## !! Continuations from Page 1!! Rajnath warns Pakistan...

still resorts to terrorism. Even today, over 80 percent of terrorists who come to

India are from there The terrorism would have ended in 1965 only, had the then government not turned the strategic advantages gained on the battlefield into disadvantages. The situation on ground has significantly improved since the abrogation of Article 370," he said.

Rajnath Singh described PoK as the crown jewel of India, which is nothing more than a foreign territory to Pakistan. He said: "J&K is incomplete without PoK. The peo-

ple living there are b e i n g deprived of a dign i f i e d Efforts are being made by Pakistan to mislead and provoke t h e m against India in the name ofreli-ΡοΚ land being used for terrori s mTraining camps terrorists are running and launch pads

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to the border. The Indian government is well aware of the situation. Pakistan will have to put an end to its nefarious designs.'

Declaring that Jammu and Kashmir remains "incomplete" without Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), Defence Minister delivered a strong message to Pakistan, warning to dismantle its terror infrastructure or face serious consequences

The Defence Minister reiterated the Government's commitment towards the welfare of the veterans, serving soldiers and their families. Terming it as a top priority, he assured that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) will always work beyond its capacity to ensure the well-being of its soldiers, who remain as the assets to the country even after retirement. He enumerated the steps taken by MoD and underlined that the Government stands with the soldiers of the country at every step.

As part of the event, Rajnath Singh hoisted a 108-feet high National Flag and inaugurated 'Akhnoor Heritage Museum'. The museum is a tribute to the rich history and culture of the region. Located on NH-144A connecting Jammu to Poonch, the museum showcases the rich history and legacy of the region.

Certain mobility equipment in terms of Motorised Wheelchairs, Tri Scooters, Scooters and Auto Rickshaws were handed over to the ex-servicemen on the occasion. More than 40 stalls/help desks of various Records Offices, Defence & Government Welfare Organisations, Banks & Employment Agencies were established at the venue for in-situ grievance redressal and awareness.

CRS authorises opening...
118 km Qazigund-Baramulla section commissioned in October 2009 followed by 18 km Banihal-Qazigund in June 2013, 25 km Udhampur-Katra in July 2014 and 48.1 km long Banihal-Sangaldan stretch in February, last year.

The work on the 46-km Sangaldan-Reasi section was also completed in June last rear, leaving a total 17 km stretch between Reasi and Katra and this section was finally completed in December 2024.

Quoting the letter, the officials said the CRS referred to his inspection of the newly constructed BG line between the Katra and Reasi section by motor trolley, on foot followed by speed trial on the entire section from Katra to Banihal and authorised regular opening of the section for the public carriage of passengers and freight traffic at a maximum permissible speed of 85 Kmph on the main line and 15 Kmph on

However, the officials said the authorisation is subject to the compliance of various conditions, guidelines and stipulations.

Talking to reporters on reaching Banihal after the successful high-speed trial run from Katra railway station, Deshwal said the trial run at 110 kmph on the 180degree rising grade in such a challenging geography from Katra to Banihal has written a new chapter in the history of railways

Last month, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the completion of the Reasi-Katra section, an important development that will connect Kashmir with the rest of the country.

On January 4, a successful trial run of an electric train was successfully conducted on the Katra-Banihal section. The railways have conducted six trials over the past month on various segments of the track, including the two major milestones of the Anji Khad and Chenab bridges.

### Soldiers protecting borders...

Lieutenant Governor expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Raksha Mantri, Rajnath Singh for dedicating Veterans' Day to honour the distinguished service of the ex-servicemen. He reiterated the government's commitment to protect the interests of Armed-forces personnel and their families

The Lieutenant Governor observed that the blessed land of Akhnoor bears the indelible footprints of the valour and saga of courage of our Veterans. He said, the 108-ft high Monumental National Flag and Akhnoor Heritage Museum dedicated to the nation by the Raksha Mantri will inspire the generations and keep reminding us of the selfless devotion and sacrifices of our brave soldiers and their families for the motherland.

"A martyr's house is a sacred temple. This feeling and respect should be there in the minds of common man. Administration and society can express their gratitude to those who sacrificed everything for the country by fulfilling their responsibilities and ensuring that they live a life of comfort and dignity," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor highlighted various welfare programmes providing assistance and support for the education of the children of veterans and their better

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also paid homage to the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa.

Two-minute silence was observed in the honour of martyrs of the Armed Forces. Mobility aids like motorised wheelchairs, retrofitted scooties were distributed to the veterans and veer naris

**HIGHLIGHTS...** sacrificed everything for the country by fulfilling their responsibilities and ensur-

ing that they live life of comfort and dignity

108-ft high Monumental National Flag, Akhnoor Heritage Museum dedicated to

#### Our veterans are...

celebrated on 14th January every year to recognise the service rendered by the First Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Field Marshal KM Cariappa, who

The day was first celebrated in 2016 and it is commemorated every year since by hosting interactive events in the honour of the ex-servicemen.

#### CM reaffirms his...

all benefits are provided through ex-servicemen welfare schemes without delay and hindrance.'

He also called upon veterans to voice any concerns or gaps in the system so they can be promptly addressed.

"If there are any challenges or weaknesses in our efforts, please bring them to our attention so that we can work together to resolve them. We are committed to serving you with the same dedication that you showed in serving the nation," he added.

Addressing the gathering of ex-servicemen and their families, who participated in the 9th Armed Forces Veterans' Day held at Tanda Artillery Brigade, the Chief Minister expressed his gratitude and emphasized the critical role of veterans in safeguarding the country's freedom and peace.

Highlighting the unparalleled commitment of veterans, Omar Abdullah acknowledged their courage and dedication, stating, "You put the nation above everything else, setting aside your personal well-being and dreams for the greater good. While you protected our borders, you also gave us the priceless gift of peace. It is because of your service that we sleep soundly at night, knowing that our country is in safe

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah assured the gathering, "We will always stand by you. Your sacrifices will never be forgotten, and we pledge to support you in every possible way. You have done your duty to the nation with honor; now it is our turn to do ours." Defence Minister Rajnath Singh earlier hoisted a 108-feet tall national flag and inaugurated a heritage museum in the Akhnoor belt of Jammu. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, the Chief of Defence Staff and senior officers.

# Landmine explosion in...

Line of Control are dotted with landmines which sometimes get washed away by rains resulting in such types of accidents, the officials said.

#### Maha Kumbh: First...

dip on Tuesday, almost double the first day's figure.

While the first major 'snan' of the Maha Kumbh was on Monday on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima', the akharas or the members of the Hindu monastic orders took their first snan on Makar Sankranti.

Shri Panchayati Akhara Mahanirvani and Shri Shambhu Panchayati Atal Akhara were the first ones to take 'Amrit Snan'. Thirteen akharas are participating in the Maha Kumbh

The Amrit Snan began in the 'Brahma Mahurat' around 3 am with the icy waters of the Triveni Sangam hardly a deterrent for the devouts.

Rose petals were showered from helicopters on the devotees during their 'Amrit

Mahanirvani Akhara's Mahamandaleshwar Chetangiri Maharaj told PTI, "The full Kumbh is held in Prayagraj every 12 years, but the Mahakumbh occurs once every 144 years after 12 full Kumbhs. It is a rare blessing for devotees to partake in this holy event. Sixty-eight Mahamandaleshwars and thousands of sadhus from Mahanirvani Akhara participated in the Amrit Snan."

Mahant Ravindra Puri of Niranjani Akhara shared, "Thirty-five Mahamandaleshwars and thousands of Naga sadhus from Niranjani Akhara participated in the Amrit Snan.'

Former minister and Niranjani Akhara's Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti said, "The crowd of youth at the ghats signifies the deep faith in Sanatan Dharma. Whenever Sanatan Dharma has faced challenges, youth and seers have come forward to

After Niranjani and Anand Akharas, thousands of saints from Juna Akhara, Avahan Akhara, and Panchagni Akhara performed their Amrit Snan. Members of the Kinnar Akhara also took a holy dip alongside Juna Akhara, led by Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Avadheshanand Giri, who arrived at the ghat in a grand chariot, followed by groups of Naga sadhus.

The sequence continued with three Bairagi Akharas - "Shri Panch Nirmohi Ani Akhara, Shri Panch Digambar Ani Akhara, and Shri Panch Nirvani Ani Akhara completing their ritual baths, followed by Udasin Akharas, Panchayati Naya Udasin, and Panchayati Bada Udasin Akharas. Finally, the seers of Shri Panchayati Nirmal Akhara concluded the Amrit Snan.

Carrying spears and tridents, Naga sadhus with their bodies smeared in ash moved in a procession with some riding horses as they made their way to the Shahi

With flowers in their matted hair, garlands around their necks, and the 'trishul' (trident) held high, they added to the spiritual grandeur of Maha Kumbh.

Amid the rhythmic beats of drums, their energy and enthusiasm turned the occasion into a vibrant celebration. Their displays with 'trishuls' and 'damrus' emphasised that Maha Kumbh is not merely a religious event but a festival of unity between humanity and nature.

Many devotees chanting 'Har Har Mahadev', 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Jai Ganga Maiyya' were also seen moving in groups towards the various ghats with many men arrying their children on their shoulders while some were seen assisting their aged parents.

Greeting people on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "This is the living form of our eternal culture and faith. Today on the auspicious occasion of the great festival of folk faith 'Makar Sankranti', congratulations to all the devotees who earned virtue by taking the first 'Amrit Snan' at the Triveni Sangam in Mahakumbh-2025, Prayagraj.'

In the evening, he shared another post on X: "Heartfelt greetings to all revered saints, Kalpavasis, and devotees who took a holy dip in the sacred Sangam on the auspicious occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' during the grand confluence of faith, equality, and unity at 'Mahakumbh-2025, Prayagraj'!

"Over 3.5 crore revered saints and devotees earned spiritual merit by bathing in the pure and continuous flow of the Triveni during the first 'Amrit Snan' festival."

Adityanath also extended his gratitude on the completion of the first 'Amrit Snan' to all the "Akharas, the Mahakumbh Mela administration, local administration, police administration, sanitation workers, volunteer organizations, religious institutions, boatmen, and all the departments of the central and state governments associated with Mahakumbh".

Devotees from abroad were also among those who took the holy dip to mark Shahi

"I am happy to be here. All thanks to my (Indian) husband. I am into yoga for last 20 years but now I have got the opportunity to know about Maha Kumbh. This experience is very unique and I feel grateful. It's a good opportunity to get 'Moksh'," Pinelopi Khanna, a Greek national told PTI Videos as she participated in the 'Amrit

A young woman named Harsha from Uttarakhand who left the world of glamour to embrace spirituality was also seen drawing a lot of attention

Celebrated on January 14 every year, Makar Sankranti marks the transition of the Sun into Capricorn, signifying the end of the winter solstice and the beginning of longer days. It is a harvest festival dedicated to the Sun God and holds immense cultural and spiritual significance.

Previously known as 'Shahi Snan,' the 'Amrit Snan' is a ceremonial holy dip performed by saints and devotees at sacred confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers in Prayagraj during the Maha Kumbh. It is believed to cleanse sins and provide spiritual merit, attracting millions of Hindu pilgrims to partake in this ritual.

As devotees returned from their pilgrimage, residents of Prayagraj organized large-scale food distribution. At various intersections and main roads, locals served pooris, vegetables, and khichdi as prasad.

Mukesh Chandra Jaiswal, organizing a community kitchen near the Shri Ram Janaki temple at Muthiganj, stated, "The feast, including pooris, vegetables, khichdi, and halwa, has been ongoing since 6 AM and will continue until 11 PM.'

Similarly, at Zero Road, Pandit Kishore Kumar Pathak, running a food distribution service under the Prabhu Kripa Pracheen Bal Roop Hanuman Mandir Tripauliya, said, "Since morning, we have been serving khichdi to devotees so they leave Prayagraj with positive memories.

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

The fair would continue till February 26 and has four more special bathing dates to go, which are days that draw maximum number of devotees for the dip at Sangam.

## Natural cave of...

natural cave which remains closed for most part of the year owing to safety issues "The natural cave is open for the devotees from today, depending on the rush of the devotees. We will allow pilgrims to have 'darshan' of the old cave only when the number is less than 10,000 so that they do not face any inconvenience," Garg said.

He said the pilgrimage is progressing smoothly from the new cave which can accommodate a large number of pilgrims without any difficulty.

Officials said more than 1.50 lakh pilgrims have visited the cave shrine since the beginning of the New Year.

We have almost 10,000 to 15,000 pilgrim footfalls at the cave shrine on a daily basis. The number of pilgrims go up usually on the weekend days," the CEO of the shrine board said, hoping that the number of pilgrims will go up after the opening of the natural cave. Last year, 94.83 lakh pilgrims offered prayers at the revered shrine, the second highest number of visitors in a decade.

#### Mysterious disease claims...

the investigations and reach to possible reasons of these deaths reported from this particular village

Dulloo also took this occasion to hear from the different experts from PGIMEF (Chandigarh), NIV, CSIR and NCDC about their findings after studying numerous samples taken from the affected persons or area. He also sought suggestions from them about the future course of action to be taken from here.

It was stated by these experts that after carrying out of extensive microbiological studies no viral, bacterial or microbial infection was found to cause these deaths These were found to be localised and possibly having some epidemiological linkage It was also stated that certain neurotoxins were found in the samples of the deceased persons which is further investigated to know more about it.

The government has taken several measures including rushing of Rapid Respons Teams, carrying out investigations of samples from humans and animals, testing of water etc besides taking assistance of reputed health institutions of the country to know about the actual causes behind these deaths. It may be recalled that nine people belonging to two families died in the village last

month. Initially the deaths were attributed to suspected food poisoning. However the situation turned grim when most of the villagers complained of similar symp toms, prompting government intervention and the rushing of experts from various prestigious health institutions in the country. Last month, the principal of Government Medical College Hospital, Jammu, Dr.

Ashutosh Gupta, had said preliminary investigations pointed to a viral infection as the cause of the mysterious deaths. However, he also said more studies were needed to reach a definitive conclusion. Teams of experts from Pune's National Institute of Virology, PGI Chandigarh

AHMS Delhi and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi, have vis ited the village to assist in the investigations. Rajouri Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma is personally monitoring the sit

uation to ensure timely intervention and mitigation, the officials said, adding aggressive contact tracing and sampling by the Health Department teams are being The officials said food and water samples had already been collected to ascertain

the quality and safety of essential supplies in the region.

A dedicated team of the Health Department, led by Jammu Health Director, led b Rakesh Mangotra and Rajouri Chief Medical Officer Dr Manohar Rana is camping at Kandi Kotranka to oversee the operations.

The administration has also stationed a mobile medical unit and ambulance or standby to address any emergent medical needs. The district administration remains committed to the safety and well-being of the

residents and urges the public to cooperate with health officials during the ongoing surveillance and interventions, an official said. He said for any health-related concerns, the public is encouraged to reach out to

the district control room or the local health authorities.

### 5 killed, 2...

of AK Raza, a resident of Choskore; and Muhammad Ibrahim, son of Haji Muhammad, a resident of Badgam. The other two victims, believed to be non-locals have vet to be identified.

Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari expressed profound grief and sorrow over the death of in a tragic road accident in Kargil.

Bukhari wrote on his X handle, "I am shocked and deeply saddened by the tragic loss of at least five lives in an accident in the Shilikchey area of Kargil, where a Scorpio and a tipper collided head-on, causing both vehicles to plunge into a deep gorge. The death of five locals has been confirmed, while two non-locals are report ed to be in critical condition.'

He further said, "My heartfelt sympathies go out to the families of the victims This is an immense loss, and no words of solace can ease the pain of the loved ones of the deceased. May the Almighty grant them eternal peace. My thoughts and prayers are also with the two injured persons, wishing them a swift and complete recovery."

#### Kashmir remains in grip of severe cold **STATE TIMES NEWS**

SRINAGAR: Kashmir continues to be in the grip of a cold wave as the minimum temperatures stayed several degrees below freezing point in the valley, the meteoro logical department said on Tuesday.

The valley is likely to witness mainly dry weather over the next few days, it said. The minimum temperature in Srinagar settled at minus 4.1 degrees Celsius or

Monday night, up from the previous night's minus 5.1 degrees Celsius, according to the meteorological department.

North Kashmir's tourist resort of Gulmarg, known for skiing, recorded a minimum temperature of minus degrees Celsius, slightly up from the previous night's minus 6.5

degrees Celsius. Pahalgam, one of

the base camps for

the annual Amarnath Yatra in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 7.8 degree Celsius, down from minus 8.4 degrees Celsius the night before.

The minimum temperature was minus 5.6 degrees Celsius in Qazigund, minus 5.5 degrees Celsius in Konibal in Pampore town, minus 4.7 degrees Celsius in Kupwara and minus 3.4 degrees Celsius in Kokernag.

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

Kashmir is currently in the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan' -- the harshest period of winter During the 40 days of 'Chillai-Kalan', which began on December 21, the chances of snowfall are the highest and the temperature drops considerably.

'Chillai-Kalan' ends on January 30 followed by a 20-day 'Chillai-Khurd' (smal cold) and a 10-day 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold).

#### EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF MAHA KUMBH MELA SPECIAL TRAIN For the convenience of Rail Passengers, Northern Railway has decided to extend

the Periodicity of following Kumbh Mela Special Train as per details given below:

Train No.	From	То	Days of Run	Notified Upto	Extended Upto	Total Trips
04601	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	Phaphamau Jn.	Date Wise	24.01.2025	07.02.2025 & 14.02.2025	02
04602	Phaphamau Jn.	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	Date Wise	25.01.2025	08.02.2025 & 15.02.2025	02

Rest of all information will hold good.

For detailed information regarding stoppages and timings of above trains, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in





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