



**Viksit Bharat
Viksit Jammu & Kashmir**



Inauguration of
6.4 km Sonamarg Tunnel

worth over ₹2700 crore

- All-season, uninterrupted, year-round connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg boosting local trade and tourism.
- Creating unparalleled growth opportunities for local businesses such as hotels, transporters, and restaurants.
- Improved access to large markets for local agricultural produce like saffron, apples, walnuts, cherries, kehwa, etc.
- Includes an Escape Tunnel, ventilation tunnel, 6 km approach road and a 4 km creeper lane dedicated to heavy vehicle traffic.
- Strategically Important project providing all weather connectivity to border areas throughout the year.

by

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister



Sonamarg, Ganderbal | January 13, 2025 | 10:00 AM

Live Telecast on DD News

TOP NEWS OF J&K

JAMMU, MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2025

Daily Evening Newspaper



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BRIEFLY

Grand Lohri, Makar Sankranti celebration hosted by Zuvi Preschool & Daycare Jammu

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Zuvi Preschool & Daycare hosted a vibrant and culturally enriching Lohri and Makar Sankranti Celebration to mark the festive season with grandeur and tradition. The event was graced by the presence of Ayodhya Gupta, Senior BJP Leader as the Chief Guest.

The celebration commenced on a spiritual note, with the young stars kids of Zuvi Preschool reciting the Gayatri Mantra and performing a soulful Ganesh Stuti, setting a serene and auspicious tone for the day.

Staying true to its mission of fostering cultural values, Zuvi Preschool & Daycare showcased the rich heritage of the old Dogra community through mesmerizing performances by the children. The tiny tots brought to life the essence of Dogra traditions with their energy, enthusiasm, and captivating acts.

Adding to the traditional fervour, parents and guests participated in the Lohri rituals, offering groundnuts, sesame seeds, and other dry fruits to the holy fire, symbolizing prayers for prosperity and well-being. The ceremony reflected the spirit of unity and gratitude, resonating with the significance of the festival. The celebrations reached their peak as everyone joined in dancing to the energetic beats of the dhol, adding rhythm and joy to the event. The festive atmosphere was filled with smiles, laughter, and a sense of togetherness as the audience relished every moment.

Speaking on the occasion, Ayodhya Gupta lauded the efforts of Zuvi Preschool & Daycare in promoting cultural values and organizing such a meaningful event. He emphasized the importance of imparting traditional knowledge to the younger generation. Nishu Kiran, Co-founder of Zuvi Preschool & Daycare, extended heartfelt gratitude to the honorable guests, parents, and children for their enthusiastic participation. She praised the staff for their efforts in making the day memorable and reaffirmed Zuvi's commitment to celebrating cultural traditions and fostering community connections.

PM inaugurates much-awaited Sonamarg tunnel

Tours tunnel along with Union Ministers, J&K LG, CM, others



RAJIV

SRINAGAR, Jan 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the much-awaited Z-Morh tunnel at Sonamarg.

The Prime Minister inaugurated the tunnel this afternoon along with Union Ministers Nitin Jairam Gadkari, Dr Jitendra Singh, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and other officials.

The inauguration of Sonamarg Tunnel was done from the East Portal.

After inauguration, the Prime Minister along with the other Union Ministers and J&K LG and Chief Minister toured the tunnel. After touring the tunnel, they will directly drive towards the main venue.

Pertinently, the 6.5-kilometer-long Z-Morh Tunnel is poised to make Sonamarg

accessible from Srinagar year-round, a feat previously hindered by harsh winter conditions.

Work on the Z-Morh Tunnel began in May 2015 but faced delays after Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS), the initial contractor, ceased operations in 2018 due to financial challenges. The project was subsequently retendered in 2019 and awarded to APCO Infratech in

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Z-Morh tunnel inauguration: CM's Advisor says Sonamarg set to become best ski-destination

Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Jan 13: Ahead of the inauguration of the much-awaited Z-Morh tunnel, Nasir Aslam Wani, Advisor to Chief Minister on Monday said that Sonamarg can emerge as the best ski-destination.

Talking to the reporters, Wani said that the local people from Sonamarg were dreaming about this tunnel for a long time and the tourism players too were waiting for this project.

"With this inauguration, Sonamarg will become the all-season tourist destination," he said, adding that the slopes here are best and has the potential to become the best ski-resort.

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PM Modi led Govt wiped out terrorism from J&K, turned it into real paradise: LG Sinha



Top News Report

SONAMARG, Jan 13: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for transforming Jammu and Kashmir into a "real paradise" and eradicating terrorism from the region.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the 6.5-km-long Z-Morh tunnel in Central Kashmir, LG Sinha highlighted the developmental strides J&K has achieved under PM Modi's leadership.

"The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has wiped out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir and has turned it into a real paradise. Peace, progress, and prosperity have become the hallmarks of his regime," said LG Sinha.

LG Sinha termed the inauguration of the Z-Morh tunnel, built at a cost of Rs 2,700 crore, as a "game changer" for the region. He described the (Z-Morh) tunnel as a "Bhagya Rekha" (lifecycle) for Jammu and Kashmir, enabling year-

round connectivity to the picturesque Sonamarg.

"This is a day of immense pride. This tunnel will boost connectivity and usher in a new era of economic opportunities for the region," said LG Sinha. He also announced that the much-awaited Zojila tunnel, which will connect Sonamarg with Ladakh, is set to be completed by 2026.

He said, "Ek ek kar ke, aapke khwabon ko saakar karne ka kaam PM Modi ne kiya hai (One by one, PM Modi has turned your dreams into reality)," LG Sinha said. Expressing confidence in J&K's bright future, LG Sinha said, "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jammu and Kashmir will achieve new heights of development and prosperity."

Highlighting PM

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PM Modi meets construction workers, engineers

Top News Report

SONAMARG, Jan 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday commended the efforts of engineers and construction workers who worked relentlessly to make Z-Morh Tunnel a reality.

PM Modi after inaugurating the tunnel inter-

acted with the construction workers and engineers, who were a part of this project.

The workers clicked photographs with PM Modi and briefed him about how this important tunnel was constructed. Earlier PM Modi arrived in Sonamarg in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district and dedicated

the nation much awaited Z-Morh Tunnel.

Union Ministers Nitin Jairam Gadkari, Dr Jitendra Singh, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and other dignitaries were present on the occasion. Pertinently, the 6.5-kilometer-long

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CM Omar pitches for Statehood restoration in presence of PM Modi

Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Jan 13: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday urged the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fulfill his promises vis-à-vis restoring the statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

In his inaugural address after the inauguration of Sonamarg tunnel, Omar Abdullah praised PM Modi for fulfilling two of his promises out of three made

during his speech in Srinagar after assuming the office last year for the third straight term.

"The two promises including the 'Delhi ki Doori' as well as the conducting assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir have been fulfilled by you," Omar told PM Modi during his address and stated that the third promise of restoring the statehood is not been fulfilled yet and the people here

including these media persons usually ask him the question related to it. "My heart believes that the promise will also be fulfilled by you soon," he said.

Earlier, the Chief Minister began his inaugural speech while remembering the seven persons including a doctor who were killed in an attack at Gagangear in October last year.

The seven persons

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Statehood for J&K should be restored at the earliest: Nasir Aslam Wani

Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Jan 13: Nasir Aslam Wani, Advisor to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, expressed hope for the early restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking to reporters after the inauguration of the Z-Morh tunnel by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Wani said, "Jammu and Kashmir

should not have been downgraded to a Union Territory. We are hopeful that statehood is restored at the earliest. The dual control system is creating more harm than good, and we want it to end soon."

The newly inaugurated Z-Morh tunnel, which will provide all-weather connectivity to Sonamarg, was lauded by Wani as a significant step in boosting tourism in the

region. "The tunnel will transform Sonamarg into an all-weather destination, benefiting the local economy and tourism sector," he added.

The demand for the restoration of statehood has been a key political issue since Jammu and Kashmir was reorganized into two Union Territories in August 2019. Leaders across the political spectrum

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EDITORIAL

Infrastructure Development

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has witnessed transformative changes in its infrastructure development, especially post-2019, when its special status was abrogated under Article 370. The financial year 2024-25 represents a critical period in this journey, with significant investments, policy shifts, and project implementations aimed at propelling the region toward economic prosperity and improved living standards.

Improved road and highway networks have been central to infrastructure development in J&K. Projects such as the four-laning of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway have reduced travel time and enhanced connectivity between the valley and the rest of the country. The completion of the Zojila Tunnel, set to be the longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia, has further ensured year-round connectivity between Ladakh and the Kashmir Valley. Additionally, the Bharatmala Pariyojana, a flagship highway development initiative, continues to bring seamless access to remote areas in the region. These projects not only facilitate the movement of goods and people but also attract investments by improving logistical ease.

Railway connectivity has been a cornerstone of J&K's infrastructure development. The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), nearing completion in 2024-25, stands as a testament to engineering excellence in the challenging Himalayan terrain. Once operational, it will provide all-weather rail connectivity, transforming the economic and social fabric of the region. The Anji Khad Bridge, India's first cable-stayed railway bridge, is another milestone that underscores the government's commitment to integrating J&K with the national railway network. These projects promise to boost tourism and create employment opportunities, especially in areas that were previously isolated. J&K's abundant hydropower potential has been leveraged to meet the energy demands of the region and contribute to the national grid. Projects such as the Ratle Hydropower Project and Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Project are set to enhance the power generation capacity significantly. These developments aim to make the region energy-sufficient and foster industrial growth. Solar power initiatives are also gaining traction, with plans to establish large-scale solar parks. These projects are not only environmentally sustainable but also align with India's broader goals of renewable energy transition. Smart City projects in Srinagar and Jammu have gained momentum, with investments in public infrastructure, waste management systems, and urban mobility solutions. The development of cycling tracks, pedestrian pathways, and smart traffic management systems has enhanced the quality of urban living. Moreover, initiatives like the Srinagar Riverfront Project aim to rejuvenate urban spaces while preserving the cultural and ecological heritage of the region. Housing schemes under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) have also contributed to improved living conditions in urban and semi-urban areas. Tourism, a vital economic driver in J&K, has received a significant boost through enhanced infrastructure. Development of eco-tourism projects, new trekking routes, and adventure sports facilities have been key focus areas. The government has also prioritized the development of border tourism circuits, showcasing the natural beauty and cultural richness of lesser-known destinations. The establishment of more hotels, resorts, and homestay facilities, coupled with improved accessibility, has led to record-breaking tourist footfalls. Pilgrimage tourism, particularly to shrines like Vaishno Devi and Amarnath, continues to thrive due to better infrastructure and security arrangements. The education and healthcare sectors in J&K have seen substantial investments. New medical colleges, AIIMS campuses, and specialized healthcare facilities are being developed, ensuring better healthcare access for the population. On the education front, the establishment of more universities and skill development centers aims to empower the youth with modern knowledge and employment opportunities.

Despite significant progress, challenges remain, including difficult terrain, security concerns, and climate vulnerabilities. However, the government's proactive policies, public-private partnerships, and focus on sustainable development are addressing these hurdles effectively.

The year 2024-25 marks a pivotal phase in J&K's infrastructure growth story, setting the stage for long-term socio-economic transformation. With sustained efforts, the region is poised to emerge as a model of development, contributing meaningfully to India's growth narrative.

Duggar Festival of Lohri-Festival of Bonfire

By: Omkar Dattatray

India is a land of fairs, festivals and festivities and Jammu and Kashmir is no exception to this. The people of Duggar Pradesh celebrate many festivals and the festival of Lohri is one such festival celebrated by the Duggar's. Lohri is the festival celebrated in the whole of north India and the Duggar's of Jammu celebrate the festival of Lohri with great pomp and show and take pride in celebration of this festival and it is the festival of bonfire, traditions and rituals. Lohri is celebrated one day before Makar Sankranti and it is considered the harbinger of spring season and the people of northern India including Jammu take the festival of Lohri as the beginning of spring season and they feel that climate change takes place from the day of Lohri. It is especially celebrated by the children and they take great enjoyment in the celebration of Lohri and make merry and dance. The children and the young people go from door to door and seek offerings from the householders and the people as well offer money to those going from door to door. People sing and dance to the tunes of the drums and take great delight in the celebration of Lohri. The importance of Lohri festival and the folklore connected with it is very great in Dogri culture, tradition and rituals and duggar's attach much importance to the celebration of Lohri festival. The festivities of Lohri remain at the evening before Makarsankranti. On the evening of Lohri all the members of the family assemble around a fire and offer some dry fruits to the fire and make merry and dance. Lohri is essentially a harvest festival mostly celebrated in Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu. People and in Jammu Duggars celebrate it with great fun, excitement

and enthusiasm. The customs and traditions may slightly vary from one region to another but the basically all of them are attached to the harvesting of the Rabi crops. The people of north India including Jammuites celebrate the festival of Lohri as the end of winter solstice. The harvested fields and front yards are lit up with flames of bonfire and people sit around it and engage into singing, dancing and merry making. Lohri signifies the fertility of joy of life. People sit around the bonfire and throw puffed rice, sweets and popcorn into flames. In the morning children of the locality gather in their new dress and go to every home singing songs of praise of Dulla Bhatti or Robin Hood of Punjab. Dulla Bhatti used to rob the rich people and distribute the wealth among the poor and underprivileged. People give the children money, sweets, peanuts etc. The evening is known as Lohri loot. The children sing "Dabba bhara ya leera da, A ghar ameera da" which means - "Box filled with cloths strips, this house is rich. And those who weren't that generous had to face a bunch of kids chanting the following. "Hukka bahai Hukka - A ghar bhukka meaning - "Hukka oh! Hukka!" this house is full of miseries. "As the sun sets in the evening, huge bonfires are set and lit up in the harvested fields or in front of house. For that purpose, logs of wood are piled up together and the fire is lit. The significance and legends about Lohri festival are many. Lohri is the first of India's rich and diverse mélange of festivals. It is celebrated with great pomp and show as well as energy across different regions of the country and in Jammu it is celebrated in a special manner in the new calendar year. In north India and predominately Punjab the Lohri festival is associated with harvesting season. The significance and legends about Lohri festival are many

and these link the festival to the Punjab region. It is believed by many that festival marks the passing of winter solstice. Lohri marks the end of winter and is a traditional welcome of longer days and the sun's journey to northern hemisphere by the people in the northern region of the Indian subcontinent. It is observed the night before Magi, also known as Makar Sankranti and according to the solar part of the lunisolar Vikrami calendar it typically falls on the same date every year that is 13th January. Lohri is an official holiday in Punjab, Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. The festival of Lohri is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims and this strengthens the communal harmony and exhibits our unity in diversity. In northern India and predominately Punjab this harvesting festival begins the festivities of spring. The festival of Lohri is said to commemorate Dulha Bhatti's bravery and his resistance against the Mughal rulers. As already said the auspicious festival of Lohri is celebrated by Punjabies, Haryanvis, Dogras of Jammu with great joy. The children and young people specially celebrate this festival by singing and dancing to the tunes of the drum beats. Children make merry and enjoy by dancing round the bonfires and offering rice, peanuts and Raveri to the fire. In Punjab Pakistan, it is not observed at official level, however Hindus and Sikhs and some Muslims observe the festival in rural Punjab and the cities Faisalabad and Lahore. Mohammad Tariq, former director of Faisalabad Arts Council believes it is important to keep the festival alive as Lohri is celebrated in Pakistan, Punjab and in Indian Punjab. The history of Lohri, a seasonal festival of north India is as old as that of story of Indus valley civilization itself. The festival of Lohri in fact marks the

end of winter and the coming of spring and the new year. The fires lit at night, the hand warming the song and dance and the coming together of an otherwise atomized community are only some of the features of this festival. The Lohri of north India coincides with Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Makar Sankranti in Bengal, Magha Bihu in Assam, Tai Pongal in Kerala, all celebrated on the auspicious day of Makar Sankranti. There are some interesting socio-cultural and folk legends connected with Lohri. The ancient significance of the festival is it being a winter crop season celebration and is linked to Punjab region. A popular folklore links Lohri to the tale of Dulla Bhatti a Rajput tribe. The central theme of many Lohri songs is the legend of Dulla Bhatti whose father was a Zamindar who lived in Punjab during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar. He was regarded as a hero in Punjab, for rescuing Punjab girls from the tyranny of foreign rulers. Therefore the festival of Lohri is also an occasion for remembering Dulla Bhatti and his bravery. In brief Traditionally it is a community bonfire where people gather around it, sing songs, munch on festive delights and make merry. In brief, the festival of Lohri and the Dogra culture, customs, rituals and roots should be kept alive and thus the festival should be celebrated in a befitting manner so that it will speak about the great culture and it should be transmitted to future generations.

(The author is a columnist, social, KP activist & Freelance writer)

Keeping balance between China & US: Tough times for Yunus' B'desh Columnists

By: Pradeep C. Nair

A recent article in Pratham Alo, a Bangladeshi English daily, headlined "Touhid-Wang Meeting on 21 January: Issues to Gain Priority", is telling on the paradoxical situation that Bangladesh is caught up in now, and raises question about the longevity and legality of the Muhammad Yunus government. Recently, Mr Yunus' interim government announced elections would be held in the country within 18 months. However, will Mr Yunus be able to carry out the multiple reforms that he has been promising, before that? The fact that reforms by a government that is not elected and lacks constitutional legitimacy is also not lost on anyone. The article begins by announcing a four-day visit by Bangladesh's foreign affairs adviser Touhid Hossain to China from January 21 to 24 and then proceeds to state that "Bangladesh needs to proceed with caution since China is laying emphasis on geopolitics. It is undeniable that the West, the US in particular, has expansive support and cooperation for the present government. So, it would not be prudent for Bangladesh to take any such step that may go against the country's interests". The first major aspect this statement highlights is the keenness of the Chinese to have the Bangladeshi official on their soil the day Donald Trump takes over as US President (it will still be January 20 in the US when Mr Hossain meets officials in Beijing on January 21). China has thus wasted

no time to work on its strategic interests in Bangladesh. The second aspect is the tacit admission in Bangladesh of the role of the US or America's "Deep State" in orchestrating the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government. Sheikh Hasina herself had called out the role of the US in her ouster, but the US had denied the allegations. The statement of the US was one that not many believed anyway. However, Mr Trump is a Yunus baiter since Grameen America, that Mr Yunus chaired in 2016, gave almost \$250,000 to the Clinton Foundation when Hillary Clinton contested for President against Mr Trump. Mr Hossain's visit to Beijing is at the invitation of Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister. During the visit, China is likely to have geopolitics uppermost on its mind and use the changed political circumstances (and the consequent anti-India sentiments) in Bangladesh to forge closer ties. After Mr Yunus' takeover in August last year, 12 Chinese companies have invested \$210 million in Bangladesh, which is much higher than at any other time in five months! China wants to use this opportunity to build closer relations with Bangladesh by making it a zero-sum game against India. Thereby also hangs a tale that despite a US-supported administration now in Dhaka, the Chinese have no qualms on capitalising on the opportunity! Earlier, Mr Yunus had met the Chinese foreign minister on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September last year, when they discussed matters of "bilateral and stra-

tegic interest. It is disconcerting, however, that India-Bangladesh relations have come under stress since the political changeover in Bangladesh. There have been a series of provocations for India that includes attacks on Hindus, vandalism and desecration of temples (both claimed as exaggerated by Mr Yunus and his officials), revival of the Jamaat-e-Islami and other radicals, seeking the extradition of Sheikh Hasina, threats to "annex" parts of India by a close Yunus aide, seeking "strategic ties" and "resolution of the 1971 grievances" with Pakistan, the docking of MV Yuan Xiang Fa Zhan, a Chinese-owned merchant vessel with Pakistani cargo (part of which was questionable cargo), which was a first since 1971, easing the visa regime on Pakistan citizens, agreeing to a Pakistani proposal for joint training of the Pakistan and Bangladesh armies in Bangladesh, seeking the supply of Pakistani Hatf-II short-range missiles, increasing the import of ammunition from Pakistan, deployment of Bayraktar TB2 drones on the Indian border, reports of Bangladesh security agencies aiding the formation of two new ethnic militant outfits in Tripura, the arrest of Chinmoy Krishna Das (the Iskcon priest), attempts to rewrite history by downplaying India's role in the liberation of Bangladesh, threats to downsize India's trade surplus, alleging that power tariff rates of Indian companies as too high, are among those that stand out.

At a seminar recently in Bangladesh, Mr Hossain had stressed the importance of

establishing seamless connectivity between Bangladesh and China through Myanmar. The current crisis in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, Bangladesh's only entry point into Myanmar) and the Rohingya crisis in Rakhine state makes that aspiration almost impossible. It is also interesting to note that during a recent interaction with the media, Mr Hossain had described his forthcoming visit to China as part of Dhaka's ongoing efforts to maintain balanced relations with China, alongside the United States and India. However, will Mr Hossain's four-day-long visit to China balance Bangladesh's relations with the US or worsen it under Mr Trump's watch, given his disdain for both Mr Yunus and China? Only time will tell. Are the multiple provocations by the Yunus government actually balancing relations with India? That looks improbable. What is appreciable is the diplomatic and strategic restraint that India has maintained despite all the provocative acts and statements that have come out of Dhaka. That is statesmanship at its best. The undeniable fact is that geography will have the final say in India-Bangladesh relations in times to come is something all governments in Bangladesh will have to come to terms with. The Yunus government, meanwhile, will have its hands full deciding between China (which is more than willing to resurrect the Bangladesh economy, obviously with future costs for Dhaka) and the US (which brought Mr Yunus to power in the first place) before its time runs out.

Nambardar Diggar-led delegation calls on Lt Governor Brig Mishra

Top News Report

LEH, Jan 13: A delegation from Diggar, Nubra led by Nambardar, Tsewang Dorje, called on the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd), at the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat. Secretary, PWD/PHE/GAD, Michael D'Souza, IAS; Director, Animal Husbandry, Dr Ismail; Director, Sheep Husbandry, Dr Iftikhar and Assistant Director, Tourism, Leh, Padma Angmo, JKAS, were present in the meeting.

Tsewang Dorje informed various issues related to the village, including the need to establish a Cultural and Tourism Centre in the village to boost tourism activities and increase the footfall of tourists;



ists; the need to improve telecommunication connectivity in the village; the need to address the issue of providing potable drinking water through Jal Jeevan Mission; the need to establish a Public Gathering Centre where the villagers can converge and indulge in livelihood activities; the need for an Animal Treatment Centre

at the Village for the treatment of cattle and livestock, particularly yaks, etc.

The LG asked AD Tourism Leh to prepare a detailed plan for the promotion of tourism in Diggar village, including homestays, tourism activities such as rock climbing, daily cultural activities and the inclusion of the village in the tourism circuit

on the lines of Disket, Hunder and Turtuk so that the villages can benefit and earn their livelihood from tourism activities.

He also highlighted the need to improve connectivity in the village through better roads. He asked the villagers to set up a Dairy Cooperative and indulge in cheese-making activities, for which the UT Administration would provide necessary assistance.

The LG asked the villagers to bring the raw pashmina wool to the Pashmina Dehairing Plant so that the villagers could get better rates for the wool. He asked Director, Sheep Husbandry to ensure zero mortality of pashmina kids in the next winter season by improving the shelter enclosures in which the pashmina kids are kept.

AAP will make a historic mandate with a thumping majority in Delhi: Gurmeet

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: AAP leader and social activist Gurmeet Singh Baaghi has expressed strong confidence in his party's performance in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections. He predicts that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will secure a historic mandate, breaking all previous records with an overwhelming majority. According to Baaghi, the people of Delhi have immense faith in AAP's governance, which prioritizes public welfare and efficient delivery of services. He contrasts this with other parties, accusing them of divisive politics and failing to fulfill promises made to the electorate.

Baaghi emphasized that AAP has consistently focused on delivering results. He pointed out that citizens can easily identify multiple projects implemented by AAP, unlike other political parties whose contributions



remain vague in public memory. He accused opposition parties, particularly the BJP and Congress, of making false promises about employment, education, and development, only to abandon these commitments post-elections.

Recalling AAP's stellar performance in previous elections, Baaghi highlighted the party's dominance in 2015, where it won 67 out of 70 seats, and in 2020, where it secured 62 seats. He believes that AAP is poised to surpass these achievements in the next election. According to him, this election will be a

contest between AAP's "politics of work" and the "politics of abuse" by others.

Baaghi also praised the dedication of AAP workers, stating that they are prepared with full enthusiasm and strength to achieve victory. He reiterated AAP's commitment to inclusive growth, respect for citizens' aspirations, and governance free from corruption. He further claimed that AAP has stayed away from divisive politics, focusing instead on meeting public expectations through hard work and commitment.

Baaghi stated that the people of Delhi are overwhelmingly in favor of AAP, which he believes will return to power with a historic mandate. He expressed optimism that the party's vision of equitable growth and citizen-centric governance is resonating not only in Delhi but across the nation.

Claim by National Conference of following Gandhi's vision is false & frivolous: Brig Gupta

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: The result of the recently held assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir proved beyond doubt that the voting was not done on regional basis but religious basis because of the successfully played communal card by National Conference.

While to the contrary its leaders often proclaim to be following Gandhi Ji's vision. It is mere rhetoric and much far from truth retorted Brig Anil Gupta, Spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party in a press release issued today. Adding further Brig Gupta asserted that Gandhi Ji was a firm believer of inclusivity and secularism, the two ideals NC never adhered to right since its inception. Gandhi Ji's name is being exploited by the NC leadership to remain politically relevant outside the Kashmir Valley. "The Maharaja was

called as a 'Kafir' by Abdul Qadir in his fiery speech in 1939 where Sheikh Abdullah was the Stage Secretary. The Quit Kashmir call given by the later in 1946 was manifestation of the same ideology because Sheikh wanted the Hindu Dogra ruler to leave Kashmir Valley, a Muslim majority area. The demand was not to relinquish the throne. Sheikh was interested only in Kashmir Valley and had neither any interest nor any stake in the rest of the princely state," alleged Brig Gupta.

Elaborating further Brig Gupta said that the secular claim of NC got busted when Sheikh refused the Sikh refugees from Muzaffarabad and nearby areas to settle in Kashmir Valley. It was further exposed when the Uyghur & Balti Muslim refugees were granted citizenship while the Hindu refugees from West Pakistan were refused

the same. The icing on the cake was the refusal of NC to insert the word secular in the then State's Constitution while it was inserted in the Indian Constitution.

Exclusivity has been the hallmark of NC politics. Why was the state administrative service and radio services named KAS and Radio Kashmir and not JKAS and Radio Jammu Kashmir questioned the NC leadership? NC's love for Gandhi Ji is out of compulsion and not conviction asserted Brig Gupta.

Reminding NC of its disrespect for Gandhi Ji, Brig Gupta questioned as to why the installation of the statue of Gandhi Ji in the newly constructed high court complex in Srinagar was cancelled on October 2, 1988 by the then NC-Congress government? Not only that the person who spearheaded the movement against installation, an active member

of NC, was later given a ticket for the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat in 1989. Not even a little finger was raised by the NC or Congress leaders who now shed crocodile tears on the ideals of Gandhi ji. It was only after the abrogation of 370 that BJP government ensured installation of the statues of Gandhi ji in the High Court and the Secretariat in Srinagar claimed Brig Gupta.

Quoting an example of exclusivity, in 1985 a few civil servants floated a cooperative society with the aim of meeting their bona fide need of housing since they were serving the state.

NC legislators opposed the registration of the society on the plea that non-state subjects could not acquire residential plots despite them rendering life-long service in the state. They were accused of a conspiracy to upset the population balance. The

32 members belonging to IAS and IPS dissolved the society in disgust. It displayed NC's apathy against the representatives of the Centre and exposed the hollow claims of inclusivity.

Brig Gupta further exposed the hypocrisy of NC by questioning as to why it didn't accept applicability of the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse Act), 1988 enacted by the Centre.

The situation at that time demanded that it should be made applicable in J&K since fundamentalism and secession was being preached assiduously than from the pulpits of mosques here. Dr Farooq Abdullah's government turned deaf ears to the threats being given to the Kashmiri Hindus and yet it claims to be secular. Undoubtedly, the claims made by NC of following Gandhi Ji's vision are false and frivolous.

Deep resentment over ticket being cut of Valmiki and Dalit stalwart leaders in Delhi assembly elections

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: National Valmiki Sena founder Surendra Chandel called a meeting of the society today and while talking to the journalists who had come there, he said that there is a lot of resentment in the society over the ticket being cut by BJP of our Bharatiya Janata Party Scheduled Caste Front state president Mohanlal Gihara in Delhi assembly elections. Similarly, the prominent leaders of our Dalit soci-

ety's Valmiki community were also not given tickets, including Manoj and Naresh Kumar Valmiki from Kundli assembly, Meenakshi Sood from Patel Nagar assembly, Harishankar Dhikolia from Seemapuri, Deepak Valmiki Basu from Ambedkar Nagar assembly, Lukhar are going, whereas if seen, 40 percent of the population in Delhi is from Scheduled Caste Dalit community. And Scheduled Caste Front BJP's State President Mohan Lal Gihara is an honest



and decent person who is always dedicated to the party and his image in Delhi is very good among the Dalit community and the people of Dalit community consider him their ideal.

National Valmiki Sena founder Surendra Chandel demanded from the country's proud Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah that 40% of the population living in Delhi is from Dalit

community, we should not be neglected like Kejriwal, Kejriwal government also neglected our community, our organization demands that our Delhi State President Mohanlal Gihara and the prominent leaders of Valmiki community should be given tickets.

He said that the Dalit community of Delhi was with the Bharatiya Janata Party yesterday and will remain with it in future too, just we should not be neglected.

Dogra Brahman Prathinidhi Sabha celebrates Lohri



Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: The festival of Lohri was celebrated by Dogra Brahman Prathinidhi Sabha Parade Jammu today with traditional fervour and gaiety a well-attended religious function was held in the premises of Sabha under the Chairmanship of Ved Parkash Sharma President DBPS Jammu. Sat CA President UT BJP J&K, Chief Guest while Jammu East MLA Yudhvir Sethi were the Guest of Honour on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion former Minister Priya Sethi, NMC President Subash Shastri, former Bureaucrats Sujanya Sharma, former Chairman J&K Rakesh Kumar Chhibber and representatives of various social reli-

gious organizations said that "This is a tradition of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to celebrate all the festivals of all the religions and with great respect. Such types of festivals strengthen the bond of the brotherhood among the people."

The traditional fire was lit and various nuts and sweets were offered. The enthusiastic workers performed 'Bhangra' on the tunes of drum beats and congratulated each other on the occasion.

Among others who paid their tribute included Pt. V.M. Magotra, N.C. Sharma, M.L. Sharma, Satyanand Sharma, Former Deputy Mayor B.S. Baloria, Former Deputy Commissioner B.S. Jamwal, M.L. Padha, Pt. Barita Ram, Shiv Ram Sharma, Jagan Nath Sharma, Ramesh Sharma, K.L. Sharma, Davinder Sharma (Baboo), S.S. Baru, Gurdass Sharma, Sat Paul Sharma, Raman Sharma, Som Nath Sharma, Rajesh Bargota, Prem Balotra, Ritiz Khajuria, Sanjeev Kerni, Ramesh Sharma, Sunil Sharma, Krishan Lal Sharma, Jagdish Dogra, Vansh Raina, Ganesh Kumar Yash Pal, Ved Parkash Padha, also threw light on the importance of the day.

IEI, Jammu Centre celebrates Lohri



Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: The Institution of Engineers (India), Jammu Local Centre, celebrated the vibrant festival of Lohri with enthusiasm at the Institutional Complex, Sector-3, Channi Himmat, here. The event, marked by active participation from its members, turned out to be a joyous and memorable occasion.

The celebration commenced with a traditional bonfire, symbolizing the spirit of Lohri and the joy of the harvest season. Members gathered around the bonfire, enjoying the warmth and the festive ambience.

Er. Anil Verma, FIE, Chairman of the Jammu Local Centre, addressed the

gathering, emphasizing the importance of cultural festivals in fostering unity and strengthening social bonds.

He highlighted Lohri as a festival that signifies the end of winter and the arrival of longer days, bringing prosperity and happiness to all.

To enhance the festive spirit, traditional snacks like peanuts, popcorn, and sweets were distributed among the attendees, creating a warm and cheerful atmosphere.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Er. Avneet Gupta, MIE, Honorary Secretary of the Jammu Local Centre. He expressed gratitude to all participants and organizers for their efforts in making the celebration a grand success.

Army organises awareness lecture on National Youth Day at Budhal

Top News Report

RAJOURI, Jan 13: The Indian Army conducted a lecture on National Youth Day at Budhal, District Rajouri, to inspire and empower the local youth.

The event was held to commemorate the birth anniversary of

Swami Vivekananda, a renowned philosopher and spiritual leader.

The lecture aimed to promote awareness about the importance of education, skill development, and national service among the youth.

It also highlighted the significance of Swami Vivekananda's teach-

ings and their relevance in today's world.

The Indian Army's initiative to conduct awareness lectures on National Youth Day demonstrates its commitment to empowering the youth and promoting national development. Similar events have been organized by the



Indian Army in the past, including lectures on

National Unity Day and Farmers' Day.

Lohri hai, Lohri hai!

From those in the corridors of power to the performers on screen, Lohri is a day to light a bonfire, don traditional attire and gorge on sumptuous delicacies

Dressed in the finest Phulkaris, gajjak and rewaris passed around the bonfire and dancing to the tunes of Sundar Mundriye, the very first festival of the year, Lohri, spells new beginnings, new hopes and happy times!

A Punjabi, who grew up all over the country given her father's postings, for IAS officer Sakshi Sawhney, Lohri has been a day to celebrate not just with bonfire and sweets, but also to ensure creating an environment of equal opportunity for all genders. Calling Punjab home, as she is from the Punjab cadre, the DC Amritsar shares, "Lohri is indeed special in Punjab. While mungphali, rewari, gajjak and til bhugga have been part of celebrations, here in Amritsar I have discovered the magic of kha-joor—that's only made for the 15 days around Lohri." Made with basic ingredients like flour, ghee, sugar and then deep fried in oil, kha-joor has been a famous Amritsari Lohri special. While traditionally Lohri has been celebrated for new-born boys, Sawhney says, "We are two sisters. Not only was Lohri celebrated for us, but our parents also guided us to reach out for true happiness. We ensure the same for our daughter." Lohri is also about precious Phulkaris and shiny juttis! "Here



in Amritsar, and also while I was in Patiala, self-help groups are making amazing hand-made Phulkaris. I get my dupattas from them and also urge others to look out for the self-help groups in their area and promote them," says Sawhney, who also makes it a point to visit orphanages and old-age homes to mark the day.

Childhood memories Kanwardeep Kaur, SSP, Chandigarh, fondly remembers the childhood practice of singing songs, visiting the neighbourhood, demanding Lohri and returning rich, but over the years things have changed. "Our childhood was fun. I would accompany kids in the neighbourhood and they were so creative with the songs," says Kanwardeep Kaur. Over the decades, now Lohri is a family celebration. "We gather around a bonfire and enjoy treats," shares the cop, who makes sure she has a serving of gajrela

along with other delicacies on the day.

Warmth of connection Avneet Kaur Sidhu, Zonal AIG (CID), Bathinda, remembers Lohri as one of her favourite festivals while growing up. A huge family coming together around a bonfire, singing songs and inventive games with loads of food passed around, each moment was special. Every Lohri, she is trying to recreate all those times.

"Lohri is family time. More the merrier," says Sidhu. While dressing up is saved for social occasions, for her it's all about being comfortable and cozy in the company of her loved ones. "Lohri for me reflects warmth of connection. In the world today, that's fast being replaced by camera clicks and the race to upload pictures, I try to treasure all that I can from the times gone by."

Colleagues as family We catch SSP Faridkot Pragya Jain right after an encounter with

category one gangsters' aides and recovery of arms. The young girl from Delhi, much in love with Patiala salwars and loose kurtis, has taken to her khaki attire with aplomb. A strong votary of strict policing, most of her Lohris are celebrated in the police lines with her colleagues, who are like family. "Lohri is also the day to visit old-age homes and orphanages; kuch unki sun lete hain, kuh kah lete hain," says Jain, who takes out time to enjoy gajrela and mungphalis on the day!

Proud Punjabi Being the first festival of the year, it holds a special place as it means a New Year, a new hope. My family and I light a bonfire and pray. Later, we munch on lots of mungphali, rewari, gajjak, popcorn and the dinner usually includes makkhi roti with saron ka saag, which is the season's special. Like every year, I'm going to be celebrating Lohri with my family in Punjab. For

me any festival is incomplete without wearing ethnic clothes. I am a proud Punjabi. When it comes to Punjabi suits, I'm a fan of the authentic Patiala salwar kameez. I wish everyone a Lohri filled with happiness, joy and prosperity.

— Ankita Sharma, actress.

Ethnic flavour is her preference Lohri brings great energy, cheer and celebration for me. It's an occasion to get together with the family and loved ones, and spend time with the bonfire. While we are grooving to the thumping beats of the dhol and adding memories, we also reflect and are ready to bid adieu to winter. We thank God for the blessings and good times, being dressed up in the traditional attire and munching on Lohri specials. This year, I am celebrating with my family in Mohali. I will dress up in traditional attire and look forward to dancing on Punjabi

beats around a bonfire. I shall also prepare kheer for the family. I have invitations for first Lohri celebrations of the newborns from near and dear ones. It is substantially significant for me to dress up in ethnic clothes for Lohri as it makes me feel complete, ready and vibrant for the festival. I also have fond memories of dressing up in the ethnic outfits during the Lohri celebrations during my graduation and Masters years in Panjab University, Chandigarh. I am looking forward to sharing the joy of the festival with the needy and underprivileged people through my Dream Buds Foundation. — Diljot, actress.

Faunting his best Lohri means togetherness with friends and family, gorging on mungphali, rewari, gajjak; dancing and singing Sundar Mundriye. I like to flaunt the best of my clothes on Lohri. It charges me up and

motivates me to explore more. I appreciate that a lot of people are celebrating the Lohris of newborn girls too, signifying that the festival is equally important for a girl as it is for a boy. — Kanwalpreet Singh, actor.

Treasure trove of memories

Being a Sardarni and having been born and brought up in Punjab, Lohri holds a huge significance for me. On the eve, I sit around a bonfire with family and sing songs. During the day, I like to help underprivileged kids in whatever way possible. Now that I am the brand ambassador of Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan, I have more opportunity to visit various destitute homes and de-addiction centres to help those in need. I usually dress up according to the occasion, but Lohri gives me an opportunity to don my original Punjabi costumes. Ethnic-wear always reminds me of my grandma's

sandook (box). Whenever I used to open it, I was fascinated with her beautiful collection. I have treasured some of them. — Samaira Sandhu, Actress.

All about vibes Like everywhere, I celebrate Lohri with a bonfire, good food and dance! When in Chandigarh, the flavour is fully Punjabi while in Mumbai we have some events to attend or sometimes I am hosting. I will be taking to the stage at a Lohri event in Mumbai this time and inviting industry friends. Meanwhile, your outfit can make or break your vibe! Nothing can beat a classy simple kurta pyjama, but if you can experiment and carry Indo-Westerns with different colours, why not? Celebrate with your loved ones, make new friends and enjoy our culture to the fullest.

— Karan Singh Chhabra, Actor.

We are two sisters. Not only was Lohri celebrated for us, but our parents also guided us to reach out for true happiness. We ensure the same for our daughter. — Sakshi Sawhney, DC Amritsar

Lohri is family time for me. The festival reflects the warmth of connection. I try to treasure all that I can. — Avneet Kaur Sidhu, Zonal AIG (CID), Bathinda.

Preity Zinta on Los Angeles wildfires: I'm heartbroken by the devastation

Actor Preity Zinta, who is based out of Los Angeles, says she is safe but heartbroken by the devastation caused by the raging wildfires in the US city.

According to American media, the Los Angeles County medical examiner's office confirmed the death toll from the wildfires ravaging the area has risen to 16.

Since the fires first began on Tuesday just north of downtown Los Angeles, they have burned more than 12,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartment buildings, businesses, out-buildings and vehicles.

Zinta, who shares twins Jai and Gia with husband-financial analyst Gene Goodenough, in a note on X said she never thought she would live to see a day where fires would ravage neighbourhoods in Los Angeles.

"Friends & families either evacuated or put on high alert, ash descending from smoggy skies like snow & fear & uncertainty about what will happen if the wind does not calm down with toddlers and grandparents with us. I'm heartbroken at the devastation around us & grateful to god that we are safe as of now (sic)" she wrote.

The actor also praised the fire depart-



ment and firefighters for their efforts.

"My thoughts & prayers to people that are displaced & have lost everything in these fires. Hope the wind dies down soon & the fires are contained... Stay safe everyone (sic)" she added.

No cause has been determined for the largest fires, and early estimates indicate the wildfires could be the nation's costliest ever, reported US media.

Zinta will next be seen in Rajkumar Santoshi's directorial "Lahore 1947", produced by Aamir Khan Productions.

Ekta Kapoor pens birthday wish for Sakshi Tanwar on 52nd birthday

As Sakshi Tanwar turned 52, TV producer and director Ekta Kapoor penned a birthday note for the actress, who has worked in her shows such as "Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii" and "Bade Achhe Lagte Hain".

Ekta took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a selfie with Sakshi, who is widely recognised for her portrayal of Parvati Agarwal.

For the caption, Ekta wrote: "Happy Birthday Soxxy."

After her television debut in 1998 with "Albela Sur Mela", Sakshi gained fame for her role of Parvati in the soap opera, "Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii". She then essayed the role of Priya Kapoor, opposite Ram Kapoor, in "Bade Achhe Lagte Hain".

In the 2016 film "Dangal", she played Daya Kaur, wife of former wrestler Mahavir Singh Phogat, who trains his daughters to be world-class wrestlers against social odds.

Sakshi made a comeback on television with "Tyohaar Ki



Thaali". Manoj Bajpayee, Neena Gupta, Sakshi Tanwar come together for upcoming thriller 'Dial 100'.

Talking about Ekta, she is currently in Jaipur and recently shared a glimpse of her "2000-calories" filled yummy Rajasthani thali.

Ekta took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a glimpse of the delicacies she

gorged on. She revealed she had "dal baati choorma and ker sangri."

Upon getting her thali, Ekta was heard saying: "2000 calories guys. 2000 calories."

On January 9, Ekta shared some glimpses of her downtime with her family in Jaipur. The producer was accompanied by her son Ravie, and nephew Lakshya during the holiday.

She took to the stories section of the photo-sharing app and posted a short clip where Lakshya could be seen holding Ravie's hand while Ekta asked the two to smile for the camera.

Ekta had also welcomed "queen" Tabu on "Bhoot Bangla", which is being shot in Jaipur.

"Bhoot Bangla" starring Akshay Kumar promises to be a perfect blend of thrills and laughter, as the film explores the haunted house genre with a comedic twist.

Directed by Priyadarshan, "Bhoot Bangla" is produced by Shobha Kapoor and Ekta Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms and Akshay Kumar's production house, Cape of Good Films. The film is co-produced by Faara Sheikh and Vedant Baali. The story is written by Akash A Kaushik and screenplay by Rohan Shankar, Abilash Nair and Priyadarshan. The dialogues are by Rohan Shankar.

'Bhoot Bangla' is set to arrive in cinemas on April 2, 2026.

Aubrey Plaza deactivates Instagram account post husband's death

"The White Lotus" star Aubrey Plaza's Instagram account is no longer active after the death of her husband, writer-filmmaker Jeff Baena.

The 40-year-old actor's verified page has been deactivated as of Sunday, reported Page Six.

When one searches for Plaza's profile on the social media app, an error message reading, "Sorry, this page isn't available", appears.

While it is unclear exactly when the actor deactivated her account,

the development occurred after Baena died by suicide at his Los Angeles home. He was 47.

Plaza and Baena began dating in 2011 and tied the knot in a small wedding ceremony in 2021.

The actor featured in his directorial debut film, the 2014 zombie comedy "Life After Beth". She also appeared in Baena's other directorials "Joshy" (2016), 2017's "The Little Hours" and 2022's romantic comedy "Spin Me Round".



Will be back soon: 'Pushpa' star Rashmika shares update after injury

"Pushpa 2: The Rule" star Rashmika Mandanna has confirmed that she got injured in her leg recently, saying she hopes to return to work soon.

The 28-year-old actress, also known for films such as "Animal", "Bheeshma" and "Geetha Govindam", shared a post on Instagram on Saturday days after reports of her sustaining a leg injury started doing social media rounds.

"Injured myself in my sacred gym shrine," she wrote in the caption alongside a picture of her with a plaster on her right leg.

Mandanna apologised to the directors of her upcoming films "Thama", "Sikandar", and "Kubera" for the delay in the shoots due to her injury.

"Now I'm in 'hop mode' for the



next few weeks or months or god only knows, so seems like I'll be

hopping my way back to sets for Thama, Sikandar, and Kubera. To my directors sorry for the delay...I'll be back soon enough just making sure my legs are fit for action (or at least fit for hopping). In the meantime, if you need me...I'll be the one in the corner doing a highly advanced bunny hop workout. HOP HOP HOP..," she wrote.

The actress was last seen in Sukumar's "Pushpa 2", co-starring Allu Arjun. The film, a sequel to 2021's "Pushpa: The Rise", has become the highest grossing movie in India with a gross box office figure of Rs 1,831 crore, according to production banner Mythri Movie Makers.

The makers on Saturday released a 20-minute extended version of "Pushpa 2".

Maha kumbh | Very special day for those who cherish Bharatiya values, says PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (Agencies): As Maha Kumbh began in the holy city of Prayagraj on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described it as a very special day for those who cherish Indian values and culture, saying the massive religious event embodies India's timeless spiritual heritage.



"A very special day for crores of people who cherish Bharatiya values and culture! Maha Kumbh 2025 commences in Prayagraj, bringing together countless people in a sacred confluence of faith, devotion and culture. The Maha Kumbh embodies India's timeless spiritual heritage and celebrates faith and harmony," he said on X.

The prime minister said that he was happy to see Prayagraj abuzz, with countless people coming there, taking the holy dip and seeking blessings. He wished the pilgrims and tourists a wonderful stay.

Two teens die after falling into Kerala's Peechi Dam, two others critical

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Jan 13 (Agencies): An accident at the Peechi Dam reservoir in Thrissur, Kerala, claimed the lives of two 16-year-old girls, identified as Alina and Anne Grace.



Alina passed away early this morning (January 13) and Anne Grace died shortly after while undergoing treatment at the Jubilee Mission Hospital. Both were natives of Pattikkad. The condition of two other teenage girls, who also fell into the reservoir and sustained severe injuries, remained critical. A special medical team, including expert doctors from Thrissur Medical College, was continuing their treatment. The two others include

16-year-old Irene, from Pattikkad, and 12-year-old Nima, a native of Peechi. The accident occurred yesterday afternoon (January 12) when they fell into the reservoir while attempting to save another person, who had slipped and fallen into the water. Their rescue attempt turned disastrous when all four fell into the water. Anne Grace, Irene, and Alina were visiting their friend Hima, who is Nima's sister, to attend the festival at Peechi Church.

Maha Kumbh begins in UP's Prayagraj, nearly 60 lakh devotees take holy dip

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR (UP), Jan 13 (Agencies): A thick blanket of fog could not blur their vision, the cold breeze failed to reduce their energy levels and the bone-chilling water of river Ganga in Sangam area could not dampen their excitement, as lakhs of devotees from different walks of life took the holy dip on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima' on Monday.



The Maha Kumbh 2025 commenced here amid chants of bhajans and slogans.

The excitement was clearly visible in the Sangam area as the pilgrims and devotees — mostly in groups — walked towards river Ganga and took a holy dip chanting 'Jai Ganga Maiyya'.

"Till 9.30 am, around 60 lakh pilgrims had taken dip," the Uttar Pradesh government said in a statement.

The state government also said that a large number of devotees from India and abroad were seen at the Sangam Ghat.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended his greetings on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima'. "Where there is a confluence of cultures, there is also a confluence of faith and harmony. Maha Kumbh-2025 is giving the message of 'unity in diversity', Prayagraj is providing an encounter with Sanatan along with

the welfare of humanity," he said on X.

26-year-old Arjun Tripathi, a resident of Prayagraj, was among the devotees, who had turned up early to take a dip.

"I have come here with my wife Ranjana to take the dip. I have been visiting the Kumbh Mela and the Magh Mela on a regular basis since my childhood days. I feel completely satisfied and contented after taking the dip," he told agency.

Tripathi, who stays barely 7 kilometres from Sangam area, also said that he had asked his friends to accompany him and enjoy the first major 'snaan' of the Maha Kumbh but "they did not turn up probably due to cold weather".

Manjeet, a resident of Haryana's Rohtak, said that it was a "good experience".

"The water is good and taking a dip was a good experience. I will also be taking a dip on the occa-

sion of Makar Sankranti and will be staying here for a week," he said.

Lucknow resident Rajendra Prasad Tripathi, who came here with his wife Urmila, said that he "felt very nice after taking the dip". "May Maa Ganga bless all of us," he added.

Appreciating the arrangements made for the devotees, Kailash Narayan Shukla and Arvind Rajput from Rath in Hamirpur said that "good arrangements were made for the pilgrims and we had no problems in taking the holy dip".

Banda resident Ram Naresh Mishra, who accompanied them, said the "policemen were also present near the bathing area and we did not face any problem".

Neela Chatterjee, a resident of Kolkata, was initially a bit reluctant to take the dip, but she "felt happy and satisfied" after taking the dip. She said that she would be

going to Varanasi from Prayagraj.

'Jai Shri Ram', 'Har Har Mahadev' and 'Jai Ganga Maiyya' chants could be regularly heard as the pilgrims moved towards the bathing area in groups.

A group of women from Uttar Pradesh's Siddharth Nagar were busy singing folk songs before taking a dip on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima'.

The policemen were also seen guiding the pilgrims towards the bathing area.

A team of YouTubers from South Korea was seen capturing various shots of the Maha Kumbh on their cameras, while the tourists from Japan were seen taking information from local guides on witnessing the huge crowd here.

Sanatani devotees from various European countries, including Russia and the United States, not only witnessed this great festi-

val of faith and unity but also took a holy dip.

Christina from Spain was one among them. She praised this wonderful moment wholeheartedly on seeing the grandeur of the Maha Kumbh, the statement added.

A huge crowd from Prayagraj, and from other states like Bihar, Haryana, Bengal, Odisha, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh was seen at various ghats of Prayagraj, including Sangam, the statement said.

The people selling puja items and applying tilak to the devotees on the ghats near Sangam Mela area in Maha Kumbh Nagar appeared extremely busy.

Pradeep Upadhyay, who was seen applying tilak to the devotees, said that he did this work during the Kumbh in 2019 as well but people are more enthusiastic this time.

Echoing similar sentiments, Phulpur resident Santoshi Devi, who is running a retail shop of puja items in the Sangam area, said the Ganga Jal storage cans are in great demand.

The present edition of the Kumbh is being held after 12 years, though seers claim the celestial permutations and combinations for the event are taking place after 144 years, making the occasion even more auspicious.

No alliance can succeed if dialogue stops: Sanjay Raut

MUMBAI, Jan 13 (Agencies): Days after the Shiv Sena (UBT) announced to go solo in the local body polls in Maharashtra, party leader Sanjay Raut on Monday said no alliance can succeed if dialogue among its partners ceases.

alliance and the right to organisational growth as the major considerations for contesting solo, which raised a question mark over the opposition bloc's unity.

The Rajya Sabha member on Sunday asserted his party wants to go solo in the local bodies polls to strengthen its base and has never called for dissolution of the opposition INDIA bloc or the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which include the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP).

On Monday, while speaking about the INDIA bloc, Raut said, "It is the collective desire of all of us to progress further in the political landscape of this country. However, over the past few days, some of our alliance partners seem to have taken the



stance that communication has broken down. No alliance can succeed if dialogue is severed." He claimed the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance collapsed in 2019 because dialogue between the two ceased.

"Lack of proper communication and dialogue directly contributed to the alliance's breakup," he said.

The INDIA bloc consists of nearly 30 par-

ties and to maintain dialogue with all of them, it is essential to appoint some responsible leaders, Raut said.

He said Uddhav Thackeray has repeatedly emphasised this point during the INDIA bloc meetings and other senior leaders have also raised the issue.

"The INDIA bloc has performed remarkably well in the country's politics during the Lok Sabha elections, and it must continue to thrive. As the largest party in the alliance, the Congress bears the greatest responsibility. Congress must assume this role," Raut said.

On contesting elections against allies, Raut said there is nothing wrong in fighting polls against one another.

"In a state like Delhi, for example, the AAP and the Congress can compete. Similarly, in municipal elections (in Maharashtra), as we have suggested, a different approach might be necessary," he said.

"However, while considering such alternatives, no one should go to the extent of labelling their former or potential future allies as traitors. This is the stand of Uddhav Thackeray and the Shiv Sena (UBT)," he added.

Two students injured after glass panel collapses in Kolkata school building



KOLKATA, Jan 13 (Agencies): Two students were injured after a portion of a glass panel on the fourth floor of a school building collapsed in South Kolkata on Monday morning, officials said.

The school authorities said one of the injured students was discharged after being

administered first aid, while another has been sent to a private hospital.

The incident happened around 7 am as the students were entering the school premises when a large glass panel along with its frame fell from the fourth floor, injuring the two students, the officials said.

The school authorities said that a probe will be conducted into the mishap.

A section of parents, however, claimed that two students suffered serious injuries and another received first aid before being discharged.

They also alleged that no ambulance was available to take the injured to hospital.

The school authorities said the ambulance driver was unavailable due to illness, but the injured were promptly attended to.

Debasish Kumar, the MLA of Rashbehari Constituency, who visited the school, said the incident is unfortunate and that its authorities should prioritise safety alongside academics.

A school official said that a probe will be conducted into the mishap.

17-year-old girl dies by suicide in Bhubaneswar, police suspect exam pressure

BHUBANESWAR, Jan 13 (Agencies): A Plus-II second-year girl student of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya in the capital city allegedly died by suicide in her hostel room on Monday. The victim was 17 years old and a native of Kendrapara district.



she did not respond to their phone calls, they informed the hostel authorities about the matter.

Hostel authorities rushed to the room and found her hanging from a ceiling fan using a stole. On receiving information, Capital police station officers arrived at the spot and launched an investiga-

tion into the matter.

"We did not recover any suicide note but the victim's phone has been seized for investigation. A case of unnatural death has been registered and further probe is underway," said Capital police station IIC, Dayanidhi Nayak.

Sources said police are investigating whether the victim had

any exam pressure or was upset due to some personal issues. This is the third such incident where a student ended their life in the city within three months.

A 17-year-old MBBS aspirant allegedly died by suicide in her hostel in November last year reportedly due to the study pressure. The girl had told her mother that she was not prepared for her coaching centre's physics examination. In December, a second year MBBS student of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) had allegedly died by suicide in his hostel room.

Pro-Dalit group members arrested for trying to throw beef at BJP Coimbatore office



COIMBATORE, Jan 13 (Agencies): Members of Aadmi Thamizhar Peravai, a pro-Dalit organisation, were arrested on Monday for attempting to throw beef at the BJP office in Coimbatore as a form of protest.

The incident was sparked by BJP leader Subramaniam, who was caught on camera allegedly harassing a couple running a beef stall near a temple. Subramaniam reportedly demanded the stall be removed, claiming it violated vil-

lage rules.

The woman refused, pointing out that stalls selling chicken and fish were operating in the same area.

Her argument and the confrontation gained traction on social media, leading to widespread criticism of Subramaniam's actions. A case has since been filed against him by the Tamil Nadu police. Following this, around 200 people from the village blocked the road leading to Maniyakampalayam in protest against the police action.

The protesters claimed that the cart was located

very close to a school and a temple.

In response, several organisations rallied in support of the woman. Members of Aadmi Thamizhar Peravai planned to stage their protest by throwing beef at the BJP office. However, they were intercepted by the police about 100 meters from the office and taken into custody. Visuals from the site of the protest show protesters stomping on posters with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's pictures on them.

Further investigations are underway.

Seoul says North Korean soldiers captured in Ukraine haven't shown desire to defect

SEOUL, Jan 13 (Agencies): South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Monday that two North Korean soldiers who were captured by Ukrainian forces while fighting alongside Russian forces in Russia's Kursk border region haven't expressed a desire to seek asylum in South Korea.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on the social media platform X that he's willing to hand over the soldiers to North Korea if the country's authoritarian leader, Kim Jong Un, arranges for an exchange with Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russia. Zelenskyy added that "there may be other options" for North Korean soldiers who do not wish to return home, and a video released by his government indicated that at least one of the captured soldiers expressed a desire to remain in Ukraine.

In a closed-door briefing at South Korea's National Assembly, the National Intelligence Service confirmed its participation in the questioning of the North Korean soldiers by Ukrainian authorities.

The agency said the soldiers haven't expressed a request to resettle in South Korea, according to two lawmakers who attended the meeting.

The agency said it was willing to discuss the matter with Ukrainian



an authorities if the soldiers eventually do ask to go to South Korea. About 34,000 North Koreans have defected to capitalist rival South Korea to avoid economic hardship and political suppression at home, mostly since the late 1990s.

Koo Byoungsam, spokesperson of South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said facilitating the asylum of the North Korean soldiers would require "legal reviews, including on international law, and consultations with related nations."

"There's nothing we can say at the current stage," Koo said.

Seoul's spy agency believes that about 300 North Korean soldiers have died and another 2,700 have been injured while fighting against Ukrainian forces, in what represents North Korea's first involvement in large-scale conflict since the 1950-53 Korean War.

The agency assessed that the North Koreans

are struggling to adapt to drones and other elements of modern warfare. They are further disadvantaged by the crude tactics of their Russian commanders, who have thrown them in assault campaigns without providing rear-fire support, according to Lee Seong Kweun, a lawmaker who attended the agency's briefing.

The agency said memos found on dead North Korean soldiers indicated that they had been ordered to commit suicide before being captured, according to Lee.

The agency said one North Korean soldier, facing the threat of being captured by Ukrainian forces, shouted "General Kim Jong Un" and tried to detonate a hand grenade before he was shot and killed.

Zelenskyy confirmed the capture of the North Korean soldiers on Saturday, days after Ukraine, facing a slow Russian onslaught in the east, began pressing new attacks in Kursk to retain ground

captured in a lightning incursion in August — the first occupation of Russian territory since World War II.

Moscow's counterattack has left Ukrainian forces overstretched and demoralized, killing and wounding thousands and retaking more than 40% of the 984 square kilometers (380 square miles) of Kursk that Ukraine had seized.

Moon Seong Mook, a retired South Korean brigadier general, said the high death toll for North Korean soldiers was predictable, as they would not have been sufficiently prepared for an unfamiliar mission in the terrain of the Kursk region, which is vastly different from North Korea's mountainous landscape.

Another disadvantage for the North Koreans is that they are not conducting independent operations but are being thrust into combat under Russian commanders, possibly struggling with unfamiliar tactics and communication issues due to language barriers, said

Moon, who has taken part in numerous military talks with North Korea. The North Korean forces could be operating special surveillance teams to arrest or execute attempted deserters, he said.

"The current battlefield environment, combined with drones and other technologies, have created situations North Korean soldiers have never encountered before," Moon said. "They are also being deployed in large numbers in wide-open fields, where there is no place to hide, in continuous battles to retake the area, and that seems to be where the casualties are coming from."

North Korea's decadeslong financial troubles, which have forced many soldiers to grow their own food or spend long hours deployed in construction and other work to sustain the national economy, could also have impacted the quality of training they receive at home, Moon said.

Still, there are concerns in Seoul that North Korea's participation in the Ukraine crisis poses a significant threat to South Korea, as North Korean forces may gain crucial combat experience and Russia may provide technology transfers that could enhance North Korea's nuclear-armed army.

'Our country is not for sale': Former ally of Trudeau and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh warns Trump



OTTAWA, Jan 13 (Agencies): Leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP), and an earlier ally of former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Jagmeet Singh, issued a warning to US President-elect Donald Trump on Monday, regarding his proposed plans to annex Canada. "I have a message for Donald Trump. Our country (Canada) is not for sale. Not now, not ever," Jagmeet Singh said in a video posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Singh added that Canadians are proud people who are ready to "fight like hell to defend" their country.

The NDP leader however also mentioned about supporting the US amid the Los Angeles fire that resulted in the death of at least 24 people, saying it is "who we are... we show up and support our neighbours."

"If Donald Trump thinks he can pick a fight with us, there will be a price to pay. I have committed that if Donald Trump imposes tariffs on us, we should respond with retaliatory tariffs in kind. I think that anyone run-

ning as Prime Minister should do the same," he said in the video.

Donald Trump has been vocal about his intentions to incorporate Canada as the 51st state of the United States. In a December post on his social media platform, 'Truth Social,' Trump claimed, "Many Canadians want Canada to become the 51st State."

On Christmas Day, he outlined the potential advantages of such a move, stating, "Their taxes would be cut by more than 60 per cent, their businesses would immediately double in size, and they would be militarily protected like no other country anywhere in the World."

Earlier in the month, following Justin Trudeau's resignation, Trump revisited the idea of a merger, saying, "If Canada merged with the US, there would be no Tariffs, taxes would go way down, and they would be TOTALLY SECURE from the threat of the Russian and Chinese Ships that are constantly surrounding them. Together, what a great Nation it would be!!!"

Justin Trudeau swiftly dismissed the proposal, stating, "There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States."

He further emphasised, "Workers and communities in both our countries benefit from being each other's biggest trading and security partner."

In a letter shared on X, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly said that she consulted with colleagues and advisors, many urging her to seek the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. However, she recognised that addressing pressing international challenges, including tariff threats from the US President-elect, must take priority.

"This is happening now. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, I must dedicate every minute of my time and all my energy to defending the interests of Canadians. Which is exactly what I am doing and will continue to do," it read.

Sources stated that Canada is ready to respond with a comprehensive list of tariffs on American goods if President-elect Donald Trump moves forward with his plan to impose a 25 per cent import tax on Canadian goods.

In 2023, the United States imported goods worth USD 419 billion from Canada, which is also the largest source of foreign oil for the US.

UK PM Keir Starmer lays out plan to make Britain 'world leader' in AI

LONDON, Jan 13 (Agencies): Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Monday laid out his plans to unleash the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) with the help of billions of pounds of investment and dedicated AI Growth Zones to speed up infrastructure to make the UK a "world leader" in the sector.

Unveiling details of the Labour government's 'AI Opportunities Action Plan', Starmer said he believes AI can transform the lives of working people and has the potential to speed up planning consultations to get Britain building, help drive down admin for teachers and even help improve roads through cameras to spot potholes. It comes as three major tech companies — Vantage Data Centres, Nscale and Kyndryl — have committed to GBP 14 billion investment to build the AI infrastructure the UK needs to harness the potential of this technology and deliver 13,250 jobs across the UK.

"Artificial Intelligence will drive incredible change in our country. From teachers personalising lessons, to supporting small businesses with their record-keeping, to speeding up planning applications, it has the potential to transform the lives of working people," said Starmer.

"But the AI industry needs a government that is on their side, one that won't sit back and let opportunities slip through its fingers; and in a world of fierce

competition, we cannot stand by. We must move fast and take action to win the global race," he said.

"Our plan will make Britain the world leader. It will give the industry the foundation it needs and will turbocharge the Plan for Change. That means more jobs and investment in the UK, more money in people's pockets, and transformed public services," he added.

Downing Street pointed out that AI is already being used in hospitals up and down the UK to deliver "better, faster, and smarter" care — spotting pain levels for people who can't speak, diagnosing breast cancer quicker, and getting people discharged quicker. This is already helping deliver the government's mission to build an NHS fit for the future, it noted. According to IMF estimates, AI can boost productivity by as much as 1.5 percentage points a year, which is estimated to be worth up to an average GBP 47 billion to the UK each year over a decade.

"AI is a powerful tool that will help grow our economy, make our public services more efficient and open up new opportunities to help improve living standards," said UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves.

"This action plan is the government's modern industrial strategy in action... This means better living standards in every part of the United Kingdom and working people have more money in their pocket,"



she said.

According to the British government, the aim is to "mainline AI into the veins of this enterprising nation", introducing a raft of new measures learning from the US and European Union (EU) approach to deliver "dynamism, flexibility and long-term stability" for businesses.

"This government is determined that the UK is not left behind in the global race for AI, that's why the actions we commit to will ensure that the benefits are spread throughout the UK so all citizens will reap the rewards of the bet we make today," said Peter Kyle, UK's Science, Innovation, and Technology Secretary.

"This is a plan which puts us all-in — backing the potential of AI to grow our economy, improve lives for citizens, and make us a global hub for AI investment and innovation," added Matt Clifford, a British entrepreneur who drafted the 'AI Opportunities Action Plan' being followed by the government.

Among the new measures, the first of a planned set of AI Growth Zones will come

up in Culham, Oxfordshire. The public compute capacity is intended to be increased twenty-fold to give the UK the processing power needed to fully embrace, with work starting on a brand-new supercomputer. A new National Data Library to unlock the value of public data and a dedicated AI Energy Council to understand the energy demands and challenges which will fuel the development of this technology are among some of the other proposed measures in a three-pronged approach: laying the foundations of AI, boosting adoption across public and private sectors, and keeping the UK "ahead of the pack" in AI.

"Now that the government has set out its plan, it is time to act, and at pace. To drive new investment, industry will want to see more detail on how this plan will be actioned within the next six months, particularly as we face growing competition from other countries," said Julian David, CEO of the techUK business association championing the sector.

Progress made in talks over Israel-Hamas ceasefire, hostage release, officials say

CAIRO, Jan 13 (Agencies): US and Arab mediators made significant progress overnight toward brokering a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war and the release of scores of hostages held in the Gaza Strip, but a deal has not been reached yet, officials said Monday.

Three officials acknowledged progress has been made and said the coming days would be critical for ending more than 15 months of fighting that has destabilized the Middle East. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the talks.

One of the three officials and a Hamas official said there were still a number of hurdles to clear. On several occasions over the past year, US officials have said they were on the verge of reaching a deal, only to have the talks stall.

One person familiar with the talks said there had been a breakthrough overnight and that there was a proposed deal on the table. Israeli and Hamas negotiators will now take it back to their leaders for final approval, the person said.

The person said mediators from the Gulf country of Qatar had put renewed pressure on Hamas to accept the agreement, while President-elect Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, was pressing the Israelis. Witkoff recently joined the negotiations and has been in the region in recent days.

The person said the mediators had handed off the draft deal to each side and that the next 24 hours would be pivotal.

An Egyptian official said there had been good progress overnight but that it would likely take a few more days, and that the sides were aiming for a deal before Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration. A third official said the talks were in a good place but had not been wrapped up. That official also assessed that a deal was possible before the inauguration.

A Hamas official, however, said a number of contentious issues

still need to be resolved, including an Israeli commitment to ending the war and details about the withdrawal of Israeli troops and the hostage-prisoner exchange. The official was not authorized to brief media and spoke anonymously.

The Egyptian official confirmed that those issues were still being discussed.

Months of negotiations have repeatedly stalled.

The Biden administration, along with Egypt and Qatar, has spent over a year trying to broker an agreement to end the deadliest war ever fought between Israelis and Palestinians and secure the release of scores of hostages captured in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, which triggered the conflict.

But the sides have been divided over the details of the planned exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, as well as the nature of the ceasefire itself. Hamas has said it will not release the remaining captives without an end to the war, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the campaign until "total victory" over the militant group.

Under discussion now is a phased ceasefire. Netanyahu has repeatedly signaled he is committed only to the first phase, a partial hostage release in exchange for a weeklong halt in fighting. The possibility of a lasting ceasefire and other issues would be negotiated after the first phase begins. Hamas has demanded a full withdrawal and complete end to the war, and is hoping this first phase will lead to that outcome.

US President Joe Biden, who hopes to wrap up a deal before leaving office next week, spoke with Netanyahu about the talks on Sunday.

The head of Israel's Mossad foreign intelligence agency, David Barnea, and Biden's top Mideast adviser, Brett McGurk, were both in the Qatari capital, Doha. Barnea's presence meant high-level

Israeli officials who would need to sign off on any agreement are once again involved in the talks.

McGurk has been working on final details of a text to be presented to both sides, Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told CNN's "State of the Union." But he said he would not predict whether a deal can be reached by Jan. 20, the day of the inauguration.

"We are very, very close," he said. "Yet being very close still means we're far because until you actually get across the finish line, we're not there."

Palestinians and families of the hostages hope for a deal.

Just one brief ceasefire has been achieved in 15 months of war, and that was in the earliest weeks of fighting. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week that a deal is "very close" and he hoped to complete it before handing over diplomacy to the incoming Trump administration.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 46,000 Palestinians, the majority women and children, according to the territory's Health Ministry, whose count does not give a breakdown between fighters and civilians. Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and abducted around 250 others in the attack that ignited the war.

Families of the roughly 100 hostages still held in Gaza are pressing Netanyahu to reach a deal to bring their loved ones home. Israelis rallied again Saturday night in the city of Tel Aviv, with photos of hostages on display.

In Gaza, Palestinians were tempering their hopes for a stop to Israel's campaign, which has devastated much of the territory and driven around 90% of its 2.3 million people from their homes.

"We hear that there are negotiations every day, but we see nothing," said Mazen Hammad, a resident of the southern city of Khan Younis. "When we see it on the ground, then we believe that there is a truce."

J&K BJP celebrates Lohri with fervour



Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu & Kashmir, celebrated Lohri with traditional fervor at its headquarters in Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

BJP State General Secretary (Org.) Ashok Koul, former Dy. CM Kavinder Gupta, BJP Vice President & MLA Yudhvir Sethi, MLA Arvind Gupta, BJP NEM Priya Sethi, Ayodhya Gupta, Baldev Singh Billawaria, Tialk Gupta, Balbir Ram Rattan, Dr. Pardeep Mahotra, Sanjita Dogra, Naresh Singh Jasrotia, Prof Kulbhushan Mohtra, Ajay Pargal, Vinay Gupta,

and other senior leaders of party were present on occasion.

BJP senior leaders extended Lohri greetings to mankind while praying for good fortune, bumper harvests, and peace in the Universe. They also offered traditional nuts and sweets to all assembled on the occasion.

Ashok Koul said that the Lohri festival heralds the harvest of the winter crops, honors the Sun God for warmth, and encourages the days to grow longer with the celebration of Makar Sankranti. He said that it is always pleasurable to celebrate the "Lohri" as this gives the indication of brotherhood among us with

the lovely change in

weather in anticipation of good fortune for the whole world. He greeted people, said that "Lohri" depicts our cultural ethos for time immemorial, and exhorted them to celebrate such occasions together with all their near and dear ones. He also prayed for the peace in Jammu & Kashmir denouncing the acts of terrorism and violence in the region.

Kavinder Gupta, while extending the greetings of the Lohri festival to everybody, especially to the residents of J&K, prayed for the prosperity of Jammu & Kashmir. He said that the festival depicts a profound love of nature, plentiful reap and humans and also marks the realm of activeness among all living creatures.

Valedictory ceremony marks conclusion of Skill Development Program on Mini Soil Testing Laboratories



Top News Report

BARAMULLA, Jan 13: The Division of Soil Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Wadura, celebrated the successful conclusion of the Six-Week Entrepreneurial Skill Development Program on Mini Soil Testing Laboratories with a valedictory function. Sponsored by the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), New Delhi, the program aimed at empowering aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge required to establish and operate mini soil testing laboratories.

The ceremony was attended by distinguished guests, faculty members, and participants, who highlighted the program's significant contributions to promoting sustainable agriculture and fostering rural entrepreneurship.

Over the six weeks, participants received hands-on training, technical insights, and entrepreneurial guidance, equipping them to play a vital role in improving soil health management and agricultural productivity.

Speaking at the event, the organizers expressed their gratitude to MSME for their support and emphasized the importance of such initiatives in driving innovation and economic growth in the agricultural sector. Participants shared their transformative experiences and committed to applying their newfound skills in advancing soil health and supporting farmers.

The Division of Soil Science reaffirmed its dedication to organizing similar programs in the future to continue empowering individuals and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Bukhari greets people on Lohri

Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Jan 13: Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari has extended his greetings to the people on the eve of Lohri, a folk festival that celebrates the harvest of winter crops in northern India.

Bukhari wrote on his X handle, "Warm greetings to all those who

are celebrating the joyous festival of Lohri today. This folk festival, primarily celebrated in Punjab and other parts of our country, marks the arrival of the harvest season."

He added, "It is a celebration of joy, abundance, and prosperity in people's lives. I extend my heartfelt greetings and sincere best wishes to everyone on this special occasion. Happy Lohri!"

Public extends gratitude to MLA Pawan Gupta for conduct of Geo-Tag Survey of PMGSY Road

Top News Report

PANCHARI, Jan 13: A deputation from Panchayat Upper-Lower Meer of Block Panchari here yesterday MLA Udhampur West Shri Pawan Kumar Gupta and extends heartfelt gratitude.

The public of Chakakothi also sincerely thanks to MLA for Geo-Tag Survey of road by giving directions to concerned department.

MLA also directed the

Block Development Officer Panchari to provide Population Certificate of Current Population and as per census 2011 for further submission to PMGSY Department for preparation of DPR within stipulated time.

The public also sincerely thanks to BJP Mandal President Panchari Kuldeep Kumar for their full support for completion of Geo-Tag Survey.

MLA of Udhampur West assured the deputation that DPR would

be done in a time-bound manner.

Moreover, MLA said, "This PMGSY road will made easier for farmers to transport their produce to markets, and will also attract new businesses to the both panchayats."

On this occasion, Pawan Singh, Parkash Singh, Ganesh Dutt, Sham Lal, Krishan Lal, Ashok Singh, Paras Ram, Girdhari Lal were also leading person of deputation.

BJP is only party working for development, unity, welfare of people: Dr. Tahir Chowdhary

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: BJP is the only political party in Jammu and Kashmir vigorously working for development, unity, and the welfare of its people.

BJP's vision and commitment continue to pave the way for a stronger and more progressive region, ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard and valued.

Dr. Tahir Chowdhary, Spokesperson, J&K BJP, accompanied by Dr. Pardeep Mahotra, Incharge, Media Department, J&K BJP and Naresh Singh Jasrotia, senior leader of BJP was addressing a Press Conference at the party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

Dr. Tahir Chowdhary, while addressing the media persons said that the regional leadership of NC has started building up a false narrative, feeling a sense



of political insecurity for the love of people for BJP due to the people-centric policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Union government. He said that the people from Jammu as well as Kashmir are appreciating the development-oriented changes in the region, which is being liked by the local leadership and hated by the NC's leadership.

"Today, Kashmir is inching towards BJP. More and more people are joining the party in Kashmir. People are visiting the party office in large numbers on a daily basis. BJP is the only political party vigorously

working for the development, unity, and welfare of its people in Kashmir sorting out the issues of locals. Common masses from Jammu as well as Kashmir have developed strong faith in BJP", he said.

"People are appreciating the good governance by the Modi government, which has successfully stalled the politics of hatred in Kashmir. Stopped pellet guns, hartal calendars, and bloodshed. Now the Schools, colleges, and markets are running smoothly. Terrorists killed the whole families of BJP activists and other nationalist people who worked for peace and progress in Kashmir, but the BJP activists never stopped. There is a visible development-oriented change in 2014 which boosted the multi-pronged development in Jammu & Kashmir after 2019.", said Dr. Tahir Chowdhary.

Sonamarg tunnel will boost regional travel safety, efficiency, and economic growth: Pawan Sharma

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Pawan Sharma, a senior BJP leader and district Doda Prabhari, celebrated the inauguration of Sonamarg Z-Mor tunnel as a pivotal milestone, expressing deep gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for spearheading transformative

growth that uplifts communities and propels India towards a brighter future.

Sharma stated, "Today marks a historic milestone with the inauguration of the Sonamarg Z-Mor tunnel, a vital project linking the Kashmir valley with Ladakh. This tunnel will provide a secure and convenient route for travelers

while playing a crucial role in the region's economic development."

He further stated, "This project demonstrates Prime Minister Modi's vision and leadership. We acknowledge our gratitude to him for his support in completing this project."

Sharma further emphasized that the tunnel will serve as a

valuable asset for the regional community, facilitating travel in a safe and efficient manner. He also observed, "We expect this tunnel to contribute substantially to the regional economic development and bring about significant improvements in the standard of living for the local population."

FROM PAGE NO:3

PM inaugurates much-awaited Sonamarg tunnel

January 2020. The project, originally initiated during the UPA II government, saw its foundation stone laid in October 2012 by C.P. Joshi, then Minister for Surface Transport.

Initially projected to be completed by 2016-2017, the Rs 2,716.90 crore tunnel has now been completed, promising year-round accessibility to Sonamarg and enhancing travel to Leh.

Z-Morh tunnel inauguration: CM's Advisor says Sonamarg set to

become best ski-destination

He added that the tunnel will increase the connectivity and boost the economy of the locals here as well.

"There is a need to organize sports activities here. We will bring the ski-consultants to the place as the area has the natural slopes similar to the ones being found in Europe. I am hopeful that the facilities will be increased and Sonamarg will become the best ski-destination," he said.

About the Statehood restoration, Wani said the promises in this regard have been made by the Prime Minister on the floor of the house and other places, but "let's see whether there would be any announcement in this regard today."

PM Modi led Govt wiped

out terrorism from J&K, turned it into real paradise: LG Sinha

Modi's commitment to J&K's development, LG Sinha revealed that road projects worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore are currently underway in the Union Territory.

He added that 99% of J&K's villages have been connected through the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). "In 2024 alone, PM Modi visited Jammu and Kashmir three times, inaugurating projects worth Rs 41,000 crore. The Kashmir-to-Kanyakumari dream is set to become a reality," LG Sinha remarked. LG Sinha also emphasized the remarkable growth in J&K's tourism sector, which he credited to the region's newfound peace and stability. "In 2024, 2.35 crore tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir, reflecting the transformation

of J&K into a hub of tourism, not terrorism," he stated. The LG paid tributes to the seven Z-Morh tunnel staff members, who lost their lives in a terrorist attack at Gagangear last month.

PM Modi meets construction workers, engineers

Z-Morh Tunnel is poised to make Sonamarg accessible from Srinagar year-round, a feat previously hindered by harsh winter conditions.

CM Omar pitches for Statehood restoration in presence of PM Modi

were involved in the work of Sonamarg

tunnel. Omar stated that they sacrificed their lives for this project and the progress of this nation. "Unfortunately for the last 35 years, the people in J&K have sacrificed their lives for the progress of this nation. I belong to the party which has sacrificed a lot for this nation," he said. He added that presence of PM Modi this project is a clear message to those who don't want progress of J&K, peace and democracy that they won't get succeed and will have to face the defeat from here.

Statehood for J&K should be restored at the earliest: Nasir Aslam Wani

have repeatedly urged the central government to honor its commitment to restore J&K's statehood.

Advisor Dr. Pawan Kotwal chairs meeting to review progress of DILRMP Project in UT Ladakh

Top News Report

LEH, Jan 13: The Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor, UT of Ladakh, Dr. Pawan Kotwal chaired a meeting to review the progress of the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) Project in the Union Territory of Ladakh at VC Hall Secretariat, Leh.

A detailed discussion was held during the meeting on the current status of services since the last review meeting. The meeting reviewed the progress of the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) in Ladakh, which aims to enhance the accessibility, transparency, and accuracy of land records in the region.

The project, a critical component of Ladakh's revenue management and public service infrastructure, includes comprehensive digital upgrades across multiple facets of land records



management. The meeting discussed in detail the physical and financial progress of the DILRMP project including the ongoing digitization of revenue records, installation of compactors in Tehsil Modern Record Rooms, and the initiation of online citizen-centric services by the Revenue Department.

The Assistant Commissioner of Revenue (ACR), Leh presented a comprehensive Power-

Point presentation, detailing the milestones achieved under the DILRMP project. He informed that the GIS web portal for records will be launched on 10th February 2025.

The presentation highlighted several completed objectives while identifying areas that require additional resources and attention. Topics under discussion included the progress in digitizing village land records,

ongoing surveys, demarcations, and the need for an effective Management Information System (MIS) to streamline and safeguard land records.

Advisor Dr. Kotwal commended the team for their diligent efforts while underscoring the project's importance in ensuring accurate, accessible, and updated land records. He emphasized that reliable land records are crucial for enhancing transparency, reducing land disputes, and facilitating infrastructure and development projects in Ladakh. He called for the timely and efficient implementation of the remaining tasks to ensure the project's success.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Leh, Santosh Sukhadeve; Deputy Commissioner, Kargil Shrikant Suse; Assistant Commissioner Revenue Shabir Hussain; SDMs, and other concerned officers of revenue department.

Army organizes plantation drive at Chassana



Top News Report

REASI, Jan 13: The Indian Army organized the "Ek Ped Maa ke Naam" campaign, a tree plantation drive in Chassana, District Reasi, as part of its ongoing efforts to promote environmental conservation and community engagement.

The event witnessed

enthusiastic participation from local residents and school children, reinforcing the collective commitment to safeguarding nature.

During the drive, saplings of native and fruit-bearing tree species were planted in designated areas to enhance green cover and combat environmental degradation.

The initiative aligns with the Indian Army's broader objective of fostering sustainable development and raising awareness about ecological preservation among the local population.

The event emphasized the importance of protecting the environment for future generations and encouraged participants to nurture the planted saplings. The plantation drive also served as an opportunity to strengthen the bond between the Indian Army and the community.

The Indian Army remains dedicated to contributing to the region's ecological well-being and supporting initiatives that benefit both people and nature.

Ekal Abhiyan Zone Kishtwar organizes programme on Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary

Top News Report

DODA, Jan 13: A program commemorating the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda Ji was organized by Ekal Abhiyan Zone Kishtwar. The event also included the executive meeting of the Zonal Village Organization and was marked by enthusiastic participation from dignitaries and committee members.

The program was graced by the presence of Mahant Ramsharan Das Ji Maharaj of Shri Gori Shankar Temple Sarkoot Kishtwar as the chief guest.

Other prominent attendees included Principal Acharya of Bharatiya Vidya Mandir, Ramsevak; Gram Sangathan Pramukh of North West Division, Raj Singh; In-charge of Primary Education Trainings of West North Division, Kuldeep Singh; In-charge of Zone Kishtwar, Sandeep Sharma;

Divisional Executive Member, Rita Shan; and other members of the Zonal Campaign Committee and Sambhag Gram Sangathan.

The program was divided into multiple sessions.

In the first session, Ramsevak spoke about the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. He highlighted how Ekal Abhiyan is working to awaken society by spreading the ideology of Swami Vivekananda. He encouraged the youth to follow the path shown by Swami Vivekananda for a better future.

The second session featured Sh. Raj Singh Ji, who introduced the Ekal movement to the participants. He emphasized the responsibilities of the committees and their role in making Ekal a mass campaign. He discussed strategies to improve the quality of work and strengthen village organizations. He

also outlined plans for establishing new units to expand the campaign.

In the concluding session, Mahant Shri Ramsharan Das Maharaj blessed the participants and emphasized the importance of Ekal Abhiyan in preserving the culture, values, and unity of the nation. He stated that Ekal's outreach to every village makes it a vital force for societal and cultural preservation.

Zonal President Bittu Kumar expressed his gratitude to all the committee officials and participants. He assured that the Kishtwar zone would strive to become an ideal zone with collective efforts.

The program concluded with participants paying floral tributes to Swami Vivekananda and chanting the Shanti Mantra, reflecting the event's spiritual and cultural significance.

GCW Udhampur celebrates Lohri Festival with enthusiasm



Top News Report

UDHAMPUR, Jan 13: The Government College for Women (GCW) Udhampur under the aegis of IQAC celebrated the Lohri festival with great enthusiasm and fervor at college campus. The festival, which is an integral part of Punjabi and Dogra cultures, was marked with traditional rituals, music and dance.

The entire program begins with offering "Aarg" to the sacred bonfire by the Principal of the college, Dr. Nalini Pathania, along

with staff members and students of the college.

The NSS & NCC unit, Department of Music and Sports Department actively contributed to the organization of the event, ensuring its smooth execution.

Principal of the college, Dr. Nalini Pathania, in her address to the students, emphasized the importance of preserving cultural heritage and staying connected to roots through festivals like Lohri. She encouraged students to embrace unity, teamwork, and the spirit of giving back

to society. Dr. Pathania commended the efforts of all departments, volunteers, and students for their dedication in making the event a grand success.

On the occasion, the event was marked by vibrant dance performances, rhythmic beats of the dhol, and the showcasing of Dogra cultural elements, including the traditional hiran. Typical dogra folk dance 'hiran' was performed by the students from the Department of Music which was highly appreciated by all the faculty members and enjoyed by all students.

The entire programme coordinated by the Dr. Ajay Kumar Sharma PO NSS Unit, Dr. Mukesh from Sports Department and Prof. Yash Kumar from the Department of Music.

The celebration concluded with a message of harmony and positivity, inspiring everyone to carry forward the rich cultural heritage. The college remains committed to promoting community bonding through such meaningful events.

Among others, Head of the Music Department Dr. Seema Sharma, Head of the Chemistry

Department Dr. Indu Khajuria, Head of the Zoology Department Dr. Sanjit Kour, Head of the Physics Department Prof. Lekh Raj, Head of the English Department Dr. Geetanjali Rajput, Head of the Botany Department Dr. Anita Sharma, other senior faculty members of the college, non-teaching staff and a large number of students were present in the function and all enjoyed the festive atmosphere, peanuts and traditional sweets were also distributed among the students.

Director Animal Husbandry Kashmir monitors strategy for enhancing productivity, self sufficiency

Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Jan 13: Director of the Animal Husbandry Department, Kashmir, Dr Parvinder Sudan conducted a meeting to assess the physical and financial progress achieved under various schemes including CAPEX (Capital Expenditure), Holistic Agricultural Development Programme, Central Sector Schemes and NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) during the current finan-



cial year. The meeting aimed to evaluate the implementation status of these programs and ensure

that objectives are being met effectively.

The meeting held the importance in view of last quarter of current

financial year to target the loopholes and remove bottlenecks. Most of the Chief Animal Husbandry officers and their poultry development officers attended the meeting virtually. The deliberations were augmented by the view points presented by Joint Director, Poultry cum LPP, Hariparbat, Deputy Director, Poultry, Superintendent Central Veterinary Hospital, Assistant Director planning and technical officers of different wings of the

department. Dr Sudan reiterated his stand on focussing and analysing the progress reports submitted by various wings of the department and strategizing future actions to enhance productivity and efficiency in animal husbandry Sector across Kashmir. The meeting underscored the commitment of the Animal Husbandry Department towards improving livestock management and ensuring sustainable development in the region.

Vi & Lionsgate Play sign strategic partnership to offer premium content on Vi Movies & TV

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Vi, India's leading telecom operator, announced a strategic partnership with premium streaming service, Lionsgate Play, unlocking an exclusive library of top-tier content. Featuring action blockbusters, iconic franchises, acclaimed films and series, global awards, exclusive premieres, and a range of dubbed content, Lionsgate Play promises an unmatched entertainment experience. This collaboration further expands Vi's OTT portfolio, providing a premium, diverse library of Hollywood movies, original series, international titles and more at an affordable price.

Vi Movies & TV is designed to cater to the diverse entertainment needs of consumers, via aggregation of the top OTTs through a single app and single subscription offering

consumers the convenience to enjoy content from a wide range of OTTs. Users can explore a rich selection of content, ranging from Disney+ Hotstar, SonyLIV, ZEE5 to FanCode for Sports as well as regional content from Sun NXT, Manorama Max, Nammaflix, Klikk and Chaupal and now the best of Hollywood with its latest addition - Lionsgate Play. It also offers 300+ Live TV Channels including 30+ Live News Channels. All this is available through Vi Movies & TV app available for viewing on Smartphones, Smart TVs as well as Laptops & Tablets.

With Lionsgate Play, Vi Movies & TV users can now enjoy its extensive library of global hits, featuring blockbuster franchises like John Wick, The Hunger Games, and Saw, alongside stand-out titles such as Past Lives, Tokyo Vice, Paris

Has Fallen, Normal People, Operation Fortune, Plane, Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard, The Iron Claw, The Beekeeper, Arcadian, and more. Additionally, users will have access to prestigious award shows like the Primetime Emmy Awards, Golden Globes, Critics' Choice, and BAFTA Awards, bringing the best of premium, world class entertainment for Vi Movies & TV subscribers.

The partnership with Lionsgate Play is a testament to Vi's continuing pursuit of innovation and commitment to delivering best-in-class entertainment. By continuously adding renowned platforms like Lionsgate Play to its offerings, Vi reaffirms its dedication to curating a rich and diverse content ecosystem tailored to the evolving tastes and preferences of Indian viewers.

Acharya National Culture Activities Group hosts Best Dancer of J&K – Session 7

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Acharya National Culture Activities Group successfully hosted the highly anticipated "Best Dancer of J&K – Session 7" at the Auditorium, Polytechnic College, Bikram Chowk, Jammu on January 13, 2025. The event celebrated the vibrant and diverse dance culture of Jammu and Kashmir, showcasing an array of exceptional talent from across the region.

The event was graced by notable dignitaries, including Balbir Singh, with the esteemed Guest of Honour, Hitesh Badyal

Founder Member Nirvana Academy along with Rakesh Jamwal SHO Pacca Donga, Subash Chander Shavotra, Ranjit Kumar, Nirmal Mattoo, Gurpreet Singh, Kamal Singh, Sapna Soni, Amar Chohan, Kiran Varma, Deepak Kumar, Umesh Kumar, Ashil Gill, Kulwinder Kaur, and Sweetie Joyshi. Their presence added a sense of prestige and encouragement to the proceedings.

The competition saw participants competing in various categories, with each dancer demonstrating extraordinary skill, grace, and creativity. The event was adjudicated by a panel of respected judges, including Ritu

Dogra, Yogeshwar Singh Jamwal, and was organized under the expert guidance of Raj Shavotra.

After a day full of electrifying performances, the title of "Best Dancer of J&K Season 7" was awarded to the participating group from Acharya Academy for Dance and Aerobics. Their mesmerizing performance left a lasting impression on the audience, securing them the prestigious title for this year.

This year's competition not only celebrated the art of dance but also provided a platform for young talents to shine and pursue their dreams.

India not doing well in Test cricket: New BCCI secretary vows to make changes

Newly appointed BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia has vowed to help India return to their best shape in Test cricket. Saikia has acknowledged that India have dropped the ball in Tests in the recent times.

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (Agencies): Newly appointed Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary Devajit Saikia has admitted that India is struggling in red-ball cricket. Speaking to reporters in Mumbai after being elected unopposed, Saikia said that it would be a big challenge to return India to its former glory.

India have lost two back to back Test series against New Zealand and Australia. After losing 0-3 to New Zealand at home, India were hammered by Australia 3-1 in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Saikia said that the BCCI is speaking to all the experts and trying to find a positive outcome. He added that India will take it series by series and at the moment focus on the white-ball bilateral series against England.

"It is a big challenge because if you see, we are not doing good in Test cricket in the last two series against Australia



as well as New Zealand. So, immediately we are having the England series so far as T20 is concerned and thereafter the big event of the Champions Trophy in Dubai. We have to think about one (tournament) at a time. We have had a lot of discussions during the last two days and we are trying to streamline; whatever our drawbacks are, we have to overcome them," he told reporters at the BCCI headquarters.

"We are taking all the expert

opinion also. So, we look forward to a very positive outcome from these discussions and exercise. Our immediate challenge is the England series (at home) and thereafter the Champions Trophy. I will carry forward the work done by ICC chairman and former BCCI secretary Jay Shah," he added.

WHO IS DEVAJIT SAIKIA?
Hailing from Assam, Devajit Saikia has a multifaceted background that includes a career in cricket, law, and administration.

As a former first-class cricketer, Saikia played four matches between 1990 and 1991, serving as a wicketkeeper. Although his cricketing career was relatively short, he managed to collect 53 runs and managed to exact 9 dismissals.

After his cricketing days, Saikia transitioned into a career in law. He began practising as a lawyer at the age of 28 in the Gauhati High Court. Prior to his legal career, he had also secured jobs in the Northern Frontier Railways and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) through sports quotas.

Saikia's entry into cricket administration began in 2016 when he became one of the six vice presidents of the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) under the presidency of Hemanta Biswasarma, who is now the Chief Minister of Assam. He later became the ACA secretary in 2019.

Rohit Sharma asks BCCI to let him remain captain, says report



NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (Agencies): Another big revelation has emerged from last week's Board Of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) meeting, attended by Test and ODI skipper Rohit Sharma, as well as head coach Gautam Gambhir. It is already known that the topic of Rohit's successor in the leadership role is intensely being discussed, with Jasprit Bumrah emerging as the top candidate. However, Rohit is said to have informed the BCCI selectors and top bosses that he wants to remain the team's skipper, in both Tests and ODIs, for a few more months, post which he is likely to end his international career.

According to a report in Dainik Jagran, Rohit isn't keen on giving up the leadership baton yet, even though Jasprit Bumrah has emerged as a top candidate to lead the team in the longest format.

The Hitman, who has been struggling

for form over the past few months, is said to have informed the BCCI that he is unlikely to continue his international career after this year's Champions Trophy. In the meantime, the board has been asked to find his successor for the captain's role in both Tests and ODIs.

If all goes to plan, Rohit could end up hanging his boots after the conclusion of the Champions Trophy.

The BCCI bosses and the selection committee, however, isn't entirely on board with Bumrah's appointment as the team's full-time skipper. His workload is required to be cautiously managed to prevent injuries, which have hampered his career for a log time. Hence, the selectors are also keen to find out capable vice-captaincy options to assist Bumrah.

As per a report in the Hindi daily, the management also doesn't want two different captains for Tests and ODIs. The idea of appointing Suryakumar Yadav as ODI skipper was also contemplated but the T20I skipper doesn't have a place in India's 50-over side at the moment.

Appointing Bumrah as both Test and ODI captain could work well for the team but his repeated injuries still remain a concern. Hence, the names of Rishabh Pant and Yashasvi Jaiswal have been floated for vice-captaincy.

South Africa announce squad for Champions Trophy, include veteran pacers

CAPE TOWN, Jan 13 (Agencies): South Africa on Monday included Lungi Ngidi and Anrich Nortje in the Temba Bavuma-led squad for next month's Champions Trophy after the pacers recovered sufficiently from their respective injuries. Nortje sustained an injury on his big toe last month which ruled him out of the series against Pakistan while a groin strain in November forced Ngidi to miss the series against Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

South Africa, the semi-finalists of the 2023 ODI World Cup, are placed in group B of the Champions Trophy. They will start their campaign against Afghanistan in Karachi on Febru-

ary 21 before meeting Australia in Rawalpindi on February 25 and their final group game is against England on March 1.

However, frontline pacer Gerald Coetzee was not picked because of the groin injury that he suffered during the first Test against Sri Lanka in Durban last year.

Subsequently, he missed the second Test at Gqeberha and the entire home rubber against Pakistan.

Pacer Nandre Burger, who suffered a lumbar stress reaction, ahead of the ODI series against Ireland in early October too was not considered for selection.

However, the Proteas trusted the improving

fitness of all-rounder Wiaan Mulder, who broke his middle finger in the series against Sri Lanka, but he played in the second Test against Pakistan after the physios gave the green signal. Keshav Maharaj and Tabraiz Shamsi are the specialist spinners, who will be assisted by Aiden Markram's part-time off-spin.

South Africa squad: Temba Bavuma (captain), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen.

Cricketer Abhishek Sharma shreds IndiGo: 1-day holiday completely ruined

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (Agencies): Indian cricketer Abhishek Sharma criticised IndiGo Airlines on Monday, January 13, alleging misconduct by a staff member at Delhi Airport. Abhishek expressed frustration, stating that his single day of holiday was ruined after missing a flight despite arriving on time. Abhishek, 24, is set to join the Indian team for the much-awaited five-match T20I series against England, starting January 22.

In a strongly worded statement shared on social media, Abhishek claimed he was unnecessarily redirected between counters, causing him to miss the flight. He named a specific staff member and demanded action.

"I had the worst experience with IndiGo at Delhi



airport, and the behaviour of staff, especially counter manager Ms Sushmita Mittal, was absolutely unacceptable. I arrived on time at the correct counter, but they redirected me unnecessarily to another counter. Only to tell me later that check-in was closed, making me miss my flight. I only had a one-day holiday, which has now been completely ruined. To make it even worse, they are offering no further help-

ful assistance. This is by far the worst airline experience, and worst staff management I've ever had," Abhishek Sharma said in his Instagram story.

Abhishek Sharma was recently named in India's 15-man squad for the T20I series against England. He had been representing Punjab in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Abhishek played for Punjab as recently on January 11. He was part of the XI that lost

to Maharashtra in Vadodara and bowed out of the competition.

It is likely Abhishek had planned to spend his brief holiday with family and friends before joining the national squad in Kolkata, where the first match of the series is scheduled for January 22.

The players are expected to arrive a few days earlier to prepare under the leadership of Suryakumar Yadav and head coach Gautam Gambhir.

ALL EYES ON ABHISHEK IN ENGLAND T20Is

Abhishek Sharma was in fine form during the Vijay Hazare Trophy, India's premier domestic 50-over tournament. The left-hander scored 467 runs, including a century and three fifties,

in eight matches.

Abhishek made a solid start to his T20I career, scoring a century in only his second match at the highest level — against Zimbabwe in Harare in July 2024.

However, he struggled for consistency, going seven innings without a score of 20 or more.

Questions were raised about his place in the T20I squad after failures in the first two knocks of India's tour of South Africa in November 2024. A few pundits defended him, arguing that Abhishek is a natural aggressor and should be allowed occasional failures.

Abhishek regained some form towards the latter half of the tour, scoring a fifty in Centurion and a crucial 36 in Johannesburg.

Karun Nair equals record-feat in Vijay Hazare in bid to revive India career

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (Agencies): Vidarbha captain Karun Nair is batting like a dream in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy. Nair, who was famously snubbed from the Indian Test team back in 2016 despite scoring a triple hundred in his debut series, has made it his life's mission to get back into the national team.

The batter has already scored 5 hundreds in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, equalling the record of Narayan Jagadeesan in the tournament. Nair, currently 33 years of age has scores of 112*, 44, 163*, 111*, 112 and 122* in the tournament. Nair's terrific form has helped Vidarbha all their games by a decent margin, helping them to qualify for the semi-finals of the tournament.

Recently in an interview with agency, Nair opened up on the tough phase of his career when he was dropped from Karnataka side. Nair said that he was lucky to get a second chance in Vidarbha and knew that he had to score a truckload of

runs to make his place permanent in the team.

"For six-seven months, when I didn't play any cricket, all I did was travel three hours a day just to have a net session. I had no other option. I wasn't considered for any format and I was really emotional at that point of time. I had to move on and work on myself. Moving on wasn't easy, I needed a couple of months to get over it and then start practicing my skills and mindset. I would say, I was just preparing myself so that when I got another opportunity, I was not going to give anyone an excuse to drop me. For that, I needed to score runs and be consistent. So I just worked hard to get that back in my game," Karun Nair said on the sidelines of Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Nair had expressed his wish to return to the Indian side in 2024. "Everyone plays this game to represent their country, and that's my aim now — to play Test cricket again. I'm confident in my ability and



believe I can achieve it," he had stated with conviction.

Karun Nair's career with the Indian national cricket team is a tale of remarkable achievements and puzzling setbacks, particularly highlighted by his dramatic rise and fall following his historic triple century.

Nair made his international debut in 2016, starting with his ODI debut against Zimbabwe in June of that year. However, his ODI career was short-lived, as he managed only 7 and 39 runs in his first two matches and failed to secure a regular place in the ODI team.

His Test debut came later in 2016 against England at Mohali, and it was in the final Test of this series that Nair achieved what many

thought would be a career-defining milestone. On December 19, 2016, at Chennai, Nair scored 303*, becoming the second Indian batsman after Virender Sehwag to score a triple century in Test cricket. This feat also made him the third international player to convert his maiden Test century into a triple century, a rare achievement in the history of the game.

Despite this extraordinary performance, Nair's stay in the national team was brief. He was inexplicably dropped for the next Test against Bangladesh in February 2017, with Ajinkya Rahane returning to the team. This decision marked the beginning of Nair's struggles to regain his place in the Test squad. He warned

the benches for several matches, including the series against Australia, and when he did get chances, he failed to impress, scoring only 53 runs in the entire series.

Nair's last Test appearance was in March 2017 against Australia in Dharamshala. His inability to convert starts into significant scores and the presence of other talented batsmen like Hanuma Vihari further pushed him out of the team. The selectors and team management opted for a different lineup, preferring players who could offer more versatility, such as Vihari's off-break bowling skills.

The chairman of selectors, MSK Prasad, later explained that Nair was informed about the reasons for his exclusion, emphasising the need for a balanced team composition. However, Nair himself has expressed that there was a lack of clear communication from the team management and selectors regarding his role and future in the team.

Cummins, Hazlewood in Australia Champions Trophy squad despite injury concerns

SYDNEY, Jan 13 (Agencies): Pat Cummins was on Monday named captain of Australia for next month's Champions Trophy while fellow pacer Josh Hazlewood too was included in the squad despite lingering injury concerns surrounding both players.

Cummins was managing an ankle injury throughout the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India, which played a part in him missing the upcoming tour to Sri Lanka along with the pacer wanting to stay back at home to welcome his second baby.

Hazlewood, side lined from the Melbourne and Sydney Tests due to a calf niggle, was similarly not picked for the Sri Lanka series but has been named in the preliminary 15-player Champions Trophy squad.

The Aussies, a two-time winner in the event and the reigning ODI world champions, also picked all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who was

dropped for the fifth Test at SCG against India after mediocre outings in the first four matches.

"This is a balanced and experienced squad with the core having been involved in the previous one-day World Cup, the West Indies series, last year's successful tour of the UK and the more recent Pakistan home series," said Chair of Selectors George Bailey.

"It offers a variety of options for touring management depending on opposition and the conditions that may present in Pakistan," he added.

The squad will assemble, prepare and play a one-off ODI against Sri Lanka following the Test series before heading to Pakistan for the group stage matches of the ICC showpiece.

Australia gave prominence to all-rounders in the squad selection as Matthew Short and Aaron Hardie were drafted in ahead of out-of-form Jake Fraser McGurk.

Adam Zampa is the lone specialist spinner

in the squad. He will be supported by part timers Short and Glenn Maxwell.

Pacer Nathan Ellis has also earned a berth after leading Hobart Hurricanes into the Big Bash League final as there were three changes to the squad that did duty in last year's ODI World Cup in India.

David Warner retired from international cricket and Cameron Green is recuperating from a back surgery, while pacer Sean Abbott was not considered.

Australia have been drawn in Group B alongside Afghanistan, England and South Africa, and their round robin matches will be played at Lahore and Rawalpindi.

Australia squad: Pat Cummins (c), Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Aaron Hardie, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa.

OBC Samaj felicitates Kushant on his appointment as Mandal President Rehari-Bakshi Nagar

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: The OBC Samaj today felicitated Kushant Prajapati on his appointment as Mandal President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for Rehari- Bakshi Nagar Mandal.

Brahm Jyot Satti, senior leader and state in-charge of BJP OBC Morcha, Parveen Badyal (District Vice President OBC), Pawan Verma (District Vice President OBC), Sanjay Verma (Mandal President OBC), Kamal Kishore Pami (Booth President), Radha Rani (BJP leader), Bharat Bhushan, Ravi Kumar, and other distinguished citizens attended the ceremony.

The event, organized by Sanjay Verma, was attended by senior BJP leaders and OBC Morcha functionaries, who praised Kushant's dedication and commi-



ment to the party's ideals. Dignitaries garlanded Kushant and felicitated him with Mata ki chunni, wishing him a bright future.

Speaking on the occasion Brahm Jyot said that We are happy to see Kushant take on this new role. His leadership skills and passion for social welfare make him an ideal candidate for this position.

He expressed happiness over Kushant's new role, citing his leadership skills and passion for social welfare.

As Mandal President, Kushant will strengthen the party's presence in Rehari- Bakshi Nagar Mandal and promote backward class welfare.

Kushant's appointment demonstrates the BJP OBC Morcha's commitment to empowering marginalized communities and promoting social justice.

The BJP is a party of hard workers and nationalists, and we look forward to working with Kushant for the betterment of society, he added.

80% of remaining terrorists in J&K are of Pak origin: Army Chief



Top News Report

JAMMU/ NEW DELHI, Jan 13: Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Monday said that 80% of the remaining terrorists in the Jammu and Kashmir are of Pakistani origin.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, the Army chief said that there is a shift "from terrorism to tourism," marked by a decline in violence and successful events like the Amarnath Yatra, which saw over 5 lakh pilgrims last year.

He said that last year, 60% of terrorists eliminated were of Pakistan origin. "As of today, around 80% or more of the remaining terrorists in the Valley and Jammu area are believed to be of Pakistan origin," he said, adding that despite

the effective ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC) since February 2021, infiltration attempts and terror infrastructure persist.

He acknowledged increased terrorist activities in north Kashmir and the Doda-Kishtwar belt but emphasised that overall violence levels remain under control.

"The peaceful conduct of the Amarnath Yatra, which saw over five lakh pilgrims last year, and elections in the region indicate a positive shift from 'terrorism to tourism,'" he said.

He also emphasised the role of the media in national security, stating, "Mass media and security forces have great potential to converge towards nation-building and national security."

"My mission is to ensure full-spectrum preparedness while transforming the Indian Army into an Atmanirbhar (self-reliant), future-ready force, a key pillar of national security that contributes meaningfully to nation-building," he said.

KCPS Chairman, MD attend Round Square heads symposium in London

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: KC Public School, Jammu, the only Round Square school in J&K and amongst 270 member schools in the world like The Doon School, Mayo College, Larence School Snawar etc. attended the Round Square Heads' Symposium which is an opportunity, once every two years, to network, share good practices, collaborate on common challenges and take time and space to think creatively and develop new ideas. Its 2025 edition was held in London from January 9 to 12.

This year's theme - 'Back to the Future' - focused on future thinking and innovation.

Raju Chowdhary, Chairman of KC Public School and Arti Chowdhary, Managing Director (MD) of the school attended the symposium and gained in-depth knowledge and understanding of the theme extremely relevant to rapidly evolving future world of artificial intelligence (AI) and how future innovation in education might reimagine and reinvigorate our traditions, history and heritage.

The venue of the Symposium was London

County Hall, Belvedere Road, London.

On January 9, Heads of more than 100 Round Square Schools from all over the world split into smaller groups visited 5 Round Square Schools in and around London, namely, Box Hill School, Cobham Hall School, Queen Anne's School, LVS Ascot and Radnor House Sevenoaks where they were hosted by heads of these schools and given tours followed by lunch.

On January 10 and 11, they attended a series of keynote addresses, panel discussions, workshops and carousels. The keynote speaker on January 10 was Priya Lakhani, OBE, who is Founder, CEO of CENTURY Tech and BBC AI Decoded correspondent. She co-founded the Institute for Ethical AI in Education, is a Non-Executive Board Member at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and sits on the UK Government's AI Council.

On January 11, the keynote speaker was Adah Parris who is a leading keynote speaker, polymath, anti-disciplinary artist, tech futurist, and activist. She is the Chair of Mental Health First Aid England and the advisory group for the Centre for

Cultural Value. The Panelists and Baraza Breakout Leaders were Carla Aerts (UCL London), Dr. Martin Compton (Kings College, London) and Dr Jun Zhao (University of Oxford) who spoke about the future of education in an AI world, leveraging generative AI for a transformed teaching and assessment future and fostering children's digital agency and making moral machines.

The carousel speakers consisted of Katrina Sampson (Havergeral College, Canada), Andrew Baker Dainfern College, South Africa), Punit MK Vasu (The Indian School Dubai), Alec O'Connell (Scotch College Perth, Australia), Nick Reeves (Colegio Colombo Británico, Bogota), Adam England (Ecole Ruban Vert, Gabon), Ambika Gulati (The Millennium School, Dubai) and Wayne Brown (Whanganui Collegiate School, New Zealand) - heads of Round Square schools from different parts of the world.

They shared their innovations and good practices related to integration of AI with school education and other relevant issues.

The Symposium concluded on January 12 with the Annual General Meeting of the Round Square.

Trade union leader Bhopinder Singh joined hands with JKTF, nominated as District president Kathua



Federation M.Amin Khan, State President Mohd Ashraf Sheikh, and Sr. Vice Chairman Showket Ali Beg, Provincial President Jammu Sanjeet Sharma along with the entire central leadership, congratulated Singh and acknowledged outgoing District President Dr. Sanjay Sharma, now Provincial Vice President.

The Central leadership expressed hope that Singh and Sharma will collaborate to strengthen the teachers' forum and promote teachers' and students' welfare.

Additionally, Anil Dutta and Shafiq Raza Qurashi Senior trade Unions leader's from District Poonch has been elevated to State Vice President & Provincial Secretary of the Teachers Forum respectively.

sent of State President Mohd Ashraf Sheikh.

As a veteran trade union leader, Singh brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role, expected to strengthen the Teachers Forum Kathua and advocate for teachers' rights.

Chairman J&K Teachers Forum and National vice president All India secondary Teachers

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Bhopinder Singh, a seasoned trade union leader from District Kathua, has taken the reins as the new District President of the Teachers Forum Kathua.

His nomination was made by the District Executive body of the Teachers Forum Kathua, with the con-

Sai Shyam Educational Society celebrates Lohri

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Sai Shyam College of Education and Sa Shyam Public Hr. Sec. School Ghou-Manhasan, Jammu celebrated annual festival Lohri today with gaiety and enthusiasm. Celebrations started with lit of fire by

C. L. Tickoo Chairman of the Institution along with Principal and Staff. Special assembly was held wherein importance of festival was discussed among the students.

Dances and melodious songs were presented by students as part of celebration. Students of lower



classes were attired in colorful dresses. All stu-

dents and teachers sang folk songs and danced

around the fire

The importance of Lohri festival which marks the end of winter season and harvesting of winter crops in North India was explained to the students.

Lastly, Prasad of peanuts, Revdi, etc was distributed among all students and teachers.

TNWS felicitates Nitish Mahajan, President of Trikuta Nagar Mandal BJP

Top News Report

JAMMU, Jan 13: Team Trikuta Nagar Welfare Society (TNWS) organized a felicitation ceremony to honour Nitish Mahajan on his appointment as President of the Trikuta Nagar Mandal by the BJP.

His primary responsibilities include addressing the public's concerns and assisting the MLA of the Bahu Constituency in resolving local issues.

The event took place at the society office and was presided over by R.P. Kakkar, President of the Society. He welcomed the guests and audience, presenting Mahajan with a copy of the Madbhagwat Geeta as a token of respect and encouragement for a successful tenure.

During the event, Mahajan engaged in a meaningful interaction with the executive members of the society.

He assured the attendees of his commitment to addressing the pressing issues of Trikuta Nagar residents under the guidance of the MLA and in coordination with the civil administration. Being an active executive member of the society, he expressed his awareness of the long-pending and critical issues in the area and pledged to prioritize their resolution.

Residents shared several significant concerns



during the meeting. One major issue discussed was the inefficiency in streetlight repairs and maintenance. It was pointed out that the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) has been inconsistent in addressing complaints, with many unresolved for over three to eight months.

Despite repeated follow-ups, residents receive new helpline numbers that are either non-functional or unresponsive.

Another pressing concern was the poor quality of road work in Sector 5, Ward 54, near Shiv Mandir Lane.

The blacktopping completed by the JMC's engineering wing deteriorated within a month. Residents demanded an investigation into the substandard work and suggested replacing the roads with fixed lock-type tiles throughout Trikuta Nagar to ensure a long-lasting solution.

Additionally, residents raised several other civic issues, including the need for a new

borewell in Ward 54 to address water shortages; Removal of bulk garbage from the main market area; Desilting of the deep drain running across Sector 7 to Sector 6 behind RBI quarters; and Clearing of blocked drain pipes under the main road, extending from the mini market to the main market of Trikuta Nagar.

The felicitation ceremony concluded with a resolution to highlight these issues with the concerned authorities.

It was decided that once the Hon'ble MLA of the Bahu Constituency returns from Delhi, all the discussed problems will be escalated for early and effective remedies.

The event saw a large gathering of residents and society members. Notable attendees included Pankaj Gour, Kewal Sher, S.N. Kaul, R.K. Tikoo, O.P. Sharma, Vijay Gupta, Sandeep Sharma, Er. Varinder Kumar Suri, Er. Ashok Kumar Arora, and Krishan Lal Gupta.



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