

Good Morning Kashmir

16th Year Of Publication

Narendra Modi @narendramodi



Thank you Visakhapatnam! The roadshow today was spectacular. Happy that our Nari Shakti and Yuva Shakti came to bless us in large numbers.

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2025 Begins With 59% Deficit Rainfall In J&K



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: The New Year—2025 has begun with the deficit precipitation as Jammu and Kashmir has recorded a deficiency of 59 percent in the first week of January.

According to the details, from January 01 to January 08, J&K has recorded a deficit rainfall of 59 percent despite the recent snowfall in most parts of the Valley. Against the normal rainfall of 18.4 mm, J&K has recorded a precipitation of 7.6 mm.

Nine stations across J&K including the winter capital of the Union Territory—Jammu recorded large deficit rainfall. The large deficit rainfall is being marked from 60 per cent to 99 per cent.

Four stations including the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar have recorded the normal precipitation during

the period. As per the details, Budgam and Ganderbal stations in central Kashmir saw large excess rainfall from January 01 to January 08.

Meanwhile, the local Meteorological department (MeT) has issued a yellow warning, saying that there is a possibility of an isolated cold wave till January 10. Amidst the forecast of an isolated cold wave, Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that there is a possibility of generally dry weather conditions and cloudiness during the 10th evening and night.

On January 11, he said that generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light rain in plains of Jammu and snow at isolated higher reaches of Jammu division & Kashmir division.

On January 12-14, the weather would remain generally dry, he said, adding that on January

PM Modi To Inaugurate Z-Morh Tunnel On January 13

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Jammu and Kashmir on January 13 to inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel on the Srinagar-Sonamarg road to make Sonamarg an all-weather tourist destination.

Official sources said that the PM will arrive on January 13 to physically inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel that will bypass the road from Gagangir to Sonamarg allowing visitors and locals to visit the hill station throughout the year.

At present, the Gagangir-Sonamarg stretch of the road gets blocked by heavy snowfall and avalanches that hit the area every year. The Z-Morh Tunnel is a 6.5 km long 2-lane road tunnel between Gagangir and Sonamarg in the Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir. It is named after the Z-shaped stretch of road that the tunnel has replaced (Z-Morh translates to "Z-turn" in English).

The road used before was



avalanche-prone and often got blocked for several months, but the Z-Morh tunnel provides all-weather connectivity to the Sonamarg tourist town. It takes only 15 minutes to travel the 6.5 km long tunnel compared to hours over the zig-zag road up and down the hills. Together with the adjacent

Zoji-La Tunnel, this geographically important tunnel on the Srinagar-Leh Highway will provide year-round weather-proof connectivity to Baltal (Amarnath cave), Kargil and other places in the Ladakh region.

It will also enhance military logistics and boost tourism and the economy. In addition to

providing all-weather connectivity to Sonamarg, the tunnel will help the employment of local youth and boost tourism and allied activities in the area.

It is one of the 31 road tunnels, 20 in Jammu and Kashmir and 11 in Ladakh.

The construction of the tunnel was started in 2018. The tunnel

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Police Bust Major Drug Racket, 2 Held

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: A major drug racket was busted by the J&K Police, said officials here on Wednesday, adding that two peddlers were arrested and a consignment of eight kg heroin was recovered.

A police statement said that in a successful anti-narcotic operation, police in Srinagar district arrested two drug peddlers from whom eight kg of heroin was recovered.

"A 'Naka' (Checkpoint) was established by

Soldier Ends Life Over 'Blackmail'

AGENCIES

JAMMU: A 27-year-old Army jawan, took his own life in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch on January 4, alleging prolonged harassment and blackmail by a woman and her accomplices.

The jawan has been identified as Krishna Kumar Yadav, a resident of Amarsar village in Jaipur. In his suicide note, Yadav has recounted an incident that took place two years ago and has been haunting him ever since. According to his

High-Speed Trial Held On Katra-Banihal Section



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Indian Railways has achieved a historic milestone with the successful completion of a high-speed trial on the challenging 180-degree climb from Katra to Banihal under the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project.

This development, conducted under adverse conditions, marks a major step towards connecting the

Kashmir Valley with the rest of India via a direct rail link.

Northern Railway Safety Commissioner Dinesh Chand Deswal described the event as a promising advancement for the Indian Railways, signaling the potential launch of the much-awaited rail service. "The trial at 110 km/h on the 180-degree climb is a significant achievement in the history of Indian Railways," Deswal said.

The high-speed trial

JK An Important Place On National Cultural Map: LG Sinha

Says Youth Are Responsible For Writing Their Own Destiny, Shaping The Future Of JK



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Maintaining that the youth are responsible for writing their own destiny and shaping the future of Jammu Kash-

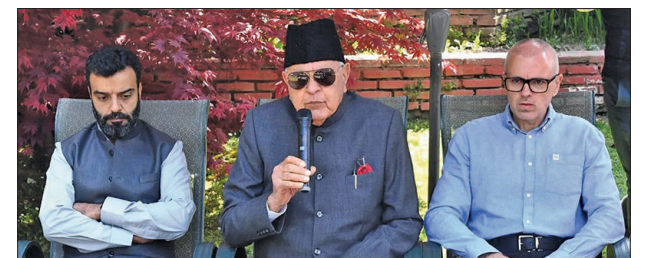
mir, the Union Territory Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said on Wednesday advised the youth from removing the word impossible from their dictionary and move forward

LG Meets Politicians, Several Delegations

JAMMU: Former Minister and legislator besides several delegations on Wednesday called upon Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha and discussed various issues.

Nazir Ahmad Khan, Chairman, District Development Council Budgam, called on LG and submitted a memorandum of demands to him highlighting key development issues of Budgam district including stoppage of the Vande

Omar Must Lead Statehood, Art-370 Struggle: Ruhullah



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: National Conference leader and Member of Parliament, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi on Wednesday expressed scepticism about the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir in the near future.

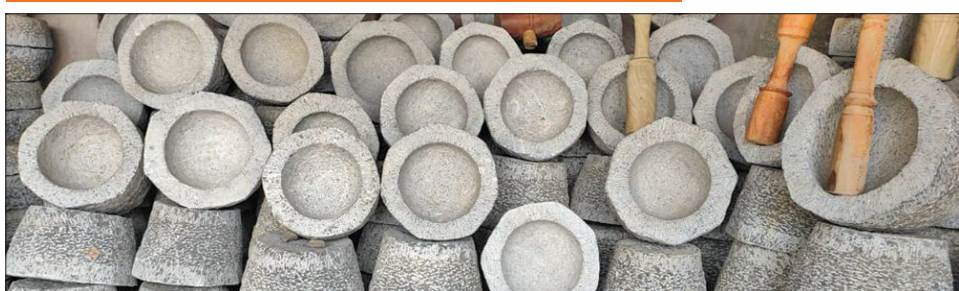
He accused the BJP of orchestrating a governance structure in J&K that sidelined the role of an elected

government, leaving it overshadowed by the Lieutenant Governor.

Mehdi said, "The BJP has designed the system in a way that even if an elected government led by Omar Abdullah is in place, its authority would be diminished by the LG. Whenever the Chief Minister convenes a meeting, the LG holds a similar one the next day, creating the impression that

Kashmir's Traditional Stone Carving Faces Collapse Amid Mining Ban

Carvers Seek Govt Support, Sustainable Solutions; Say Hundreds Of Families Lost Livelihoods



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Stone carvers in Sanderkoot village of north Kashmir's Bandipora district are grappling with the fallout of a mining ban imposed in 2019 which has now disrupted a centuries-old tradition of stone carving, leaving hundreds of families without their primary source of income.

The carvers, locally referred to as sang taraash, have relied on devere stone from local mountains for generations to craft curbstones, gravestones, and floor stones. Since the 2019 mining ban, they have lost access to this essential material, halting

their craft and threatening their livelihoods and a centuries-old cultural tradition.

Notably, the Sanderkoot village is renowned for its centuries-old tradition of stone carving, which holds a significant place in Kashmir's cultural heritage.

The skilled artisans have been crafting exquisite stone pieces such as curbstones, gravestones, and floor stones from the region's unique devere stone.

Sharing his concern with a local news agency KNO, Shakeel Ahmad, a local who took up the craft in 2008, said they now face challenges. "For years, I supported my family with this work. After

the ban, everything changed. The government tells us to look for other jobs but does not provide alternatives or address our concerns. This is not just about stone carving; it's about survival for many of us," he said.

Mushtaq Ahmad, another carver, said this craft has been in their families for hundreds of years. "It's not just a job but a way of life. Generations have passed this skill down, and now we cannot continue it. The government is preserving other art forms, so why not ours? We only ask for the means to work again," he said.

Haleema Begum, the wife of a stone carver,

Insta Page Admin Booked For Defamation

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Police in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district have filed an FIR against the administrator of an Instagram account, "Bhadrawah Confession Page," for allegedly sharing defamatory and 'false' content about several individuals.

The administrator is accused of spreading "fabricated and malicious" information, significantly impacting the victims' personal lives.

The police said that the action followed multiple complaints from individuals who claimed their names were used in false narratives shared on the social media page, a police spokesperson reported. The FIR was registered at Bhadrawah police station under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Information Technology Act.

Authorities have launched an investigation to identify and apprehend the person responsible for defamation, public mischief, and intimidation. The police warned

MUFASA: THE LION KING (3D HINDI) (U) 03:10PM

PUSHPA (THE RULE PART-02) (HINDI) (U/A 16+) 12:30PM, 02:50PM, 05:45PM

YEH JAWAANI HAI DEEWANI (HINDI) (U/A) 12:00PM

KRAVEN THE HUNTER (HINDI) (A) 04:30PM

BABY JOHN (HINDI) (U/A 16+) 11:40AM

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DC Srinagar reviews arrangements for Republic Day-2025

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: In connection with celebrations of forthcoming Republic Day-2025, a meeting was held Wednesday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud Din Bhat at Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex here to ensure smooth and flawless conduct of the national event.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Srinagar, Imtiyaz Ahmad was also present in the meeting.

At the outset, the DC took a Department wise review about the arrangements to be put in place by the respective Departments.

The DC directed the Officers of the concerned Departments to ensure all preparations including Seating arrangements, March Past Parade, Cultural programmes, Transport & Parking facilities, Power & drinking Water Supply, deployment of Sanitation staff, Medical/First Aid & Fire and Emergency teams, Installation of Public Address System, besides illumination of Government Building on the eve of upcoming Republic Day.

On the occasion, matters related to Security, Media Management and entry of VVIPs, VIPs and other participants were also discussed in detail.

The DC stressed on making fool-proof security arrangements in and around the Stadium to



ensure hassle-free celebrations of the function. He also enjoined upon the concerned Officers to maintain close coordination with each other for holding the function smoothly.

Regarding parking for vehicles, the DC asked the Officers of the Traffic Department to formulate an action plan so that the maximum number of vehicles of the dignitaries and other participants coming to attend the function are accommodated in a hassle free manner.

SMC authorities were asked to ensure proper cleanliness in and around the Bakshi Stadium, besides functioning of all washrooms and mobile toilet facility at the venue on January 26. They were also asked to take measures for dog menace around the venue.

Dr Bilal asked the

Education Department and Cultural Academy to ensure all necessary arrangements for boarding/lodging of participating school children and Artists are taken care well in advance with concerned, while transport arrangements will be made by JKRTC. He emphasized on proper safety measures of the participants at the accommodations.

He also stressed on making elaborate arrangements to tackle any water logging, if any caused due to rain/snowfall on the occasion of Full Dress rehearsal proceedings and the main event on 26th January.

The DC also asked the PDD for illumination of identified Government buildings and other prominent spaces on the eve of

the Republic Day-2025. He also asked the Officers to hoist the national flag in their respective offices on the Day.

SSP Srinagar also spoke on the occasion and briefed about the security plan being put in place for peaceful Republic day celebrations for this year.

Besides, Additional District Development Commissioner, Ghulam Hassan Sheikh, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Syed Ahmad Kataria, Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, SDM East, SDM West, Chief Medical Officer, the meeting was attended by senior Officers of PDD, PHE, R&B, SRTC, Cultural Academy, Hospitality & Protocol, RTO, YS&S, Sports Council, Mechanical Engineering and other line Departments.

Distt Admin G'bal holds grievance redressal camp at Wakura

GMK NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL: A Block Diwas was convened Wednesday at the Tehsil Office Wakura to listen to public issues, grievances and demands for their timely redressal.

The camp, presided over by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Mohammad Altaf, was attended by a large number of residents from Wakura block and surrounding areas.

Tehsildar Wakura, BDO Wakura, and officers from various line departments were also present.

During the session, the residents of Wakura and nearby villages raised several pressing concerns. They called for the enhancement of PHC Wakura's infrastructure and the establishment of a Jan Aushadhi center there.



Other issues raised included the designation of Wakura as a horticulture zone, improvements to irrigation canals, ensuring seed availability at the agriculture office, and address-

ing staff shortages at the animal husbandry office, particularly the absence of a veterinary doctor.

The public also demanded upgrades to playfield infrastructure, creation of

employment opportunities, establishment of a Skill Development Institute, and the development of a recreational park for children.

Additionally, residents urged the restoration of SRTC bus services to Lal Chowk, improvements to transportation services, and the repair of the deteriorating condition of Wakura-Dab road.

The ACR instructed officers to coordinate closely to ensure the equitable development of all areas. He directed concerned officers to prioritize resolving the public's genuine demands and submit a detailed report on pending issues for consideration by higher authorities.

The ACR reiterated the administration's commitment to addressing these concerns promptly and encouraged active public participation in such outreach programs.

DC Sgr chairs DLC meet, finalizes action plan for re-verification of beneficiaries

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: In order to finalize the action plan for re-verification process of beneficiaries listed in the Public Distribution System (PDS) database in the District, a meeting of District Level Committee was Wednesday held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud Din Bhat here in his office chamber.

During the meeting, the DC asked the officers to expedite the re-verification process for all beneficiaries, particularly those under the AAY and PHH categories. He stressed the officers to conduct a detailed review of current income status of the beneficiaries to ensure the transparent PDS database.

On the occasion, the DC also directed the Officers to ensure 100% completion of e-KYC for all beneficiaries and to incorporate any eligible beneficiaries who may have been left out from the system.

The DC also directed the formation of Sub Committees at the Village and Ward levels which will conduct general surveys to streamline and update the database in stipulated time.

Notably, the District Level Committee has been formed by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to oversee the verification of beneficiaries enrolled under the Public Distribution System (PDS) database. As per Government order the Committee will be responsible for verifying the eligibility of beneficiaries, identifying and including any left-out eligible individuals, and completing the e-KYC process for pending beneficiaries.

The District Level Committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner, with the Assistant Commissioner (Revenue), Assistant Commissioner (Development), District Social Welfare Officer, and Assistant Director (FCS&CA) as members is tasked with verifying the eligibility of all beneficiaries enrolled in the Public Distribution System (PDS) database, in accordance with the applicable rules, and ensuring the removal of ineligible beneficiaries.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Syed Ahmad Kataria, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Assistant Director FCS&CA, Tehsildar Headquarters and other concerned.

DC B'la finalizes arrangements for Republic Day-2025



GMK NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, chaired a meeting Wednesday to finalize the arrangements for the Republic Day 2025 celebrations in the district.

Senior officers from the civil administration, police, education department, and other concerned agencies were present in the meeting.

The DC reviewed the arrangements in detail, including seating, heating, security and the cultural programs planned for the event. He emphasized the importance of ensuring proper seating arrangements, uninterrupted heating facilities.

The main event will be held at District Police Lines, Baramulla, where the National Flag will be hoisted and cultural programs will showcase the region's heritage and diversity. Departments

were instructed to ensure active participation of participants and local artists to add vibrancy to the celebrations.

The DC also reviewed security arrangements and directed the police to deploy adequate personnel and ensure stringent measures at all venues. Traffic management, emergency response plans, and crowd control measures were also discussed to ensure a smooth and secure event.

Additionally, the DC directed the concerned departments to ensure the availability of essential services, such as water supply, power backup and medical facilities, to address any exigencies during the program.

The meeting concluded with the DC directing all departments to work in coordination to make the Republic Day celebrations a grand success, reflecting the spirit of unity and patriotism.

DC Anantnag formally launches PMAY-G 2.0

GMK NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Syed Fakhruddin Hamid Wednesday formally launched the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G) 2.0 at an official ceremony held at Dak Bungalow Khanabal, here.

This significant launch aims to bring the government's vision of 'Housing for All' closer to reality by ensuring affordable housing for all eligible rural beneficiaries.

Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) Anantnag provided an in-depth overview of PMAY-G 2.0, emphasizing its key objectives, implementation strategies, and benefits for rural households. A live demonstration of the online registration portal was conducted, showcasing its functionality and ease of use.

The surveyors deployed for the initiative received hands-on training on the mobile application and technical aspects of data collection. This training aims to ensure accurate and seamless registration of eligible beneficiaries.

The DC highlighted the transformative potential of PMAY-G 2.0 in enhancing rural housing and living standards. He urged the survey teams to ensure that no eligible beneficiary is left unregistered and

directed them to strictly adhere to the scheme's guidelines. He further emphasized the need for inter-departmental cooperation to facilitate smooth implementation and accurate data collection.

The DC also called upon the media to play a proactive role in raising awareness about the scheme to ensure its wider outreach among the rural population. He stated that the recently opened registration portal by the Ministry of Rural Development offers a significant opportunity for eligible beneficiaries to secure affordable housing.

He added that the launch of PMAY-G 2.0 in Anantnag reaffirms the district administration's commitment to improving living standards and addressing housing challenges in rural areas, marking a pivotal step toward achieving housing equity and improving rural living conditions. The administration remains committed to realizing the scheme's objectives through collaborative efforts and community engagement.

The event was attended by senior officials, including the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Block Development Officers (BDOs), and officials from the Rural Development Department (RDD).

Seminar on NEET held at GDC Shopian



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: A seminar for the aspirants of National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) of the district was Wednesday organized at Government Degree College (GDC) Shopian by District Administration Shopian.

The event was hosted by the Chief Education Officer, Shopian in collaboration with GDC Shopian and DIPR Shopian and was attended by NEET aspirants and recent NEET Qualifiers of the district.

The function was aimed to orient the NEET aspirants of the district about the upcoming initiation of the free NEET Coaching and mentorship program by the district administration at two centres put up in Shopian town and Zainapora Subdivision.

The function was also graced by recent NEET Qualifiers of the district who provided guidance and mentorship/ counseling to the aspirants. It also served as a motivational event, recognizing the achievements of the district's NEET qualifiers and inspiring others to pursue their dreams in the medical field.

Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar attended the seminar and took the opportunity to felicitate the NEET qualifiers from the district with Mementos and Appreciation certificates.

The seminar aimed to provide a platform for aspirants, qualifiers and educators to discuss the importance of NEET, its exam pattern, and preparation strategies, said Shahid Saleem. He urged the aspirants to use the facility provided by the district administration to give shape to dreams in the much cherished field of medical education and health.

The District Administration's initiative demonstrates its commitment to promoting education and encouraging students to excel in competitive exams like NEET.

38 officers regularized as Dy Directors in J&K E&S Service

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: In a significant move towards enhancing administrative efficiency, the Jammu and Kashmir Government regularized 38 in-charge Deputy Directors of Jammu and Kashmir Economics and Statistics (Gazetted) Service (JKESS) as Deputy Directors.

As per the order issued by Planning, Development and Monitoring department, the regularizations have been made in respect of these officers in the pay level-11 (67700-208700) with effect from 21.12.2023 as per the recommendations of Departmental Promotion Committee/J&K Public Service Commission.

Secretary, Planning, Development and Monitoring department, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary said that this decision comes as a part of the government's continued efforts to streamline the administrative structure and ensure that experienced officials are recognized for their contributions. He added that this step will

further strengthen the department and enable it to deliver better services and play a crucial role in policy making through data-driven insights.

He also wished the officers for successful tenure in their new capacity and advised them to contribute significantly in their enhanced roles and responsibilities.

Free Medical camp held at Shopian

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: A free medical camp, 'Parwah' or 'Care' was organised today by the Motor Vehicles Department, Shopian in collaboration with the Health Department for the drivers of district Shopian at Batapora Stand, Shopian.

The camp was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar in the presence of ARTO, Shopian.

The DC appreciated the initiative taken by departments, showcasing the administration's commitment to providing

much needed medical screening for the vital section of our society. Such events demonstrate the efforts being taken to promote healthcare and wellness in the district, said Shahid Saleem.

The medical camp aimed to provide comprehensive health check-ups and medical facilities to the members of the transport sector.

MVD & Health Departments have been regularly conducting the Medical Camps in the district for the transporters of the district in order to provide the services of free healthcare to them.

Distt admin Srinagar reaches out to the fire victims of Hazratbal

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, a team of District Administration, Srinagar today visited Hazratbal area of the District to provide immediate assistance to the fire affected families whose houses were gutted in a fire incident here on Wednesday morning.

The immediate relief was sanctioned by Deputy Commissioner Srinagar and was provided to the affected families through the team of District

Administration in the form of blankets, besides Rs10,000 to each affected families as an interim relief out of the District Red Cross Fund.

The Team of District Administration Srinagar also expressed sympathy with the affected families on loss of property.

Further, the Deputy Commissioner has also directed the concerned authorities to assess the losses and make a comprehensive report for providing structure-wise financial assistance under SDRF to the fire affected families separately.

PW Expands Offline Network with 150+ Vidyapeeth, Pathshala Centers

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Physics Wallah (PW), an Indian Ed-Tech platform, currently has over 150 Vidyapeeth and Pathshala centres across 20 states of India. Approximately ten of these centres also have the Vidyapeeth Residential Programme (VPRP). For the current academic year (AY) 2025-26, PW has broadened

its offline presence by opening Vidyapeeth and Pathshala centres in several new cities including key locations like Dibrugarh, Chennai, and Udaipur. Chennai marks the platform's first offline foray into the state of Tamil Nadu.

The event also saw participation from students who previously studied at PW and secured seats at gov-

ernment colleges such as IIT and AIIMS. These students were congratulated and asked to share their journey with the current students.

The Vidyapeeth Residential Programme (VPRP) is designed for NEET and JEE aspirants seeking a learning experience with residential support. This program provides a structured and academically

stimulating environment, allowing students to fully dedicate themselves to their academic objectives. By offering consistent faculty for both online and offline classes, VPRP is trying to ensure a smooth learning experience, and attempting to minimize the challenges typically associated with switching between formats.

Kashmir's ancient stone carving faces collapse amid mining ban

SAJID RAINA

SRINAGAR: Stone carvers in Sanderkoot village of north Kashmir's Baniptora district are grappling with the fallout of a mining ban imposed in 2019 which has now disrupted a centuries-old tradition of stone carving, leaving hundreds of families without their primary source of income.

The carvers, locally referred to as sang tarash, have relied on devere stone from local mountains for generations to craft curbstones, gravestones, and floor stones. Since the 2019 mining ban, they have lost access to this essential material, halting their craft and threatening their livelihoods and a centuries-old cultural tradition.

Notably, the Sanderkoot village is renowned for its centuries-old tradition of stone carving, which holds a significant place in Kashmir's cultural heritage.

The skilled artisans have been crafting exquisite stone pieces such as curbstones, gravestones, and floor stones from the region's unique devere stone.

Sharing his concern, Shakeel Ahmad, a local who took up the craft in 2008, said they now face challenges. "For years, I supported my family with this work. After the ban, everything changed. The government tells us to look for other jobs but does not provide alternatives or address our concerns. This is not just about stone carving; it's about survival for



many of us," he said.

Mushtaq Ahmad, another carver, said this craft has been in their families for hundreds of years. "It's not just a job but a way of life. Generations have passed this skill down, and now we cannot continue it. The government is preserving other art forms, so why not ours? We only ask for the means to work again," he said.

Haleema Begum, the wife of a stone carver, spoke about the struggles faced by families. "My husband's earnings came from carving stones for homes and mosques. Now, we don't even have enough for basic necessities. We don't want charity; we want to work. The ban has left us dependent on odd jobs, which are not enough to sustain our family," she said.

The locals said the ban was implemented without consultation or an understanding of its impact. Several carvers have tried switching to other professions, but with limited skills outside their traditional craft, options remain scarce. "I tried working as a labourer, but the income is inconsistent," said Bashir Ahmad, another carver. "This art was our identity. Losing it feels like losing a part of who we are."

"This craft has been part of our lives for centuries, passed down from one generation to the next," said Nazir Ahmad, a stone carver. "Now, with the ban, we are unable to continue what our ancestors sustained for so long. It feels like our heritage and livelihood are being erased."

Another group of artisans who have been carving stones for generations, now find themselves struggling after the mining ban. "With no access to raw materials, we have had to turn to daily labour, but the

income is unpredictable and barely enough to meet our basic needs. It's a difficult reality after years of craftsmanship," they said.

In other districts, artisans who have relied on local stone quarries for generations are also facing similar challenges. They urge the government to lift the ban or introduce a sustainable mining policy that allows them to resume their work. They also demand skill development programmes and financial assistance for families affected by the ban.

Meanwhile, an official said that the government is in the process of reviewing the matter. He said Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary will form a committee to assess and categorise these mining sites as either major or minor. "The final decision will be made based on the committee's recommendations," the official said—(KNO)

Srinagar woman transforms passion for quilling into thriving profession

JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: A passionate young woman from Srinagar has emerged as a successful quilling artist by turning her pastime into a thriving profession.

Sabreena Aliya, 28, a resident of the Soura area in Srinagar, has dedicated herself to showcasing and preserving Kashmir's vibrant heritage through her intricate quilling creations.

After completing her master's degree in Arabic, Sabreena discovered her calling in the art of quilling—a relatively uncommon craft in Kashmir. Using paper strips, she skillfully loops, curls and twists them to craft captivating designs with remarkable precision.

Sabreena said her fascination for art and drawing began in childhood when she would create various items. However, her journey into quilling began



after discovering the art form through a mobile app.

"I came across a 3D quilling artwork online, which ignited my curiosity and motivated me to explore this unique medium," Sabreena said. "From there, I transitioned from creating simple decorations to crafting complex and detailed designs."

Her father, a designer, played a pivotal role in her success by helping her build structural bases for

her quilled pieces. "His support allowed me to transform my passion into a thriving business," she added.

Sabreena's creations, ranging from delicate flower panels to iconic representations of Kashmiri culture such as Samovars and Shikaras, have garnered significant interest. Her custom Nikah designs, personalized name plaques, and lifelike replicas of traditional Kashmiri

artefacts are particularly sought after.

Beyond her artistic endeavours, Sabreena is passing on her skills to the next generation by teaching quilling art to students at a local school. She has registered with the Handicrafts and Handlooms Department, further establishing her role as a preserver of Kashmir's artistic traditions.

Harnessing the power of social media, Sabreena has showcased her work to a broader audience, attracting customers who value the uniqueness of her creations.

Sabreena now seeks government support to establish a centre where she can train youth interested in quilling. "Everyone knows there are fewer government jobs. Youth must strive to do something unique to gain attention while working to keep Kashmir's heritage alive," she said—(KNO)

Qazi Salman Promoted as Director, PIB Srinagar



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Senior Indian Information Services (IIS) officer Shri Qazi Mohammad Salman has been promoted as Director, Press Information Bureau (PIB), Srinagar, with additional charge as Director News, Doordarshan Kendra (DDK), Srinagar.

The order was issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India

today for 27 senior level IIS officers posted across the country.

Shri Salman was serving as Joint Director, Press Information Bureau (PIB) Srinagar, with an additional charge of News Unit of Doordarshan Kendra (DDK) Srinagar. In his new role, Shri Salman will continue to oversee the operations of PIB Srinagar and News Unit of DDK Srinagar, ensuring enhanced public outreach and information dissemination in the region.

The officer has a vast experience in the field of public information and broadcasting. His leadership in various roles has been widely recognized and instrumental in strengthening the communication of government policies and programmes the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

Elusive Musk Deer rescued in Verinag forests

UMAISAR GULL GANIE



ANANTNAG: A rare and threatened species of Musk Deer was rescued alive in Verinag forest belt of South Kashmir's Anantnag district, wildlife officials said on Wednesday.

A wildlife official said that the Musk Deer, commonly known as 'Roose Kat', was found roaming near Verinag Garden, after which it was captured alive by locals.

"The Kashmir Musk Deer (*Moschus cupreus*), categorized as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), will be taken to Dachigam National Park, a wildlife sanctuary on the outskirts of Srinagar," the official said.

He said that the Musk Deer is one of the top conservation priority species,

facing population decline due to poaching, habitat loss, and climate change. The animal is often hunted for its musk pod, making its survival increasingly difficult.

"It was a rare event for the deer to be found in the Verinag forests," the official said.

"It was spotted by locals, who informed us. We immediately dispatched a team and rescued the Musk Deer," Mushtaq Mir, a wildlife in-charge in Dooru, told KNO. He said the deer had a minor injury and had been given proper treatment—(KNO)

SDH Kokernag

Patients accuse doctor of misbehaviour, stage protest

JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: Patients visiting Sub District Hospital (SDH) Kokernag in South Kashmir's Anantnag district on Wednesday accused a doctor posted at the health facility of misbehaving with them.

Locals, staged a protest against the Health Department for its alleged "failure" to take action against the doctor, whose misbehaviour, according to them, has been brought into the notice of higher ups several times.

The protest erupted over the allegations of patient Suhaib Hussain Khan. Protestors alleged that the particular doctor has been in question for months as he has repeatedly used foul language with the patients.

They said that they have brought his behaviour into the notice of higher ups on many occasions but nothing has been done till date.

In addition to using foul language, they alleged that the doctor asks the patients to visit him at his private clinic.

They said the Block Medical Officer (BMO) Larnoo had assured the formation of an inquiry committee to investigate the allegations. He had assured that a detailed report will be submitted within two days, and strict action will be taken if the allegations are substantiated, but nothing has been done till now.

Residents urged Health Minister Sakina Itoo to intervene into the matter and take action against the erring doctor.

When contacted Director Health Services Kashmir (DHSK) Dr Jehangir Bakshi while talking to KNO said, "The Chief Medical Officer Anantnag has ordered an inquiry and the show cause notice has been sent to the erring doctor."—(KNO)

Javed Dar conducts surprise visit to GMC B'la, reviews functioning

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj, Javed Ahmad Dar, Wednesday conducted a surprise visit to Government Medical College (GMC) Baramulla to review its functioning and service delivery.

During the visit, Principal GMC Baramulla, Dr. Majid Jahangir and Medical Superintendent of associated hospital, Dr. Parvaiz Masoodi, briefed the Minister about the operations, infrastructure and challenges faced by the institution. They provided updates on ongoing projects and initiatives aimed at improving patient care and healthcare services.

The Minister interacted with the patients, attendants, doctors and paramedical staff to seek feedback on healthcare services there. He inspected various departments and sought details about the

duity rosters of staff, particularly during the evening and morning hours, to ensure adequate staffing and seamless service delivery. He directed the administration to strictly adhere to the duty schedules and ensure presence of staff at all critical hours.

Javed Dar also issued strict directions for maintaining cleanliness and hygiene across the institution, ensuring availability of essential medicines and equipment besides improving the response time in emergency services. He further stressed the need for regular monitoring and timely redressal of grievances to build public trust in the healthcare system.

Highlighting the government's commitment to quality healthcare, Javed Dar urged the staff to uphold high standards of professionalism and deliver compassionate care to patients. He assured full support for strengthening the institution's infrastructure and resources.

Arrangements finalized for Dubjan Winter Festival in Shopian

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: Arrangements for inaugural Winter Carnival, 'NAGRAI HEEMAL', scheduled for January 11th and 12th at Dubjan, Shopian were finalized today here at Mini-Secretariat Shopian under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar.

On the occasion, the DC detailed out the department wise action plans for the impactful organisation of mega and first of its kind event in the district, which aims to promote tourism, culture, and community engagement.

The carnival will feature a variety of activities, including snow crafts, snow igloos, ice sports, competitions for children, and exhibitions of local cuisine and arts.

The administration has

sought participation of locals for engaging them in activities of adventure, arts etc along with showcasing the rich culture and heritage of the district.

The District administration has made all arrangements and is coordinating efforts across various departments to ensure the event's success for promoting the tourism potential of Mughal road- Heerpora wildlife sanctuary and Historic Sarais circuit.

DC emphasized the importance of effective planning and collaboration among departments to provide a memorable experience for participants and has called out for maximum participation.

SSP, Shopian, Anayat Ali; ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone; ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz officers of district administration & security forces were present.

Mission Karmayogi, A Revolutionary Reform: Khatana

AGENCIES

KOCHI: Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha Member, Ghulam Ali Khatana, praised the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, for introducing the visionary Mission Karmayogi, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at transforming bureaucracy into a more people-centric and public-friendly institution.

According to the Associated News Bureau, speaking at an event, Khatana highlighted that Mission Karmayogi focuses on creating a dedicated and efficient workforce committed to serving the public. "This initiative marks a shift from rule-based to role-based governance, enabling employees to transform into true Karmayogis. It emphasizes enhancing their skills and modernizing

their mindset to deliver better services to society," he said.

Khatana further stated that the mission aims to equip government employees with modern tools and a progressive outlook, fostering innovation and efficiency in governance. He commended the initiative's potential to bridge the gap between the administration and the people, ensuring that governance becomes more inclusive, transparent, and impactful.

Mission Karmayogi is expected to usher in a new era of governance where the focus will remain on delivering measurable outcomes and meeting the aspirations of the citizens. This ambitious reform underscores the government's commitment to building a more efficient, accountable, and people-oriented bureaucracy. (ANB)

JKPCC Chief Tariq Karra's son steps into politics

MUBASHIR ALAM WANI

SRINAGAR: Dr. Waleed Tariq Karra, son of Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) Chief, Tariq Hamid Karra, has announced his transition from a full-time medical professional to mainstream politics, marking the continuation of his family's three-generation political legacy.

Dr. Waleed, a former Resident Dermatologist at GMC Srinagar, said that his foray into politics was primarily driven by his father's wish to uphold the family's political legacy, which spans three generations.

"I was reluctant towards politics; my interests were sports, poetry, and music. However, the legacy of political service, carried forward by my father and other family members, compelled me to take on this new role," he said.

Dr. Waleed disclosed that he was poised to contest the 2024 Assembly elections from the Eidgah constituency. However, due to a pre-poll alliance agreement, he had to withdraw his candidacy. Having officially joined

the Congress as a party worker, Dr. Waleed said that he has no interest in holding any official post. His focus, he said, is on grassroots development and serving the people of the Central-Salitang constituency. He said he was already playing an active role under his father's guidance.

He said under his father's guidance, he has taken charge of the works committee, tasked with overseeing developmental initiatives and concerns in the Central Shaletang constituency.

Dr. Waleed highlighted his commitment to addressing issues in the Central Shaletang constituency. He said he was acting as an "unofficial" representative and that recently he was overseeing snow clearance and addressing winter-related challenges like electricity issues.

He said he aims to collaborate with the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) to develop a sustainable, futuristic model for urban development, drawing inspiration from global standards in countries like the US and Europe—(KNO)

NAME CORRECTION

It is hereby notified for the information of all concerned that the name mentioned in my Aadhar card bearing number 6692 8447 0771 is incorrectly registered as SHAGUFTA AKHTAR, whereas my correct name, as per my school documents, is SHOGUFA BANO. Now I want to correct it. Any person having any objection in this regard may contact the concerned authorities within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained after this period.

Good Morning **Kashmir**

EDITORIAL

Man Animal Conflict On The Rise

There has been an increase in the number of man-animal conflicts in Kashmir from the last two decades causing general panic in the society. The main encounters occur between humans living in colonies bordering wildlife sanctuaries and animals living in these sanctuaries like leopards, black bears, and brown bears. Of late the frequent sightings of non-native species like saw-scaled Russel's viper in urban areas of Ganderbal and Kupwara has led to panic in many circles.

From 2006 to March 2024, 264 people were killed and 3,164 were injured in encounters with wild animals. In 2023-2024, there were 4,947 reported cases of wildlife conflict, resulting in 12 deaths and 83 injuries. The north division of Kashmir has been the most affected, with 2,873 cases and 8 fatalities in 2023-2024. Kupwara, Baramulla, and Bandipora in the north, along with Anantnag and Kulgam in the south, are the most conflict-prone areas.

The main causes of this conflict are the human encroachment of areas that are essentially forest land or the buffer zone between forests and civilian areas. The availability of food in urban or suburban areas is another reason as this alters the natural instinctive food habits of the animals. Climate change has resulted in reduced forest cover, which has reduced the natural resources for wild animals. Of all these reasons, the increasing population is the most critical reason for the increasing occurrence of man-animal conflict. Our Kashmir valley is expanding horizontally rather than vertically. However, the fact that the entire Kashmir valley falls in the earthquake prone zone is the main reason why the municipality does not encourage high-rise colonies. So the only option people are left with is to encroach upon the forests. Recently, the government's resolve to build townships around Srinagar can be one effective strategy to curb this horizontal expansion.

The response of the Department of Wildlife Protection has established 22 rescue control rooms around Kashmir to manage the conflict. However, there are parallel estimates being floated that the Wildlife Department is not adequately staffed to handle the crisis. The Department of Wildlife needs to increase their staff, gadgetry and surveillance to minimise fatalities arising out of these conflicts. The government must consider the prospect of vertical expansion and start practically implementing it as soon as possible.

As We Move Along Time



MOHAMMAD IMRAN RESHI

You might be surprised after reading the title of this write-up, but there is no error or doubt in the same. Let's unveil the mystery behind this. Whereas Almighty Allah has endowed us with innumerable endowments and blessings, which we cannot count on even in this AI and Robotics world. Amongst all those blessings, time is the most important blessing endowed upon us by Almighty Allah. If we share or donate our blood with some needy, the same gets regenerated within a few days but this is not the case with our time.

Time once spent, whether intentionally or unintentionally, positively or negatively, cannot be retrieved or regenerated at any cost. Imagine you are donating blood to someone to save his life, but that needs a doctor or other specialized personnel to perform this operation. The fact is that someone can only get that professional degree or specialization after spending 25 to 30 years studying and training in that particular subject/field, making the optimum and utmost utilization of his time. What if we are ready to donate our blood to some needy, but there is no one enough capable to initiate the process of blood transmission in a very professional, careful, and confident way? And that is why the article has been titled this way. Now let's dive a bit deeper into this mystery. The author is hopeful that the readers can certainly benefit from this if the due attention and concentration have been paid to the same.

We have always heard about the great personalities who have dwelled in the past centuries and who have contributed great treasure to this world. We always feel proud and excited when hearing or encountering their respectable names in our studies or in our subjects while studying. When we dive deep into their contributions towards societies and their achievements in life, our reason fails to figure out this riddle, as to how can a person achieve

and accomplish such milestones in this merely limited human life span.

Whether we take the examples in the fields of education, medicine, space, politics or any other sphere of life, we definitely come across names and titles of such great personalities and dignitaries whose contribution we can never overlook and ignore. Some great names worth mentioning are Al-Khwarizmi, Isaac Newton, Thomas Alva Edison, APJ Abdul Kalam Azad, Jawahar Lal Nehru, William Wordsworth, Sir Mohammad Iqbal, and so forth. Let aside, there personal backgrounds the subjects of interest, and their field of work, one thing is common to all of them and that's Time Management.

More or less, all of these great personalities might have struggled and worked very hard throughout their life, but the most important thing that had helped them to achieve such milestones and contribute such ever-lasting wealth to the nation is the judicious and optimum utilization of their time and leisure.

When we come across their names and their contributions towards the nations, in our subjects, we often consid-

er as if they don't belong to the human race rather, they are some superhuman and supernatural aliens who are built with such knowledge and understanding, but that is not the case. They only understood the value of their time and learned the fact of putting their time to proper use.

All the significant personalities whose names we often read, hear, or use in our daily life, has started their journey from the letter "A" and their day is constituted of only 24 hours as we do. None of them has enjoyed the privilege of having a day of 30 hours or a year of 400 days. Moreover, not a single person was born accompanied by any bachelor's or master's degree in any of the subjects. All they did to manage to reach such heights and create such unbreakable records was the proper utilization of their limited time.

As some author has rightly said that if you dare to waste one hour in your life, you have not yet realized the value of your time and life as well. Even some believe that time is the real wealth. Here the point is clear how important our time is. But unfortunately, in our case, everything is on the contrary. The thing

we mostly take for granted and spend obliviously is the asset of time. We do not admire and manage our time as it is supposed to be spent and utilized. And once the time is over we just wish and wail but that all is in vain. Our regretting and repenting can never ever reverse our life to childhood and provide us, once more, the opportunity to use our time wisely and efficiently.

It is advisable for all of us especially the student folk to admire their time and realize its value. We should not spend our time in such an oblivious and reckless way. It is only the proper utilization of our precious time that can pave way for our success in life and the achievement of great milestones. Only then we can make our life easy and prosperous and make our parents and dear ones feel proud of us. It is the only way to contribute some sustainable and unforgettable developments and achievements to our society and the human race in general.

While doing any activity or intending to do any activity, think twice as to whether this is important for me or not. Similarly, whenever someone asks for your time, think twice whether this may prove fruitful for me in the long run or it may deprive me of the peace and progress in future. Before doing any activity or spending time with some person, we must think as to what extent, doing this activity or sharing time with that person, is adding value to our life. If it is not adding any value and meaning to your life and your future progress, it is better to abstain from that activity or such person.

So far as kids are concerned, they are not having such cognitive development to consider the importance of their time. Hence, their parents and guardians are held responsible to inculcate the value and importance of time in the hearts & minds, and the body & soul of their wards so that they will not be indulged in unnecessary and unimportant activities, which otherwise, can prove very derogatory and harmful for their future self. We must not deprive them of their childhood rights of playing and doing amusing things but we just need to let them know the management of their time in a very friendly and loving manner. So that when they reach adolescence, it should not become a thing of concern for us or them as well.

The author can be mailed at reshiim-ran777@gmail.com

Will India Be Able To Defeat Metapneumovirus?



DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

Human Metapneumovirus has emerged as a global health concern, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals. First identified in 2001, human metapneumovirus causes significant respiratory infections worldwide, leading to hospitalization and mortality, particularly in low-income countries. As viral outbreaks such as human metapneumovirus pose increasing challenges, it is important to strengthen regulatory frameworks for effective management. Human metapneumovirus has become a significant global health concern due to its widespread spread, particularly during seasonal outbreaks.

The virus is gaining attention as its impact increases across regions. In China, increased surveillance has revealed a rise in human metapneumovirus cases, particularly in children and the elderly, indicating an increase in detection rates. Although first identified in 2001, human metapneumovirus has gained attention worldwide due to its increasing respiratory infections, leading to increased hospitalizations and mortality. The World Health Organization reports that human metapneumovirus accounts for 3%-10% of hospitalizations globally, with a significant increase in children under five years of age.

The virus often spreads rapidly during flu season, leading



to a surge in respiratory infections, making it a seasonal health threat. In China, the flu season coincides with a surge in human metapneumovirus cases, leading to increased hospitalizations and media coverage. Despite being in circulation for years, many countries, including India, lack a comprehensive and affordable testing infrastructure for human metapneumovirus. While global agencies monitor human metapneumovirus, many regions still face challenges in detecting and reporting it, affecting early interventions. The virus disproportionately affects certain vulnerable groups, such as children under five years of age.

Human metapneumovirus disproportionately affects young children, particularly those under the age of five, who are at higher risk of severe illness and hospitalization. The elderly, particularly those with existing health problems, are more vulnerable to severe outcomes from human metapneumovirus infection. In China, a rise in human metapneu-

movirus cases in the elderly has led to a rise in hospitalizations, highlighting the vulnerability of the older population. People with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of severe infection with human metapneumovirus, requiring intensive medical care.

Deaths due to hMPV are significantly higher in vulnerable groups, including infants and immunocompromised people. The case fatality rate for children under five years of age is 1%, raising concerns about the impact of the virus on high-risk populations in both developed and developing countries. In low- and middle-income countries, limited healthcare access increases the risk of severe outcomes for vulnerable populations. Measures to strengthen the regulatory framework and capabilities to manage such viral outbreaks include strengthening the diagnostic infrastructure. India can enhance its diagnostic capabilities by expanding testing facilities for viruses such as hMPV in both the government and private sectors.

The Indian Council of Medical Research can collaborate with private laboratories to ensure widespread, affordable hMPV testing, leading to early detection and prevention. India can expedite the approval process for diagnostic tests by establishing a streamlined regulatory pathway that allows rapid approval of tests during public health emergencies. The Drugs Controller General of India can implement an emergency approval mechanism for diagnostic kits that meet international standards. A robust national surveillance system can be developed to monitor respiratory infections in real time, tracking trends and emerging threats such as human metapneumovirus.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare can expand the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme to include real-time human metapneumovirus tracking across all states. India can launch public health campaigns to raise awareness about human metapneumovirus, focusing on prevention methods and

recognizing symptoms, especially among vulnerable populations. The Ministry of Health can partner with the media and NGOs to conduct information campaigns, especially in rural areas, to recognize symptoms of respiratory infections such as human metapneumovirus.

Strengthen international collaboration: India can enhance its global collaboration to share information and resources for managing viral outbreaks, thereby ensuring timely response to emerging pathogens. India should enhance its regulatory framework to tackle emerging viral threats such as human metapneumovirus by strengthening surveillance, diagnosis, and rapid response mechanisms through National Health Mission initiatives. Investments in vaccine and antiviral research, along with global best practices, will help mitigate such outbreaks. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure is essential to protect vulnerable populations and control HMPV spread.

Author is a TV panelist

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Human Metapneumovirus: Let's All Calm Down



PRIYANKA SAURABH

Human metapneumovirus, part of the Pneumoviridae family, is a respiratory virus that causes illnesses ranging from mild colds to more severe lung infections such as pneumonia and bronchiolitis. Although less recognized than flu or respiratory syncytial virus, human metapneumovirus is an important cause of respiratory illnesses worldwide, especially during winter and spring. The virus poses a particularly great risk to vulnerable populations such as young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems. The virus can cause great difficulties for them, so it is important to raise awareness and take preventive measures. Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to severe respiratory conditions such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia.

Older adults, 65 years of age or older, as well as people with chronic health problems such as asthma or COPD, are more likely to have complications. During pregnancy, hMPV can cause respiratory problems, which can put the health of both mother and baby at risk. People who have weakened immune systems, whether due to a medical condition or treatment such as chemotherapy, are at higher risk of having severe symptoms. A recent outbreak of hMPV in China has highlighted the potential seriousness of this virus, especially in vulnerable groups. Most infections occur in children under 14 years of age, with many cases requiring hospitalization due to their severity. Symptoms range from persistent cough and fever to more serious conditions such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia. Its similarity to other respiratory illnesses complicates diagnosis and treatment.

To prevent its spread, health authorities in China have emphasized preventive measures such as hand washing, wearing masks, and timely testing. Symptoms of HMPV in adults



often resemble the common cold or flu. These include persistent cough, frequent mucus production, nasal congestion or runny nose, fever, usually mild to moderate fatigue and general body aches, sore throat, and shortness of breath in severe cases. Children are more likely to have severe symptoms. Human metapneumovirus is highly contagious and spreads through a variety of means. The virus can spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, causing respiratory droplets to spread into the air. The virus can also spread through physical contact with an infected person, especially if someone touches their face, eyes, or mouth. The virus can persist on surfaces, and touching contaminated objects such as doorknobs or mobile devices increases the risk of infection. Small respiratory particles can remain suspended in the air, especially in crowded or poorly ventilated

spaces.

Symptoms of human metapneumovirus resemble those of other respiratory infections, making accurate diagnosis dependent on specific laboratory tests. This molecular test detects the genetic material of the virus with high accuracy and is considered the gold standard for diagnosing human metapneumovirus. Rapid antigen tests give quick results but are less sensitive than PCR tests. Most people recover from human metapneumovirus in about 7 to 10 days without complications. However, certain groups are at higher risk of serious complications. Human metapneumovirus can cause viral pneumonia, with severe cases requiring hospitalization and intensive care. Infants and young children often experience inflammation and blockage of the airways, leading to difficulty breathing and wheezing. Human metapneumovirus can worsen

existing respiratory conditions such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. These infections, such as bacterial pneumonia, can develop as complications due to a weakened immune system. Respiratory complications caused by human metapneumovirus during pregnancy may risk maternal and fetal health.

Human metapneumovirus has no specific antiviral medication. The main goal of treatment is to manage symptoms and prevent complications. It is essential to recover and maintain strength. Medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can control fever and body aches. In severe cases, supplemental oxygen or mechanical ventilation may be needed. Patients with complications such as pneumonia may need to be closely monitored in the hospital. To prevent HMPV, it is important to focus on preventive measures, as there is currently no

vaccine available. To reduce the risk of infection, follow these measures. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available. Stay away from individuals who show symptoms of respiratory illness. Avoid crowded areas during outbreaks. Be sure to regularly clean surfaces that are frequently touched, such as door handles, phones, and countertops. Wearing a mask during an outbreak or flu season can help reduce exposure to respiratory droplets. If you have any symptoms, it is important to stay home to prevent the spread of the virus. Being aware of human metapneumovirus and its potential impact is important for early detection and prevention.

Author is a Research Scholar in Political Science

Bangalore's Rameshwaram Cafe

DR. SHIBEN KRISHN RAINA



Bangalore, or Bengaluru as it is now officially known, is one of India's most prominent cities. Known for its pleasant, balanced climate, the city has earned several nicknames, including the 'Silicon Valley of India' for being a hub of Information Technology (IT). Home to some of the world's leading IT companies, Bengaluru also boasts the title 'Garden City of India,' with its numerous lakes and lush parks.

The city is a cultural and educational hub, hosting historical landmarks such as the ISKCON temple—one of the largest Krishna temples globally—sports arenas like the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, and prestigious institutions, including the National Cricket Academy. Bengaluru is also the headquarters of the Art of Living Foundation, one of India's most popular NGOs, led by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Adding to its vibrancy are performances by artists, musicians, and comedians, which are a regular feature of its cultural scene. Given its unique mix of technology, tradition, and entertainment, Bengaluru is aptly called a 'Fun City.'

Currently, I am in Bangalore, and one name that has been making waves here is the 'Rameshwaram Cafe.' Located in Indiranagar, this 10x10 square-foot eatery has become a must-visit destination for food lovers, especially those craving authentic South Indian cuisine. Interestingly, the cafe gained widespread attention last year due to a bombing incident, but this hasn't deterred its popularity.

Despite its modest size, the cafe is perpetually bustling with customers, both inside and outside. People start queuing up early in the morning to get a taste of its delicious offerings. Known for its exceptional South Indian delicacies, the Rameshwaram Cafe reportedly generates an annual turnover exceeding 50 crore.

The Rameshwaram Cafe was established in 2021 by CA Divya Raghavendra Rao and Raghavendra Rao. Since its inception, the cafe has set itself apart not just with its food but also with its traditions. Every morning, a religious ceremony is performed before the massive kitchen is

Adding to its vibrancy are performances by artists, musicians, and comedians, which are a regular feature of its cultural scene. Given its unique mix of technology, tradition, and entertainment, Bengaluru is aptly called a 'Fun City.'

set in motion. The gas stoves are lit only after prayers to the divine, ensuring a spiritual day.

In the cafe's expansive kitchen, dozens of skilled chefs work tirelessly to prepare a wide variety of South Indian dishes. From fluffy Idlis and crispy Dosas to flavorful sambar and chutneys, every item is crafted to perfection. This dedication to authenticity and quality has made Rameshwaram Cafe a household name in Bengaluru and beyond.

Visiting the Rameshwaram Cafe is more than just a meal; it is an experience that blends culinary delight with cultural reverence. For food enthusiasts and cultural explorers alike, this little gem in Indiranagar offers a slice of Southern tradition, served with a side of impeccable hospitality. Whether you're a local or a visitor, Rameshwaram Cafe is a must-visit spot in Bengaluru. Its blend of flavor, faith, and finesse truly captures the spirit of this dynamic city.

Author is a Former Fellow, IAS, Shimla (HP)

Fat-Burning Foods: 10 Foods That Will Help You Burn Your Belly Fat

Specific foods can help burn belly fat by influencing metabolic processes, improving digestion, and reducing fat accumulation in the abdominal area. These foods often contain nutrients like protein, fibre, and healthy fats, which boost metabolism, enhance fat oxidation, and regulate hormones related to appetite and fat storage. Additionally, some foods have anti-inflammatory and thermogenic properties, which help the body burn more calories. In 2025, dietary advancements and a focus on functional foods continue to highlight ingredients that not only promote overall health but specifically target belly fat. Read on as we share a list of foods you should add to your diet to lose belly fat.

10 Foods that will help you burn belly fat in 2025

Avocados are rich in mono-unsaturated fats, which help reduce visceral fat and improve satiety, making it easier to avoid overeating. Their high potassium content helps regulate water retention and combat bloating, while their fibre slows digestion, promoting stable



energy levels and reduced cravings. Known for its catechins,

green tea boosts metabolism and enhances the body's fat-burning capacity. The antioxi-

dants in green tea reduce oxidative stress, a factor linked to belly fat accumulation. Green

tea includes higher-concentration extracts in convenient forms, making it easier to incor-

porate into busy lifestyles while maximising its fat-burning benefits.

Packed with protein and probiotics, Greek yogurt helps maintain muscle mass while promoting fat loss. Probiotics improve gut microbiota, reducing inflammation and optimising digestion, key factors for trimming belly fat. Fortified Greek yogurt with additional strains of probiotics has become popular, further amplifying its benefits.

This nutrient-dense grain provides a perfect balance of protein, fibre, and essential amino acids, helping control hunger and stabilise blood sugar levels. The glycemic benefits of quinoa prevent fat storage in the abdomen. Quinoa now comes fortified with plant-based omega-3s, adding another layer of metabolic support.

Capsaicin, the active compound in chilli peppers, enhances thermogenesis, causing the body to burn calories even at rest. It also suppresses appetite, reducing overall calorie intake. Chilli pepper blends combine capsaicin with other fat-burning compounds like piperine (from black pepper)

for increased efficacy. Also Read: Want To Lose Belly Fat? Know What, When And How Much You Should Be Eating For Effective Results

Blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries are rich in antioxidants and fibre, which combat insulin resistance, a key factor in belly fat storage. Freeze-dried berry powders are a popular addition to smoothies and snacks, offering concentrated benefits for reducing abdominal fat.

High in protein and choline, eggs help reduce fat storage around the liver and belly. Consuming eggs for breakfast promotes satiety throughout the day, reducing overall calorie intake. Eggs are enriched with omega-3 fatty acids that further boost our health.

Spinach, kale, and other greens are low-calorie, fibre-rich foods that support digestion and reduce bloating. Their high vitamin and mineral content also combat deficiencies that can slow metabolism.

By incorporating these foods into a nutrient-rich diet and maintaining an active lifestyle, you can significantly target and reduce belly fat.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

2025 Begins With

15 & 16, generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light snow at isolated to scattered places.

Moreover, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to follow administration and traffic advisory—(KNO)

PM Modi To

workers came under terror attack on October 20, 2024, when two terrorists entered the workers' camp at Gagangir and fired indiscriminately. Seven civilians, including six non-local workers of the infrastructure company building the Z-Morh tunnel, were killed. A local doctor was also killed in the attack.

Police Busts

police station Qamarwari in Srinagar after receiving specific information about the movement of a consignment of narcotics. At Barthana a vehicle was stopped for checking. Six kg of heroin was recovered from under the driver's seat and two kg was recovered from other two persons in the vehicle," read the statement.

The arrested persons have been identified as Anas Ajaz Awan of Dildar Tangdhar, Kupwara, and Zahid Ahmad Sheikh of Channipora, Tangdhar Kupwara.

"The narcotics and the vehicle used in the commission of crime have been seized as evidence. A case under sections 8/21 and 29 of the NDPS Act has been registered in Police Station Parimpora. Further investigation is going on," the statement mentioned.

"Preliminary investigation shows that the narcotics were smuggled from Pakistan as part of cross-border drug trafficking network," police said.

J&K Police has been pursuing the linkages to dismantle various drug syndicates and also identify and arrest all those involved in the illicit trade.

Along with this, the security forces have been aggressively carrying out anti-terrorist operations against terrorists, their over-ground workers (OGWs) and sympathisers in order to dismantle the terror ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir.

These operations followed some dastardly attacks carried out by the terrorists after the peaceful and people-participative Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections in the union territory. Intelligence agencies say that the peaceful conduct of elections witnessed by diplomats of many countries has frustrated the handlers of terror sitting across the border in Pakistan. The agencies say the terror handlers have directed terrorists in J&K to give the dying terrorism its last push in the union territory and the smuggling of narcotics is a part of the tactics

Soldier Ends

suicide note, Yadav was drugged and filmed in a compromising situation with a woman during a visit to Rajasthan's Jeenmata two years ago.

The perpetrators allegedly blackmailed him with the video, extorting over Rs 15 lakh. Yadav said his military service obligations prevented him from filing a police complaint, leaving him with no way out.

The police have registered a case against the accused. The family has urged the police to ensure the perpetrators are punished.

High-Speed Trial

began at Katra station at 10:30 AM, with the train covering the distance to Banihal station in just one and a half hours. The return journey commenced at 2:00 PM,

concluding at Katra by 3:30 PM. This trial is the final high-speed test on the track, according to Deswal, who added that the data collected during the two-day statutory inspection will now undergo analysis. A decision regarding the launch of the direct rail service is expected to follow after review by the central government.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had earlier announced the completion of the Reasi-Katra section in December, a significant step in the USBRL project. Launched in 1997, the project has faced numerous delays due to challenging geographical, climatic, and technical conditions.

The USBRL project is a critical initiative aimed at integrating Kashmir into the national railway network. "The success of the trial not only highlights the technical prowess of Indian Railways but also brings the dream of seamless rail connectivity to the region closer to reality," Deswal said—(KNO)

JK An Important

with determination and confidence.

Sinha made these remarks while flagging off 55-member Youth Contingent from UT of Jammu Kashmir for New Delhi to participate in the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue - National Youth Festival 2025. He interacted with the participating youth and officials, and extended his best wishes for the prestigious event.

Sinha called upon the youth to embrace this special opportunity to display their leadership talent and demonstrate diversity in folk dance, poetry, writing, painting and music. He also asked the youth to achieve excellence in their respective competition and also explore ways to contribute to nation building.

"Youth are responsible for writing their own destiny and shaping the future of Jammu Kashmir. Never feel satisfied. Remove the word 'Impossible' from your dictionary and move forward with determination and confidence," he said.

Speaking on the vision and objective of National Youth Festival, the LG said the glorious event prepares our youth to assume future challenges and responsibilities towards the nation with patriotic feelings.

"Jammu Kashmir occupies an important place on the national cultural map. The youth festival will provide an opportunity to make our rich cultural legacy popular and enrich cultural consciousness of the society," he said.

"At UT level, the event brings youth from different districts and different backgrounds to mingle and learn from each other. This helps in developing better understanding and appreciation of different cultures and talents," he added.

During the interactive session, the youth spoke about different themes in which they are representing J&K and also shared the role of younger generation of Jammu Kashmir in realising the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary, Youth Services and Sports Department; Rajinder Singh Tara, Director General, Youth Services and Sports; Jitendra Mishra, Nodal officer, participating youth and officials accompanying the Contingent for National Youth Festival were present.

LG Meets Politicians,

Bharat train at Budgam railway station. He requested that the stoppage of Vande Bharat train would provide a much-needed boost to the district's economy by improving connectivity and attracting more tourists to renowned destinations such as Doodhpathri, Yusmarg, Tosamaidan, and the revered Charar-e-Sharief shrine.

Khan also extended gratitude to the LG for his continued support in developmental projects in Budgam, particularly

the construction of bridges over Nalla Sukhnag in the Beerwah constituency, which has been a long-pending demand of the local population.

Sinha assured the DDC Chairman that appropriate action will be taken to address the issues projected by him during the interaction.

Ajatshatru Singh, former Minister and senior BJP leader also called on the LG. Earlier, a delegation of newly elected office-bearers of J&K High Court Bar Association, Jammu led by its President Advocate K. Nirmal Kotwal, called on Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha, today.

The delegation comprised of Adv. Baldev Singh, Adv. Pardeep Majotra, Adv. Anshu Mahajan and Adv. Rahul Aggarwal apprised the LG on various concerning issues of the legal fraternity.

Also, Ms Abida War, Chairperson J&K Solace Employees Working Women Association and Ms Jagmeet Kour Bali, President, All Sikh Minority Employees Association and All Employees Joint Association Kashmir (M) also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

Omar Must Lead

he is in charge." He further highlighted the lack of clarity in the business rules, which he claimed adds to the ambiguity in governance.

Mehdi, as per a local news agency KNT accused the BJP of actively seeking ways to disempower the people of Jammu and Kashmir and being dismissive of their aspirations. He alleged that the party's actions reflect a disregard for the popular mandate given to the National Conference by the people.

"The BJP's strategy is disrespectful to the democratic aspirations of the people of J&K. It undermines their mandate and seeks to weaken their political voice further," he remarked.

Responding to a question, Mehdi advised NC Vice-President Omar Abdullah to remain closely aligned with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasized the heavy mandate the NC has received and urged the Chief Minister to respect and uphold it.

"Omar Abdullah must stay connected with the people's aspirations. If he distances himself from their expectations, he risks being seen as a representative of Delhi rather than the leader of Jammu and Kashmir," Mehdi warned.

He further stressed that the government of India must respect the overwhelming mandate given to the NC, warning that any disregard could be disastrous for the broader idea of India.

Mehdi also voiced concerns about the future direction of governance in Jammu and Kashmir, suggesting that the BJP is not inclined to meet public expectations. He said Omar Abdullah's leadership would be judged by his efforts to restore statehood and Article 370.

"The people fear that their expectations will not be met. Omar Abdullah must lead the struggle for statehood and the restoration of Article 370, or risk being perceived as a proxy for Delhi," he said.

Insta Page

that anyone involved in such activities would face strict action. The police also urged the public to avoid engaging with pages that propagate controversies and harm reputations.

Kashmir's Traditional

spoke about the struggles faced by families. "My husband's earnings came from carving stones for homes and masjids. Now, we don't even have enough for basic necessities. We don't want charity; we

want to work. The ban has left us dependent on odd jobs, which are not enough to sustain our family," she said.

The locals said the ban was implemented without consultation or an understanding of its impact.

Several carvers have tried switching to other professions, but with limited skills outside their traditional craft, options remain scarce. "I tried working as a labourer, but the income is inconsistent," said Bashir Ahmad, another carver. "This art was our identity. Losing it feels like losing a part of who we are."

"This craft has been part of our lives for centuries, passed down from one generation to the next," said Nazir Ahmad, a stone carver. "Now, with the ban, we are unable to continue what our ancestors sustained for so long. It feels like our heritage and livelihood are being erased."

Another group of artisans who have been carving stones for generations, now find themselves struggling after the mining ban. "With no access to raw materials, we have had to turn to daily labour, but the income is unpredictable and barely enough to meet our basic needs. It's a difficult reality after years of craftsmanship," they said.

In other districts, artisans who have relied on local stone quarries for generations are also facing similar challenges. They urge the government to lift the ban or introduce a sustainable mining policy that allows them to resume their work. They also demand skill development programmes and financial assistance for families affected by the ban.

Meanwhile, an official said that the government is in the process of reviewing the matter. He said Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary will form a committee to assess and categorise these mining sites as either major or minor. "The final decision will be made based on the committee's recommendations," the official said.

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UAE Ambassador inaugurates padel courts at OP Jindal Global University

IAN S

SONIPAT (HARYANA) : In an effort to promote health, well-being, and cross-cultural collaboration, Abdullnasser Alshaali, UAE Ambassador to India and Prof. (Dr) C. Raj Kumar, Vice Chancellor of O.P. Jindal Global University, inaugurated four state-of-the-art padel courts at O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) here. The inauguration ceremony underscored the shared commitment of the UAE and India to fostering healthier communities and strengthening bilateral ties.



The four padel courts, named after leading UAE airlines -- Air Arabia, Emirates, Etihad, and FlyDubai -- symbolise the vital role of aviation in fostering people-to-people connections between the UAE and India.

This naming initiative, jointly envisioned by Ambassador Alshaali and Prof. (Dr) Kumar, underscores the pivotal contribution the UAE airlines undertake in bridging distances and enabling opportunities. By connecting Indian students with educational and professional pathways abroad, UAE Airlines plays an integral role in supporting their

global ambitions, facilitating cultural exchange, and strengthening ties between the two nations.

Commenting on the occasion, Ambassador Alshaali said, "Padel is the UAE's fastest-growing sport and has experienced a surge of interest in India over recent years. The opening of the state-of-the-art Air Arabia, Emirates, Etihad, and FlyDubai padel courts here at JGU will not only open new opportunities for JGU students to participate in a highly social and exciting sporting activity, it will also offer JGU scope to host international-level padel

tournaments and training camps. The UAE takes pride in supporting the growth of padel in India, and enhancing our cooperation with JGU."

The inauguration of the padel courts reflects JGU's commitment to holistic student development by integrating physical fitness into its educational ethos. This initiative also symbolises the deep-rooted UAE-India partnership, which spans sports, health, education, and cultural exchange.

"At JGU, we believe in the power of sports and fitness to bring people together and inspire

healthy lifestyles. Naming these courts after UAE Airlines is a tribute to the bridges that aviation builds between our two nations. It is a reminder of the possibilities that open up when people are connected, whether through sports, education, business, or cultural exchange," said Prof. (Dr) C. Raj Kumar, Vice Chancellor of JGU.

The inauguration of the panel courts featured the participation of JGU's leadership, faculty, and students, alongside representatives from Air Arabia, Emirates, Etihad, and FlyDubai.

Iss devi ko kitne bungalow chahiye: BJP amplifies attack on Delhi CM Atishi

IAN S

NEW DELHI : The political tension in Delhi escalated on Wednesday as the BJP intensified its attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over the ongoing 'bungalow for CM' controversy. The BJP's state president, Virendra Sachdeva, raised pointed questions directed at Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, sarcastically asking, "Toh aakhir iss devi ko kitne bungalow chahiye?"

Speaking to IANS, Sachdeva demanded clarity on the issue, asking, "Whose bungalow is this? This government residence where 'Atishi' is written — whose bungalow is it?"

"If it was allotted to her, why is she asking for 'Sheesh Mahal'? If it was being given to her, why didn't she accept it earlier? How many bungalows does a Chief Minister need in



Delhi? She lives in Kalkaji, yet refuses to reveal who occupies this one. Even locals are tight-lipped, though posters outside point to its occupant. So how many bungalows does this 'devi' need? We want an answer."

Sachdeva further reacted to BJP leaders' calls to turn the 'Sheesh Mahal' into a museum, suggesting, "I have said that the 'Sheesh Mahal' should be

declared a museum of corruption. If the BJP forms the government in Delhi, no BJP Chief Minister will stay in that Sheesh Mahal."

As Delhi Assembly elections near, the 'Sheesh Mahal' and 'bungalow for CM' controversy is becoming a central issue in the political debate.

The AAP has retaliated by dubbing the Prime Minister's residence as the 'Raj

Mahal,' accusing the BJP of overspending on it with a budget of Rs 2,700 crore.

This back-and-forth between 'Sheesh Mahal' and 'Raj Mahal' reflects the fierce political rivalry, with the AAP-led by Arvind Kejriwal, the BJP, and the Congress all gearing up for the February 5 elections.

The latest drama unfolded when AAP leaders, including Sanjay Singh and Saurabh Bharadwaj, were stopped by the police from entering the Delhi Chief Minister's official residence. The AAP had invited the media to tour the premises in an effort to counter the BJP's criticisms of the Chief Minister's residence.

With only a month left before the Delhi Assembly elections, the political war over 'Sheesh Mahal,' 'Raj Mahal,' and the fight for the capital continues to heat up.

Private equity investments in India surge to \$15 billion in 2024, a 46.2 pc growth

IAN S

NEW DELHI: Driven by sectors such as healthcare and pharmaceuticals, consumer-related industries and technology -- amid stable political scenario and favourable policy environment -- private equity (PE) investments in India surged to \$15 billion in 2024, marking a 46.2 per cent increase from the previous year, according to a report on Wednesday.

India's expanding middle-class population, robust startup ecosystem, and strong IPO market provided ample opportunities for investors, according to the data shared by LSEG, a global financial markets infrastructure and data provider.

"India remains one of the top markets in the Asia Pacific for financial sponsor activity, accounting for at least 28 per cent of the region's total equity investments during this period, up from a 15 per cent market share the previous year," said Elaine Tan, senior manager, LSEG Deals Intelligence.

The total PE funds raised over the last three years reached approximately \$23 billion, earmarked for deployment in India.

"Favourable government initiatives, anticipated global monetary easing, diverse sector opportunities, and a rising interest in integrating ESG into growth strategies are some

of the key factors expected to drive private equity activity in India in 2025," according to the report. Stable political scenario, favourable policy, infra push to drive Indian economy in 2025

According to recent projections by global brokerages and financial institutions, the Indian economy is poised to be supported by a stable political scenario, favourable policy environments, the effects of production-linked incentive (PLI) programmes, possibilities brought about by changes in the global supply chain and government emphasis on infrastructure spending.

The Indian macro remains strong among large markets except for the growth part. The Current Account Deficit (CAD) has improved significantly and is expected to be 1 per cent for FY25.

Moreover, robust services exports and healthy remittances flow should help keep the country's CAD in the safe zone during the current financial year (FY 2024-25), according to a Crisis report.

Most domestic macro and micro indicators remain steady. Given these aspects, the domestic equity market remains focused on earnings, according to industry experts. Government spending has resumed, employment is on the rise, and supply bottlenecks are lessening.

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V. Narayanan appointed new ISRO chief, to succeed S. Somnath on Jan 14

IAN S

NEW DELHI : V. Narayanan has been appointed as the next chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Secretary of the Department of Space, according to an official announcement made on Tuesday. He is set to take over from the current ISRO chief, S. Somnath, on January 14.

A distinguished scientist at ISRO, Narayanan currently serves as the Director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) in Valiamala, Kerala.

With nearly four decades of experience in the Indian space programme, Narayanan has held several important roles within ISRO.

His expertise primarily focuses on rocket and spacecraft propulsion.

According to an official order from the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, Narayanan has been appointed to serve in

these roles for the next two years, until further notice.

An official order from the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Personnel and Training states, "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of V. Narayanan, Director, Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre, Valiamala, as Secretary, Department of Space and Chairman, Space Commission, for a period of two years from January 14, 2025, or until further orders, whichever is earlier."

He is a Rocket and Space-Craft Propulsion Expert and joined ISRO in 1984 and functioned in various capacities before becoming Director of LPSC.

The Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre, which Narayanan heads, is engaged in the development of liquid, semi-cryogenic and cryogenic propulsion stages for launch vehicles, chemical and electric propulsion sys-

tems for satellites, control systems for launch vehicles, and transducers development for space systems health monitoring.

He is also the Chairman of the Project Management Council-Space Transportation System (PMC-STS), the decision-making body in all launch vehicle projects and programmes, and the Chairman of the National Level Human Rated Certification Board (HRCB) for Gaganyaan, India's planned human spaceflight mission.

During the initial phase, he worked in the Solid Propulsion area of Sounding Rockets and Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV) and Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). He further contributed to the process planning, process control and realisation of Ablative nozzle systems, composite motor cases and composite Igniter cases.

At present, Narayanan is the Director of the Liquid

Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), one of the major Centres of the ISRO having its headquarters at Valiamala in Thiruvananthapuram, with a unit at Bangalore.

Having studied in Tamil-medium schools, Narayanan completed his M.Tech in Cryogenic Engineering and PhD in Aerospace Engineering from IIT, Kharagpur, where he was awarded a Silver Medal for achieving the first rank in the M Tech programme. The rocket and spacecraft propulsion expert joined ISRO in 1984 and rose through the ranks to become the director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre in 2018.

S Somnath took over as the ISRO Chief in January 2022 and it was under him that India became the first country in the world to land a rover in the South Pole region of the Moon. It also joined an elite club of countries to achieve a soft landing on the Moon, after the US, Russia, and China.

Lokayukta conducts raids against seven govt officials in Karnataka

IAN S

BENGALURU : The Lokayukta officials conducted simultaneous raids against seven government officials in Karnataka on Wednesday in connection with the disproportionate assets case, sources said.

The raids were conducted in nine places - Bengaluru, Chikkamagaluru, Bidar, Belagavi, Gadag, Ballari, Raichur, Bagalkot and Tumkur districts.

According to sources, the raids were conducted at the residence of a Joint Director of the Transport Department in Bengaluru, the residence of a Health Officer in Kadur Primary Health Centre in Chikkamagaluru, the house of an Engineer attached to the Minor Irrigation Department in Bidar.

The Lokayukta sleuths also conducted raids on the residence of a Tehsildar in Khanapur of Belagavi. They also raided his office in Belagavi, another residence in Nipani town. The team headed by Lokayukta SP Hanumantharayappa conducted these raids. The residence and

properties of an executive engineer attached to Gadag-Betageri Municipality were raided. The officers conducted searches and seizures at the office of Gadag-Betageri Municipality, his residence, office and farmhouse. The sleuths raided his properties at five locations in Gadag, Gajendragarh and Bagalkot districts.

The offices and residences of an officer attached to the Backward Classes Welfare Department and a Joint Engineer attached to the Bengaluru Electricity Supply Company (Bescom) in Raichur were also raided.

Besides, the residence of a retired RTO officer in Tumakuru has also been raided. The officer had retired from the services last year.

However, an official statement is awaited.

Earlier, the sleuths of Karnataka Lokayukta conducted raids across the state early in July last year at 56 locations, including the houses, offices and properties of officials. Over 100 officials carried out the raids.

Sandeshkhali gang-rape case: Calcutta HC orders police protection for victim

IAN S

KOLKATA : A single-judge bench of the Calcutta High Court, on Wednesday, directed the state police to provide 24-hour protection to the woman, who had earlier this week approached the court accusing the local cops of a lackadaisical investigation into her complaint of gang-rape against three men, including a local Trinamool Congress leader.

At the same time, the single judge bench of Justice Jay Sengupta also directed the local police station to submit a report in the form of an affidavit on the progress of the investigation into the woman's complaint by January 12.

The state government counsel, on Wednesday, informed the court that there had been significant progress in the investigation of the matter and the process was on to file the charge sheet in the case. However, the victim's counsel claimed that

although the accused was constantly threatening her and her family members, there had been no action on the part of the local police.

Thereafter Justice Sengupta directed the state police to provide 24-hour police protection not only to the victim but the entire family besides asking the state police to file a progress report investigation.

In her petition, the victim alleged that the crime took place in May last year, and she and her family members approached the local police to act on the matter. She has now alleged that for all these months the cops have not moved an inch forward in the course of the investigation. At the same time, she and her family members are under pressure from the accused and their associates to withdraw the complaint at the local police station.

Among the three accused named one is Trinamool Congress' block president in Sandeshkhali Dilip Mondal.

The Calcutta High Court had admitted the petition.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee made a weekend trip to Sandeshkhali on December 30, after avoiding such an initiative during the entire period of crisis there earlier this year following allegations of sexual harassment of local women and land grabbing of people by local Trinamool Congress leader Sheikh Shahjahan.

While addressing a public meeting at Sandeshkhali on that day, the Chief Minister hinted towards the "money game" influencing the movement by locals there earlier this year.

On that very day, leader of opposition in the West Bengal Assembly Suwendu Adhujari conducted a protest at the same place, defying the last-minute denial of police permission for the same. He drew a comparison between Mamata Banerjee and the chief of the caretaker government in neighbouring Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus.

Formula-E case: Senior IAS officer appears before ACB

IAN S

HYDERABAD : Special Chief Secretary, Telangana government, Arvind Kumar appeared before the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in a Formula-E race case on Wednesday.

The senior Indian Administrative Officer (IAS) reached the ACB headquarters in Banjara Hills around 10 a.m.

The ACB, which is probing the alleged financial irregularities in conducting the Formula-E race in Hyderabad in 2023, is likely to question the official about the transfer of Rs 54.88 crore to Formula-E Operations Limited (FEO).

As the then Special Chief Secretary of Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department, Arvind Kumar, who is the second accused in the case, had played a key role in payments to the UK-based FEO from Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA).

The ACB is likely to record the statement of

Arvind Kumar, who was issued a memo in January last year by the state government seeking an explanation for entering into an agreement for conducting the Formula-E race while the Model Code of Conduct was in force.

The senior IAS official had reportedly stated in his response to the memo that he issued orders for the transfer of money on the direction of the then Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department (KTR).

The ACB registered a First Information Report (FIR) against KTR, Arvind Kumar and former Chief Engineer of HMDA B.L.N. Reddy for alleged irregularities in payment by HMDA to FEO and associated entities without adhering to established financial procedures.

The FIR was registered under Sections 13 (1) (A) and 13 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, along with Sections 409 and 120 (B) of the Indian

Penal Code. The ACB had summoned KTR on January 6. He, however, returned from the ACB office after his lawyer was not allowed to be present during questioning.

The ACB issued another notice to him the same day, directing him to appear before it on January 9.

The Telangana High Court on January 7 dismissed KTR's petition to quash the FIR. The court also refused to pass orders to ACB not to arrest him. The BRS working president has filed an appeal in the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, former HMDA Chief Engineer B.L.N. Reddy appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the same case. The ED is conducting the probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) based on the FIR filed by the ACB.

The Central agency is looking into possible violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

PCB shifts tri-series with New Zealand and South Africa to Lahore and Karachi

AGENCIES

The PCB has relocated its ODI tri-series with New Zealand and South Africa to Lahore and Karachi, as it readies the two venues to host the Champions Trophy from February 19.

The four-match tri-series, due to start on February 8, was originally scheduled to be played in Multan. But the PCB has decided to move it to the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore and the National Stadium in Karachi, a move the board said "reflects the PCB's confidence in the readiness of these upgraded venues".

The board said in a statement: "Given the advanced stage of preparations at the Gaddafi Stadium and the National Bank Stadium, the PCB has decided to relocate the upcoming tri-nation ODI series to these two venues. The series, featuring New Zealand and South Africa alongside Pakistan, was originally scheduled to be held in Multan."

Both stadiums have been undergoing significant upgrade and renovation work this season. It has caused some disruption to the calendar, with neither the Gaddafi Stadium



nor the National Stadium hosting any of the seven Tests this season. Karachi was scheduled to host one Test against England, but that was moved to Multan. Multan is also hosting two Tests against West Indies this month.

But the work was widely acknowledged to be necessary, given that Pakistan is hosting its first ICC event in nearly 30 years. The most significant renovation has taken place at the Gaddafi Stadium, where capacity has been increased to 35,000, two new digital replay screens

have been installed, and an entirely new players' and hospitality enclosure has been built. Similar upgrades have been carried out in Karachi's National Stadium, while the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium - which has hosted international and domestic games this season - has undergone more minor enhancements.

The PCB said the Gaddafi Stadium will be set for an inauguration in the last week of January. The board "assured the fans, spectators and media that all upgrade work was progressing

on schedule and will be completed before or around the set deadlines".

Ten, and possibly 11, of the 15 matches of the tournament will be played across Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi. The remaining games, all involving India and one semi-final, will be played in Dubai, as well as the final should India make it. That is part of the hybrid model agreed upon by the PCB, the BCCI and the ICC, after the Indian government did not give permission for India to travel to Pakistan.

Fakhar Zaman aims for Champions Trophy comeback

AGENCIES

Fakhar Zaman is "100% certain" he will play for Pakistan again and is gearing up for the 2025 Champions Trophy, which begins on February 19 and will be hosted in Pakistan and Dubai.

"A 100%, I will play for Pakistan (again)," Fakhar, 34, told the Vipers Voices podcast. "Actually, many people do not know about that, but after the T20 World Cup I got sick and because of the medical condition I was not fit, so I was not a part of the team."

"But now I [have] recovered 100%, and you will see me in the next white-ball series which Pakistan play."

Fakhar, once an integral part of the Pakistan white-ball setup, has not played international cricket since the 2024 T20 World Cup last June in the USA and West Indies, where Pakistan were eliminated in the group stage. He last played an ODI in the 2023 ODI World Cup but is hopeful of returning for the Champions Trophy at home.

Incidentally, it was in the 2017 Champions Trophy that Fakhar shot to prominence with a title-winning 114 against India in the final at The Oval in London. "My plan has been around the Champions



Trophy," he said. "I did not play in the Australia tour or in the South Africa tour, so my whole plan was just to play in the Champions Trophy, to make myself available and to be fully fit for the tournament."

"That was in the back of my mind, and I am thankful, and I am lucky to be fit right now. I started from the Champions Trophy 2017 and that went really well for me and now I am very excited for the next edition also. I talked to the selectors, the head coach, and everyone wanted me to play in the Champions Trophy."

Fakhar had high praise for 22-year-old opener Saim Ayub, who has become a regular across formats for Pakistan. Ayub has had a

sensational start to his ODI career, with three centuries and a fifty in nine innings, which includes hundreds in Australia and South Africa. However, an ankle fracture sustained during the first morning of the second Test against South Africa in Cape Town has put his Champions Trophy campaign in jeopardy.

"I hope and I believe that he will recover quickly, and I was thinking yesterday to call Saim just to talk to him about this injury," Fakhar said. "Believe me, he is such a great player that if he continues to play for the next four to five years, he will be at the top and he will be amongst the top three players in the world."

While Fakhar wants to open the batting for Paki-

stan, he may not find a slot there, with Ayub, Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan already at the top of the order.

"In Pakistan, we have three of the best players in the world in Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Saim Ayub, so sometimes I feel lucky to be in the team even if I am not able to make my place in the team as an opener," Fakhar said. "If the team has faith in me and they want me to bat at number four or five, that totally makes sense, because for me the team is always first and I play wherever the team wants me to play, but I always prefer to open."

Fakhar is currently gearing up for his maiden ILT20 stint where he will feature for the 2023 runners-up Desert Vipers. "There are many Pakistani players who have played for the Desert Vipers including Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Azam Khan and Mohammad Amir and they talk really highly about this team, the environment, the management, the way they play the cricket and the way their mindset is," Fakhar said. "So when I got the offer, without any discussion with anyone, I said 'yes, I would love to play for this team.'"

The ILT20 begins on January 11, with the Dubai Capitals taking on MI Emirates in Dubai.

Archie Vaughan to captain England Under-19 team on tour of South Africa

IANS

NEW DELHI : All-rounder Archie Vaughan will captain England men's U19 team on its upcoming tour of South Africa. Archie, who is the son of former England captain Michael Vaughan, will lead an 18-man squad across three 50-over and two red-ball games happening from January 14 to February 6.

Archie took 15 wickets and scored 236 runs in just four County Championship matches for Somerset in the last season. "I found out that I was going to be captain during the training camp before Christmas and it was a very special

moment. To get the opportunity to represent England at this level is really special in itself, but to lead the team out is something else," said Archie in a statement issued by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

"It will obviously be a good challenge and we'll have to adapt to the conditions. The training camp that we had over there before Christmas was really beneficial and we're all ready and raring to go."

"If someone had told me 12 months ago that I would have forced my way into the Somerset first team and be captaining the Under-19s I wouldn't have believed them. It hap-

pened quickly but I'm going to keep my feet on the ground and work harder and harder. The next step is to try and win in South Africa and hopefully, I can perform as well," he said.

The England Under 19 squad will fly out on Thursday ahead of the first 50-over game against the South Africa U19 team on January 17. The two-match red-ball series begins in Stellenbosch on January 26 before the second game happens in Cape Town on February 3.

"After putting in a lot of purposeful work on a really good camp before Christmas, we get the opportunity to play against South Africa Under-19s, which will be very exciting for the

boys competing in an England shirt," said England U19 head coach Michael Yardy.

Meanwhile, South Africa also announced their U19 squads, with Bennie Hansen to captain them in both 50-over and red-ball games. "Regarding Bennie (Hansen), his captaincy and leadership style, he's done really well in terms of leading Western provinces at Khaya Majola and Cubs Week. Most importantly, Bennie has been part of our under-19 program."

"He toured Bangladesh with us. He's got a good understanding of how we want to play our cricket. And the fact that he plays the style that we

like, playing with good positive intent. That made it an easier decision for me to choose him as a captain. He's grown a lot in the past few months and it's going to be quite exciting to see how he fronts up to the challenge of England," said SA U19 Men's head coach Malibongwe Maketa.

England U19 squad: Archie Vaughan (captain), Farhan Ahmed, Tazeem Ali, Ben Dawkins, Kesh Fonseka (Test squad only), Alex French, Alex Green, Jack Home, James Isbell, Eddie Jack, Ben Mayes, James Minto, Harry Moore, Joe Moores (ODIs only), Thomas Rew, Aaryan Sawant, Naavya Sharma and Alexander Wade

South Africa U19 ODI squad: Bennie Hansen (Captain), Daniel Bosman, Raveeq Daniels, Divan de Villiers, Carl Fryer, Paul James, Enathi Khitshini, Adnaan Lagadien, Chad Mason, Bandile Mbatha, Nqobani Mokoena, Lethabo Phahlamohlaka, Semal Pillay, Jason Rowles and Ntando Soni
South Africa U19 Test squad: Bennie Hansen (Captain), Daniel Bosman, Muhammad Bulbulia, Raveeq Daniels, Divan de Villiers, Paul James, Martin Khumalo, Adnaan Lagadien, Chad Mason, Nqobani Mokoena, Lethabo Phahlamohlaka, Nathan Rossouw, Jason Rowles, Jorich van Schalkwyk and Sandiswa Yeni.



MAZBOOTI SE BANI HAR
— DEEWAR SE JHALAKTE HAI —
DIL KE EHSAAAS

