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## Centre sanctions 9 projects worth Rs 85 Cr for J&K Universities, Colleges

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Union Ministry for Education, has approved projects worth Rs 85 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) for nine higher education institutions in Jammu & Kashmir.

The decision, taken during the third Project Approval Board (PAB) meeting announced on December 20, 2024, underscores the government's commitment towards transforming higher education infrastructure and fostering inclusivity and excellence in the region.

Among the sanctioned projects, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in Rajouri will receive Rs 20 crore to strengthen its infrastructure.

Additionally, five new girls' hostels will be constructed in the focus districts of Bandipora, Baramulla, Kulgam, Ramban and Udhampur, each allocated Rs

10 crore to promote gender equity.

Three Government Degree Colleges in Bandipora, Sogam Kupwara and Nowshera will also receive Rs 5 crore each for infrastructure development and upgradation.

PM-USHA, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of Education, has been designed to address critical gaps in the higher education sector by enhancing infrastructure, curriculum reform, accreditation and employability.

Aligned with the principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the scheme aims to ensure equitable access to quality education, particularly for under-represented groups, thereby fostering a more inclusive and dynamic higher education ecosystem. These recent sanctions are part of a broader vision to make education a driver of social and economic

transformation, bridging regional disparities and empowering students with the skills needed for a rapidly changing world.

The Higher Education Department of Jammu & Kashmir had earlier submitted a comprehensive proposal for 47 institutions, with a total estimated cost of Rs 585 crore. Including the latest approvals, 18 institutions including Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University and several colleges, have been sanctioned under PM-USHA across three PAB meetings held in 2024. The cumulative funding now stands at Rs 155 crore, marking a significant milestone in addressing the infrastructural and academic needs of the region. The establishment of new hostels and upgraded facilities will not only enhance the quality of education but also support gender inclusion, a critical aspect of NEP 2020's vision for equitable develop-

ment.

NEP 2020 emphasizes a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education, prioritizing equity, inclusivity and excellence. PM-USHA serves as a key enabler in realizing this vision by bridging infrastructural gaps and promoting reforms that align with global standards. The projects sanctioned for Jammu & Kashmir will create an environment conducive to innovation, learning and employability, ensuring that students from all sections of society have access to quality education.

These initiatives reflect a sustained commitment of J&K Government towards building a robust higher education framework that not only addresses present challenges but also anticipates future needs, ensuring that the region's academic institutions are well-prepared to contribute to national and global progress.

## Winter vacations from Dec 26 to Jan 4

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Directorate of School Education Jammu on Saturday announced winter vacation for Summer Zone Schools.

"All Government and recognized Private Schools of Summer zone of Jammu Division shall observe winter vacations w.e.f 26-12-2024 to 04-01-2025" an order issued by DSEJ stated.

It stated that any default on part of the Head of the Schools/Teaching staff in observance of the above schedule shall attract action under Rules.

## Chillai Kalan begins in Kashmir

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Chillai Kalan, the 40-day period of harshest winter, commenced in Kashmir on Saturday with Srinagar experiencing its coldest December night in five decades at minus 8.5 degrees Celsius, according to the meteorological

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## Demographic data along India-Myanmar border should be mapped: Amit Shah

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AGARTALA: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said the demographic data of people along the India-Myanmar border, especially in Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur, should be mapped so that it can help in fencing the boundary and infiltration can be stopped.

Chairing the 12th meeting of the Shillong-based North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC) Society here, he also said that there is a need for extensive mapping for mineral, oil, and coal reserves in the northeastern states so that the region could be financially benefited from the royalty received from these minerals.

"The demographic data of people along the India-Myanmar border, especially in Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur, should be mapped so that it can help in fencing of the border and infiltration can be stopped," Shah said.



He said for this, there is a need to conduct a comprehensive survey in the border areas.

The home minister said the NESAC society should focus on forest area development using space science.

He said for this, necessary steps should be taken by comparing old maps with the latest maps and where there are possibilities, efforts should be made to plant trees in collaboration with the state governments.

Similarly, Shah also asked the society to map floods in

the northeastern states.

He lauded the efforts of NESAC society for proper and positive use of space technology in administration and emphasised its extensive use in the development of a difficult geographical area like the Northeast in the coming times.

The home minister also said that the NESAC society should also focus on developing its revenue model.

He said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

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## Army has increased operational footprint in Jammu region: Lt Gen Sachdeva

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

RAJOURI/JAMMU: The Army has increased its operational footprint in the Jammu region, including the strategic occupation of the upper reaches of the Pir Panjal range, a senior officer said on Saturday.

The Army is playing a pivotal role in military-civilian coordination in creating a stable environment in the region, the officer said.

The officer emphasised that the Army will continue its efforts to promote peace, security, and development in this region.

"In recent times, the Indian Army has significantly

enhanced its operational capabilities. We have strengthened our patrols and posts, even in the highest mountains and ridges. This progress has been made possible thanks to your unwavering support," said General Officer Commanding (GoC), White Knight Corps, Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva.

Lt Gen Sachdeva visited Rajouri to strengthen civilian-military ties by taking parting part in a 'Kaumi Ekta meet' which aims to recognise the role of local communities and veterans in maintaining peace and

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## JU scripts history; secures prestigious A++ Grade in NAAC Accreditation Cycle IV

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The University of Jammu has scripted history by reaching a milestone of achieving the coveted A++ grade in the NAAC accreditation (Cycle IV) with an outstanding CGPA score of 3.72 on a 4-point scale.

"This is a marked improvement over the last accreditation Cycle (Cycle III), where in it had attained an A+ grade with CGPA of 3.51, thereby exhibiting its commitment to quality sustenance and quality enhancement", Vice Chancellor, Prof. Umesh Rai said, expressing his profound pride on this achievement.

Flanked by senior func-



VC JU, Prof. Umesh Rai addressing media in Jammu on Saturday.

tionaries, Prof Rai attributed this success to the collective efforts of the entire University fraternity. "The A++ grade reflects the unwavering commitment of

our faculty, officers, staff, scholars, students, and alumni. It is a testament to our shared vision of transforming the University of Jammu into a global hub for academ-

ic and research excellence," said Prof. Rai.

He elaborated on the transformative initiatives undertaken by the University,

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## JU's outstanding accomplishment made J&K proud: LG

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Vice Chancellor, faculty, staff, scholars and students of University of Jammu for attaining the coveted A++ Grade from NAAC, securing an exceptional score of 3.72.

In a social media post, the Lieutenant Governor said the outstanding accomplishment of the University of Jammu has made J&K proud.

The Lieutenant Governor posted on X, "The University of Jammu has achieved the prestigious A++ Grade with a CGPA of 3.72 on a seven-point scale by NAAC. Heartiest congratulations to the Vice Chancellor, faculty, staff, scholars and students for this outstanding accomplishment. You've made J&K proud. Jammu University's



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## India can never permit others to have a veto on its choices: Jaishankar

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday India can never permit others to have a veto on its choices and will do whatever is right in the national interest and for the global good without being intimidated to "conform". In a video message for a function in Mumbai, he said when India is etched more deeply in global consciousness, its repercussions are truly profound.

In a world grappling with unhealthy habits, stressed lifestyles or recurring climate events, there is

## India has potential to become skill capital of world: Modi



PM Narendra Modi attending community programme in Kuwait on Saturday.

■ AGENCY KUWAIT CITY: Praising the diaspora's contribution to global growth, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said

here on Saturday that India has the potential to become the "skill capital of the world."

Modi was addressing a

large gathering of the Indian community at a special event 'Hala Modi' at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Sports Complex in the city.

"Every year, hundreds of Indians come to Kuwait. You have added an Indian touch to Kuwaiti society. You have filled the canvas of Kuwait with the colors of Indian skills. You have mixed the essence of India's talent, technology, and tradition in Kuwait," Modi said.

The prime minister, who is visiting Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad

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## Namo Bharat train commuters to get 10 pc discount on tickets through RRTS app

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Nammo Bharat train commuters can avail a 10 per cent discount on tickets purchased through the RRTS Connect mobile application as part of the "loyalty points program" launched by NCRTC, an official statement said.

National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) Managing Director Shalabh Goel launched the initiative at the Sahibabad Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) station on Saturday and also unveiled the first edition of Nammo Bharat Times, a bi-monthly commuter newsletter.

Under the loyalty points program, passengers will earn one point for every rupee spent on Nammo Bharat train tickets.

Each loyalty point is valued at Rs 0.10 (10 paise) and will be credited to the passenger's account. These points can be redeemed for ticket purchases, the statement added.

This initiative will not only benefit passengers monetarily but also encourage the use of digital QR tickets through the 'RRTS Connect' app, simplifying travel through paperless ticketing, the statement said.

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## PM's life-size cut-out adorned with 'Pheran' in Srinagar



■ STATE TIMES NEWS SRINAGAR: A life-size cut-out of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on display in Srinagar's Lal Chowk was adorned with a 'pheran' - a traditional Kashmiri cloak - on International Pheran Day on Saturday.

A local poet from Budgam district in central Kashmir, Jamal Ali Karbala, alias Jamal Budgami, draped a beige pheran over the life-size cut-out of the Prime Minister, attracting a large number of onlookers, including tourists.

"We have been celebrating Pheran Day for the last four years, and this is the second time we've adorned Modi ji

with a pheran. We also lit 'izband' (harmala seeds) and showered sweets on him," Budgami, who claims to be the chairman of the All India Modi Fans Association, told reporters.

Izband seeds are traditionally placed on hot charcoal or in a Kangri (Kashmiri fire-pot), where they explode and release a fragrant smoke. The smoke is believed to ward off evil.

"We want the pheran to become famous worldwide and are celebrating Pheran Day along with Modi ji," Budgami said. He added that the aim behind adorning Modi with a pheran "is to make him focus on Kashmir more seriously."

## *****Ironic:***** Modi's India proactive in building temples across Muslim world but helpless in Bangladesh

**ANCHOR**  
**DOST KHAN**

J A M M U : Irony as it may be, the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Abdullah Al Baroun and Abdul Lateef Al Neseef, the individuals behind the Arabic versions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in the State of Kuwait, a Muslim country, lakhs of Hindus are continuously being persecuted, temples vandalized and Sanatan Dharma mocked and knocked in the neighbouring Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, yet another Islamic nation.

True, India's strongest ever Prime Minister Narendra Modi has kept the flag of Sanatan aloft globally with magnificent temples coming up in various parts of the world, lat-



est one, the first ever Hindu Temple in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, but does all this help Sanatanis to live like humans in most hostile countries like

Bangladesh, Afghanistan, to name a few.

Hindus are profusely bleeding in Bangladesh, children massacred, women raped and temples razed to

ground. This is nothing new. Hindus have been at the receiving end for hundreds of years of Mughal Rule, leaving trail of blood, forced conversions and desecration of Sanatan symbols all over the Indian sub-continent. Hindus are still struggling for restoration of their identity and pride in their only and exclusive country-India. The bruises unleashed in the immediate neighbourhood are still haunting the Sanatanis.

Can't mighty India under Modi do anything for Hindus in Bangladesh?

"Showing its cultural and spiritual prowess on the global stage is meaningless until Hindus and temples remain target of radicals. India must not forget its position as the only spiritual leader of the global Sanatan community and therefore it cannot shun its responsibility to preserve Hindu heritage.

Bangladesh is crying and craving for Indian attention.

A situation like the one existing in Bangladesh with Hindus at the verge of annihilation can be dealt with by multi-pronged strategies-building diplomatic pressure on the rogue nation to ensure safety of Hindus and other minorities; involving voluntary, social and religious organizations to open up their arms for the persecuted minorities to retrieve and rehabilitate them, highlight the plight of Bangladeshi temples on international forums by generating awareness besides extending legal and financial assistance to the victims. The other option is to adopt hot pursuit.

Of course, India has to tread cautiously but assertiveness cannot be overlooked. If India doesn't come to the rescue of Hindus in Bangladesh who will? India adopted hot pursuit in 1971 under

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