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## Fast-track NEP-2020 implementation; focus on employability of students: LG tells VCs

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Sunday called for fast-tracking the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and laid broad guidelines on moving towards formulation of courses and curriculum based on the new policy.

Interacting with Vice Chancellors of Universities in J&K and while reviewing the programs undertaken by the varsities under the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the Lt Governor also called for completing the modalities of transfer to Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), Exit option provision and preparing an action plan to promote course modules on cultural values, professional ethics, Indian Knowledge System, innovation, entrepreneurship, industry 4.0 skills and communication skills.

Sinha said that focus should be on skilling and employability of students,



LG Manoj Sinha interacting with VCs of Universities in J&K.

besides promotion of local languages and culture.

At the outset, all the Vice Chancellors and Director, Colleges gave detailed presentations on the activities and programs undertaken by their varsities and the Higher Education department under the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' and briefed the chair about the proposed activities to be organized in run up to the celebrations of 75th year of Independence.

While chairing the meeting, the Lt Governor called for the impact assessment of

programmes undertaken, besides sustained efforts to highlight the contribution of our freedom fighters.

"Universities should invest more in Innovation and Incubation, providing our youth with prospects for the future and strengthening the position of young women in the society", he added.

Calling on academia to lead the journey of development & prosperity of J&K, the Lt Governor said that research must flow from Labs to Field. He impressed on Agriculture Universities to

focus on developing innovative ways to reduce the input cost of farmers, besides providing continuous handholding to increase production.

During the meeting, the Lt Governor observed that Vocational courses, Co-curriculum activities and Student exchange programs should be made an integral part of the education system.

Underscoring the need for increased synergy between the Universities and Higher Education department of UT administration, the

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## Winter Session: Govt to bring bill to repeal farm laws today

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Winter Session of Parliament is set to begin on a stormy note on Monday, with the government listing a bill to repeal the three contentious farm laws on the first day itself even as the Opposition plans to push for a law on minimum support price on agriculture produce.

The Farm Laws Repeal Bill is slated to be introduced in Lok Sabha on Monday.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting for the past one year against the three legislations and demanding they be repealed.

Several farmer unions have pressed for a law on minimum support price (MSP).

Various opposition parties on Sunday raised the issue of legal backing for MSP at an all-party meet called by the government ahead of the session.

The opposition also raised the issue of compensation for family members of farmers who had died during the year-long protests

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## WORLD ON ALERT! COVID variant spreads to more countries

### GoI lists measures to be followed by States/UTs

### ■ AGENCY

LONDON: The new potentially more contagious omicron variant of the Coronavirus has popped up in more European countries, just days after being identified in South Africa, leaving governments around the world scrambling to stop the spread.

In view of the possible threat that the new COVID-19 variant can pose to the nation, the Government of India (GoI) has asked all states and UTs to focus on intensive containment, active surveillance, enhanced testing, monitoring of hotspots, increased coverage of vaccination and augmentation of health infrastructure.

Listing a series of measures which states and UTs should undertake, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan also stressed on rigorous surveillance of international passengers, ensuring prompt dispatch of samples for

genome sequencing and strict enforcement of Covid-appropriate behaviour to effectively manage this Variant of Concern (VoC).

As a proactive step, the government has already placed nations, where this VoC has been found, in the category of 'at risk' countries for additional follow-up measures of international travellers coming into India from these destinations, he said in a letter dated November 27.

"In view of the possible threat that this VoC can pose to the nation, it is imperative that the intensive containment, active surveillance, increased coverage of vaccination and Covid-appropriate behaviour must be enforced in the field in a very proactive manner to effectively manage this VoC," Bhushan said.

The health secretary said it is essential that the disease surveillance network in the

country is geared up for rigorous follow-up of international travellers from all countries, especially those designated as 'at risk'.

There is already a reporting mechanism for obtaining past travel details of passengers coming through international flights, he said, adding this should be reviewed and the protocol provided by the ministry should be strictly ensured, including testing on disembarkation of travellers coming from 'at risk' countries and sending all positive samples for genome sequencing to INSACOG labs in a prompt manner.

Emphasising that ample testing infrastructure need to be operationalised to tackle any surge due to this mutated virus, Bhushan said it has been observed that the overall testing as well as the proportion of RT-PCR tests have declined in some states.

"In the absence of

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## NC ready for assembly polls; no issue with delimitation based on 2011 census: Omar

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Sunday said he supports a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 census data "rather than one driven by political motives" even as he asserted his party was ready for assembly elections, which are yet to be announced.

He also said his party never believes in provoking the public and added that people get annoyed when there is a mistake on part of the government.

"Getting ready for elections or holding elections is the responsibility of the election



commission. Our (assembly) elections have already been delayed for a long time as the last polls were held in 2014 and seven years have already passed," the former chief minister told reporters in Doda. He said his

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## Kashmir continues to reel under cold wave

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The minimum temperature at most places in Kashmir dropped on Sunday as cold conditions returned across the valley and mercury settled below the freezing point, met department officials said.

The temperature last night dropped across the valley except in the Kokernag town in the south, they said.

They said Srinagar recorded a low of minus 0.2 degrees Celsius last night -- down from 0.4 degrees Celsius the previous night, they said.

Pahalgam, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 3.0 degrees Celsius.

Gulmarg resort town in north Kashmir's Baramulla district also recorded a minimum temperature of minus 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Mercury in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at a low of minus 1.4 degrees Celsius. Qazigund, the

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**WEATHER**

**Temperature (Jammu)**

Max: 24.2°C Min: 11.1°C

**Humidity**

Max: 83 Min: 59

**Temperature (Srinagar)**

Max: 13.6°C Min: -0.2°C

**Humidity**

Max: 87 Min: 70

Sunset : 17:27 Hours

Sunrise : 07:14 Hours

## COVID containment: Night curfew timing revised in J&K

### Two deaths, 145 new cases reported in UT

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: With the new COVID variant Omicron swirling the world, the night curfew timing in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been reviewed and revised on Sunday amid peak of the wedding season.

Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in its latest communication on restrictions for Covid-19 containment has stated, "Whereas it was observed that there is a need to continue with the existing COVID containment measures in all Districts in view of

the uneven trend observed in daily Covid cases as well as rising positivity rate."

According to a Government Order, "Night Curfew shall continue to remain in force in all districts from 9 pm to 6 am but for those districts with positivity rate below 0.2 and weekly case load below 250 where it would be from 11 pm to 6 am".

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir recorded 145 fresh COVID-19 cases during the past 24 hours, taking the number of those infected to 3,36,531, while two new deaths due to the virus raised

the toll to 4,475, officials said.

Eighteen of the fresh cases were from the Jammu division and 127 from the Kashmir division of the Union Territory, the officials said.

They said Srinagar district recorded a maximum of 61 new COVID-19 cases followed by 31 cases in Baramulla district.

There are 1,658 active cases in the UT, while the number of recoveries stands at 3,30,398, the officials said.

Twenty seven people tested positive for Covid-19 in

Ladakh in last one day, taking the overall virus tally in the Union Territory (UT) to 21,494 and active cases to 249, an official statement said.

Ladakh has registered 213 Covid-related deaths -- 155 in Leh and 58 in Kargil -- since the outbreak of the pandemic last year.

Of 2,366 people tested for Covid-19 on Saturday, 25 were found infected in Leh and two in Kargil.

Twenty coronavirus patients were discharged from a hospital in Leh and one in Kargil, taking

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## ‘Nearly all terrorists involved in civilian killings in J&K last month neutralised’

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Nearly all the terrorists involved in the killings of civilians in Jammu and Kashmir last month have been neutralised and the armed forces are now focussing on intelligence-based "surgical operations" involving smaller teams to deal with terror activities in the Union Territory, sources in the security establishment said on Sunday.

They said a "refined" approach to deal with terrorism has been put in place under a more nuanced framework of better coordination among the Jammu

and Kashmir police, the intelligence agencies and the Army with an aim to minimise collateral damage.

After a spell of relative calm, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a spate of killings of innocent civilians last month, triggering apprehensions of an intense cycle of violence and turmoil in the region.

The sources said a major focus of the anti-terror drill has been to achieve "zero loss" of innocent lives and all wings of the security forces have been trying to achieve it.

That is why the focus has

been on "intelligence-based surgical operations" involving smaller teams, with a focus on drawing support from the local population to such actions, they added.

According to intelligence inputs, Pakistan-based terror handlers have instructed their proxies operating in Kashmir to ensure at least 10 civilian deaths whenever the security forces undertake counter-terror operations, the sources said.

They said 24 civilians were killed and 49 injured in various counter-terror operations in 2018.

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## Finish terrorism but try to protect lives of innocent civilians: Azad to security forces

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

ANANTNAG: Praising security forces in combating terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, former Chief Minister of erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir and senior Congress leader, Ghulam Nabi Azad advised them to try their best to avoid civilian killings during encounter with terrorists.

"We lost thousand of youth and security force personnel in Jammu & Kashmir due to terrorism for the last three decades which was a big loss and can never be fulfilled," Azad said while addressing a public rally at Kokernag in district Anantnag.

"We will support our security forces in their endeavour to finish terrorism in J&K and saving lives of lakhs of people from terrorists but also feel sad when



Former Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad addressing a public rally at Kokernag on Sunday.

any civilian dies in encounter," he said, adding that armed forces must finish terrorism but at the same time they try their best to protect lives of innocent civilians besides taking effective meas-

ures to remove prevailing sense of fear from their hearts.

Azad said the people of the Valley are against the killing of innocent civilians. He also

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## RSS not a military organisation: Bhagwat



### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

GWALIOR: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said the Sangh is not a military organisation, but a group with family atmosphere.

"Sangh is not an all-India music school. Martial arts programmes do take place (in it), but Sangh is neither an all India gym nor a martial arts club. Sometimes, the

Sangh is described as a paramilitary (force). But Sangh is not a military organisation," he said.

Sangh is a group with family atmosphere, the RSS chief added.

He was speaking here at the closing event of the four-day Ghosh Shivr (musical band camp) of the Sangh's Madhya Bharat Pranth.

"Western countries consider music as entertainment. It is played for thrill there. But in India, music is meant to soothe the soul. It is an art that calms down the mind," he added.

Bhagwat had reached Gwalior on Friday midnight to address and guide the ghosh shivr that began here on Thursday.

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