

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! J&K carries out...

efforts of frontline health workers, ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, volunteers, and district health teams for their tireless dedication in reaching every household, including those in far-flung and vulnerable areas.

"Going to far-flung areas and giving these two drops to children there is very challenging, but our frontline staff delivered on that efficiently," she said.

The Minister further highlighted that the department has established around 11000 booths across J&K, involving almost 42000 healthcare workers and around 20 lakh children will be administered Polio drops during the campaign.

She added that special immunization booths, mobile teams, and house-to-house visits have been put in place across all districts to cover every eligible child, besides robust monitoring mechanisms have also been established to ensure effective implementation of the campaign.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Vikram Randhawa said that National Immunization Day (Polio) Campaign forms a key component of the government's public health strategy to protect future generations and strengthen disease prevention measures across Jammu and Kashmir. He called upon all the parents, public and responsible citizens to contribute towards this campaign.

The MLA also lauded the continuous efforts of Health Minister; Sakeena Itoo for bringing improvements in healthcare infrastructure across Jammu and Kashmir.

In his address, Secretary Health, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed said that this day is very important for maintaining the status of Polio free India, which our country achieved in the year 2014. He called upon the parents and public to actively participate in this campaign. He further said that the department has established around 11,000 booths for the administration of Polio drops to the children across Jammu and Kashmir.

CEO State Health Agency, Ananth Dwivedi; Mission Director ICDS, Sajad Hussain Gana; Commissioner Food and Drug Administration, Smita Sethi; Director Family Welfare and Immunization, Dr. Poonam Sethi; Director Health Services Jammu, Dr. Abdul Hamid Zargar; doctors, paramedical staff, healthcare professionals and large number of locals and children were also present on the occasion.

Pertinently, the Pulse Polio Campaign 2025 across Jammu & Kashmir is being conducted on a massive scale, with 10,893 vaccination booths established across the Union Territory. A total of 42,564 health workers and volunteers have been deployed to ensure smooth implementation of the programme. To cover children on the move, 256 transit vaccination points and 520 mobile teams have been established. Through these extensive arrangements, the campaign aims to administer Oral Polio Vaccine to approximately 20 lakh children under five years of age across J&K, ensuring that no child is missed and the Polio-Free status of the region is sustained.

Telescope seized in...

on Sunday morning, they said.

Police and parties of the Special Operations Group (SOG) are conducting further inquiry into the matter, the spokesperson said.

"The public is advised not to panic," the official added.

In a separate incident, police took Tanvir Ahmad into custody for questioning from village Diani in Samba district, reportedly after a "Pakistani" phone number was noticed on his mobile, they said.

Ahmad is originally a resident of south Kashmir's Anantnag and is currently residing in Samba, the officials said.

President gives assent...

delivery, thereby strengthening the foundation for a prosperous, resilient and self-reliant Rural Bharat.

Earlier, Parliament passed the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025, marking a decisive reform in India's rural employment and development framework. The Act replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 with a modern statutory framework that enhances livelihood security and is aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Anchored in the principles of empowerment, growth, convergence and saturation, the Act seeks to transform rural employment from a standalone welfare intervention into an integrated instrument of development. It strengthens income security for rural households, modernises governance and accountability, and links wage employment with the creation of durable and productive rural assets, thereby laying the foundation for a prosperous and resilient Rural Bharat.

The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 marks a significant milestone in India's rural employment framework, reinforcing livelihood security and sustainable development. One of the key highlights of the Act is the enhanced statutory employment guarantee. Under Section 5(1), every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work is entitled to a minimum of 125 days of wage employment per financial year. This is a notable enhancement over the previous 100-day provision, ensuring predictable income, strengthened livelihood security, and meaningful engagement of rural households in national development.

To support agriculture and rural labour requirements, the Act allows States to notify an aggregated pause period of up to sixty days in a financial year during peak sowing and harvesting seasons (Section 6). The full 125-day employment guarantee remains intact for the remaining period, striking a balance between agricultural productivity and workers' rights.

The Act also mandates timely wage payments. Wages must be paid weekly or within fifteen days of completion of work (Section 5(3)), with delay compensation payable as per Schedule II. This provision reinforces wage security and protects workers from delays that previously hampered income stability.

A distinctive feature of the Act is the linkage of employment with productive rural infrastructure. Wage employment is aligned with the creation of durable public assets in four thematic domains: water security, core rural infrastructure, livelihood-related infrastructure, and works to mitigate extreme weather events (Section 4(2) read with Schedule I). These assets are planned through a bottom-up process and aggregated into the Viksit Bharat National Rural Infrastructure Stack, ensuring convergence, outcome-based planning, and saturation of critical rural infrastructure based on local needs.

The Act strengthens decentralized planning with national convergence. Works originate from Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans (VGPPs), prepared and approved at the Gram Panchayat level through participatory processes (Sections 4(1)-4(3)). These plans are digitally integrated with national platforms like PM Gati Shakti, facilitating coordinated planning across Ministries while retaining local decision-making authority.

A reformed financial architecture ensures predictable funding through a 60:40 cost-sharing pattern between the Centre and States, 90:10 for North Eastern and Himalayan States, and 100% funding for Union Territories without legislatures. Normative allocations based on objective parameters (Sections 4(5) and 22(4)) preserve statutory entitlements while maintaining fiscal discipline.

The Act also enhances administrative capacity, raising the expenditure ceiling from 6% to 9%, enabling improved staffing, training, technical support, and effective field-level implementation.

Importantly, the Act preserves the right to demand employment. Section 5(1) clearly obliges the Government to provide 125 days of wage employment, reinforced by grievance redressal mechanisms. Employment is tied to the creation of productive, durable, and climate-resilient assets, ensuring mutually reinforcing objectives of livelihood and infrastructure development (Section 4(2) and Schedule I).

Technology plays an enabling role, with provisions for biometric authentication, geo-tagging, real-time dashboards, and strengthened social audits by Gram Sabhas (Sections 20, 23, and 24). The Act also reinstates unemployment allowance, payable if employment is not provided within fifteen days, ensuring meaningful statutory protection.

The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025, expands employment guarantees, institutionalizes participatory planning, strengthens accountability, and integrates convergence-driven development. It positions rural employment as a strategic tool for empowerment, inclusive growth, and resilient rural prosperity, fully aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

HC transfers minor...

Jandyal village in Bhalwal tehsil of Jammu, approached the court in October last year, demanding transfer of the investigation to the crime branch, as he suspected that his daughter was subjected to rape and murder.

The girl was found hanging from a tree near her residence on August 15, 2024.

Justice Rahul Bharti, while disposing of Ali's writ petition filed through advocate Deepika Pushkar Nath, directed the CBI to conduct preliminary verification followed by investigation in accordance with the CBI manual read with the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS).

The direction came in a three-page order after the personal appearance of SSP, CBI Jammu, Venkateswarlu Chandu and Deputy Superintendent of Police and Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Akhmoor, Virender Gupta, along with the enquiry officer on December 18.

The court directed the SDPO to hand over the entire enquiry record to the CBI, after translating all Urdu-script documents into Hindi or English by January 18, and formally deliver it to the agency by the next day.

The high court directed the CBI to apprise the chief judicial magistrate, Jammu of the status of the inquiry or investigation within three months of its commencement to ensure effective judicial monitoring and to prevent any laxity in the probe. Gharota police station, Jammu has been directed to extend all necessary cooperation to the CBI.

Searches underway after...

adjoining forest villages in the Majalta area, some 5 km west of the site of an earlier encounter that left a policeman dead, the officials said.

They said an intelligence input was received late Saturday that two unidentified terrorists visited the house of Mangtu Ram at Chore Motu village at around 6.30 pm and took food.

Police and paramilitary forces were immediately mobilised, but the terrorists could not be found, they said.

The forest belt near the village was cordoned off, and a combing operation was launched simultaneously from different sides with the first light of the day on Sunday to track down and neutralise the terrorists, the officials said.

On December 15, a policeman was killed in an encounter with terrorists at Soan village in the Majalta area after security forces received information about the movement of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorists in the area.

The terrorists managed to escape, taking advantage of thick foliage and darkness, the officials said.

Hike in train...

Railways till March 31, 2026.

According to the Railway Ministry, the previous fare hike in July 2025 has generated Rs 700 crore revenue till date.

Congress indulging in...

and pride of Assamese people, which the BJP has been trying to protect.

"The Congress is opposing the revision of voter lists as it wants to grab power... They oppose whatever good I try to do... The BJP government will always work to protect the identity, land, pride and existence of Assamese people," Modi asserted.

"Assam must be safeguarded from the poison of Congress' appeasement and vote-bank politics. I assure you all that BJP will stand like a shield to protect Assam's identity and honour," he told thousands of people ahead of the assembly polls.

The Assembly polls to 126 constituencies are likely to take place in March-April next.

Underscoring that BJP governments at the Centre and state are for the poor, tribals, youth and women, Modi said it is working to end decades of violence in Assam and the Northeast.

"Our government has always kept Assam's identity and culture paramount, highlighting symbols of Assamese pride on every platform," he added.

Addressing the rally on the second and final day of his Assam tour, the PM alleged that the Congress has inflicted "so much wrongs" to this country that despite "correcting" those for the last 11 years, a lot of work still remained to bring everything on track.

"When our government awarded Dr Bhupen Hazarika the Bharat Ratna, the Congress openly opposed the decision. Its national president remarked that 'Modi nachne gane walon ko Bharat Ratna de raha hai' (Modi is giving Bharat Ratna to dancers-singers), which is an insult to both Bhupen Da and the people of Assam," Modi asserted.

He said the BJP government's aim is to make Assam as powerful as it was during the Ahom dynasty centuries ago.

"Industrialisation and connectivity are fulfilling Assam's dreams. The double-engine government of the BJP is empowering youth to see new dreams," he added.

Continuing its tirade against the Congress, Modi said even when a semiconductor unit was set up in the state, the opposition party went against it.

"It was the opposition government that for decades denied land rights to the tea community brothers and sisters, whereas the BJP government has given them land rights and a dignified life," he added.

Expressing satisfaction at the presence of a huge number of women at the rally, Modi said: "When my mothers and sisters come in such large numbers, it gives me a special feeling. Many sisters have come with tea gardens' flavour and tea's flavour creates a special feeling inside me."

He also informed the crowd that when Russian President Vladimir Putin visited India recently, Assam's black tea was gifted to the VIP.

Stating that India cannot develop without Northeast's progress, he said everyone is lauding Assam's development momentum nowadays.

"The benefits of development have reached the poor in far-flung areas of the country. Due to our relentless efforts, 25 crore people have been taken out of poverty and a neo-middle class has been created in India," Modi asserted.

The PM pointed out that fresh data has come which symbolises the changes taking place in the country.

"Earlier, among the poorest families in villages, only one in 10 had a bike. Now, nearly half the families in villages own a bike or a car. Mobile phones have reached almost every household and items like refrigerators, once considered a luxury, have now become common and found a place even in village kitchens," he said.

Modi said that the role of eastern and Northeastern India is continuously increasing, and the entire region will become the growth engine of the nation's development. The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of a Rs 10,601-crore brownfield ammonia-urea plant in Dibrugarh district of Assam, and asserted that it would usher in a new chapter of industrial progress in the region.

The facility - Assam Valley Fertiliser and Chemical Company Ltd (AVFCCL) - will have an annual urea production capacity of 12.7 lakh metric tonnes and the project is scheduled for commissioning in 2030.

The PM, on the last day of his two-day Assam visit, laid the foundation stone of the plant here, located within the existing premises of the Brahmaputra Valley Fertiliser Corp Ltd (BVFCL).

11 flights cancelled...

of Kashmir and moderate rainfall in the plains.

The AAI official added that four flights were waiting for departure at the apron of Srinagar airport, while two flights were scheduled to arrive later in the day.

The official further noted that the resumption of flight operations would depend on an improvement in weather conditions.

Traffic on the Mughal and Sinthan Top roads, which provide alternative connectivity to Kashmir, was suspended on Sunday due to light to moderate snowfall in the high-altitude areas of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

However, traffic on the 270-kilometre Jammu-Srinagar national highway -- the only all weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country -- was plying as usual despite intermittent rains that ended the over one-and-a-half months long dry spell, they said.

A group of three tea vendors, left stranded in the Peer Ki Gali area, were rescued by police and Border Roads Organisation in a joint operation after they made passionate appeals through video messages urging the authorities to rescue them.

"Despite challenging weather conditions and reduced visibility, the police team swiftly moved to the location and carried out a well-coordinated rescue effort. Through timely action and close coordination, all three stranded persons were safely evacuated from the area," a police spokesman said.

He said the rescued individuals are stable and safe.

The Mughal road, which connects the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri with south Kashmir's Shopian, was closed for traffic as a precautionary measure after more than three inches of snow was recorded at Peer Ki Gali on Sunday afternoon.

The Sinthan Top road, which connects Kishtwar and Doda districts in Jammu with south Kashmir's Anantnag, was also closed after moderate snowfall in the higher reaches.

Both the mountainous roads usually remain closed for several months due to heavy snowfall during winter.

In response to the inclement weather and its potential impact on public safety, the police in Poonch have established a dedicated helpline to assist residents in times of need.

"This initiative is aimed at ensuring timely support and maintaining public safety during adverse weather conditions," the police spokesman said.

The police also urged residents to avoid unnecessary travel, especially in areas prone to landslides or road blockages, and stay updated on weather forecasts and advisories issued by the authorities.

Misconceptions about RSS...

about the RSS, but those views should be based on facts and not on "narratives and secondary source information".

"In order to bring the reality in front of people, lectures and interaction sessions have been organised in four cities of the country," Bhagwat said.

Maintaining that the RSS does not have any political agenda, he said the Sangh works for the betterment and protection of the Hindu society.

Bhagwat said India would again become a 'Vishwaguru' and that "it is the duty of the Sangh to prepare society for the purpose".

The RSS has been holding such sessions as part of the centenary celebrations in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru.

"The strength of Hindus is awakening and will certainly happen," he said.

Asserting that Bharat's rise is a certainty, Bhagwat said the rise of Hinduism is also imminent and as such the bad people are worried about it.

"That is why propaganda against India and organisations like the Sangh is happening with more tempo," the RSS chief said.

He said the RSS will discuss ways to bring to the people the truth so that they are not swayed by such propaganda.

"If everything remains fine in our neighbouring countries, which were part of Bharat earlier, our position will also be fine," he added.

"The government will decide its policies on such matters, but at the society-to-society level, wishing well for each other is something we would like to discuss," he said.

Neighbouring Bangladesh has been going through turmoil since protests against the Hasina government broke out in mid-2024 with reports of atrocities on minority Hindus there.

The death of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi triggered attacks and vandalism across Bangladesh, including stone-hurling at the Assistant Indian High Commissioner's residence in Chattogram on Thursday.

The RSS chief also said one should not buy things which can be made at home and that only those objects should be bought which can increase the income of locals.

"One should not buy anything from a foreign country which can be made at home," he said, advocating Swadeshi for the interest of the nation.

The RSS leader said one should use mother tongue instead of a foreign language.

"When you are Bengali-speaking people, write 'Swagatam' instead of 'Welcome' at the entrance of your residence," he said.

He also encouraged people to travel within the country and explore its cultural and historical sites.

"There are so many places across Bharat which are worthy to be visited," he said, adding, "whether one sees other parts of the world or not, one should see his own country."

The RSS chief said one should read the basic tenets of the Constitution, including the Preamble and the fundamental duties of citizens.

Rahul Gandhi Ko...

When the shopkeeper faced the Raja, he started crying and trembling and also admitted his fault. He vowed before the Raja that he would return the full amount along with interest as soon as he reached back since money was lying in his shop. Raja Ram Singh sternly directed him to return money to the Kabuliwala. Agreeing and trembling, the trader left the Raj Darbar.

When they reached back at the shop, the trader stood in his shop and said: "I care two hoots about your Raja or his orders. I am not going to pay even a single paisa. Do what you like, but I will not give anything to this Kabuliwala !"

Highly astonished, the Raja ke Sipahi rushed back to the Court and narrated the whole thing before Raja Ram Singh. Every-one was dumb struck. How anyone could dare defy Rajagya (the Royal Dietate), they all wondered. Now, the trader would surely be given death sentence; was on everyone's mind.

But Raja Ram Singh was very sensible. He pondered for some time. And then he ordered that not only the shopkeeper be arrested, but the roof of his shop be also broken and brought back to the Royal Court. Now this was a very strange order: arresting the trader was understandable, but uprooting the roof of shop and bringing that also to the Darbar was something beyond imagination. But then who would question the orders of the King!

A 'motorecade' of Royal force and ponies went to the area. They arrested the shopkeeper and uprooted the roof of the shop. While the shop was being broken, the trader cursed, abused and shouted; but no one would listen to him. The arrested person was put in jail for the night and on the orders of the Raja, the debris of shop was put on the open ground outside the Royal Court covering it with a carpet.

The next morning, the shopkeeper was brought before Raja Ram Singh. The Raja asked what he intended to do. Fearing for his life, the trembling shopkeeper said that although his shop had been broken and he was financially in doldrums, still he would repay the debt of Kabuliwala as soon as he reached back home. And then, the Raja asked him to stand on the carpet hiding shop debris and repeat the same thing.

When the shopkeeper stood upon the mound, he said: Raja Ji dukaan te meri tod ditti; hun hor ke kare lege? Aaun te ik paisa ne dega, jo karna hai kar lo. (Raja Ji, you have already broken my shop; what else can you do? I will not give even a single paisa, do what you like!)

Raja Ram Singh laughed loudly. He said to the Kabuliwala : Is ki to mitti mein nuks hai ! He will not give you anything.

At the end, the shopkeeper was punished as per law and the Raja reimbursed the Kabuliwala out of government funds!

The story has remarkable resemblance with visits of Rahul Gandhi to foreign countries. Whenever he is on foreign soil, on videshi mitti, he always abuses, curses, degrades and demonizes Mother India. And now I have understood the reason: Is ki to mitti main nuks hai !!

Paddy procurement hits record high of 4.47 lakh quintals in Jammu

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Paddy procurement in the Jammu region has reached 4.47 lakh quintals during the ongoing Kharif marketing season, the highest ever in the region, an official said on Sunday.

The procurement has surpassed the previous peak of 4.05 lakh quintals achieved during the 2021-22 Kharif marketing season, marking a significant rise in farmer participation and minimum support price (MSP) coverage, the spokesperson said.

"To date, 4.47 lakh quintal of paddy has been procured, which is the highest ever recorded so far. The procurement operations for the current season will continue till December 31," he said.

The spokesperson said that during the 2024-25 Kharif Marketing Season, 3.27 lakh quintal of paddy was procured, benefiting 4,897 farmers. MSP disbursement amounted to Rs 75.67 crore.

During the ongoing Kharif Marketing Season, paddy procurement has registered a significant increase, reaching a record level of 4.47 lakh quintals till date, benefiting 6,130 farmers, with MSP amounting to Rs 106.48 crore paid to farmers through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

This reflects a substantial improvement both in procurement volume and farmer outreach during the current season, the spokesperson said.

He said 24 mandis are operational across the region, ensuring smooth and accessible procurement for paddy growers. MSP rates for the current season were fixed at Rs 2,389 per quintal for Grade 'A' paddy and Rs 2,369 per quintal for common paddy, providing assured prices to farmers.

Indian visa application centre suspended indefinitely in Bangladesh's Chattogram

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

DHAKA: India on Sunday suspended visa operations at its mission in Bangladeshi port city of Chattogram until further notice, according to media reports.

The move comes in the wake of a fresh wave of unrest witnessed in the country following the death of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi.

His death triggered attacks and vandalism across Bangladesh, including stone-hurling at the Assistant Indian High Commissioner's residence in Chattogram on Thursday.

Hadi, a prominent leader of the student-led protests last year that led to the ouster of the prime minister Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, was a candidate for the scheduled February 12 general elections.

He was shot in the head on December 12 by masked gunmen at an election campaign in central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area and died while undergoing treatment in Singapore on December 18. "Due to the recent security incident at Assistant High Commission of India (AHCI) Chittagong, Indian visa operations at IVAC Chittagong (Chattogram) will remain suspended from 21/12/2025 until further notice," the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) said in a brief statement.

The announcement for reopening the visa centre will be made after reviewing the situation, the statement added. The decision came into effect on Sunday.

There are five IVAC facilities across Bangladesh at Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Chattogram and Sylhet. An IVAC official told PTI that the other four offices have remained operational as of Sunday.

India on Thursday resumed operations at its visa application centre in Dhaka, a day after closing it over escalated security concerns, but closed for a brief period two other identical facilities in Rajshahi and Khulna as anti-India protestors tried to march towards the Indian missions there. On Saturday, security was strengthened at the Indian Assistant High Commission office and the visa application centre in Bangladesh's Sylhet city. The enhanced security measures were put in place to ensure that "no third party can exploit the situation," Additional Deputy Commissioner (Media) of the Sylhet Metropolitan Police Saiful Islam was quoted as saying by The Dhaka Tribune newspaper on Saturday.