

**!! Continuations from Page 1 !!
Modi to inaugurate...**

Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), which oversees the project, has said the "engineering marvel" is a game changer for the region.

"The Sonamarg Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir is a game-changer for the region, offering more than just a connection between Gagangir and Sonamarg. This engineering marvel is poised to unlock the full potential of the region's trade and tourism sectors," the NHIDCL said on X.

It said the tunnel is equipped with cutting-edge technologies that provide real-time updates and seamless connectivity for users. This futuristic infrastructure will not only enhance the travel experience but also set a new standard for road connectivity in the region. Along with the Zojila Tunnel, set for completion by 2028, it will reduce the route length from 49 km to 43 km and boost vehicle speed from 30 km/hr to 70 km/hr, ensuring seamless NH-1 connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh. This enhanced connectivity will boost defense logistics, drive economic growth and socio-cultural integration across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, the officials said.

LG, CM greet...

He expressed hope that these celebrations would usher in an era of peace, harmony and prosperity for the region.

"Lohri holds a special significance, symbolizing the vibrant culture and traditions of our land. May these celebrations strengthen bonds and spread warmth and happiness among everyone," the Chief Minister said.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah conveyed his best wishes to all communities observing these festivals and prayed for a bright and prosperous future for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, also extended greetings to people of Jammu and Kashmir, maintaining that the festivals are a tribute to the bounties of nature ushering a change in the weather, moving towards spring.

While hoping that these festivals will usher an era of peace and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir, Dy CM urged upon the people to consign to fire the hatred and work collectively for making our nation strong and prosperous.

Strength of youth...

Achieving ambitious goals requires the active participation and collective effort of every citizen of the nation, he added.

The prime minister cited the rise of the US following its economic crisis in the 1930s and Singapore's rise from a backward region lacking basic facilities to a major economic power to stress the need for setting big goals and sincerely working towards them. He noted how India became an open defecation-free country, manufactured Covid vaccines and inoculated its population against the virus. Asserting that the 25 years till 2047 are India's golden period (Amrit Kaal), Modi said he has full confidence that the young population will realise the dream of 'Viksit Bharat'.

This is the time for a quantum jump, he said.

The country also hopes to host the Olympics in the next decade and is working towards it with full dedication, he added.

Swami Vivekananda had a lot of faith in the young generation and said the youth will find solutions to all problems, Modi said. The prime minister further said that he has absolute faith, "blind faith" in his words.

The event was held on the occasion of Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary, which is observed as the National Youth Day. Stressing the role of high growth in India's development, Modi recounted how the country's capacity and budget in different fields have risen with the growth of its economy.

The budget for infrastructure has grown six times in 10 years, he said.

Asserting that the Indian economy is on its way to becoming the third biggest in the world, the prime minister said it will cross USD 10 trillion by the next decade. Earlier in the day, Modi visited an exhibition hosting many of the participants of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue. Over 3,000 "dynamic, young leaders" were chosen from across the country to attend the dialogue following a selection process. The dialogue is being held as part of the prime minister's efforts to bring one lakh youths having no political link into politics.

Minor girl dies...

preliminary investigations had pointed towards viral infection as the cause behind the mysterious deaths but said that more work needs to be done to reach the final conclusion.

Various teams of experts from Pune's National Institute of Virology, PGI Chandigarh, AIIMS Delhi and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi, had also visited the village to assist in the investigations.

Meanwhile, DIG Rajouri-Poonch, Tejinder Singh, Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, and Senior Superintendent of Police, Gaurav Sikarwar, visited Badhaal to assess the prevailing ground situation and ensure immediate support to the community.

As part of the relief measures, the DC Rajouri deployed ambulances, health teams and ASHA workers to provide essential medical assistance to the residents. Furthermore, other departments have been activated to ensure seamless coordination and cooperation with the general public.

Samples have been collected from ill patients and investigations have been initiated to determine the cause of the ailments. The administration is closely monitoring the situation and will take necessary action based on the outcome of the investigations. The general public is advised not to panic and to follow any advisories issued by the authorities.

It is pertinent to mention that, apart from health teams, the police has also started a fresh investigation in this matter.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with the locals to understand their immediate concerns and emphasized the importance of timely intervention and joint departmental efforts to address their needs. SSP Gaurav Sikarwar assured the residents of enhanced security measures and prompt action on any emergent issues.

The district administration remains committed to ensuring the safety, health, and welfare of the residents of Badhaal. All necessary steps are being taken to address their concerns and provide comprehensive support.

Cattle lifter detained...

under the Act, he said. The spokesman said his activities were hurting the sentiments of a particular community, prompting police to prepare a dossier for his detention under the PSA.

Rajnath, CDS to...

motorised wheelchairs, e-scooters, and autorickshaws will also be distributed to the veterans, he added.

The event reflects the army's respect and unwavering commitment to care for the war widows and veterans who served the nation with pride and dedication, the spokesman said.

Slight respite from...

minus 6.5 degrees Celsius, it said.

Pahalgam, one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 6.2 degrees Celsius, up from minus 7.6 degrees Celsius the night before.

Pahalgam was the coldest place in the valley. The minimum temperature was minus 4 degrees Celsius in Qazigund, minus 3.6 degrees Celsius in Konibal in Pampore town, minus 4 degrees Celsius in Kupwara and minus 3.9 degrees Celsius in Kokernag.

The weather in the valley will be mostly cloudy but dry till January 18 with a possibility of light snow at isolated higher reaches on January 15 and 16, the meteorological department said.

35 Cr pilgrims...

35 crore pilgrims. Arrangements are also being made like that.

"The area of the mela has increased by almost 25 per cent. This time it is being set up at around 4,000 hectares, while in the last Kumbh, it was set up in an area of around 3,200 hectares," Singh told PTI in an interview.

Drawing further comparison with the 2019 Kumbh, Singh said, "This time, we have divided the Mela area into 25 sectors as compared to 20 sectors in 2019. The lengths of ghats have been increased to 12 kilometres (in 2025) from eight kilometres (in 2019). The parking area too has been increased to 1850 hectares this time as compared to 1291 hectares in 2019.

"There was a drastic change when you compare what was done in 2013 and 2019, and you will find a quantum improvement and jump this time, because money-wise also, last time we had spent around Rs 3,500 crore, and this time it is just double, and we are spending around Rs 7,000 crore. The state budget for the Maha Kumbh is Rs 7,000 crore."

The central government's departments have also invested a lot, he said, adding, "in the railways you will find revamping, National Highways also," he said.

When asked about the arrangements for Mauni Amavasya, he said it has always seen the highest number of visitors during Kumbh. "An estimated four-five crore devotees are expected during the period of Mauni Amavasya this time (from January 25 to January 30), while in 2019, the figures stood at three-four crore. There are six important (major bathing) dates on which there will be more pilgrims and more crowd.

"So, on those days, as a precautionary measure, the state government does not extend any VIP protocol to anybody. So, we request all the VVIPs not to come on those six days. We try to accommodate or invite them for days, which are non-major bathing days."

The estimated number of Kalpvasis in the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is 15-20 lakh, while it was 10 lakh in 2019, he said.

The number of pontoon bridges has also witnessed a rise to 30 this time from 22 in 2019, while the mela area's road length has been increased to more than 450 kilometres from 299 kilometres.

The number of streetlights has also increased to 67,000 this year from 20,000 the last time, he said.

The number of toilets set up this time is 1.50 lakh as compared to 1.14 lakh in 2019. The public accommodation beds have increased from 20,000 in Kumbh Mela 2019 to 25,000 in Maha Kumbh Mela 2025.

Elaborating on the security and safety aspect he said, "There are more than 55 police stations, and around 45,000 police personnel are getting deployed there on duty. Projects have also been sanctioned to monitor the social media continuously, so that nobody does any mischief. If anything untoward is coming up on social media, it should be identified, isolated and tackled... There is excellent coordination between the institutes of the Centre and the state government."

The State Disaster Management Authority is already working and the NDMA is also working. They have trained 'aapdaa mitr' (disaster volunteers), he said.

Commenting on the digital aspect of Maha Kumbh, the UP chief secretary said, "We have Integrated Control and Command Centres established there before the last Kumbh. This time, it has been strengthened, and more than 3,000 cameras have been deployed in the entire Kumbh area. ICC will be managing the crowd by reading the density of the crowd at a particular place.

"Secondly, all the bookings of land and facilities are being done digitally by the mela administration. On the whole, this is going to be a grand arrangement," Singh said.

When asked to comment on the visits of foreign nationals and ambassadors to the event, the UP chief secretary said, "(In) the last Kumbh, people from 55-60 countries came, because immediately a day or two before Kumbh started, there was the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Varanasi, so many people came from there. Besides that, one day, we will organise visits of embassies.

That visit is being organised on January 30," he said.

Singh also said, "For this Maha Kumbh, the government has been preparing for the last one to one-and-a-half years, and we have sanctioned work worth Rs 7,000 crore in view of Kumbh. Besides this, we are also making arrangements in the adjoining districts. Pilgrims who are coming to Prayagraj, many of them will go to Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Mirzapur and other nearby places. "So, in adjoining districts also, we are making arrangements to receive the pilgrims. Projects have been sanctioned even for a city like Lucknow," he said. "We are also deploying 250 electric buses for taking pilgrims from one part of the mela to the other part, or from the parking area to the mela area," the UP chief secretary said.

Search ops to...

Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) were eliminated in a two-day-long operation in the Akhnor sector on October 28 and 29 last year.

Cong to launch mass contact programme to rejuvenate party in J&K

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir unit of Congress has decided to revamp and reactivate the organisation at the grass-roots level by carrying out mass contact programmes in every constituency throughout the year, the party said on Sunday. The decision to this effect was taken at a day-long meeting of the party which was attended by senior leaders including AICC Incharge JK Affairs Bharatsinh Solanki, JKPC president Tariq Hameed Karra and AICC General Secretary G A Mir, a party spokesman said.

He said they had threadbare discussions on the assembly elections held last year, organisational affairs and measures to strengthen, revamp and rejuvenate the party.

The National Conference-Congress alliance won the elections but the Congress' performance was dismal as the party was able to win only six seats -- five in Kashmir and one in Jammu - out of the 32 it contested.

The current political situation and the year-long organisational activities



AICC Incharge JK Affairs Bharatsinh Solanki and other senior leaders during the meeting.

were discussed in detail, the spokesman said.

Solanki said at the meeting that the Congress has declared 2025 as the "year of the organisation" and the special focus would be to rebuild the organisation, strengthen the party structure at all levels and remove shortcomings up to booth levels.

He asked party leaders to concentrate on restructuring, reorganisation and revamping the party to prepare it for future elections.

He appreciated Karra for engaging with the grass-roots party cadres after the election results to seek their feedback and suggestions for strengthening the party.

"The party could not perform as per expectations but together in alliance (with National Conference), we could checkmate BJP's attempts to create a hung assembly and come to power by divisions and manipulations," he said. Solanki said it is victory of "our mission to keep BJP out of power as its ideology is a threat to the basic idea of India -- unity in diversity". He said Congress has always had a vital role in J-K because of its secular ideology.

Karra referred to challenges before the party and said the organisation would be strengthened at all levels in the days to come.

"Congress has done a lot for J-K... the UPA government led by former prime minister Manmohan Singh supported Jammu and Kashmir in every sector whether linked to power, rail-

way or road connectivity, creation of jobs, health, education and skill development and relief and rehabilitation programmes.

"All major projects being inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi were initiated by the UPA government but the BJP government could not carry forward those with the same speed while several projects are still pending," he claimed.

He referred to the demand for the restoration of statehood and asked party cadres to be ready for struggle.

Mir said the Congress is second to none and has "history, legacy and strong ideology" suitable for this diverse nation". He asked cadres to get ready for a "bigger fight to achieve the larger goal ahead".

Workshop on 'Sexual Harassment at Workplace' held

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Directorate of Floriculture, Parks & Gardens Jammu organized a one day Workshop on 'Sexual Harassment at Workplace' at its premises at Harki Poudi road under the chairmanship of Director General Floriculture, Parks & Gardens Jammu S. Jatinder Singh.

On the occasion, the Director General threw light on the provisions of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act 2013 viz-a-viz its applicability and use by the Government officials especially the females. He elaborated and educated the participants of Internal Complaints Committee & the women attendees of the workshop with the POSH Act and gave awareness on their rights.

He further highlighted the launching of the new version of SHE- BOX Portal which will serve as a central repository for monitoring data and complaints under 'The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013, which is live now.

The Members of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) were given training to deal with the com-



Director General Floriculture, Parks & Gardens Jammu S. Jatinder Singh chairing the workshop.

plaints of sexual harassment by Gurmeet Kour, Deputy Director (Planning) and Chairperson of ICC at Directorate of Floriculture Jammu. She stressed that the need of the hour is to ensure safety of women at workplace and to conduct such awareness & training campaigns on regular basis. She also highlighted some focal points which were touched upon in the workshop that included awareness about sexual harassment at workplace, understanding of the POSH Act, behaviors that are actionable under the POSH Act, compliances and penalties and mock trials. Interactive session was also conducted in the workshop where queries of the female employees were clarified. It was emphasized to the participants to bring to the notice of the Chairman ICC any violation of the Act in their workplaces.

The participants included Ishtiaq Ahmad Malik Floriculture Officer (HQ), member of the ICC Lakshmi Assistant Floriculture Officer and all female officials of the department.

Motivational Lecture on National Youth Day held at Brahamleen Guru Gosian Mela Ram Ji Adhyayan Kendra Banpuri

STATE TIMES NEWS

SUNDERBANI: On the auspicious occasion of Vivekananda Jayanti, celebrated as National Youth Day, a motivational lecture was delivered by Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Amit Khajuria at the Brahamleen Guru Gosian Mela Ram Ji Adhyayan Kendra in Banpuri, Sunderbani on Sunday.

The event was organized by the Sad Guru Baba Kanshi Giri Ji (Bangang Wale) Charitable Trust, with the active involvement of library committee members and trust representatives.

In his inspiring address, Amit Khajuria emphasized



Dignitaries along with participants during the programme.

the importance of a positive mindset and constructive thoughts as fundamental ingredients for achieving success in life.

Drawing on the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, he urged the youth to harness their potential, embrace challenges, and cultivate resilience.

The DySP shared personal anecdotes and experiences that highlighted the significance of setting goals and maintaining determination in the pursuit of one's aspirations.

The event also provided a platform for interaction, allowing the aspiring youth to engage with DySP Amit Khajuria during a Q&A session, where they sought

guidance on various aspects of personal and professional development.

The presence of library committee members and trust representatives enriched the atmosphere of camaraderie and encouragement.

The Sad Guru Baba Kanshi Giri Ji (Bangang Wale) Charitable Trust's initiative to host such motivational events reflects their commitment to empowering the youth of Sunderbani.

As National Youth Day continues to inspire future generations, the lessons imparted during this lecture are sure to resonate within the community for years to come.

DIG JSK range felicitates Vivek Suri, Sunil Sharma

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: DIG Jammu-Samba-Kathua range Shiv Kumar Sharma felicitated Vivek Suri General Secretary Veteran Cricket Association J&K and Insp Sunil Sharma at a function jointly organised by Zonal Police Headquarters and Veteran Cricket Association J&K.

Vivek Suri and Inspector Sunil Sharma have been selected to represent North Zone in Zonal Cricket Championship to be held at Bhopal were provided Cricket bats by DIG JSK range Shiv Kumar Sharma in the presence of Amit Sharma Vice President Veteran Cricket Association J&K.

While speaking at the occa-



sion, Shiv Kumar Sharma appreciated Vivek Suri for the passion towards the game and promotion of Veteran Cricket in J&K & organising many inter-state Veteran Cricket Tournaments in J&K. He further said that it is a great inspiration for all the Senior Cricketers to continue their cricket and can participate in the forth coming veteran tournament in Jammu.

Vivek Suri General Secretary of Veteran Cricket Association apprised that VCAJK is working for the promotion of Veteran Cricket in J&K and already VCAJK

team has represented J&K in recently held North Zone Veteran Cricket Championship at, Faridabad apart from many Bilateral series played with Veteran associations of Uttarakhnad, Delhi, Punjab & Chandigarh. He further informed that VCAJK under the aegis of the nation body, Board for Veteran Cricket in India is organizing another nation Veteran Cricket Championship in Jammu next month in which teams from Telangana, Mumbai, Delhi, Chandigarh, Vidharbh are going to participate.

Amit Kumar Vice President Veteran Cricket Association J&K thanked DIG JSK range Shiv Kumar Sharma for gracing the occasion.