will showcase new sides of my musical journey and I'm thrilled about the surprises in store."

Jonita, who loves to be around her family in free time, likes eating, watching movies, travelling and exploring new places. "It inspires me creatively and allows me to unwind," she beams.

As for her advice to youngsters, she says, "Stay true to who you are, embrace challenges and never stop learning. The journey might seem tough at times, but consistency and persistence is the key. Every step forward, no matter how small, brings you closer to achieving your goals."

Sonakshi Sinha criticises Mukesh Khanna for 'distasteful' comments against her family

Bollywood star Sonakshi Sinha has slammed veteran actor Mukesh Khanna for making "distasteful statements" against her upbringing and family while criticising her for lack of knowledge about Ramayana. Back in 2019, Sonakshi incorrectly answered a question about the Hindu epic during her appearance on popular quiz show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' (KBC), hosted by Amitabh Bachchan. Khanna, who had criticised the actor back then, recounted the incident during a recent interview

with RJ Siddharth Kannan. In her response, Sonakshi, 37, posted a long note addressing Khanna, 66, on her Instagram

"Dear Sir, Mukesh Khanna ji...

I recently read a statement you made saying that it's my father's fault I did not answer a question about the Ramayana correctly on a show I attended many, many years back," she wrote.

The actor asked Khanna to stop bringing up the same incident to make "news at the expense" of her and her family. "... The next time you decide to say anything about the values my father has instilled in me... please remember it's because of those values that I have only said what I said, very respectfully, after you decided to make some distasteful statements about my upbringing." Sonakshi said though she "blanked out" during her appearance on 'KBC', she wondered how Khanna could

forget the lessons to "forgive and forget" taught by Lord Ram himself"

"If Lord Ram can forgive Manthara, if he can forgive Kaikeyi... if he can even forgive Ravan after the great battle was done, surely you can let go of this extremely small thing in comparison.. not that I need your forgiveness," added the 'Dahaad' star. In the interview with Kannan, Khanna, 66, blamed Sonakshi's father, veteran actor and TMC MP Shatrughan Sinha, for not teaching Sonakshi about Ramayana. "People got angry, 'She doesn't know'. I said it's not Sonakshi's fault; it's her father's fault. Why did you not tell your kids? Why did you let them be so modern?" he said.

Congress stung by Shah's expose on its insults of **Ambedkar: PM Modi**

Our government has worked to develop Panchteerth, the five iconic places associated with Dr Ambedkar, says PM

NEW DELHI, Dec 18 (Agencies): As the Congress mounted a massive offensive against the ruling BJP over Home Minister Amit Shah's Tuesday remarks about BR Ambedkar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday defended the Home Minister saying the Opposition party had been stung by Shah's expose on its serial insults of the Father of the Indian Constitution.

"If the Congress and its rotten ecosystem think their malicious lies can hide their misdeeds of several years, especially their insult towards Dr Ambedkar, they are gravely mistaken!" said Modi defending Shah after both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were adjourned until 2 pm over Shah's remarks on Ambedkar yesterday in the Rajya Sabha when he was replying to the debate on the Constitution.

Modi said people of India have seen time and again how one party, led by one dynasty, has indulged in every possible dirty trick to obliterate the legacy of Dr Ambedkar and humiliate the SC/ST communities.

"The list of the Congress' sins towards Dr Ambedkar includes: Getting him defeated in elections not once but twice; Pandit Nehru campaigning against him and making his loss a prestige issue; denying him a Bharat Ratna; denying his portrait a place of pride in Parliament's



Central Hall," said the Prime Minister.

He said the Congress can try as they want but they can't deny that the worst massacres against SC/ST communities have happened under their regimes.

"For years, they sat in power but did nothing substantive to empower the SC and ST communities," Modi added.

He said in in Parliament, Shah had exposed the Congress' dark history of insulting Dr Ambedkar and ignoring the SC/ST communities.

"They are clearly stung and stunned by the facts he presented, which is why they are now indulging in theatrics. Sadly, for them, people know the truth!

"It is due to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar that we are what we are! Our government has worked tirelessly to fulfil the vision of Dr Babasaheb Ambed-

kar over the last decade," the

Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister added that across sectors, government schemes—be it removing 25 crore people from poverty, strengthening the SC/ST Act, our government's flagship programmes, like Swachh Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, Ujjwala Yojana and more, have touched the lives of the poor and marginalised.

"Our government has worked to develop Panchteerth, the five iconic places associated with Dr Ambedkar. For decades, there was a pending issue on land for Chaitva Bhoomi. Not only did our government resolve the issue, I have gone to pray there

as well. We have also developed 26, Alipur Road, in Delhi, where Dr Ambedkar spent his last years. The house where he lived in London has also been acquired by the government. When it comes to Dr Ambedkar, our respect and reverence is absolute," the Prime Minister said as the Congress sought to turn the tide on the BJP.

Shah had yesterday said to the Congress, "Had you taken the name of God as many times as you take the name of Ambedkar, you would have benefitted. We are happy you are taking BR Ambedkar's name but then also speak about your real sentiments and approach towards Ambedkar. Ambedkar had to resign from the first Cabinet because of his differences over issues including Article 370; unhappiness over government's treatment of SCs and STs," Shah said.

The Home Minister said then Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru said at the time the Cabinet would not be weakened if Ambedkar leaves the Cabinet.

"This is their reality. How appropriate is it to use for votes the name of Dr Ambedkar, whom you opposed all your life? You are now in minority which is why you are remembering Ambedkar," said Shah.

BJP leaders alleged the Congress peddled selected part of Shah's speech to create a distortion.

Rahul Gandhi slams Modi government over trade deficit touching all-time high



NEW DELHI, Dec 18 (Agencies): Slamming the Modi government, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said prioritising crony businesses over play-fair ones leads to weakened manufacturing sector, depreciating currency, record high trade deficits, high interest rates, falling consumption and soaring inflation.

Tagging a media report which said that trade deficit and imports are at an alltime high, Gandhi hit out at the government. "What happens when

a government prioritises crony businesses over play-fair businesses?" Gandhi said.

"Result: Weakened manufacturing sector, depreciating currency, record high trade deficits, high interest rates, falling consumption and soaring inflation," he said in a post on X.

After recording double-digit growth in October, India's exports in November contracted by 4, 85 per cent yearon-year to USD 32. 11 billion, while the trade deficit widened to an all-time high of USD 37. 84 billion due to record surge in gold imports.

According to the commerce ministry data, imports rose by 27 per cent year-on-year to a record USD 69.95 billion in November due to high inbound shipments of vegetable oil, fertiliser, and silver.

Gold imports during the month under review soared to an all-time high of USD 14. 8 billion as against USD 3. 5 billion in November 2023.

Cumulatively, during April-November this fiscal, exports increased by 2. 17 per cent to USD 284. 31 billion and imports by 8, 35 per cent to USD 486. 73 billion.

Trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, during April-November widened to USD 202. 42 billion from USD 170. 98 billion during April-November 2023.

Free treatment for senior citizens at all Delhi hospitals: Arvind Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, Dec 18 (Agencies): Ahead of Delhi elections in February next year, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) today announced free treatment for senior citizens at all government and private hospitals. Party chief Arvind Kejriwal said people above the age of 60 will be treated for free as part of the 'Sanjeevani Yojana' once his party retains power in the national capital.

"It is now our duty to take care of you. You people have worked hard to take the country forward," the former

Delhi chief minister said. The AAP has released the names of its candidates for all 70 seats in the Delhi Assembly. Mr



Kejriwal has confirmed that he will contest from his New Delhi seat in the upcoming polls while Chief Minister Atishi will fight from her Kalkaji constituency.

"There will be no upper limit on the cost of treatment. Registration for this will start in a day or two. AAP workers will come to your home for registration. They will give you a card, keep

it safe. Once we come into power after the elections, this policy will be implemented," Mr Kejriwal said.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has called for a preparatory meeting this week over next year's Delhi elections. The dates for the much-anticipated polls will be announced shortly after this meeting, sources said.

2 Soldiers killed while loading ammo in tank during training in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, Dec 18 (Agencies): Two soldiers were killed and one injured in Bikaner's Mahajan field firing range while loading ammunition in a tank during a training exercise on Wednesday, the second fatal incident in the range this week.

The charger exploded while they were loading the ammunition, said

Defence Spokesperson Lt Col Amitabh Sharma.

"Two soldiers have died in the incident and one is injured," he said.

Local police officials rushed to the spot as soon as information about the blast came in.

"Three soldiers were practising with the tank. Ashutosh Mishra and Jitendra died in the explosion

The injured soldier has been taken to Chandigarh in a helicopter," Circle Officer Lunkaransar (Bikaner) Narendra Kumar Poonia said.

While Mishra was from Deoria in Uttar Pradesh, Jitendra came from Dausa in Rajasthan. Their bodies were taken to the Suratgarh military station.



On Sunday, gunner Chandra Prakash Patel died when he was hooking a gun with the gun

towing vehicle. The vehicle suddenly slipped backwards.

Patel was fatally injured.

Punjab: Train services affected due to farmers' 'rail roko' protest

CHANDIGARH, Dec 18 (Agencies): Train services in Punjab were affected as farmers squatted on rail tracks on Wednesday as part of their threehour 'Rail Roko' protest to press the Centre into accepting their various demands, including a legally binding minimum support price for crops.

The call for the 'rail roko' was given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha. Kisan Mazdoor Morcha

leader Sarwan Singh Pandher said farmers have been squatted on rail tracks at many places from 12 noon to 3 pm.

Protesting farmers blocked train routes at many places, including Moga, Faridkot, Kadian and Batala in Gurdaspur; Phillaur in Jalandhar; Tanda, Dasuya, Mahilpur in Hoshiarpur; Makhu, Talwandi Bhai in Ferozepur; Sahnewal in Ludhiana; Shambhu in Patiala; Mohali; Sunam and Lehra in Sangrur, Rampura Phul in Bathinda and Devidaspura in Amritsar

The Humsafar Express from Jammu to Sealdah, Dadar Express from Amritsar to Mumbai and Shan-e-Punjab Express from New Delhi



to Amritsar were halted at different platforms of the Ludhiana railway station.

The Shatabdi Express coming from New Delhi for Amritsar was halted at Khanna railway sta-

A protesting farmer said, "We are demanding a legal guarantee for MSP from the government.'

Farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha have been camping at Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13 after their march to Delhi was stopped by security

For the past three weeks, Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal has been on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana to press the Centre to accept the agitating farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP on crops.

A "jatha" (group) of 101 farmers made three attempts to enter Delhi on foot on December 6. December 8 and again on December 14. Haryana security personnel did not allow them to proceed.

Besides a legal guarantee on MSP for crops, the farmers are demanding a debt waiver, pension for farmers and farm labourers, no hike in the electricity tariff, withdrawal of police cases and "justice" for the victims of the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

Reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, and compensation to the families of the farmers who died during a previous agitation in 2020-21 are also part of their demands.

Regulating OTTs comes under preview of I&B Ministry, concerns of telecom service providers are raised: Jyotiraditya Scindia

NEW DELHI, Dec 18 (Agencies): Regulating over-the-top (OTT) platforms comes under the purview of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia adding that one of the six advisory groups that he had established, had flagged the issue, highlighting concerns from the perspective of telecom service providers (TSPs).

"That is something that, to be very candid, comes under the domain of the Ministry of I&B (information & broadcasting). Having said that, I have six advisory groups that I have set up and this concept has come up as an issue that they would like to discuss from the point of view of the TSPs," Scindia said.

The debate stems from calls for OTT platforms to share the costs incurred by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) in delivering content to consumers. While TSPs argue that cost-sharing could support much-needed investments in their network expansion, while critics highlight the potential violation of net neutrality principles.

Net neutrality mandates equal treatment of all internet traffic, prohibiting payments



from content providers to TSPs. Introducing such payments, critics argue, could allow network operators to prioritize certain platforms, undermining the internet's democratic nature.

Proponents of cost-sharing highlight that the digital economy and telecom landscape have evolved dramatically in recent years. Between 2015 and 2023, India saw an explosive growth in mobile data consumption, with average usage per user jumping from 0.09 GB to 17.36 GB per month.

However, the expansion of network infrastructure, such as the number of mobile towers, has not kept pace with this demand. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT) are expected to further amplify data consumption, intensifying the need for network upgrades.

It is argued that a blanket approach to net neutrality may no longer be sufficient to address the current challenges. Instead. a nuanced framework could balance the interests of all stakeholders.

For instance, larger OTT platforms with significant revenue streams, such as subscription fees or advertising, could be required to contribute to network costs. However, smaller or less profitable platforms might be exempt to avoid stifling innovation and competition.

At the same time, any framework must address potential contractual disputes between TSPs and OTT platforms, as well as avoid creating monopolistic practices that could harm smaller players.

One proposed solution is extending the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) interconnection regulations to OTT platforms. This would establish clear rules for how OTTs and TSPs interact, ensuring transparency and fairness while maintaining net neutrality principles related to quality of service.

UP Govt should start schemes for people reeling under poverty, unemployment: Mayawati



LUCKNOW, Dec 18 (Agencies): BSP chief Mayawati on Wednesday said the Uttar Pradesh Government should start some schemes which can provide relief to people suffering from poverty, unemployment and inflation.

The schemes can be announced in the Winter session of the state assembly which started on Tuesday, the former Uttar Pradesh

chief minister said.

"In the interest of the people suffering from poverty, unemployment and inflation in UP, the government should also start some schemes in the ongoing assembly session here, which can provide some relief to them," she said on X.

The BSP has only one member in the 403member assembly.

Doval holds talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on peace at borders, restoration of ties

Special Representatives' talks being held after a gap of 5 years

BEIJING, Dec 18 (Agencies): India, China Special Representatives for the border mechanism, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met here on Wednesday to discuss a range of issues, including management of peace and tranquillity along LAC and restoration of bilateral ties frozen for over four years due to the military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Doval, who is heading the Indian delegation, arrived here on Tuesday to take part in the 23rd round of the Special Representatives' talks being held after a gap of five years. The last meeting was held in 2019 in Delhi

The talks began at 10 am China time.

The two officials were expected to discuss a range of issues to rebuild the bilateral ties following the October 21 agreement of disengagement and patrolling in eastern Ladakh between the two countries.

Tuesday, China expressed optimism about the talks saying that it is ready to work with India to implement the commitments based on the common understandings reached between Prime Minis-



ter Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping during their meeting at Kazan in Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit on October 24.

China is prepared to settle differences with sincerity, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing here when asked about the Special Representatives (SR) talks.

China is ready to work with

India to implement the important common understandings between the leaders of China and India, respect each other's core interests and major concerns, strengthen mutual trust through dialogue and communication, properly settle differences with sincerity and good faith, and bring bilateral relations back to the

track of stable and healthy development as soon as possible, he said.

The two SRs will discuss the management of peace and tranquillity in the border areas and explore a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question, as agreed upon during the meeting of the two leaders in Kazan, the External Affairs Ministry said on Monday.

After the Modi-Xi meeting, which was their first after five years, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Brazil followed by a meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on China-India Border Affairs (WMCC).

The military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh began in May 2020 and was followed by a deadly clash at the Galwan Valley in June of that year resulting in a severe strain in ties between the two neighbours.

Barring trade, relations between the two countries virtually came to a standstill.

The face-off effectively ended following the completion of the disengagement process from the last two friction points of Demchok and Depsang under an agreement finalised on October 21.

The SRs' meeting is regarded as significant as it is the first structured engagement between the two countries to restore relations.

Constituted in 2003 to comprehensively address the vexed dispute of the India-China border spanning 3,488 km, the SRs mechanism over the years met 22 times.

While success eluded it in resolving the boundary dispute, officials on both sides regard it as a very promising, useful and handy tool in addressing the recurring tensions between the two countries.

Georgia's outgoing president urges EU to use more leverage to back protesters

BRUSSELS, Dec 18 (Agencies): Georgia's outgoing president on Wednesday appealed to the European Union to press her country's pro-Russia government to hold a new election amid a police crackdown on peaceful opposition protesters

Tens of thousands of people have filled the streets regularly in recent weeks since the governing Georgian Dream party decided to suspend negotiations on joining the 27-nation EU. Police have increasingly used force and intimidation in their attempts to break up the rallies.

"Europe needs to find the leverage to act. If Europe cannot exert leverage on a country of 3.7 million, how can it expect to compete with the giants of the 21st century?" Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili told EU lawmakers in Strasbourg, France.

The EU granted Georgia candidate status for membership in December 2023, but put the accession bid on hold and cut financial support in June after the passage of a "foreign influence" law that was widely seen as a blow to democratic freedoms.

On Monday, EU foreign ministers agreed to impose visa restrictions on Georgian diplomats and government officials. They also weighed a list of Georgian representatives to impose sanctions on, but no agreement could be reached.

Zourabichvili suggested that this wasn't enough, and she urged the world's biggest trading bloc to use its weight as Georgia's biggest donor, biggest economic market and home to the South Caucasus country's biggest diaspora.

"If we are honest, Europe so far has not fully lived (up) to the moment. Europe has, so far, met the challenge halfway," she said. "Where Georgians have been fighting day and night, Europeans have been slow to wake up and slow to react."

Former soccer player Mikheil Kavelashvili became Georgia's new president on Saturday as the governing party tightened its grip on power following an election in October that the opposition alleges was rigged with Russia's help.

"While European flags are being banned in Tbilisi, Georgians are still waiting for binding measures to come from Brussels and Washington," Zourabichvili said, and she added that the street protests won't stop "until Georgia gets a free and fair election.'

"We either go to elections, or we go somewhere that we do not know, but that certainly will be a crisis that you will have to deal (with) in much direr conditions,' she warned.

On Tuesday, European affairs ministers renewed the bloc's condemnation of the police violence.

"The Georgian authorities must respect the right to freedom of assembly and of expression, and refrain from using force. All acts of violence must be investigated and those responsible held accountable," they said.

EU leaders will discuss developments in Georgia at a summit in Brussels on Thursday.

Malaysia foreign minister to be fined for smoking at eatery

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Agencies): Malaysia's foreign minister will be issued a fine for puffing a cigarette in a non-smoking area, the country's health minister said Wednesday.

Health Minister Dzulkefly Ahmad earlier this week reposted a photo of Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan smoking at a street-side eatery in the Malaysian state of Negeri Sembi-

Smoking in all eateries and restaurants was declared illegal in Malaysia in 2019 and further strict measures were introduced in October this year.

"The Foreign Minister's office has been informed of this matter," Dzulkefly said on social media platform X on Wednesday, adding that the foreign minister himself wanted to be issued a fine for the offence.



Under Malaysian law, people caught smoking in prohibited areas can face a fine of up to 5,000 ringgit (\$1,120).

Mohamad apologised on Wednesday and said he had received a violation notice from health authorities but that the fine amount was not yet determined.

"If it has become a concern and an issue among the public, I would like to sincerely tender my apology," he was quoted as saying in The Star newspaper.

"I will pay the fine, and I hope it will not be too

ad smoking at the eatery had sparked outrage online this week. "Whether you're a min-

The photo of Moham-

ister... or a VVIP, wrong is still wrong. No one is above the law," said one X user. Another said: "Law-

makers and (law) enforcement authorities who break laws should be punished more severely than the

Bangladesh court cancels death for Ulfa chief Paresh Baruah in arms-haul case

DHAKA, Dec 18 (Agencies): A high court bench in Bangladesh has acquitted former minister Lutfozzaman Babar and five others in the 2004 Chattogram armshaul case. The death sentence of Paresh Baruah, the chief of the banned terror organisation Ulfa, has been reduced to a life term, according to Prothom Alo. The case pertains to 10 truckloads of arms and ammunition meant for terror organisations working against India.

The huge consignment of weapons was seized during the regime of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh in 2004. There was evidence of the involvement of Lutfozzaman Babar, then junior minister for home affairs, in the smuggling of arms to anti-India forces.

Babar served in the Khaleda Zia government



as the Minister of State for Home from 2001 to 2006, as a member of the BNP.

The regime had also sheltered Ulfa's Paresh Baruah in Bangladesh. Baruah is now reported to be operating out of China. Baruah, who now leads the Ulfa-I, a faction of the Ulfa, is still involved in his secessionist agenda of liberating Assam, while other top leaders of the terror outfit have laid down arms and are engaged in talks with the Centre. Baruah is among six

death row convicts to

get a reprieve, according to Prothom Alo. While Baruah has been sentence has been reduced to life in jail, the others have been jailed for 10 Dhaka-based newspa-

The Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina, who was forced into exile in August after massive protests, had cracked down on anti-India forces in Bangladesh.

The acquittal of Babar and five others, and the reduction of the death sentence for Baruah

taker government under Muhammad Yunus has taken charge in Dhaka after Hasina's exit. The new regime in Dhaka hasn't been particularly friendly with India amid violence against minorities, including Hindus, of which New Delhi has been critical.

comes even as a care-

WHAT WAS 2004 CHITTAGONG ARMS **HAUL**

The 2004 Chittagong Arms Haul was one of the largest weapneighbourhood that took place in the port city of Chittagong.

The consignment of 10 truckloads of illegal arms and ammunition included 4,930 firearms, 27,020 grenades, 840 rocket launchers, 300 rockets, 2,000 grenade launching tubes, 6,392 magazines, and over 1.1 million bullets.

The weapons were believed to have been smuggled from China, with the intention of being delivered to insurgent groups in India's northeastern states.

In an exclusive interview with India Today in 2023, the then deputy director general of India's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) said the arms supply was done through the alliance between the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

It was Ulfa chief Paresh Barua who was the mastermind of the whole plot to secure the weapons for intensifying the separatist movement in Assam, Singh added.

The arms were being supplied by taking advantage of the BNP-Jamaat alliance to use Bangladesh as a sanctuary, Singh revealed.

Go Trudeau go, calls grow, Canada PM's job hangs by a thread staggering 67% disapcountry are voicing their Freeland reportedly

OTTAWA, Dec 18 (Agencies): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, once celebrated for his 2015 victory on promises of change and optimism, is now facing mounting pressure to step down both from within his party and the Opposition. Not many have retained the faith that they once had in Trudeau's abilities, given the economic mess and diplomatic mess that Canada is in. After nearly a decade in power, Trudeau's political future looks increasingly uncertain amid plummeting approval ratings, internal party dissent, and growing public frustration over rising living costs.

The crisis escalated earlier this week with the sudden resignation of Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, one of the most prominent members of Trudeau's Cabinet.

stepped down following disagreements over how to respond to US President-elect Donald Trump's threats of a 25% tariff on Canadian goods. Her abrupt departure sent shockwaves across Canada and raised serious concerns about the stability of Trudeau's govern-

Trudeau's former ally and National Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jagmeet Singh was the latest person to ask Trudeau to step down.

This comes after Trudeau has seen an all-time low in his popularity, less than a year before the October 2025 elections.

But his troubles are not limited to the home front, he is also facing strained international ties with India and the US.

Tensions escalated after Trudeau alleged Indian involvement in Canadian election inter-

ference and linked India to the death of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. These accusations have further strained bilateral ties.

Meanwhile, Trudeau faces additional challenges from the incoming US administration. President-elect Trump, who has not only threatened to impose high tariffs on Canadian goods but also mocked PM Trudeau by referring to him as the "Governor of the greatest state."

With both domestic and international pressures mounting, Trudeau's leadership appears more fragile than ever.

Freeland's resignation has increased Trudeau's critics, including members of his own Liberal Party.

Liberal MP Sean Casey publicly called for Trudeau to resign, while Montreal-area MP Anthony Housefather echoed the senti-



ment, adding to a growing chorus demanding change.

The opposition has seized the opportunity. Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre, now leading in public opinion polls, took a straight dig at Trudeau's leadership.

"Justin Trudeau has lost control, but he is onto power," Poilievre remarked.

Adding further pressure, Jagmeet Singh, the NDP leader, also stated how Trudeau is unable to address the everyday problems of

"People are dealing with soaring grocery prices, unaffordable housing, and rising interest rates. Instead of addressing these critical issues, the Prime Minister is busy fighting battles within his own party. It's clear he cannot continue," Singh stated. Public frustration has reached new heights as Trudeau's approval rat-

According to a recent Ipsos poll, only 33% of Canadians believe Trudeau is fit to remain Prime Minister, while a

ings hit record lows.

-- an increase of four points since June 2024. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre has

prove of his leadership

emerged as the top choice for Prime Minister, with 45% support, far ahead of Trudeau, who trails at just 26%.

The poll also shows that one-quarter of Canadians prefer Jagmeet Singh for the role.

This comes at a time when Canada faces a food crisis, food bank shortages, inflation and a housing crisis. Then, there is the issue of immigration that many expect the new government to handle.

However, Trudeau's inability to respond effectively has fuelled dissatisfaction, leaving many voters disillusioned.

The demand for Trudeau to step aside is no longer limited to Parliament.

Canadians across the

anger.

"Prime Minister, you've failed Canada. You've ruined this country. Walk away-you don't have an ounce of your father's integrity. Everyone around you is abandoning you. Chrystia Freeland, Sean Fraser—they've all left. It's time for you to go," said Canadian citizens on live TV.

"Everyone around you is running from you. You're abandoning me. Chris Freeland, Sean Fraser, they've all left you. It's time for you to go. It's time for Canada to have an election. You're not the king," they added.

Prominent voices in the Canadian media are also amplifying these calls.

"Trudeau is in the weakest position he's ever been in. He's become the governor of the great state of Canada," journalist Daniel Bordman

remarked.

"It's in the best interest of Canada for Trudeau to resign," Journalist Keean Bexte added to this chorus.

With Canada's next general election scheduled for October 2025 or earlier, if a no-confidence vote is triggered—Trudeau faces a rapidly shrinking window to turn things around.

Amid all the calls for him to resign, trading platform Polymarket now predicts an 80% chance that Trudeau will resign before April. Bordman told agency

that it was unlikely that Trudeau's government would last beyond April. Thre is little hope left

for Trudeau, who came to power in Canada on the planks of hope and optimism. It looks unlikely that he would be able to drag on as the Prime Minister and complete the term of the government before elections are held in Canada.

RLD J&K to organize Kisaan Goshth for Chaudhary Charan Singh Birthday: Vinay Pradhan

Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 18: The Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) has announced a week-long celebration to honor the 122nd birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna and former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh. Recognized as a champion of farmers' rights and an architect of land reform policies, Chaudhary Charan Singh's legacy will be celebrated with fervor across the country, including Jammu and

As directed by state in-charge Vinay Pradhan, the celebrations will include a series of programs under the banner of "Kisan Goshthi," running from December 17 to December 23. These events will feature visits to villages, discussions with farmers, and awareness campaigns to address issues faced by the agricultural community. The program aims to engage district presidents, metropolitan leaders, the youth wing, the student council, and department heads, who have been instructed to plan and execute these



Dr. Zohar Ahmed, President of the Jammu and Kashmir Rashtriya Lok Dal, has been tasked with appointing state officials to oversee the program's implementation at the district level. The initiative seeks to strengthen the connection between the party and the farming community while promoting Chaudhary Charan Singh's vision for rural empowerment and farmer welfare.

On December 23, the program will culminate in various significant events. The Rajasthan team of RLD will host a grand rally and a statue installation at Dhai Pedi in Alwar, Rajasthan. Additionally, Kisan Trust will commemorate the occasion at Kisan Ghat in Delhi. Across villages in Jammu and Kashmir, party workers and well-wishers will conduct Kisan Goshthis, sharing insights and continuing the dialogue on issues impacting

Chaudhary Charan Singh's contributions as Prime Minister and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh laid the foundation for many farmerfriendly policies.

The RLD is committed to preserving his legacy and advancing his vision for the welfare of farmers and rural communities. Through this week of celebrations, the party seeks to reaffirm its dedication to the agricultural sector and the ideals of Chaudhary Charan Singh.

NIA chargesheets two key aides of Khalistani Terrorist Landa

Dec 18 (Agencies): The National Investigation Agency has chargesheeted two key aides of designated terrorist Lakhbir Singh alias Landa of the banned Babbar Khalsa International outfit in a Punjab terror conspiracy case, according to the probe

agency on Wednesday. Jaspreet Singh of Punjab's Ferozepur district and Baljeet Singh of Madhya Pradesh's Barwani district were chargesheeted on Tuesday before the NIA special court in Mohali, it said.

They were identified

by NIA as members of a terror gang formed by foreign-based Khalistani terrorist Landa, said a statement issued by the probe agency.

A probe by the NIA found Jaspreet Singh to be an important onground operative of Landa and his associate Pattu Khaira, while Baljeet Singh was involved in supplying weapons to members of the Landa gang and other gangsters.

It further emerged during the investigation that Jaspreet Singh was involved in Landa's drug smuggling and extortion network aimed at gener-

Swaraj Yoga Teacher Training Graduation

Ceremony celebrates New Instructors

ating funds for BKI, the NIA claimed.

Baljeet was manufacturing weapons locally and using social media to supply them to operatives of the Landa gang, it added.

He was one of the various weapons suppliers with whom the terrorists had tied up across the country for the supply of arms and ammunition, the NIA said.

In the course of the investigation, NIA seized various arms, ammunition, narcotics and drug money, digital devices, and other incriminating articles from the accused.

Dogra Degree College students shine at Inter-**University Sports Competitions**

Top News Report

SAMBA, Dec 18: Dogra Degree College has once again showcased its exceptional athletic talent as several of its students have earned remarkable achievements at various interuniversity sports competitions.

Students from a diverse range of disciplines, including basketball, boxing, judo, grappling, kickboxing, taekwondo, Gatka, and wushu, have excelled in these competitions, earning top positions and securing selection for national-level events.

Notable achievements include Anuragh Thakur, Tejveer Singh, and Shagun Bhagat, who represented the college in basketball at the inter-university level, while Aryan Jamwal and Sharan Aryan won gold and silver medals in Pencaksilat at the inter-college level.

The boxing team saw impressive performances, with Shivali Chib securing a gold medal and Mohammad Kaif earning a silver medal, while Shivali also achieved a bronze in grappling.

In kickboxing, Vishal Kumar won a gold medal and was selected for the inter-university competition, while Shivali Chib and Shagun Bhagat won silver and bronze, respectively.

The college's athletes also excelled in Taekwondo, with Vishal Kumar winning a gold medal at the All India University level. In Gatka, a traditional martial art, students like Riya Dhamathia, Payal Devi, and Karandeep Kour not only earned gold medals but were also selected for the inter-university team,

highlighting their outstanding performance. The college's wushu team also performed excellently, with Narayan Pratap earning a gold medal and Shivali Chib securing another gold in the same discipline.

These achievements reflect the college's commitment to nurturing athletic talent alongside academic excellence, as students consistently excel in competitive sports while maintaining their academic pursuits.

Th. Gulchain Singh Charak, Chairman DET, Dr. Samar Dev Singh Charak, Secretary DET, Dr. Dharamveer Sharma, Dean Academics, Dr. Geetika Sehgal, Coordinator DET, and Dr. Bela Thakur, Principal Dogra Degree College, personally congratulated the students on their outstanding success, further motivating them to continue shining on national and international platforms.

Th. Gulchain Singh Charak, Chairman DET appreciated the efforts of Kewel Krishan Physical Instructor and Gulshan Sharma NCC CTO/ANO cum PTI for preparing the players and coordinating with the University of Jammu for smooth participation in the Inter Collegiate University Sports Competition.

Dogra Degree College continues to prioritize holistic education and extracurricular activities, encouraging students to pursue their passions in sports and develop skills that extend beyond the classroom. This success in inter-university competitions underscores the college's strong sports program and its role in fostering future athletes.

Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 18: Swaraj Yoga Institute & Wellness Retreats, with its main Yoga Ashram nestled in the serene village of Dharamkot in the Himalayas, hosted a memorable graduation ceremony for its Yoga Teacher Training (YTT)

The ceremony, held at their Jammu branch, marked the successful completion of a 27-day Hatha Yoga Certificate

The program, which is globally recognized, offers internationally certified instructor programs blending ancient yogic wisdom with modern techniques to foster holistic growth

and self-discovery. In association with the Indian Yoga Association (IYA), the event celebrated the achievements of graduates from various backgrounds who completed the intensive 200-hour YTT program.

These new instructors are now equipped with the skills to inspire wellness and mindfulness in their communities. The graduates received dual certification from IYA and Yoga Alliance, further validating their

training and expertise. The ceremony was

attended by family, friends, and mentors who gathered to honor the graduates' dedication and transformative Certificates were presented by Anil Swaraj,

Founder of Swaraj Yoga Institute, who also served as the lead mentor for the program, and Dr. Shreyansh Jain, Chairman of the Indian Yoga Association (IYA) UT-Jammu & Kashmir Chapter.

The event included heartfelt speeches, chanting of Vedic mantras, and a closing meditation led by Sanjeev Pandey.

Dr. Shreyansh Jain, in his speech, expressed his pride in the graduates, saying, "Watching these individuals evolve into confident instructors is truly inspiring. He emphasized that yoga is not just a physical practice but a way of life that fosters physical fitness, mental clarity, and emotional balance.

He encouraged the new teachers to continue their journey with dedication and help spread the message of health and wellness across society. Dr. Jain further highlighted that adopting yoga can lead to a fit, disease-free, and balanced life.

Ashok Gupta, Vice President of IYA (UT-J&K), also spoke at the event, noting the growing demand for certified yoga professionals in Jammu and Kashmir.

He stated, "As the population in Jammu & Kashmir grows, yoga has become a foolproof health maintenance regime. Certified yoga courses like these contribute significantly to filling the demand for qualified instructors."

The graduates of the program, now certified yoga teachers, shared their personal yogic journeys and the transformative changes they experienced at physical. mental, and spiritual

The new instructors include Purvie Gupta, Vikas Kumar. Rakesh Verma, Balwinder Kumar, Abishak Sharma, Aaina Bairagi, Taniya Kaith, Gurleen Kaur, and Surjit Singh. Each graduate expressed how the course has impacted their lives and how they plan to inspire others on their wellness journey.

Army organises Swachh Bharat Abhiyan at Samote

Top News Report

RAJOURI, Dec 18: With the aim of promoting a clean and healthy lifestyle in society, the Indian Army at Samote organized a 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' at Samote. The initiative aimed to raise awareness among soldiers about the importance of cleanliness in their environment and its direct impact on health and well-being

The campaign was designed to highlight the significance of maintaining cleanliness not only for personal well-being but also for the overall health of the community and the environment.

It emphasized the link between cleanliness and a healthy society, urging participants to take proactive steps in their daily routines to ensure better waste management, improved

sanitation, and better personal hygiene.

The aim of the campaign was to spread awareness about the need for cleanliness in their lines and surroundings for a healthy society.

The soldiers were educated about various health problems related to waste disposal, unhygienic living conditions, sewage issues, and personal hygiene.

After the campaign, a cleanliness drive was organized to clean the unit area and its surroundings. The soldiers enthusiastically participated in the event.

The event culminated with all participants taking a pledge to keep their lines, surrounding areas, and countryside clean. Around 26 soldiers attended the

FROM PAGE 3

Amit Shah hails reconstruction of Sharda **Temple at Teetwal**

and cultural renewal in the region.

This reconstruction symbolizes a step forward in preserving India's rich spiritual legacy while fostering hope and pride among devotees and cultural historians

Cong demands resignation of Amit Shah over **Ambedkar remarks**

and the Home Minister's insult to Dr. Ambedkar, all Pradesh Congress Committees will be holding marches at all Raj Bhavans across the country today," Venugopal said on X.

Earlier addresseing a press conference, Congress MP Neeraj Dangi said his party demands Shah's apology for the remarks.

"In Rajya Sabha, Amit Shah Ji said that taking the name of Babasaheb Ambedkar Ji has become a fashion. This is a direct insult to the Dalits of the country and Babasaheb." he said.

Shah has shown the whole country what

kind of thinking BJP leaders have, he said. "The deprived and exploited class, which they have insulted, this is the same class which will reduce them from 240 to 40,"

Dangi said. "On behalf of the Congress party, I demand that Amit Shah ji should apologise publicly and in the House. Considering what he has said about Babasaheb Ambedkar, he has lost the right to hold a constitutional post," Dangi said.

He should resign from the post of Home Minister, he said.

The Congress on Tuesday alleged that Shah's remarks in the Rajya Sabha during a debate on the Constitution show that the BJP and the RSS leaders have a "lot of hatred" for Ambedkar and demanded an apology from him.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi had said those who believe in Manusmriti will definitely be at odds with Ambedkar.

Congress general secretary-in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh had shared a video snippet on X from Shah's speech in the upper house.

"Abhi ek fashion ho gaya hai - Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar. Itna naam agar bhagwan ka lete to saat janmon tak swarg mil jata (It has become a fashion to say Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar'. If they had taken God's name so many times, they would have got a place in heaven)," Shah had said, taking a swipe at the opposition.

The home minister attacked the Congress in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, saying the party treated the Constitution as the "private fiefdom" of one family and "played fraud" with Parliament.

Concluding a two-day debate on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India", Shah ripped into the Congress for its appeasement politics and claimed that the party wanted to breach the 50 per cent quota limit to provide reserva-

tion to Muslims. He also asked the Congress if it supported the Muslim personal law and alleged that the party never worked for the welfare of the backward classes. Shah asserted that the BJP has already brought in a common civil code (Uniform Civil Code) in Uttarakhand and will implement it in all states.

Former Deputy SP. 5 others suffocate to death as fire erupts in house

been identified as 81-year-old former deputy SP Avtar Krishen Raina, his daughter Barkha Raina (25), son Takash (3), 17-year-old Ganga Bhagat, 15-year-old Danish Bhagat and 6-year-old Advik, a police officer said.

Those injured and undergoing treatment are 61-year-old Swarna (the wife of Avtar Krishen Raina), Neetu Devi (40), Arun Kumar (15), and a 69-year-old woman, he

Dr Surinder Atri, the principal of the hospital, said, "Ten people were brought to the hospital. Six were brought dead, and four others were injured." Preliminary investigations suggest the victims died of smoke inhalation and suffocation, he said, adding that no burn injuries were reported.

"It is an unfortunate incident. Our assistant matron, who had recently retired, was living in the rented house. The incident happened between 2 am and 3 am. She called over the phone and I immediately informed the police and fire brigade," the

Rocky Sharma, a student, said he was studying late at night when he noticed the fire and rushed to the house along with

others. "The fire had engulfed the drawing room, and the smoke that seeped into other rooms resulted in the deaths," he

The police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the matter.

Employers can file wage details till Jan 31 for higher pension

2022. It was launched on February 26, 2023 and was to remain available only till May 3, 2023.

However, considering representations of employees, the time was extended to June 26, 2023 in order to provide complete four months to eligible pensioners/members for filing applications.

A last opportunity of 15 days was further given to remove any difficulty faced by

Accordingly, the last date for submission of applications was extended to July 11, 2023 and a total of 17.49 lakh applications were received from pensioners/members till July 11, 2023.

In view of representations received from Employers & Employers' Associations, wherein requests were made to extend the time for uploading the wage details, employers were given multiple opportunities to submit wage details etc. online till September 30, 2023, again till December 31, 2023 and thereafter till May 31, 2024.

In spite of so many extensions, it has been observed that more than 3.1 lakh applications for validation of options / joint options are still pending with employers. Many representations have been received

from Employers & Employers' Associations, requesting extending the time further. Therefore, the ministry said a "final oppor-

tunity" is being given to the employers till January 31, 2025 to ensure that they process and upload these pending applica-

Employers are also requested to submit replies/update the information by January 15, 2025, in over 4.66 lakh cases where EPFO has sought additional information/ clarification in respect of applications that have been received and examined by

Arms. ammunition recovered from forest area in Kupwara

army's Srinagar-based Chinar Corps posted on its X handle.

"#ChinarCorps remains steadfast in its commitment to keep Kashmir terror-free,"

Kashmir remains in grip of severe cold conditions

and Kokernag in south Kashmir minus 2.8 degrees. The Met office has forecast mainly dry weather till December 26 with possibility of light snowfall in higher reaches of the valley on the night of December 21-22. However, the minimum temperature is forecast to fall further in the valley and there will be a cold wave over many stations during the next few days, it said.

Dr Jitendra informs Lok Sabha about rising private sector involvement in Space activities

Top News Report

NEW DELHI, Dec 18: Union Minister, Dr. Jitendra Singh today informed the Lok Sabha about rising public sector involvement in India's Space Space related activities.

He stated that in recent years, a number of steps had been taken to promote private sector participation in Space sector activities.

The Minister's reply stated several steps are taken by the Government to further promote private sector involvement and the growth of StartUps in the space sector in India.

The space sector has been liberalised and the private sector allowed to carry out end to end space activities.

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) was created in the Department of Space for promoting, authorising and overseeing the activities of Non-Government Entities (NGEs) in the Space Sector.

The Indian Space Policy, 2023 has been formulated by the Government to provide regulatory certainty to space activities by various stakeholders, in order to create a thriving space ecosystem.

Various schemes to encourage and hand hold private sector also announced and implemented by IN-SPACe, i.e., Seed fund Scheme, Pricing Support Policy, Mentorship support, Technical Centre, Design Lab for NGEs, Skill Development in Space Sector, ISRO facility utilisation support, Technology Transfer to NGEs, creation of IN-SPACe Digital Platform to connect

of space ecosystem etc.
The number of Space
StartUps have gone up,
from just 1 in 2014 to
around 266 as on date.

with all the stakeholders

Decadal vision and strategy for the Indian space economy is also announced by IN-SPACe, which shall increase the share of India in the overall space economy.

The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of a Rs.1,000 crore Venture Capital (VC) Fund dedicated to supporting India's space

sector.

IN-SPACe has signed around 71 MoUs with Non-Government Entities (NGEs) to provide necessary support for realization of space

systems and applications envisaged by such NGEs, which is expected to increase the industry participation in manufacturing of launch vehicles and satellites.

In order to ease access to foreign capital by Indian NGEs, the Central Government has brought out revised FDI policy for the Space Sector.

IN-SPACe has initiated the Establishment of Earth Observation (EO) System under Public Private Partnership (PPP). The Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited from Non-Government Entities (NGEs).

Technology Transfer of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) to Indian entities is under process and response to RFP is invited from shortlisted bidders.

Announcement of Opportunity is made by IN-SPACe for making available Indian orbital resources to the NGEs. One Indian entity is selected.

With the recent approval of revision in Gaganyaan Programme, the scope of the program has been expanded to include precursor missions to Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), including development & launch of 1st module of BAS (BAS-01). The 1st module of BAS is targeted to be launched in 2028 timeframe and BAS is expected to be fully operationalised with all modules by envertible.

The proposal for Venus Orbiter Mission (VOM) aims to successfully orbit Venus and better understand the Venusian surface and subsurface, atmospheric processes and influence of the Sun on Venusian atmosphere. The mission would provide an opportunity to the technologists and scientific community of our country, to further explore and understand the Venusian science considerably well before the global community. The Indian Venus Mission is expected to answer some of the outstanding scientific questions resulting in various

2035 timeframe.

scientific outcomes.
The mission is expected to be accomplished on the opportunity available during March

The total approved fund for Venus Orbiter Mission is Rs. 1236 Crore, out of which Rs. 824 Crore will be spent on the VOM spacecraft.

on the VOM spacecraft. It is planned to establish the 1st module of Bharatiya Antriksh Station (BAS) by 2028 and a fully operational BAS by 2035.

Setting up of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Lab in Space is not currently envisaged.

However, Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), will be the first National Space Laboratory to conduct multidisciplinary microgravity experiments and studies in the fields of Science, Technologies, Medicine, Agriculture, Space manufacturing, among others.

BAS will be acting as a platform for global & national collaboration, gateway to lunar exploration & beyond and to help boosting the Space Economy of the country. With the recent approv-

al of revision in Gaganyaan Programme, the scope of the program has been expanded to include precursor missions to Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), including development & launch of 1st module of BAS (BAS-01). With a net additional funding of Rs. Rs 11,170 Crore in the already approved programme, the total revised funding of Gaganyaan Programme with enhanced scope is Rs. Rs 20,193 Cr.

Ramban Administration gears up for "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" Campaign



Top News Report

RAMBAN, Dec 18: The District Administration Ramban, held a meeting today to review the preparations for the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign, scheduled to be conducted from December 19 to 24, 2024 under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Baseer-UI-Haq Chaudhary, as part of Good Governance Week

2024.
The meeting was chaired by Additional District Development Commissioner Roshan Lal and attended by ACD Srinath Suman, CPO Shakeeb Ahmed Rather, ACP Ashfaq Ahmed, BDOs, Executive Engineers from PWD and PHE, CMO, CEO, and other district and sectoral officers.

During the meeting, the ADDC emphasized

the importance of covering all parameters and targets through a block-level schedule for the campaign. A mega event under the initiative will be held on December 23, 2024, at Khari, showcasing developmental progress and

governance initiatives.

The ADDC directed officers to highlight achievements and best practices through video presentations in sectors like Rural Development (RDD), Health, Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), and others. The officers were also instructed to expedite project execution, meet financial targets, and adhere to timelines to ensure the timely delivery of ben-

Key discussions focused on ongoing developmental projects, including healthcare,

efits to the public.

educational infrastructure, road construction, accelerated JJM implementation, and enhancements in power infrastructure.

The ADDC urged BDOs and other officers to closely monitor developmental projects; ensuring progress aligns with district goals.

The departments were directed to set up their stalls at identified locations as per schedule to be implemented in various blocks from December 19 to 24, 2024. They were asked to focus on spot redressal of public issues and grievances.

The "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign aims to reinforce the principles of good governance and improve service delivery at the grassroots level, reflecting the commitment of the District Administration to the overall development of Ramban.

thermore, they raised

Delegation of Phyang lead by Councillor meets CEC Leh



Top News Report

LEH, Dec 18: Chairman/CEC Adv. Tashi Gyalson was called upon by a delegation led by Phyang Councillor Tundup Nurboo, Ven. Rigzin Dorjey, Ven. Konchok Tashi, and organiser Tundup Namgyal at his office today.

The delegation at the onset extended their gratitude to the Council for its support in recognizing Bhoti as the state

official language.

The delegation also apprised the CEC about their upcoming cricket tournament dedicated to the memory of His Eminence Ladakh Chosje Togdan Rinpoche, Bhushan Padma Awardee. The delegation expressed their privilege in being given the opportunity to organize the tournament in honor of such a revered figure. CEC Gyalson commended the initiative and expressed his

support for the event, emphasizing the importance of remembering the contributions of spiritual leaders like Ladakh Chosje Togdan Rinpoche. He highlighted the need for future generations to understand his contributions to Ladakh. Additionally, he suggested organizing a wide range of activities during the tournament to help people gain a deeper understanding of his legacy.

KDP Wing of DPAP urges Central, UT Govts to address issue of KP migrants

Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 18: The Kashmiri Displaced People Wing (J&K) of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) has made an impassioned appeal to the Central and Union Territory governments to address the long-standing issue of Kashmiri Pandit displacement.

They have called for a comprehensive and concrete policy for the rehabilitation and resettlement of the displaced community, emphasizing the need for a dignified and secure return to their ancestral homes in the Kashmir Valley.

The leaders underscored the suffering endured by the community over 35 years of exile, describing it as a tragic chapter in India's history that has uprooted patriotic citizens from their roots.

The KDP Wing high-

lighted the profound social, cultural, and economic impacts of displacement on three generations of Kashmiri Pandits. The loss of ancestral heritage, coupled with declining economic opportunities, has left the community struggling to preserve its identity.

The leaders also expressed concern about the dwindling population of the community, attributing it to deliberate neglect and inaction by successive governments. They lamented the repeated failure of past and present administrations to translate promises into tangible results, despite numerous resolutions passed in Parliament and state assemblies over the decades.

The group has also demanded the reservation of two parliamentary seats for Kashmiri Pandits, ensuring that representatives are

elected by the displaced community itself.

They proposed that elections for these representatives be conducted through welfare associations within migrant camps, an idea approved by the Commissioner Secretary of DMRRR in December 2023 but not yet implemented. Additionally, they called for immediate improvement of living conditions in migrant camps, which have remained neglected for decades.

The deteriorating infrastructure, poor sanitation, and overall lack of basic facilities have made life intolerable for residents, prompting calls for urgent action to upgrade the camps.

The leaders also voiced concerns about the economic and educational prospects of displaced youth. They demanded the establishment of industrial zones, cooperative

projects, and special quotas in education and employment to support young members of the community.

They emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for selfreliance, such as providing industrial loans and land leases for business ventures. The inefficacy of existing government schemes was also criticized, with calls for a more inclusive and effective approach to addressing unemployment and economic hardships among displaced individuals.

In their critique of bureaucratic inefficiency, the leaders pointed out delays in updating ration cards and the suspension of relief due to procedural hurdles, especially after the death of a family head.

They called for a streamlined process to prevent additional suffering for families during difficult times. Fur-

concerns about the applicability of the One Nation One Ration Card scheme to displaced migrants, demanding clarity and proper notifications to avoid confusion. Finally, the KDP Wing appealed for a one-time settlement policy that addresses the socio-economic and cultural rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiri Pandits. They called for the restoration of fundamental rights, ensuring the community's rightful place in society as full-fledged citizens. The leaders urged the government to act decisively and compassionately, fulfilling promises made by the Prime Minister and Home Minister during election campaigns.

They stressed the need for an immediate and practical resolution to end the community's decades-long suffering and exile.

Vice Chairperson DDC Reasi assures full support to victims of Paghiala fire incident

Top News Report

REASI, Dec 18: A devastating fire engulfed the shops in Paghiala, Gulabgarh, leaving the local community in shock. The incident resulted in the complete destruction of several shops and vehicles, causing immense financial losses to families from Paghiala, Gulabgarh, and Baransal who depended on these for their livelihoods.

Despite the prompt arrival of the police at the scene, the fire rapidly spread and reduced everything to ashes due to the highly flammable nature of the shops, which were made of wood and dried grass. The presence of gas cylinders in some shops further escalated the damage as they exploded after the fire started, making it impossible to control the flames in time.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the fire might have been triggered by an electrical short circuit, but the exact cause is still under investigation.

Vice Chairperson of the District Development Council (DDC) Reasi, Adv. Sajra Qadir, expressed her deep sorrow over the tragedy and assessed the damage from locals. "This unfortunate inci-



dent has left many families devastated. I assure the victims of my full support and commitment to ensuring they receive immediate relief and assistance to rebuild their lives," she said.

Adv. Sajra Qadir is actively coordinating with the district administration to provide compensation to the affect-

ed families and expedite rehabilitation measures. She emphasized that efforts will be made to reconstruct the damaged shops and ensure financial aid reaches the victims promptly.

Highlighting the need

to prevent similar incidents in the future, she stated, "This tragedy underscores the importance of safety measures in vulnerable areas. We will work towards creating awareness about fire safety protocols and conducting regular inspections to ensure the safety of structures in such

regions."

The Vice Chairperson praised the timely

response of the police and the locals there but acknowledged the challenges posed by the wooden and driedgrass structures. She also urged the community to remain vigilant and adopt precautionary measures to minimize risks.

Adv. Sajra Qadir appealed to the local community to come together in this time of need and extend their support to those who have suffered losses. "Our collective efforts can help the affected families recover from this tragedy and rebuild their lives with dignity,"

she added.

Unscheduled power cuts, Waltangoo Kund villagers up arms against PDD



Top News Report

KULGAM, Dec 18: The residents of kund waltangoo area of south Kashmir's Kulgam district are up in arms against Power Development Department for failing to provide electricity on scheduled time.

According to reports, locals alleged that the

PDD Kulgam has failed to provide adequate electricity to the area. The residents of said areas that the PDD is subjecting them to unscheduled power cuts.

Locals told Top News JK correspondent Gh Nabi khanday that due to the unscheduled power cuts people are forced to take streets. "The authorities assured us to redress their grievance but the promises done by the authorities proved hoax," they said.

"We facing immense hardships due to hide and seek of electricity in their area," they added.

Threatened to block roads, the locals said If the unnecessary power cuts won't end, we will took on road.

Residents of the area appeals, DC kulgam and Chief Engineer PDD Kashmir to look into this matter and redress their problem as soon as possible so that people can feel some sort of relief.

3rd Australia-India Test ends in draw after bad weather strikes

The third Test between Australia and India in Brisbane ended in a draw after storms halted the hosts' bid for an unlikely win Wednesday to leave the series locked 1-1.

BRISBANE, Dec 18 (Agencies): The third Test between Australia and India in Brisbane ended in a draw after storms halted the hosts' bid for an unlikely win Wednesday to leave the series locked 1-1. Early tea was taken on the final day at the Gabba because of bad light with India 8-0 having been set a target of 275 for victory, after Australia declared on 89-7. But a big storm swept over the ground during the break and play was abandoned, with the five-Test series now heading to Melbourne and then Sydney.

The draw badly hurts India's chances of making the final of the World Test Championship at Lord's next year, with Australia now likely to defend their title against South Africa.

"Unfortunately a lot of rain, which you can't do anything about, but really happy with how the guys played," said Australia skipper Pat Cummins.

"To put 450 (first innings) on is a huge total and then felt like we're right ahead of the game for all of it."

With rain causing regular disruptions throughout the Test, the chance of a result other than a draw looked to have disappeared when India avoided the follow-on late on Tuesday.



"I mean, we'll take that obviously, to have interruptions like that wasn't great," said India skipper Rohit Sharma.

"But going to Melbourne with one-all pretty much gives us that confidence that we can go out there and try and pull things towards us."

Carnage

After losing most of the morning session, Australia began their second innings after lunch showing no signs of an attacking approach.

But once under-pressure openers Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney fell, along with the equally out-of-form Marnus Labuschagne, the Australian approach seemed to change as the batsmen started

to attack every ball.

Khawaja, who turned 38 on Wednesday, came into the second innings after a run of poor form which has seen him not score a century since June

He spanked two fours from the first over he faced from Mohammed Siraj but it took the talismanic Jasprit Bumrah iust one ball to get his man. the left-hander bowled off an inside edge that also clipped

Labuschagne was next to go after wafting at a wide ball from Bumrah and edging to wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

The carnage continued when McSweeney played a cut shot off Akash Deep, edging to Pant to leave the Australians 16-3.

Deep had his second when Mitchell Marsh, promoted to bat at number four, also left his bat hanging and edged to Pant, with Australia staggering

That became 33-5 when Steve Smith was well caught by a diving Pant down the leg side off Siraj for four.

Australia were obviously trying to set a target for the Indians to chase and Travis Head (17) fell going for quick runs, a wild slog off Siraj getting a top edge that flew skywards for Pant to come around for his fifth catch.

Cummins came in and smashed 22 runs off just 10 balls before miscuing an attempted pull shot off Bumrah and holing out to KL Rahul at mid-off.

He sent Mitchell Starc out but declared soon after.

India resumed the day on 252-9 in reply to the hosts' 445 after a 10th-wicket partnership between Bumrah and Deep late Tuesday allowed them to avoid the follow-on.

They were dismissed for 260 four overs into the first session when Deep was stumped by wicketkeeper Alex Carey off part-time spinner Head.

Spin legend R Ashwin announces retirement from international cricket



BRISBANE, Dec 18 (Agencies): Dec 18 (Agencies): Indian cricket team spinner R Ashwin announced his retirement from international cricket following the third Test match against Australia in Brisbane on Wednesday. Ashwin made the announcement in the post-match press conference along with skipper Rohit Sharma after the game ended in a draw. Ashwin played the second match of the five-Test series in Adelaide but was replaced by Ravindra Jadeja for the match in Brisbane. Ashwin retires from the game as the second highest wicket-taker for India in Tests with 537 scalps in 106 games, leaving him only behind Anil Kumble (619 wickets).

Ashwin will continue to play T20 tournaments and he will represent Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2025.

"I won't take too much of your time. Today will be the last day for me as an India cricketer," Ashwin said at the end of the drawn third Test here in a joint press conference with captain Rohit Sharma during which he declined to take any questions and left after making the announcement.

The 38-year-old played the day-night Test in Adelaide and picked up one wicket. "He was very, very sure of his decision. We should stand by what he wants," said Rohit after Ashwin left the

stage. He was seen sharing an emotional moment with star batter Virat Kohli in the dressing room hours before the announcement. "A name synonymous with mastery, wizardry, brilliance, and innovation," said the BCCI in its tribute post on X.

With Ashwin stepping down from the international stage, he is truly leaving behind a tremendous legacy and massive boots to fill for the youngsters who will come in to make up for his pres-

Ashwin spearheaded the bowling attack and was a major face behind India's rise to the top and eventual domination in Test cricket that lasted from 2014 to 2019.

When one turns to look at his dominance in the home conditions, he was a phenom. His expertise wasn't just limited to the ball but also some impactful contributions with the bat.

In the white-ball format, Ashwin made 181 appearances and snatched 228 wickets. He made 116 ODI appearances and took 156 wickets at an average of 33.20, with best figures of 4/25. He also made 707 runs at an average of 16.44, with one fifty, a knock of 65 in 63 innings. He is the 13th-highest wickettaker in ODIs for India.

In 65 T20Is, he took 72 wickets at an average of 23.22. His best figures are 4/8. He also scored 184 runs in 19 innings at an average of 26.28, with best score of 31. He is the sixth-highest wicket-taker for India in T20Is.

With 765 scalps in 287 matches, he is India's second-highest wicket-taker across all formats, next to Kumble (953). He also won the 2011 50-Over World Cup and 2013 Champions Trophy with India.

"See a massive scope of improvement...": Harbhajan Singh on KL Rahul's batting

BRISBANE, Dec 18 (Agencies): KL Rahul is among the Indian batters who have impressed in the ongoing Test series against Australia. Rahul was given a chance to open for India in the absence of Rohit and he returned with scores of 26 and 77 in Perth. Rohit entered the playing XI from the second Test but Rahul continued to play as an opener. Of late, Rahul came up with a gritty 84-run knock in India's first innings at the third Test in Brisbane. While heaping praises on his batting, ex-India cricketer Harbhajan Singh suggested that there is a "massive scope of improvement" in the average of Rahul.

Harbhajan shared his views during commentary on Star Sports when the broadcaster showed Rahul's Test batting stats. The right-handed batter scored 3128 runs at an average of 34. in 55 Test matches he played (excluding India vs Australia Brisbane Test).

"He is a proper batter. His technique is excellent and he has the game for Test cricket. He knows how to leave the ball and has all types of shots. He plays spin and fast bowling well. He plays the short ball well, but I want to see an



increase of 20-25 in his average," said

"Considering his stature and the kind of player he is, his average should be around 50-55. I see a massive scope of improvement from here. He has had an up-and-down career. He has been in and out of the team and couldn't play cricket for a long time due to injury.

"I hope he is less injured now and plays continuous cricket. This slot is good for him. He opens and likes to play balls. He plays long innings. We expect his graph to keep moving upwards and when we talk about KL Rahul after five years, it will be enjoyable if the average is 50-55."

Sanju Samson snubbed from Kerala's Vijay Hazare Trophy squad, Nizar to lead experimenting with new

NEW DELHI, Dec 18 (Agencies): India batter Sanju Samson's exclusion from Kerala's Vijay Hazare Trophy squad has raised eyebrows, especially following his solid performance in the recently concluded Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. Kerala, instead, named a 19-member squad for the tournament starting on December 21, with Salman Nizar appointed as captain. Prominent players such as Sijomon Joseph, Basil Thampi, and Mohammed Azharuddeen are part of the squad, but Samson's omission remains the most talked-about deci-

Samson, who led Kerala in five out of their six matches in the Syed Mushtag Ali Trophy, made a notable impact. He scored 136 runs at a strike rate of 149.45 in the tournament, under-



lining his value as an experienced campaigner in the domestic circuit. However, despite his leadership and performances, the Kerala selectors decided to move forward without the India international for the 50-over competition.

Placed in Group E, Kerala will face Baroda, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Bengal, Tripura, and Bihar in the Vijay Hazare

The team kicks off its campaign against Baroda on December 23 in Hyderabad. With a mix of young and experienced players, the squad will aim to make a strong start in the tournament under Salman Nizar's leadership

Samson's absence could be seen as a decision aimed at combinations or offering younger players more opportunities.

However, given his international experience and ability to anchor an innings in the 50-over format, his exclusion has sparked specula-

Some fans and experts have questioned whether this decision indicates a shift in team strategy or is part of a broader pian to manage Samson's workload.

For Kerala, this edition of the Vijay Hazare Trophy will be an important opportunity to make a mark in domestic cricket. The inclusion of players like Basil Thampi and Mohammed Azharuddeen adds strength to both their bowling and batting departments. However, the spotlight will continue to linger on

Samson's omission and how the team performs in his absence.

As Kerala prepares for the tournament, their journey without their star batter will undoubtedly be closely watched, especially as they aim to compete against stronger teams like Madhya Pradesh and Bengal in Group E.

Kerala's full squad for Vijay Hazare Trophy

Salman Nizar (c), Rohan Kunnummal, Shoun Roger, Mohammed Azharuddeen (wk), Anand Krishnan, Krishna Prasad, Ahammed Imran, Jalaj Saxena, Aditya Anand Sarvate, Sijomon Joseph, Basil Thampi, Basil NP, Nidheesh MD. Eden Apple Tom, Sharafuddeen NM, Akhil Scaria, Vishweshwar Suresh, Vaishak Chandran, Ajnas M (wk).

Sunil Gavaskar strongly disagrees with R Ashwin retirement timing with series in line

BRISBANE, Dec 18 (Agencies): Former Indian captain and legendary opener Sunil Gavaskar reacted to Ravichandran Ashwin's retirement decision's impact on the team and said the allrounder the same what Dhoni did during 2014-15 Asutralia series. Ashwin announced his retirement from international cricket immediately following the drawn Gabba Test in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Gavaskar drew parallels to MS Dhoni's mid-series retirement during the 2014-15 Test series in Australia, arguing that such decisions disrupt team planning. "He could have said, listen after the end of the series, I won't be available for selection for India. What it does is that, similarly when MS Dhoni retired at the end of the 3rd Test in 2014-15 series, it leaves you one short," Gavaskar told broadcasters.

"The selection committee has picked so many players for a tour with a purpose. If there are any injuries they can select from the reserve players to have in the team. So, Sydney is somewhere where there is a lot of support on offer for spinners. So India could have played with two spinners. You never know. He could have been there for sure. I don't know how the pitch in Melbourne will be like. Normally, you tend to look at the end of the series. That's it. In the middle, it is not usual," he added.

When asked if Washington Sundar was being groomed to replace Ashwin, Gavaskar admitted it seemed likely. "Maybe Washington Sundar is ahead of him. Rohit mentioned that Sundar is flying out tomorrow. So, this marks the end of Ashwin as an international cricketer. He has been one heck of a cricketer," Gavaskar said.

Menwahile, Sundar posted a heartfelt post for state-mate Ashwin on Instagram, following the allrounder's retirement. "More than just a teammate - Ash anna, you have been an inspiration, a mentor and a true champion of the game. It's been an honour to



share the field and the dressing room with you."

"Coming from the same state of TN, I have grown up watching you from the close corners of Chepauk to playing against you and alongside you. Every moment has been a privilege. The learnings, both on and off the field are something I will carry with me forever. Wishing you success and happiness in whatever comes next," the post read.

Ashwin's retirement comes at a crucial juncture in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with the series delicately poised 1-1 with the drawn Gabba Test. His absence leaves a gap in India's bowling arsenal, especially as they prepare for the upcoming Test in Melbourne and Sydney, traditionally a spinner-friendly venue.

'Sore' Travis Head confident he'll be 'fine' for Boxing Day Test

BRISBANE, Dec 18 (Agencies): Australia's man in form Travis Head played down concerns over his fitness after appearing to struggle with a potential groin issue during the rain-marred drawn third Test against India at the Gabba here on Wednesday.

Head said he expects to be "fine" for the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne. The five-match series

is tied 1-1 going into the Boxing Day Test after the drawn affair.

"Very pleased with the way I am batting at the moment. Just a little sore, but I should be fine (before the next game)," Head, who was adjudged the player of the match, said after the game.

The 30-year-old, who



has been in red-hot form with 409 runs at an average of 81.80 this series, noticeably struggled to run between the wickets during his brief innings of 17 on day five.

At times, he was seen clutching his groin, raising concerns among the commentators.

Former pacer Brett Lee called the visuals "worrying signs", noting Head's limited movement, while Indian

great Ravi Shastri also expressed concern, describing the potential injury as a "body blow" for Australia, given Head's big role in the batting lineup.

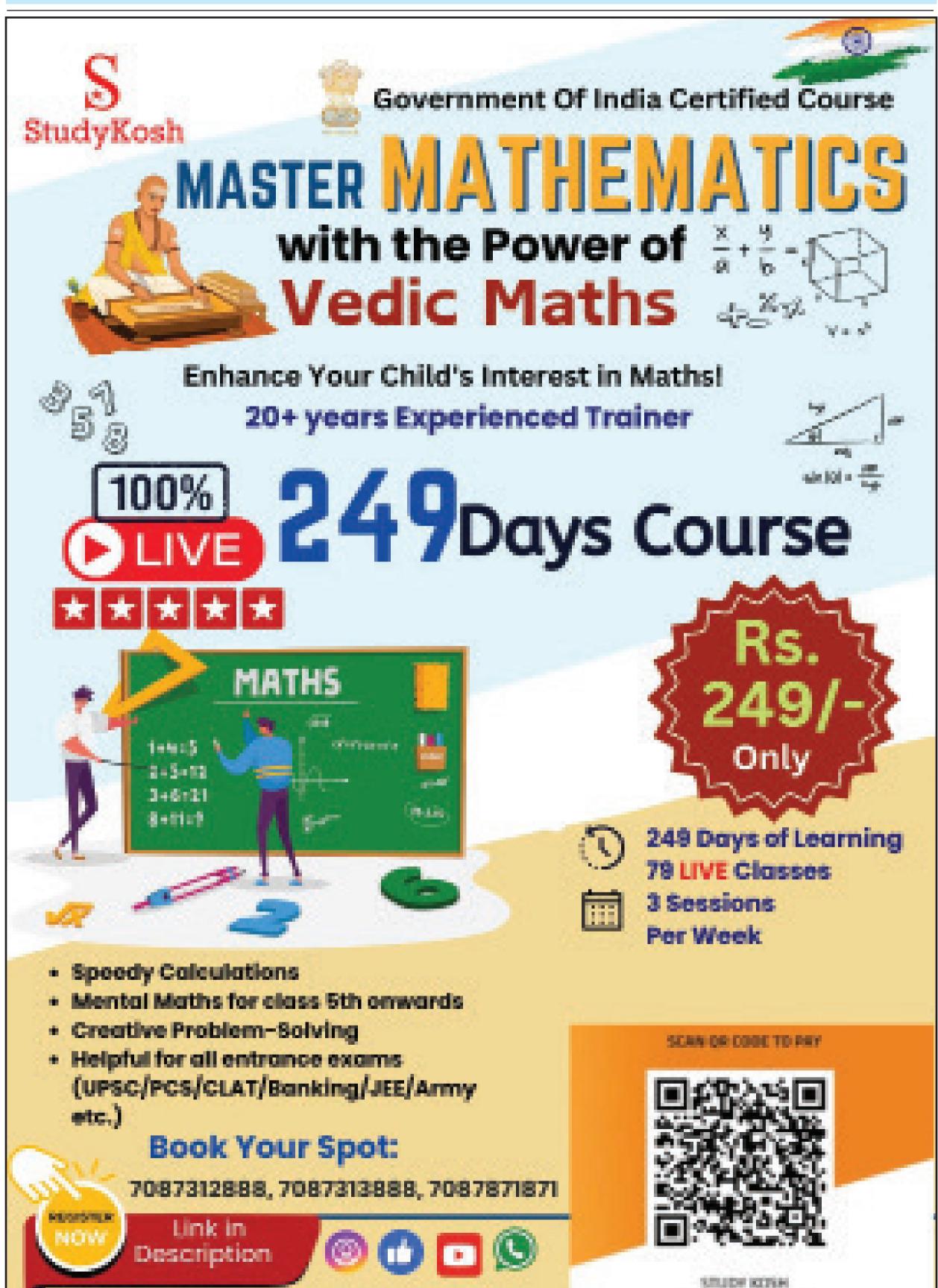
Head did not take the field during India's second innings, fuelling further speculation.

The left-hander further reflected on his approach this series, attributing his success to adapting well to challenging conditions and staying composed at the crease.

"Challenging wicket. I had to work through the gears. I had different plans, pleased I could get through those. Good partnership with (Steve) Smith," he said on their centuries, contributing to their 241-run massive stand. "I just try to sum up the

conditions well. What I've done well this series is assess the conditions. Pleased with the tempo I've batted with. Pretty relaxed communication.

"Felt like he was back in his rhythm, and he gives me full freedom and confidence knowing he's going to be there for a long while. I feel like I am playing the situation in front of me," he added.



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