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Vitasta Herald

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Transforming Vision into Reality: Lt Governor Manoj Sinha's 2025 Governance Record

From Peace-Building to Economic Resurgence, a Year of Defining Milestones

KING C BHARATI

JAMMU, JANUARY, 2026: The year 2025 stands out as a defining phase in Jammu and Kashmir's recent administrative history, marked by visible governance outcomes under the leadership of Manoj Sinha. Entering its sixth year as a Union Territory, the region witnessed a clear shift from stabilisation to delivery, with infrastructure, economy, culture and social welfare moving from policy intent to on-ground results.

Economic indicators during the year reflected sustained momentum. Jammu and Kashmir recorded a GDP growth rate of 9.5 per cent for 2023–24, with the estimated Gross State Domestic Product rising to ₹ 2.45 lakh crore from ₹ 2.20 lakh crore in



the previous year. This growth trajectory signalled a broader transition, with the Union Territory increasingly positioned as an investment destination rather than a conflict-affected periphery. Nearly ₹ 80,000 crore worth of industrial investment proposals were recorded across sectors such as information technology, hospitality, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and renewable energy, underlining renewed private sector confidence.

Infrastructure connectivity emerged as the most visible symbol of this transition. The inauguration of the Jammu–Baramulla Rail Link in June 2025 marked the fulfilment of a century-old aspiration for the Kashmir Valley. The 272-kilometre project, built at a cost of ₹ 43,780 crore, introduced strategic rail con

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Our Stories, Our Words - A Hope Heralded for a Community

From Digital Voice to Printed Legacy: The Right News (TRN) Launches 'Vitasta Herald' for the Kashmiri Pandit Community

RAKESH ROSHAN BHAT

Jammu, January 2026: This is a story of how a community found its voice. It is the story of a community faced with an existential crisis because of its forced exodus from Kashmir—a place where the river Vitasta and this community were born together. This is the community that built a heritage of ultimate knowledge and an ideal way of life, creating a treasure trove of timeless wisdom, culture, literature, and leadership. It was a leadership that shaped the very idea of living, transcending mundane existence into something more meaningful. And all along, the Vitasta was its silent witness. Then came the twist: the establishment of Muslim rule in the 14th century. Over the next seven centuries, there were seven attempts to erase this community's existence. But they were resilient. They persisted and resurged every time. They are currently in their seventh such phase, and while they have resurged in many ways, that resurgence remains incomplete because they are still living in exile. The resurgence will be complete only on the day the Vitasta sees them frolicking on its banks once again. Why is this resurgence and return so much more challenging in current imes? Because the

(Contd on Page 14)





The International Film Festival of Srinagar (TIFFS) Marks Cultural Revival in the Valley

Fourth Edition Draws Global Cinema, Youth Participation, and National Attention





BY ROHINI VAISHNAVI

THE fourth edition of The International Film Festival of Srinagar (TIFFS), held recently in Srinagar, marked a defining cultural moment for Jammu and Kashmir by bringing global cinema to the Valley and reinforcing its growing stature as a centre for filmmaking, creativity, and film tourism. The three-day festival stood out not only for its scale and diversity but also for the spirit of renewal it reflected in a region reclaiming its artistic voice.

Organised by Vomedh in association with The Avanti Foundation and Landmark Crafts Ltd, and co-powered by the Kashmiri Overseas Association, the festival brought together filmmakers, artistes, policymakers, students, and cinema enthusiasts from across India and abroad. It served as a platform for artistic exchange while underlining Kashmir's potential as a vibrant cultural and cinematic destination.

At the heart of TIFFS are the founders of Vomedh, brothers Rakesh Roshan Bhat and Rohit Bhat, whose personal journeys are closely linked with the history of displacement faced by Kashmiri Pandits in 1990. Children of families forced to rebuild life from nothing, the brothers channelled that experience into theatre and cinema, emerging as committed advocates of Kashmiri art, language, and identity. Over the years, their work has focused on creating sustainable platforms for creative expression in the region.

Rohit Bhat, a theatre director who has staged more than 15 full-length plays across India, brings with him professional experience from Mumbai's film and television industry. He also serves as co-director of the Jammu Film Festival and TIFFS. Rakesh Roshan Bhat, a noted playwright and cultural organiser, founded Vomedh 16 years ago, played a key role in establishing international film festivals in Jammu and Srinagar, and currently leads Project Pagah, an initiative dedicated to language preservation and youth engagement.

This year's edition of TIFFS received more than 700 film submissions from 50 countries, spanning languages such as Kashmiri, Hindi, Urdu, Dogri, English, and several international languages. Over a thousand people attended the festival during the three days, with strong participation from young students, particularly from institutions like the College of Islamic Studies and Amar Singh College. A special workshop on careers in filmmaking and acting, conducted by National School of Drama alumnus and noted actor Ashwath Bhatt, proved especially inspiring for aspiring artistes.

The festival was attended by several distinguished dignitaries, including Manoj Sinha, Divisional Commissioner Anshul Garg, DC Srinagar Akshay Labroo, Vice Chancellor SKUAST Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai, and Shobha Kapoor from the Ministry of Education, Government of India. The closing ceremony saw the presence of MLAs Mohammad Gul, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, Farooq Ahmad Shah, and K K Sidha. Members of the film fraternity, including Kapil Mattoo, Gul Reyaz, Ashwath Bhatt, Lalit Parimoo, Suheil Sayed, and others, added depth to the cinematic engagement.

A panel discussion titled *"Films as a Catalyst for Empathy and Change"*, moderated by the author, explored cinema's role in social transformation. The discussion featured insights from Kapil Mattoo, Mir Sarwar, Lalit Parimoo, Rakesh Bhat, Priyanka Dixit, and Devendra Jadhav, and was widely appreciated for its grounded and reflective exchange.

Awards at the festival recognised strong storytelling and social themes, with honours going to *Batta Kocha* by Ankit Wali and Koul, *Mujhe Beti Chahiye* by Vinod Chopra, and *Kaise Hain Aap* by Lalit Parimoo. Dedicated to legendary music director Madan Mohan, the festival also paid tribute to India's cinematic heritage.

In a region long affected by the absence of cinema infrastructure, IFFS has reopened doors to world-class films and renewed cultural aspiration. Beyond screenings, the festival aims to position Kashmir as a preferred filming destination, support the local economy through film tourism, and create new career pathways for youth in media and creative industries. More importantly, it has helped project Kashmir's global image as a land of beauty, talent, and creativity.

Through the sustained efforts of the Bhat brothers and their collaborators, The International Film Festival of Srinagar has emerged as a symbol of hope and cultural revival, presenting Kashmir to the world not through the lens of conflict, but through resilience, imagination, and inspiring storytelling.

Viksit Bharat GRAM G Bill to end irregularities strengthen rural economy, benefit the poor: Sat CA

Jammu, Janu ary, 2026: J&K BJP President and MP (Rajya Sabha), Sat Sharma CA, said that the Viksit Bharat GRAM G (VB-GRAM G) Bill is a decisive reform aimed at ending long-standing irregularities in rural employment schemes and ensuring transparent, need-based benefits for the poor. He was addressing a workshop organized under the VB-GRAM G Janajagaran Abhiyan at the BJP headquarters, Jammu.

The workshop was attended by J&K BJP General Secretary and Convenor VB-GRAM G Janajagaran Abhiyan Baldev Singh Billawaria, General Secretaries Sanjita Dogra and Gopal Mahajan, DDC Chairpersons Bharat Bhushan, Col Maan Singh, and Keshav Dutt Sharma, and MLA RS Pathania, besides party office bearers, district presidents, and senior leaders. Om Prakash Dhankar, National Secretary, BJP, former BJP President and Ex-Minister, Government of Haryana, and National Co-Convenor & Incharge Jammu & Kashmir for VB-GRAM G Janajagaran Abhiyan, addressed the workshop through virtual mode.

Addressing the workshop, Sat Sharma provided a comprehensive overview of the VB-GRAM G framework, stating that the workshop aims to equip party teams who will visit districts and villages to create awareness among the masses. He said that while MGNREGA was launched with good intentions, it suffered from serious shortcomings such as weak social audits, lack of proper verification, and scope for misuse, which diluted its impact on the poorest sections. "To overcome these flaws and ensure that benefits genuinely reach the needy, the Modi Government has introduced the Viksit Bharat GRAM G Bill. The new framework emphasizes transparency, accountability, and productivity, while providing 100 to 125 days of assured employment, strengthening rural infrastructure and contributing directly to the vision of a Viksit Bharat," Sat Sharma said.

Sat Sharma also criticized the Congress for indulging in mere politics over the change in nomenclature, instead of engaging in a constructive debate on how VB-GRAM G addresses the inherent weaknesses of MGNREGA and empowers rural India.

\Om Prakash Dhankar highlighted the national significance of VB-GRAM G, calling it one of the dream projects of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to strengthen rural infrastructure, support farmers, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities. He urged BJP activists to actively organize programmes under the Abhiyan, ensuring the involvement of elected representatives and respected local figures at the grassroots level. Baldev Singh Billawaria outlined a clear roadmap for Jammu & Kashmir, stating that awareness will be taken to the ground through coordinated activities such as press conferences, workshops, rural choupal meetings, and sammelans at district and mandal levels, ensuring widespread public outreach.

JKAACL's 2025 Theatre Retrospective: Revival Amid Institutional Challenges

Consistent programming sustains regional theatre despite structural headwinds





ROHIT BHAT

Jammu, January, 2026: The year 2025 proved to be one of institutional endurance for the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, as the Academy sustained a steady theatre calendar despite administrative restructuring and resource constraints following the Union Territory transition. While long-standing competitive formats remained absent, JKAACL's commitment to regular performances ensured that theatre continued to function as a living cultural practice rather than a dormant tradition.

At the core of this continuity was the Saptahik Rangdhara (Weekly Theatre Series), staged almost uninterruptedly at Abhinav Theatre. Through more than 50 performances across the year, the series became the Academy's principal intervention, balancing accessibility with linguistic and thematic diversity. Dogri, Kashmiri, Hindi and Urdu productions were programmed in rotation, offering audiences a representative cross-section of the region's theatrical voices.

The final quarter of 2025 illustrated this breadth. On December 27, Raja Art and Cultural Foundation's Kashmiri play *Graki Wizi Noon* drew strong attendance for its emotional depth and social relevance. A week earlier, on December 21, Triple "A" Performing Arts presented *Aaiena*, a Hindi production directed by Rajeshwar Singh 'Raju' with associate direction by King C Bharati, supported by Deep Society for Visual and Dramatic Arts. The play's probing look at contemporary social realities underlined JKAACL's role as a platform for independent groups. Other productions such as *Zakhmi Khwahish* and the Dogri satire *Pension* reflected the Academy's continued encouragement of both experimental and popular forms.

Beyond individual productions, Saptahik Rangdhara functioned as a democratic space. Established groups such as Natrang shared the stage with emerging and amateur troupes, a balance that theatre practitioners acknowledged as vital at a time when schools and colleges offer limited exposure to live performance. Observers noted that without this weekly anchor, many groups would have struggled to find rehearsal discipline or audiences.

Multilingualism remained a defining strength of JKAACL's theatre policy in 2025. Dogri productions dominated numerically, often addressing social satire and everyday concerns. Kashmiri plays drew on folklore and myth, including narratives rooted in Satisar tradition, while Hindi theatre engaged contemporary social questions. World Theatre Day on March 27 saw Abhinav Theatre filled to capacity, complemented by workshops and street performances that drew younger participants into the theatrical ecosystem.

However, the year was not without criticism. Cultural commentators pointed to the continued discontinuation of Annual and District Theatre Festivals, once the Academy's competitive backbone. These festivals had historically provided motivation, recognition and creative urgency for local directors and actors. Their absence, attributed to post-UT restructuring and funding delays, was seen by some as reducing theatre to routine presentation rather than creative contestation. Concerns were also raised about expanding mandates stretching limited resources and positioning the Academy more as a content provider than a cultural innovator.

In this context, the emergence of formal theatre education at Cluster University of Jammu, through its Department of Performing Arts, was widely viewed as a complementary development. While JKAACL maintained performance platforms, the university began addressing training gaps, suggesting a potential institutional balance in the years ahead.

Measured in outcomes, 2025 reflected resilience rather than renaissance. Abhinav Theatre recorded near-full weekend utilisation, youth workshops engaged several hundred participants, and digital live streams expanded reach beyond physical audiences. Inter-community engagement through Kashmiri-language productions also helped bridge cultural divides between Jammu and the Valley.

As the year closed, JKAACL's theatre record stood as one of persistence. The Academy kept the stage active during a period of transition, preserving linguistic diversity and audience habit. The challenge for 2026 will be whether this consistency can be matched with renewed competitive frameworks, restoring the creative edge that once defined the region's theatre movement.

NCC Cadets to carry swords at Republic Day parade for first time

NEW DELHI, Jan 206 In a historic first that highlights the rising stature of India's youth in the nation's ceremonial and military traditions, the parade commanders of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) will march down Kartavya Path during the upcoming Republic Day Parade carrying swords.

In doing so, they would be following the example of the personnel of the Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force(IAF) and paramilitary forces . This update was shared by Lt Gen Virendra Vats, Director General National Cadet Corps during a media interaction held here on Saturday. The DG NCC also stated that nine officers from the National Cadet Corps were awarded with the commendation cards for their role in 'Operation Sindoor' carried out by India against terrorists and terror hubs in May 2025. The DG further added that approximately 75,000 cadets participated during 'Operation Sindoor' wherein they were deployed for assisting the civil administration and providing medical support, including voluntary blood donation. To align with modern security challenges, NCC has integrated cyber awareness, disaster management and drone training into its curriculum.



In partnership with DRDO, ISRO and NPCIL, NCC now operates four DGCA-certified Remote Pilot Training Organisations, with more than 1,100 cadets trained, supported by 12 master drone instructors and 55 drone instructors, Lt General Vats highlight further. "The NCC has also begun work on setting up four to five hubs across the country where selected cadets will receive specialised training in drone and counter-drone operations," he said.

The Kashmiri Pandit Question in 2025: Between Rehabilitation Promises and a 35-Year Exile

Political, Legal and Social Realities of a Community at an Inflection Point

VITASTA HERALD NEWS BUREAU



Jammu, January, 2026: The winter of 2025 closed with the Kashmiri Pandit community standing at a rare but uneasy crossroads. After thirty-five years of displacement, institutional signals suggesting movement towards justice and return appeared closer than ever, even as ground realities continued to deepen mistrust. Legislative intent, cultural revival and policy proposals unfolded alongside insecurity, stalled rehabilitation and renewed violence, leaving the community suspended between expectation and doubt.

A significant moment arrived on July 23, 2025, when President Droupadi Murmu recommended a private member's bill for parliamentary consideration.

The *Kashmiri Pandits (Recourse, Restitution, Rehabilitation and Resettlement) Bill, 2022*, introduced in the Rajya Sabha by Congress MP Vivek Tankha, became eligible for debate.

Constitutionally, the recommendation was rare. Substantively, it was unprecedented: the bill formally acknowledged Kashmiri Pandits as victims of genocide and proposed a white paper documenting atrocity since 1988.

For a community that has sought official recognition for decades, the development carried historic weight. Yet the moment faltered. On December 5, 2025, when the Rajya Sabha met with the bill listed for discussion, debate did not take place. Community representatives present in the public gallery left disappointed, reading the delay as another instance where institutional readiness did not translate into political resolve.

Parallel to the legislative process, the government's flagship employment-based rehabilitation model reached a crisis point. The Prime Minister's Employment Package, announced in 2008 and implemented from 2010, promised government jobs and housing to facilitate return. While nearly 5,000 displaced youth were employed in Kashmir Valley offices over the years, housing targets remained largely unmet, with transit accommodation achieving barely a fraction of commitments.

In November 2025, the Finance Department clarified that these employees would continue in a temporary capacity, denying them permanent status and promotional avenues. The decision exposed a contradiction at the heart of the scheme. Recruited under a programme meant for "return and rehabilitation", employees were left without institutional security or family stability. Most families remain in Jammu, while employees live in guarded clusters in the Valley, separated from their children and ageing parents. What was conceived as rehabilitation has, in practice, entrenched separation.

Security anxieties intensified in April 2025 with the killing of 26 Hindu civilians in Pahalgam. For the Kashmiri Pandit community, the attack reinforced the belief that violence against minorities had not ended but merely receded from headlines. Former Director General of Police S. P. Vaid publicly stated that threats were known and yet not prevented, attributing failures to lack of political will rather than absence of intelligence. Such assessments deepened fears that return, without structural security guarantees, remained untenable.

Against this grim backdrop, a quieter but striking movement gathered pace: the revival of Hindu temples across the Kashmir Valley. Since 2019, more than a dozen temples have been restored through community-led efforts, often with cooperation from local Muslim residents. Sites such as Kheer Bhawani in Tulmulla and Sharada Bhawani in Budgam witnessed renewed worship in 2025, drawing pilgrims from across India. These initiatives, funded largely by the diaspora and executed by displaced Pandits themselves, became assertions of cultural continuity rather than signs of physical return. Of over 1,800 documented Hindu sacred sites in Kashmir, only a small fraction is functional today, yet the revival carries deep symbolic meaning.

Politically, 2025 saw multiple and often competing proposals for resolution. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha reiterated the government's commitment to dignified return, stressing joint efforts and conducive conditions. National Conference leaders, including Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, acknowledged Pandit suffering and spoke of coordination with the Centre. Former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti submitted a detailed proposal advocating land allocation in native districts, relaxed transfer policies and structured dialogue mechanisms.

Yet none of these frameworks addressed the core demand articulated in the Margdarshan Resolution of July 1990: the creation of a secure, constitutionally guaranteed zone in the Valley for collective resettlement. This demand regained prominence in 2025 through Youth for Panun Kashmir, which issued the Jagti Declaration in January and announced the Maha Abhiyan campaign commencing January 16, 2026. The movement signalled a shift from seeking individual rehabilitation to asserting political and territorial rights.

Central to this renewed mobilisation is the debate over genocide. The Tankha Bill's explicit use of the term marked a first in Indian legislative history. While international bodies have avoided the designation, the community argues that targeted killings, ultimatums, total displacement and the destruction of religious infrastructure constitute genocidal intent. The classification carries consequences, reframing the issue from welfare to justice, from assistance to restitution.

The international dimension also sharpened in 2025. Diaspora groups organised demonstrations in the United States, intensified documentation efforts and funded heritage restoration projects. Academic engagement increased, bringing global attention while also introducing external scrutiny that the Indian state has traditionally resisted.

By the close of 2025, three paths stood before the Kashmiri Pandit community: state-led rehabilitation within existing structures, negotiated land-based return, or a territorial solution rooted in political recognition. The failure to debate the Tankha Bill, the exposure of flaws in employment schemes and the persistence of security fears suggest that technical measures alone are insufficient. As mobilisation builds in early 2026, the question confronting Indian institutions is stark. Will the signals of 2025 mature into a credible framework for justice and return, or will they reinforce a system that manages displacement without resolving it? For a community in its thirty-sixth year of exile, the answer will define whether history finally turns, or merely repeats itself under new assurances.

Vitasta Herald Special

Shri Sharika Devi of Kashmir

श्रीशारिके शरण्ये त्वां मयि दासे कृपांकुरु।
ऋणं रोगं भयं शोकं रिपुनाशाय सत्वरम्॥

Bijaih saptabhir ujjvala kritir asau ya sapta shakti dyutih |
Saptarshi pranatanghri pankaja yugaya sapta lokartir hrita ||
Kashmira pravaresha madhya nagare pradyumna pithesthita |
Devi saptaka samyuta bhagavati Shri Sharika patu nah ||

SHRI SHARIKA DEVI holds a place of supreme reverence in the hearts of Kashmiris as the presiding deity and spiritual guardian of the Kashmir Valley. For countless generations, she has been worshipped as the Divine Mother, Jagadamba, who protects the land, guides her devotees, and represents the very soul of Kashmir. Despite the many trials and hardships faced by this sacred land, devotion to Shri Sharika Devi has never weakened.

Kashmiri families continue to offer prayers to her with deep faith, especially during Navratri, Sharika Pradurbhava Day, Hura Ashtami, Durga Ashtami, Prakrama Navami, Shivratri, and many other auspicious occasions.

The main seat of Shri Sharika Devi is situated atop Hari Parbat, also known as Pradyumna Peetha, a hill located in the heart of old Srinagar. This hill is not just a geographical landmark but a living sacred site filled with spiritual energy. Devotees believe that the Goddess resides here in the form of the Shri Chakra, also called the Sharika Chakra. This sacred yantra, formed of triangles, circles, and lotus patterns, represents the cosmic union of Shiva and Shakti, the balance between consciousness and energy. For Kashmiri Pandits and devotees of all communities, the Shri Chakra at Hari Parbat is believed to be a powerful protective force guarding the entire Kashmir Valley.

In traditional iconography, Shri Sharika Devi is depicted with eighteen arms, each holding a different weapon or symbol. These represent her divine power, her ability to remove ignorance, and her readiness to destroy negativity and evil. Some devotees worship her as a form of Durga, while others recognize her as Kundalini Shakti, the inner spiritual energy present in all beings.



In Kashmir's Trika philosophy, the non-dual Shaiva tradition, Shri Sharika Devi is revered as Para Shakti, the supreme creative consciousness. She is both the path and the goal of spiritual practice, symbolizing the awakened state of consciousness-energy that seekers aim to realize.

Among the many ancient stories associated with the Goddess, one legend holds special significance. In ancient times, the Kashmir Valley was submerged under water and troubled by the demon Jalodbhava. The suffering people and even the gods prayed to Shri Sharika Devi for deliverance. Responding to their prayers, the Goddess appeared in the form of a small bird, a myna. Carrying a pebble in her beak, she dropped it upon the demon. The pebble expanded into the mountain now known as Hari Parbat, trapping the demon beneath it and restoring peace to the Valley.

This legend conveys the truth that divine grace, even when it appears small, has unlimited power to protect and transform.

Even today, thousands of devotees climb the sacred hill to visit Shri Sharika Devi's shrine, offering flowers, lamps, and sincere prayers. The panoramic view from the summit, overlooking Dal Lake and the city of Srinagar, reminds devotees of the Goddess's constant protection. Many visitors experience deep peace, renewed strength, and a strong connection with their spiritual and ancestral heritage.

Shri Sharika Devi rises above sectarian worship and is deeply woven into Kashmiri identity. She symbolizes strength, resilience, and cultural unity. For Kashmiri Pandits, she is the Kuladevi, the family deity. For others, she is the spiritual soul of the land and the guardian of its natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Shri Sharika Devi of Kashmir remains an eternal symbol of divine power, protection, and cultural pride. Her presence on Hari Parbat continues to inspire faith and devotion. Whether worshipped as Mother, Protector, or Supreme Consciousness, Shri Sharika Devi remains the beating heart of Kashmir, representing its past glory, present refuge, and eternal hope.

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Shakti Rupena Samsthita /
Namastasyai Namastasyai Namastasyai Namo Namah //
Salutations again and again to that Goddess who resides in all beings in the form of divine power.

Om Shri Sharikayai Namah
- Ram Krishen Jyotshi
Former President, Shri Shri Jagat Amba Sharika Chakreeshwar Sanstha
Written under the guidance of Prof. Chaman Lal Raina

Violence Against Hindus in Bangladesh: A Worsening Minority Crisis

Killings, temple attacks and India's hardening diplomatic stance mark a turbulent 2024–26 phase

Vitasta Herald News Bureau

Jammu, January, 2026: Violence against Hindus in Bangladesh has entered a sharper and more disturbing phase since late 2025, marked by killings, lynchings, arson and systematic attacks on homes and temples. What distinguishes the current wave is not only its frequency and geographic spread, but also the unusually firm response from New Delhi, which has publicly rejected attempts to frame the violence as routine political unrest and has instead described it as targeted attacks on religious minorities.

Rights groups and minority platforms in Bangladesh report that incidents through 2025 showed a clear escalation. These included mob lynchings, killings following blasphemy allegations, temple vandalism, land seizures and forced evictions. The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council documented dozens of communal incidents across districts. Indian briefings cited 51 cases of communal violence in December 2025 alone, including 10 murders, suggesting a concentrated surge rather than sporadic flare-ups.

The current phase cannot be separated from the political transition that followed the ouster of Sheikh Hasina in August 2024. In the immediate aftermath, minority organisations reported that between 200 and 300 Hindu homes and businesses were vandalised and that 15 to 20 temples were damaged or destroyed. India described it as "particularly alarming" that minorities were directly targeted during the unrest. For many Bangladeshi Hindu activists, the events since then form a continuum rather than isolated episodes, driven by state weakness and emboldened Islamist groups operating in a political vacuum.

By late 2025, this narrative had hardened into what sections of the Hindu community and diaspora describe as systematic persecution. Killings, forced displacement, temple demolitions and land grabs are increasingly framed by activists as a slow-motion genocide, arguing that the persistence of attacks reflects not random lawlessness but a sustained failure to protect minorities.

The killing of Dipu Chandra Das on 18 December 2025 became a rallying point for this fear. Accused of blasphemy in Bhaluka, Das was reportedly stripped, beaten, hanged and his body set on fire by a mob. The brutality of the lynching, and the speed with which rumours translated into violence, shocked minority communities and drew international attention. In the roughly 35 days from early December, at least 11 Hindus were reported killed across Bangladesh in separate incidents. Some cases were overtly communal; others were officially described as disputes but carried strong indicators of targeted motives.



India's response since late December 2025 has been notably sharp. The Ministry of External Affairs issued multiple statements rejecting what it called attempts to dismiss the violence as "media exaggeration" or generic political disorder. Officials explicitly challenged what they described as an "anti-India narrative" emanating from Dhaka that downplayed minority targeting. Briefings on 8 and 9 January 2026 stressed that recurring attacks on minorities, coupled with denial, only embolden perpetrators. Indian officials cited figures from the Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council to counter official Bangladeshi claims that the situation was under control.

Strategically, New Delhi has maintained that it remains in contact with Bangladeshi authorities and has conveyed strong concerns, demanding justice in cases such as the killing of Dipu Das and other Hindu youths. At the same time, the situation is diplomatically sensitive, given that Sheikh Hasina remains in India after fleeing violent protests. Within India's domestic discourse, the events have intensified calls from Hindu organisations and some political voices to revisit border security, refugee policy and the treatment of minority persecution in bilateral and multilateral forums. The government, however, has so far limited itself to monitoring, protest and diplomatic pressure rather than overt intervention.

The roots of the current crisis stretch back to mid-2024. Following Hasina's resignation on 5 August 2024, minority monitors documented around 2,010 attacks on minorities between 4 and 20 August, including damage to 69 temples. At least five Hindus were killed during this period, with the Khulna division among the worst affected. United Nations reporting later cited roughly 2,400 attacks on minorities across 2024. Subsequent months saw continued vandalism of puja mandaps, arson and robbery during religious festivals, and fresh attacks into late 2024 and early 2025.

Throughout 2025, Hindu religious sites were repeatedly targeted. A Kali–Shiva temple was torched in Sitakunda in May, a large Kali idol was destroyed in Natore in July, and temples were vandalised in Faridpur and Madaripur in August. The September to November period saw a marked spike, with incidents reported across multiple districts, reinforcing the perception of a nationwide pattern rather than localised tension.

Bangladesh's interim government, led by Muhammad Yunus, has publicly condemned high-profile killings, particularly the lynching of Dipu Das. Authorities announced arrests, pledged the "full force of the law" and offered compensation and welfare support to victims' families. Senior advisers visited affected families and reiterated that no allegation or belief could justify mob violence. Security deployments were increased in several cities following the August 2024 unrest.

Yet critics argue that these measures remain reactive and limited to headline cases. Minority advocates point to delayed investigations, weak follow-through and a tendency to frame attacks as personal disputes or exaggerations. They contend that this approach fosters impunity and fails to address the structural nature of anti-minority violence. International observers have similarly noted a gap between official assurances and consistent local enforcement.

As 2026 begins, Bangladesh's Hindu minority remains on edge. Community leaders describe a long history of harassment and land dispossession now intensified by political uncertainty. Indian officials and international fact sheets continue to track hundreds, if not thousands, of attacks since mid-2024, underscoring that the period from 2024 to early 2026 represents a continuous wave of violence rather than a single episode.

The hardening of India's public stance reflects this assessment. By explicitly linking individual killings to a larger pattern of hostility, New Delhi has raised the diplomatic stakes. Whether this pressure translates into sustained protection for minorities in Bangladesh remains uncertain. What is clear is that the crisis has moved beyond episodic unrest, emerging as a defining human rights and regional stability issue that both governments can no longer afford to treat as routine or transient.

US Interventionism Under Scrutiny: Sovereignty, Power and a Sharpening Global Debate

From Venezuela to South Asia, Washington's assertive actions contrast with India's non-interference stance

Vitasta Herald News Bureau

Jammu, January, 2026: Over the past two years, United States foreign policy has entered a phase that many governments and analysts describe as increasingly assertive and, at times, openly interventionist. From the armed seizure of a sitting foreign president to renewed pressure on allied territory in Europe and overt political signalling in South Asia, Washington's actions have revived global debates on sovereignty, non-interference and the limits of power in a rules-based international order. In contrast, India has publicly hardened its own position, stressing that internal political and legal matters are not open to external commentary and that its territorial sovereignty is non-negotiable.

The most dramatic episode unfolded in early January 2026 in Venezuela. US special forces conducted a large-scale operation in and around Caracas, striking military targets and forcibly taking President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, to the United States to face criminal charges. Washington characterised the action as a law enforcement mission aimed at bringing an indicted leader to justice. However, legal scholars and several voices at the United Nations Security Council described the operation as a direct violation of Venezuelan sovereignty and the UN Charter, equating it to a coup-style abduction of a sitting head of state.

Under international law, cross-border abduction without the consent of the territorial state or a lawful extradition process is generally regarded as an internationally wrongful act. The gravity is heightened when the individual involved is a serving head of state, who enjoys broad personal immunity under customary international law to ensure sovereign equality and the orderly conduct of international relations. Critics argue that the Venezuelan operation combined multiple breaches: unlawful use of force, violation of territorial integrity and disregard for status-based immunity.

Europe witnessed a different but related assertion of American power. Former president Donald Trump revived earlier ideas of acquiring Greenland, openly proposing annexation and circulating imagery depicting the island in US colours marked "soon". Denmark's response was swift and firm. Copenhagen stated that the United States has no right to annex any part of the Danish kingdom and reiterated that Greenland's security is covered by NATO guarantees. Reports that Washington had considered offering large cash payments to Greenlanders to encourage separation from Denmark further inflamed concerns. For many European observers, the episode underscored a readiness to apply pressure even against close allies when strategic interests are involved.

In South Asia, US engagement has taken a more familiar but equally contentious form. In Bangladesh, Washington has mixed democracy promotion rhetoric with visa restrictions and warnings of tougher measures over elections and governance. While the United States frames these steps as support for free and fair elections and human rights, ruling elites in Dhaka increasingly view them as external pressure in domestic politics. Analysts note that public criticism of electoral



processes, engagement with opposition actors and hints of "harsher tactics" feed narratives that Washington is provoking instability or seeking leverage in a country whose strategic importance in the Bay of Bengal has grown amid wider competition with China and Russia.

Pakistan, too, has remained subject to periodic US pressure through aid conditionality, sanctions signalling and political commentary, reinforcing a perception across parts of the Global South that democracy and human rights language is being deployed selectively, aligned with strategic priorities rather than universal norms.

Against this backdrop, India's response to recent US political signalling has been unambiguous. In January 2026, a handwritten letter from New York City Council member Zohran Mamdani to jailed Indian activist Umar Khalid, praising his work and expressing solidarity, drew sharp criticism from New Delhi. The letter coincided with a separate communication from several US Democratic lawmakers to India's ambassador raising concerns about civil liberties. India's Ministry of External Affairs rejected these moves as interference in internal affairs.

In the same briefing, the MEA reiterated India's position on sovereignty with unusual clarity. It stated that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including areas impacted by the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Shaksgam Valley, are an integral and inalienable part of India. The spokesperson added that India reserves the right to take all necessary measures to safeguard its territorial interests. The message was consistent: foreign politicians have no locus standi on India's legal processes or territorial questions.

This stance reflects a broader contrast. While Washington has been willing to use armed force to seize a foreign leader, openly discuss annexing allied territory and apply overt political pressure in South Asia, New Delhi is positioning itself as a defender of classical sovereignty principles. Indian officials have framed commentary on internal matters as unacceptable, even as they engage diplomatically on global issues.

International law provides the framework for this debate. Sovereignty and territorial integrity are cornerstones of the UN Charter. Forcibly apprehending a person on another state's territory without consent breaches these principles, regardless of the alleged crimes involved. When such actions are linked to reshaping another country's political order, they also violate the rule of non-intervention. Legal commentary is clear that unilateral enforcement of domestic criminal jurisdiction through military force abroad is not permitted.

Cases from the past illustrate the tension. Domestic courts in some countries have allowed prosecutions to proceed despite unlawful abductions, acknowledging violations of international law but separating them from jurisdictional questions. This approach, often criticised as legitimising "irregular rendition", is seen by many scholars as undermining extradition treaties and encouraging states to bypass established legal mechanisms.

For heads of state and senior officials, the protection is stronger still. International jurisprudence recognises their immunity from foreign criminal jurisdiction while in office. Abducting such figures is therefore viewed as a particularly serious breach, striking at the core of sovereign equality.

As these issues converge, a broader geopolitical pattern emerges. Many governments in Asia, Africa and Latin America now cite recent US actions as evidence that formal respect for sovereignty can be overridden when strategic or ideological gains are perceived. India's emphatic articulation of non-interference and territorial integrity resonates within this context, aligning it with a growing chorus of states wary of precedent-setting interventions.

Whether Washington's current trajectory marks a temporary phase or a lasting shift remains to be seen. What is clear is that the contrast between US activism and India's sovereignty-first position has sharpened global debate. In an international system already under strain, how major powers interpret and apply the rules they helped shape may prove as consequential as the rules themselves.

Vitasta Herald

EDITORIAL

Journalism for an Era That Reads Everywhere

Digital First, Grounded in Credibility

When **The Right News (TRN)** was launched on August 5, 2020, it was driven by a simple belief: journalism in Jammu and Kashmir would be defined less by the weight of newsprint and more by the reach, speed and integrity of information. Years of navigating registration hurdles, financial pressures and expectations tied to legacy publishing have tested that belief. Today, it stands reinforced.

The first issue of **Vitasta Herald**, powered by The Right News, in your hands right now, is not a cosmetic change. It marks a clear editorial choice to meet readers where they already are-on phones, tablets and digital platforms-without compromising the values of verification, accountability and local relevance.

A key role in this transition has been played by **Rohit Bhat and Rakesh Roshan Bhat**, the art & culture loving brothers behind TIFFS (The International Film Festival of Srinagar), Vomedh TRN and Roots in Fateh Kadal. Their experience in building a platform where regional stories engage global audiences has informed our newsroom thinking. They bring an understanding that impact comes from clarity of purpose, not from the medium itself.

This editorial decision also reflects present realities. Print choices today are no longer only financial; they are environmental. A single printed newspaper consumes paper, chemicals and fuel, particularly costly in a region with difficult terrain. Digital publishing has its own energy costs, but its footprint reduces as readership grows. For Vitasta Herald, this makes the digital-first route an ethical decision as much as a practical one.

That does not mean abandoning print entirely. Limited physical copies will continue for archives, institutions and readers without digital access. Our primary focus, however, is on mobile-first reporting, e-papers optimised for smartphones and tablets, and social media distribution that ensures local stories reach local readers-whether in Jammu, Srinagar or the wider diaspora.

Scepticism about digital journalism's credibility is understandable. The internet spreads falsehoods as quickly as facts. This places a higher responsibility on us. Digital publication allows no hidden editions and no delayed corrections. Errors are visible, and so are corrections. Readers respond instantly, and accountability is immediate. That scrutiny strengthens journalism rather than weakens it.

Vitasta Herald remains rooted in Kashmir's journalistic tradition-hyperlocal reporting, cultural understanding and institutional memory. These strengths gain scale online. With most readers now accessing news through smartphones, especially in smaller towns, digital platforms amplify regional voices instead of diluting them.

Aligned with India's broader push towards digital access and sustainability, our approach supports a future where journalism is accessible, responsible and resilient. Our obligation is not to a format but to the reader: to report what has happened, clearly and honestly, and to hold power to account.

The journey of The Vitasta Herald begins this January 2026 committed to that task-present on the ground, active on screens, and accountable to the people it serves.

King C Bharati

Group Editor-in-Chief: Vitasta Herald (Powered by TRN)

Kashmiri Pandits' Cultural Resurgence in 2025: Reclaiming Heritage Amid Exile

How temples, youth initiatives and diaspora networks turned culture into assertion

Isha Bharati Pandit

THIRTY-five years after displacement from the Kashmir Valley, 2025 emerged as a defining year in which Kashmiri Pandits reshaped the meaning of return. With physical resettlement still elusive, the community channelled its energies into cultural revival, transforming temples, festivals and heritage initiatives into instruments of continuity and quiet political assertion. What unfolded was not nostalgia, but strategy: culture used to reclaim space, memory and legitimacy.

The most visible expression of this resurgence was the acceleration of temple restoration across the Valley. The reopening of Sharada Bhawani Temple at Ichkoot in Budgam in September 2025, attended by local Muslims as invited guests, set the tone. Earlier, in May, the Shivling at Jogeshwari Temple was reinstalled after remaining desecrated since the early 1990s. Work on Vichar Nag Temple commenced in July, with community organisations acknowledging official facilitation while stressing that funding and coordination remained community-driven.

These were not isolated acts. Since 2019, an estimated 12 to 15 major temples have been revived through coordinated efforts organised via digital platforms and diaspora donations. The annual pilgrimage to Kheer Bhawani in June 2025 drew large numbers despite heightened anxiety following the Pahalgam killings earlier in the year. Out of 1,842 documented Hindu places of worship in Kashmir, only 212 are currently functional. Each restoration therefore carries layered symbolism: visible inter-community cooperation on one hand, and the stark absence of displaced families from surrounding neighbourhoods on the other.

A striking aspect of this movement has been the role of Prime Minister's Package employees. Despite uncertainty over their service status, many oversaw on-ground execution of restoration works, blending professional duty with cultural custodianship. Deputy Commissioners' presence at reopening ceremonies and limited allocations for heritage preservation indicated administrative endorsement. Yet community voices were clear in their messaging: cultural return cannot substitute human return; it can only prepare the ground.

Youth-led initiatives gave this cultural turn ideological depth. Youth for Panun Kashmir integrated heritage revival into its Jagti Declaration issued in January 2025, positioning culture as inseparable from political rights. The organisation launched the Ajay Khosa Memorial Scholarships to support displaced students and hosted the third International Kashmiri Hindu Youth Conference at Jagti camp, where classical dance, wanvun folk poetry and Shaivite recitations reinforced inter-generational transmission of tradition.

The same platform announced the Jonaraja Institute of Genocide and Atrocities Studies, aimed at digitising manuscripts and liturgical texts displaced since 1990. Framed alongside the Maha Abhiyan mobilisation planned for 2026, the message was explicit: cultural survival is an act of resistance, not retreat.

The diaspora amplified this momentum. In the United States, the Kashmiri Overseas Association supported restoration of temples such as Mata Roop Bhawani and Pokhribal while initiating systematic documentation of damaged shrines using digital mapping. Cultural elements formed part of the "Voice of Jammu Kashmir March" at the United Nations headquarters in August 2025, where tableaux and performances narrated the exodus to an international audience. These efforts linked heritage preservation with future restitution claims, embedding culture within legal and advocacy frameworks.

Within India, organisations like Panun Kashmir used commemorative events to connect cultural memory with contemporary insecurity. World Refugee Day observances in June juxtaposed remembrance of the Pahalgam killings with screenings on the destruction of Martand Sun Temple, reinforcing a narrative of continuity between cultural loss and political displacement.

Educational and artistic initiatives added another layer. The Basohli Painting Workshop hosted by Indian Institute of Management Jammu in December 2025, though not exclusively Pandit-led, engaged displaced artists and youth in a 300-year-old Pahari miniature tradition closely tied to Kashmiri Shaivism. Such platforms allowed heritage to be experienced as a living practice rather than archived memory.

Festivals also adapted to exile. Herath celebrations combined ritual with digital innovation, while Navreh gatherings in March blended traditional cuisine and music with official assurances of return. These events sustained linguistic and ritual continuity within migrant settlements, reinforcing collective identity amid prolonged uncertainty.

Taken together, the cultural resurgence of 2025 reflects a strategic evolution. Temple revivals and heritage programmes assert historical presence without demanding immediate resettlement, fostering goodwill at the local level while maintaining pressure on institutions for restitution and security. Youth initiatives merge cultural immersion with political education, particularly for a generation born outside the Valley.

The paradox remains unresolved. Sacred spaces are being restored even as homes remain inaccessible. Culture is returning faster than people. Yet this very contradiction gives the movement its force. As articulated by Y4PK leaders, culture revived only for display is insufficient; it must culminate in lived return.

By the end of 2025, Kashmiri Pandits had repositioned themselves not solely as victims of displacement, but as active custodians of Kashmir's civilisational heritage. As mobilisation gathers pace in 2026, the cultural groundwork laid in the past year suggests a clear message: heritage revival is not an end in itself, but a prelude to claims of justice, security and homeland.

(Isha Bharati Pandit is a young author, educator and works at a prestigious institution in Gurugram.)

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Dogra Culture in 2025:
Preservation Amid Modernisation

How festivals, institutions and digital platforms revived Jammu's heritage



Vitasta Herald News Bureau

Jammu, January, 2026:
The year 2025 marked a decisive turn for Dogra culture, the distinctive Hindu heritage of the Jammu region, as community groups, state institutions and private initiatives worked in tandem to preserve identity in the face of rapid urbanisation and social change. Rather than resisting modernity, Dogra cultural actors increasingly used it as a tool, combining festivals, academic work, heritage conservation and digital outreach to ensure continuity for future generations.
At the centre of this revival stood the Tawi Filmotsva, held on March 23, 2025, under the aegis of the Jammu Cricket Association. Marketed as Jammu's first large-scale film festival, the event screened more than 50 regional films rooted in Dogra folklore, history and social life. Alongside film screenings, masterclasses and interactions with filmmakers drew strong participation, while live wanvun performances reintroduced oral traditions to younger audiences. Attendance crossed 5,000 over the course of the festival, reflecting growing appetite for Dogri-language cinema and storytelling. Organisers framed the event as both cultural celebration and cultural rescue, arguing that migration and linguistic decline make such platforms essential.
Parallel to cinematic revival, temple conservation gathered momentum across the region. The historic Raghunath Temple complex in Jammu city underwent a major phase of restoration in 2025, with seismic retrofitting and digital documentation of centuries-old inscriptions completed by September. The Bahuchnar Temple in Reasi district, associated with the Dogra royal era, saw its first comprehensive restoration since 1947, funded largely by non-resident Indians and supervised by heritage experts. These projects signalled a shift towards structured conservation rather than ad hoc repair.
Purmandal Shiv Mandir, long regarded as the spiritual heart of Dogra Shaivism, reinforced this trend through its Maha Shivratri



Mahotsav, which drew nearly 15,000 pilgrims. The festival blended Dogri bhajans with classical performances, including invited artistes from outside the region. In a notable symbolic gesture, descendants of Maharaja Hari Singh handed over portions of family archives to the temple trust, enabling digitisation of manuscripts related to Dogra governance and religious practice between 1846 and 1947.
Handicrafts and culinary traditions also moved from domestic spaces to organised platforms. Basholi paintings, a 300-year-old miniature art form native to the region, received renewed attention through a December workshop hosted by Indian Institute of Management Jammu. GI-tagged artists trained nearly 150 young participants, positioning the craft not only as heritage but as livelihood. The presence of Dogra youth among trainees suggested that traditional arts could still attract new practitioners if linked to economic opportunity.
Dogri cuisine underwent similar institutionalisation. The Jammu Dogra Culinary Festival held in November codified 25 heritage recipes into a formal registry, drawing from palace-era records and oral knowledge. Traditional dishes such as ambal and kulthi were presented alongside historical context, while home-based food enterprises received guidance on branding and certification. For many organisers, food became a medium through which everyday culture could be preserved without museumization.
Education and scholarship played a crucial role in anchoring these efforts. The Dogra Heritage Society expanded its digital archive projects, while Dogri Akademi published new editions of classical texts and folk literature. In October 2025, the International Dogra Studies Conference at the University of Jammu brought together scholars examining Dogra history beyond the margins of Kashmir-centric narratives. The establishment of a dedicated Centre for Dogra Studies at the university, offering postgraduate research opportunities, institutionalised this academic focus. Student participation was notable, with thousands contributing to village-level documentation of heritage sites across districts.
Festivals remained the most visible expression of cultural vitality. Dussehra celebrations at Sudhma Devi temple drew over one lakh participants and featured traditional theatre forms such as bhand pather, reviving satirical traditions rooted in Dogra society. Jhiri Mela continued to honour agrarian and pastoral heritage, while Namiat Bushahar, the Dogra New Year during Chaitra Navratri, combined traditional sports, rituals and digital broadcasting. Live-streaming of these events reached large diaspora audiences, underlining how technology now extends cultural spaces beyond geography.
Digital infrastructure increasingly underpinned preservation. Platforms such as Dogra Digital Duniya catalogued artefacts, folk recordings and oral histories, while virtual tours of forts and palaces attracted tens of thousands of users. Heritage walks integrated into Jammu Smart City projects linked monuments with QR-coded information in multiple languages, including Dogri, allowing residents and visitors to engage with history in everyday settings.
Cultural assertion in 2025 also carried political undertones. Events such as Dogra Asmita Sammelans and heritage yatras framed culture as a marker of regional identity within broader debates on representation and recognition. Business groups advocated a Dogra Heritage Circuit to integrate temples, crafts and local hospitality into tourism planning, projecting substantial economic returns if heritage-led development is pursued systematically. Challenges remain stark. Urban expansion has already erased a significant share of traditional structures, and language surveys indicate declining fluency among younger Dogras. Yet participation data from 2025 suggests resilience: more festivals, higher attendance, increased craft exports and growing digital engagement. The year thus marked a transition in approach. Dogra culture in 2025 moved beyond remembrance to preservation with purpose, linking heritage to livelihoods, education and technology. As the region enters 2026, Dogra identity appears less as a relic of the past and more as a living, adaptive cultural economy-rooted in history, but responsive to the demands of a changing society.

Prasar Bharati Launches 'Creator's Corner' on DD News to Empower Digital Creators Nationwide

2026 to Be the Year of Major Reforms for Prasar Bharati: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw
Creator's Corner Reflects PM Modi's Vision for the Orange Economy: Dr. L. Murugan
WAVES Emerges as a Game Changer for Creator Economy; Aims to Empower One Crore Youth; Generates Economic Activity of Rs 5,000 Crore: Ashwini Vaishnaw

Vitasta Herald News Bureau

JAMMU, JANUARY, 2026: In line with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision to recognise and promote digital content creators, Prasar Bharati today launched **"Creator's Corner",** a dedicated platform for showcasing content created by digital creators from across the country on DD News.
Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister shri Ashwini Vaishnaw said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has witnessed reforms across every sector over the past 11 years and similar reforms are now visible in Prasar Bharati.
He stated that 2026 will be the year of major reforms for Prasar Bharati, with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting also undergoing complete restructuring. These reforms will orient institutions like Doordarshan and AIR towards industry participation, new-generation creators, and technology-driven processes. He said the launch of Creator Corner marks the first step in this reform journey. Referring to the WAVES platform launched last year, he noted its role in boosting the creator economy, adding one crore youth, generating new employment opportunities, and contributing nearly **Rs.5,000 crore** to the ecosystem.
During event Dr. L. Murugan said that the launch of Doordarshan's Creator Corner is a significant step in empowering India's growing community of content creators, in line with the Hon'ble Prime



Minister's vision for the Orange Economy. He highlighted how creators from small towns and regions across the country are independently producing, editing, and sharing content, building livelihoods without large studios. He noted that Doordarshan will now provide these creators a strong national and global platform, and congratulated the DD team for this initiative.
MIB Secretary Shri Sanjay Jaju highlighted that the initiative will help build a vibrant, responsible, and inclusive creator ecosystem, recognising creators not just as actors but as complete content makers. He noted that the Creator Corner, launching on DD News, will gradually expand across all Doordarshan channels, offering creators from diverse languages, regions, and genres a national platform. He added that the dedicated prime-time slot will help creators reach wider audiences while enriching public broadcasting with diverse perspectives.

About Creators Corners

The initiative aims to promote the digital economy by encouraging the creation of quality content and expanding its reach through a partnership between Prasar Bharati and individual content creators.
Creator's Corner will feature content on a wide range of themes including News and Current Affairs, Culture, Travel, Cuisine, Art and Literature, Music and Dance, Health and Wellness, Education, Science and Technology, inspiring stories, Environment and Sustainable Development, and Entertainment.
The programme will be telecast at **7:00 PM** from **Monday to Friday** on **DD News**, with a repeat telecast the following day at 9:30 AM. Each episode will feature four to six reels or videos covering diverse themes.
This initiative represents a mutually beneficial partnership, providing digital creators a credible platform and the extensive reach of Prasar Bharati/ DD News to showcase their work, while enabling Prasar Bharati to curate innovative and diverse content that resonates with younger audiences
Interested content creators may submit their content at ddnews.creatorscorner[at]gmail[dot]com or contact +91-8130555806 to become part of this initiative.

Pakistani Drones Trigger Multiple Army Engagements Along LoC in Rajouri–Poonch Belt

Srinagar/New Delhi, January, 2026: The Indian Army engaged a Pakistani drone near the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Nowshera sector on Friday evening, as multiple unmanned aerial vehicles were detected across several forward areas in the Rajouri, Poonch and Samba districts, official sources said.

The incidents marked one of the highest single-day concentrations of drone sightings since last year's Operation Sindoor.

According to sources, army units deployed in the Nowshera sector opened fire after detecting a hostile drone movement close to the LoC. Machine guns were used to engage the aerial target, with tracer rounds lighting up the night sky in a scene reminiscent of earlier counter-drone operations carried out during Operation Sindoor. A video of the engagement, showing streams of tracer fire cutting through darkness, circulated widely, drawing comparisons with last year's intensive anti-drone actions.

Security agencies said the area is being thoroughly searched to ascertain whether the drone had dropped any payload, including weapons, ammunition or narcotics. The concern has been heightened by an incident a day earlier, when a drone originating from the direction of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir reportedly dropped a consignment of arms in the Samba sector. That recovery reinforced longstanding assessments that drones are being used to supply firearms and drugs to support terror-linked networks operating in the region.

Officials confirmed that at least four additional drone sightings were reported from different locations along the LoC and the International Border on Friday evening.

In Rajouri district, a drone was spotted at around 6.35 pm. The flying object, described as having a blinking light, reportedly entered from Dharmsal village in the Kalakote area and moved further towards Bharakh. Security forces tracked its movement before it disappeared from view.

In Samba district, another drone-like object was seen hovering briefly over Chak Babral village in the Ramgarh sector at approximately 7.15 pm. Sources said the object remained in the air for a few minutes before moving away, prompting local alerts and intensified surveillance in the area. A similar sighting was reported earlier at around 6.25 pm in the Mankote sector of Poonch district, where a drone-like object was seen moving from Tain towards Topa along the LoC.

Army officials said all the incidents are being treated as part of a coordinated pattern rather than isolated intrusions. "At least five Pakistani drone incursions were reported in a single day, which is significant given that such sightings had dropped sharply after Operation Sindoor," a senior security source said.



During Operation Sindoor last year, Indian forces had shot down several Pakistani drones and strengthened counter-drone measures along sensitive stretches of the border. Following that operation, drone activity had reduced markedly. The renewed spike has therefore raised concerns within security agencies about fresh attempts to revive cross-border supply routes using unmanned platforms.

Officials reiterated that Pakistan has repeatedly used drones to drop weapons and narcotics into Indian territory, aiding state-sponsored terror groups and criminal networks. The use of drones allows handlers to bypass traditional infiltration routes and reduce risk to operatives, making them a preferred tool for cross-border operations.

Additional troops have been placed on alert, and surveillance has been intensified across vulnerable sectors. Security agencies said coordination between the Army, Border Security Force and local police has been strengthened to track drone movements and intercept any dropped consignments.

While no casualties or damage were reported in Friday's incidents, officials said the situation is being closely monitored. Further details are expected after search operations conclude and technical analysis of the drone activity is completed.

Aditya Dhar Scripts His Own Box Office Milestone with *Dhurandhar*

Kashmiri Pandit filmmaker's spy thriller overtakes RRR to become fourth highest-grossing Indian film worldwide

Vitasta Herald News Bureau

JAMMU, January, 2026: Aditya Dhar, the Kashmiri Pandit filmmaker who rose from the margins of the industry to the very top of Indian cinema, has written another defining chapter in his career with *Dhurandhar*. In its sixth week at the worldwide box office, the spy action thriller has surpassed SS Rajamouli's *RRR* to become the fourth highest-grossing Indian film of all time globally, cementing Dhar's place among the most commercially successful directors of his generation.

On Day 36 of its theatrical run, *Dhurandhar* continued its steady march towards the ₹ 1,300 crore milestone. The film earned ₹ 4.24 crore gross in India on its sixth Friday, while overseas markets added an estimated ₹ 1.45 crore gross. The combined worldwide collection for the day stood at ₹ 5.69 crore, taking the film's cumulative global total to ₹ 1,281.45 crore.

The scale of the achievement is reflected in its detailed earnings. In India, *Dhurandhar* has recorded a net collection of ₹ 844.45 crore, translating into a gross of ₹ 996.45 crore. Overseas territories have contributed ₹ 285 crore gross so far. Together, these figures place the film ahead of *RRR*, whose lifetime worldwide gross stood at ₹ 1,275.51 crore. For Aditya Dhar, the milestone carries significance beyond numbers. As a filmmaker from the Kashmiri Pandit community, his ascent represents a personal success story shaped by perseverance and creative conviction. From scripting his early work to directing a film that now ranks among the biggest global earners in Indian cinema, Dhar has demonstrated that author-driven storytelling can coexist with mass appeal.

Among Hindi films, *Dhurandhar* now stands as the second highest-grossing Bollywood title worldwide, behind only *Dangal*, which continues to lead the chart with ₹ 2,059.04 crore. The film's performance has also reinforced Bollywood's competitive presence in an era increasingly dominated by large-scale pan-Indian productions from multiple regions.

Trade observers point out that *Dhurandhar*'s success lies not just in a strong opening but in sustained audience interest well into its sixth week. While daily collections have moderated, the consistency of footfalls across domestic circuits and international markets has ensured a steady climb. The film is expected to enter the ₹ 1,300 crore club by the end of its sixth weekend or by Day 39. As of Day 36, the updated list of the top ten highest-grossing Indian films worldwide reflects *Dhurandhar*'s new standing:



1. ***Dangal*** **– ₹ 2,059.04 crore**
2. ***Baahubali 2*** **– ₹ 1,800 crore**
3. ***Pushpa 2*** **– ₹ 1,785.84 crore**
4. ***Dhurandhar*** **– ₹ 1,281.45 crore**
5. ***RRR*** **– ₹ 1,275.51 crore**
6. ***KGF Chapter 2*** **– ₹ 1,230 crore**
7. ***Jawan*** **– ₹ 1,163.82 crore**
8. ***Pathaan*** **– ₹ 1,069.85 crore**
9. ***Kalki 2898 AD*** **– ₹ 1,054.67 crore**
10. ***Bajrangi Bhaijaan*** **– ₹ 915 crore**

With *Dhurandhar* continuing its theatrical run, any further gains will only add to its legacy. Even at this stage, the film stands as a landmark achievement for Aditya Dhar—one that blends personal journey with record-breaking success on the global stage.

Deepika Padukone pays for fans' flights, gifts Rs 15K hampers at Mumbai meet; shares update on The Intern remake

Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone recently hosted an intimate and heartwarming fan event in Mumbai before heading to New York City to ring in the New Year 2026. The evening turned into a memorable celebration for the fans.A fan took to Reddit and shared the inside details of the fan meet. In the lengthy note, a fan who attended the event described the event as 'deeply personal.' The fan claimed that the actress went out of her way to make every attendee feel valued and seen. Deepika allegedly paid for round-trip airline tickets for more than fifty supporters who travelled from various regions of India to attend the event, a move that left followers in disbelief. A sumptuous 5 kg gift basket, believed to be worth approximately Rs 15,000, was also given to each fan, demonstrating the actor's desire to repay those who have helped her over the years.Interactive games at the event produced several poignant and motivational moments. When a fan expressed her desire to travel to Paris the next year, Deepika instantly pledged to assist, and her manager promptly exchanged contact information. Indeed. Deepika gladly consented when a fan asked to outfit her in one of their own creations, making sure her staff followed up on the request once more. About The Intern and the best film Deepika also addressed her upcoming project. Several fans asked for an update on her new project, The Intern remake. She stated that she didn't think the current box office environment was suitable for a movie of that kind. She also stated that she is waiting for the ideal moment to do the project properly and is still determined to create it soon. Despite its initial poor success, she also called Tamasha one of the movies that had the greatest influence on young viewers. Mental health One of the most poignant moments was when a fan talked about having mental health issues and how Deepika's candour about her own struggles helped him deal.Deepika, who was clearly upset, consoled him and told him in private that she would be there for him if he ever needed help. The genuineness of the conversation, according to fans, perfectly encapsulated the evening's essence.During the event, Deepika celebrated her birthday by cutting a huge cake with fans and serving a lavish lunch spread that guests described as "top tier," with dishes ranging from Chinese and Mexican to Italian. Her team's warmth, friendliness, and candid interactions throughout the day were also commended by fans. Fans were thrilled when Deepika revealed that she would collaborate with Shah Rukh Khan once more and hinted at some surprise news that will be announced on her birthday. She also talked about the past year, mentioning her choice to choose serenity over poisonous surroundings, which many saw as a subtly personal comment on her recent work experiences.Deepika also talked about her personal life and discussed motherhood, its difficulties, and her hands-on parenting style. She said that even though she had assistance, she would rather be as active in her child's care as possible. Additionally, she reassured fans who are excitedly anticipating her next phase on television by confirming that she is prepared to return in full form in 2026 following maternity.



Deepika gave each admirer a personal hug and posed for pictures with them as the event came to a close. For those who went, it was more than simply a fan gathering; it was an encounter characterised by kindness, compassion, and a unique feeling of intimacy with one of India's top celebrities.

Samsung presents 'Your Companion to AI Living' at the First Look during CES 2026

JAMMU, January 2026: Samsung Electronics has unveiled its "Companion to AI Living" vision at The First Look, its CES® 2026 event held in the Latour Ballroom at the Wynn Las Vegas. The focus of the event was on AI as Samsung's philosophy, a foundation that connects the company's R&D product development, operations and user experience.

TM Roh, CEO and Head of Samsung's Device eXperience (DX) Division, opened The First Look by describing the company's AI leadership and how due to its vast, AI-enabled, connected ecosystem, Samsung can provide users with a true AI companion experience in their daily life. This approach gives users a chance to access more than just the basics from their technology and instead, provides opportunities to find more meaningful moments everywhere.

"Samsung is building a more unified, more personal experience across mobile, visual display, home appliances and services," said CEO TM Roh. "With our global connected ecosystem, and by embedding AI across categories, Samsung is leading the way to offer more meaningful everyday AI experiences." SW Yong, President and Head of the Visual Display (VD) Business at Samsung Electronics, and Sukhmani Mohta, Chief Marketing and Partnerships Officer, VD Business at Samsung Electronics America, took the stage to describe how Samsung's displays are combining hardware excellence and visual intelligence to provide a true entertainment companion. Drawing from twenty years of leading the TV industry, Samsung has built a full AI TV lineup that provides an entirely new way for users to interact with their TV.

The center of the display lineup is the 130-inch Micro RGB, which represents a monumental leap in scale and picture quality. The 130-inch Micro RGB marks a new era of color, featuring the widest and most detailed spectrum ever seen in Samsung TVs while its Timeless Frame design minimizes distractions and allows the picture to take center stage with understated elegance. A micro-sized RGB light source drives the unprecedented picture quality, with each microscopic red, green and blue diode shining independently to produce color in its purest, most natural form. Micro RGB AI Engine Pro enables precise control of RGB colors and creates overwhelmingly vivid picture quality in every scene. Elevating this next-level viewing experience, Vision AI Companion (VAC)1 uses AI technology to work alongside users as a full entertainment companion to enhance viewing, dining and mood, anywhere in the home. With it, users can receive guidance on what to watch, what to eat and what music to listen to, enhancing the overall TV experience in a way that extends far beyond simple viewing.

Samsung also offers intuitive modes to personalize the viewing experience. For soccer fans, AI Soccer Mode Pro delivers a more exciting gameday experience through AI-driven picture and sound tuning to stadium-level quality. AI Sound Controller Pro lets you raise or lower the volume of the crowd, commentary, or background music, providing a personalized listening experience for TV shows and movies. Users can simply make verbal requests, and any TV equipped with VAC — which includes Micro LED, Micro RGB, OLED, Neo QLED, Mini LED and UHD TV — contextually carries out those requests.

Across different types of programming, VAC also boosts the overall lifestyle experience. It allows users to find recipes for meals they see on TV by simply asking and uses the most up-to-date information to make recommendations that align with health and fitness goals. VAC offers multi-device functionality, as well, sending recommended recipes directly to other devices like the newly-unveiled The Movingstyle, designed to move easily throughout the home and kitchen appliances, for a multi-device experience achieved through complete ecosystem integration.

Samsung has led the global soundbar market for 11 consecutive years. This year, it is introducing two new WiFi speakers, the Music Studio 5 and 7, to further expand its integrated ecosystem. These models support a wider range of sound system combinations, enhance audiovisual quality and improve the aesthetics of any space. Each model shares a timeless, dot design concept by renowned designer Erwan Bouroullec, inspired by a universal symbol in music and art and grounded in Samsung's signature design language. Samsung also unveiled a host of new products that blend beautifully with users' homes and aesthetics. The new, ultra-thin OLED S95H features a refined bezel that gives it art gallery elegance, and Samsung's new portable projector, The Freestyle+, is powered by VAC and allows users to view content on walls and ceilings, as well as uneven surfaces like corners and curtains.

The 2026 TV lineup2 supports HDR10+ ADVANCED, delivering enhanced brightness, genre-based optimization, intelligent motion smoothing, advanced local tone mapping and improved gaming experience.

As HDR10+ adoption grows among major OTT providers, Samsung will be the first to launch HDR10+ ADVANCED in its 2026 TV lineup.



Samsung also features Eclipsa Audio, the company's new spatial sound system, introduced across all 2026 TVs.

Samsung also unveiled its most advanced Odyssey gaming monitor lineup yet, introducing five new models that push the boundaries of resolution, refresh rate and immersive visual performance. Led by Samsung's first 6K 3D Odyssey G9, the 2026 lineup debuts world-first display technologies for gamers and creators, including the next-generation Odyssey G6 and three new Odyssey G8 models.

At the center of all these display innovations is the most powerful Tizen OS yet. Users can now enjoy seven years of Tizen OS upgrades, ensuring that TVs continue to evolve long after they have entered the home.

Cheolgi Kim, Executive Vice President and Head of Digital Appliances (DA) Division at Samsung Electronics, and Elizabeth Anderson, Head of Integrated Marketing, DA at Samsung Electronics America (SEA) outlined Samsung's vision to evolve from providing home appliances to true home companions that work to eliminate the stress of daily chores. Cheolgi Kim also announced that as of December 2025, SmartThings now serves more than 430 million users, empowering Samsung with a significant scale and depth of insight that sets it apart from other brands. This insight comes to life with the Family Hub. The AI-enabled refrigerator is the centerpiece of the home and now, with an upgrade to AI Vision built with Google Gemini,3 it redefines living for an AI future. With this update, AI Vision unlocks existing limitations in recognizing food items, seamlessly tracking what is placed into and taken out of the refrigerator, making meal planning and food management simpler than ever. The Family Hub has won 10 CES Innovation Awards so far, and Samsung's AI-enabled fridges have received the award for the past three years.

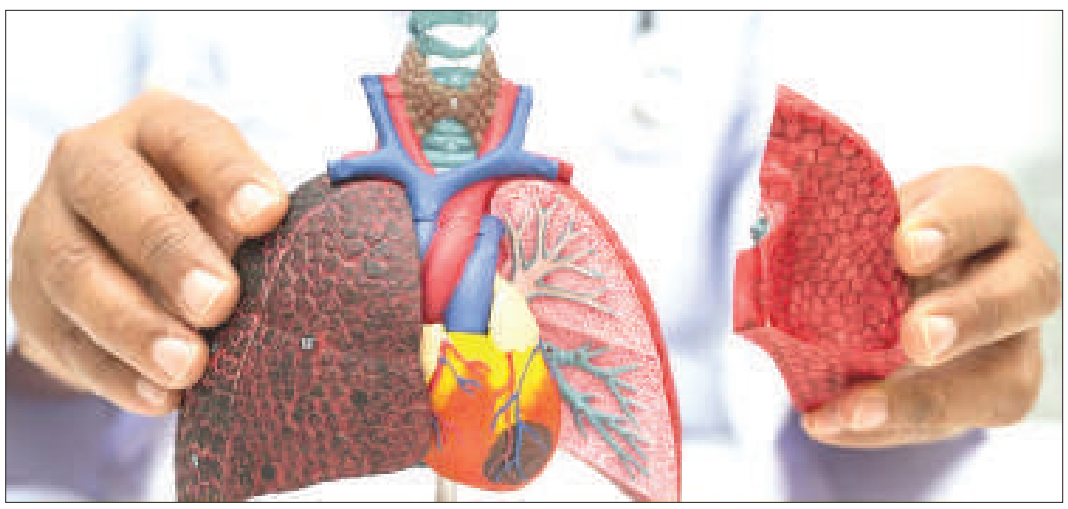
Through a gamified feature called "What's for Today?", select refrigerators provide recipe recommendations based on what is in the refrigerator or also random recommendations, reducing the stress caused by choosing what to cook. When selected, recipes show up through SmartThings Food, where users receive a step-by-step guide to help them get started instantly. The selected recipe can also be sent to connected cooking appliances to begin the process seamlessly. Video to Recipe adds even more simplicity, providing users with recommended cooking videos and converting those videos into easy-to-follow steps, allowing users to follow along while they cook without pausing the video or backtracking.

Samsung also unveiled FoodNote, a new, weekly report that recaps users' food intake patterns, from most-used ingredients and recipe recommendations, and which items it's time to restock. Additionally, Now Brief includes more widgets on the Family Hub screen and with Voice ID, can distinguish between family members and display content relevant to each individual. Ultimately, these features come together to provide various helpful insights and information throughout the week.

In the laundry room, the Bespoke AI Laundry Combo removes the need to transfer loads of laundry, solving a major pain point for households. This year's model comes with enhanced features, like a faster super speed cycle and enhanced drying performance. Moreover, Samsung's new Bespoke AI AirDresser is here to solve another common problem with your clothes.

Fatty liver disease raises liver cancer risk here's how biomarkers play a role

YOU wake some mornings feeling inexplicably drained, your belly bloated and uncomfortable. Another day, your skin turns a shade too yellow, urging you to google the symptoms. These could just be symptoms of indigestion, or they might be signs of a troubled liver.Liver cancer is not a single disease but a spectrum of tumours arising in the liver. The most common type is hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), which starts in liver cells. There's also intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma (ICC), which begins in the bile ducts within the liver. Additionally, many cancers found in the liver are not primary at all, they have spread from elsewhere in the body. Because early stages are usually symptomless, many diagnoses occur only after the cancer has advanced, when treatment options are limited and outcomes are poor.



Despite better screening tools, liver cancer ranks among the leading causes of cancer deaths worldwide, partly because many cases are detected late. Liver cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths worldwide. One reason it is so deadly is that it often doesn't show clear symptoms until it is quite advanced.Different Things Can Raise Your Risk

Some risks come from infections, like hepatitis B or C, which can damage the liver over time. Lifestyle choices—like drinking too much alcohol, smoking, being overweight, or eating unhealthily—also increase the risk. Even family history or certain genes can make someone more likely to get liver cancer.

Fatty Liver Disease Is a Bigger Problem

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), often linked to obesity and poor diet, can slowly harm the liver and raise the chance of liver cancer. More people are developing NAFLD worldwide, so it's becoming an important factor.

New Ways to Detect Liver Cancer Doctors traditionally use scans like ultrasound, CT, or MRI to find liver cancer. But researchers are now exploring blood tests and genetic tests that could spot the disease earlier, even before obvious symptoms appear.

Biomarkers Help Predict, Treat Liver Cancer

Scientists are studying special molecules in the blood called biomarkers. These can give clues about liver cancer early and might help doctors personalise treatment for each patient.

Early Detection Makes a Huge Difference

The earlier liver cancer is found, the better the chances of successful treatment. Therefore, regular check-ups, especially for people at higher risk, are important.

Also read: Doctor says these 3 medicines can save a heart attack patient

FAQs on liver cancer:

Q1. What is liver cancer?

Liver cancer occurs when abnormal cells grow uncontrollably in the liver. The most common type is hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC).

Q2. What are the main causes of liver cancer?

Chronic liver diseases such as fatty liver disease, hepatitis B or C infection, cirrhosis, excessive alcohol use, and long-term toxin exposure increase the risk.

Q3. Can fatty liver disease lead to liver cancer?

Yes. Untreated fatty liver disease can progress to inflammation, fibrosis, cirrhosis, and eventually increase the risk of liver cancer.

Q4. What are common symptoms of liver cancer?

Early liver cancer often has no symptoms. As it progresses, symptoms may include unexplained weight loss, fatigue, abdominal pain, jaundice, loss of appetite, and swelling in the abdomen.

Q5. Who is at higher risk of developing liver cancer?

People with chronic liver disease, diabetes, obesity, viral hepatitis, heavy alcohol use, or a family history of liver cancer are at higher risk.

Best foods to build muscles, for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians



MOST people think muscles are built in the gym by lifting weights, but there's more to it. Your diet plays an equally important role and helps repair and grow muscles. A well-balanced diet high in protein plays a key role, along with other nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals. Here are 8 muscle-building foods that can be incorporated into your diet for excellent results.Plain Greek yogurt

Greek yogurt is one of the most accessible high-quality protein sources. It contains all nine essential amino acids along with whey and casein, making it one of the best foods for growing muscles. It is also low in carbs and ideal for those on a weight loss programme. Enjoy it plain or add more nutrition with berries, nuts, and seeds. Choose an unflavoured yogurt with no added sugar.

Salmon

Salmon is known for its high protein content. What makes it ideal for building muscles is the presence of omega-3 fatty acids, which not only help increase muscle mass but also reduce inflammation and offer many cardiovascular health benefits. Salmon can be grilled with lemon and herbs or enjoyed in salads and sandwiches.Eggs A breakfast staple in many homes, eggs offer high-quality, complete protein. They have all the essential amino acids, especially leucine, which help build and repair muscles. They are easy to digest and offer great nutrient absorption. Eggs are also versatile, as they can be cooked in a variety of ways and paired with other foods for extra nutrition.

Chicken breast

It is highly enjoyed by fitness enthusiasts who love non-vegetarian foods. It is an easy source of complete protein and high in leucine and iron, which support muscle building. Chicken breast is also low in calories and keeps you lean and fit. There are many options for consumption: grilled or stir-fried. Enjoy it before or after a workout for faster recovery.

Quinoa

A plant-based option for vegetarians and vegans, which contains all the essential amino acids. It is a better source of protein than grains when cooked. Additionally, the presence of iron, magnesium, and fibre also provides energy and acts as a fuel for muscles. Enjoy it on the side with main dishes or use it as an alternative to rice.

Cottage cheese

Cottage cheese is loaded with high quality proteins, essential vitamins, and minerals that help in strengthening muscles and bones. It contains casein proteins, which digest slowly and keep your muscles fuelled. Since the fat content varies, it is best to choose one which suits your needs. It also has high sodium content, so it's best to use it in moderation.Peanuts

Many think peanuts are nuts, but they are basically legumes, like beans and lentils, which are high in protein. Not only this, but they are also rich in B vitamins, folate, and niacin, making them an excellent fuel for your body. What's great? They make for healthy snacks that can also be added to sandwiches, poha, and smoothies.

Pumpkin seeds

Pumpkin seeds make for a quick, go-to snack option, high in proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Their magnesium and iron content help maintain muscle mass.

Transforming Vision into Reality:..

nectivity that had long remained absent. Featuring India's longest operational railway

tunnel at 12.77 kilometres and the world's highest railway arch bridge rising 359 metres, the line significantly reduced travel time between Jammu and Srinagar and opened new economic corridors. The completion of the 12-kilometre Sonamarg Tunnel, constructed at ¹ 2,700 crore, further strengthened year-round access to high-altitude tourism zones.

Road infrastructure also advanced steadily. The Banihal–Ramban Bypass reached completion, while work progressed on the Delhi–Amritsar–Katra Expressway, expected to cut travel time between Delhi and Katra to nearly six hours. Eight major tunnel projects were brought to advanced stages, addressing terrain-related disruptions that have historically constrained mobility and commerce.

Tourism emerged as the strongest economic narrative of the year. The region recorded 2.36 crore tourist visits by November 2024, an unprecedented figure that validated the administration's focus on stability and diversification. Gulmarg alone attracted 7.68 lakh visitors during 2024 and generated ¹ 103 crore in revenue, highlighting the financial potential of upgraded tourism infrastructure. Importantly, the strategy expanded beyond traditional destinations. Areas such as Gurez, Bangus, Bhaderwah and border belts of Kupwara and Poonch were actively promoted, distributing economic benefits to rural and previously overlooked regions. The Kashmir Marathon, held in October 2024 and drawing 1,800 runners from across the world, reinforced the region's re-entry into international sporting and cultural circuits.

Cultural revival complemented the tourism push. The fourth edition of the International Film Festival of Srinagar (TIFFS), held from November 12 to 14, 2025, received over 100 film submissions from 20 countries. Thirty films from 14 nations were selected for screening, including feature films, documentaries and short films. In his address at the festival, the Lieutenant Governor called on filmmakers to document the suffering of terror victims, expose the terror ecosystem and capture the transformation witnessed after August 2019, positioning cinema as a medium for social reflection and cohesion. The festival's growing stature reflected a broader effort to reclaim Kashmir's artistic and narrative space.

Cultural preservation extended to traditional art forms. In December 2025, the Indian Institute of Management Jammu hosted the region's first Basohli Painting Workshop, bringing together GI-tag certified women artists and senior practitioners of the 300-year-old Pahari miniature tradition. The initiative linked heritage conservation with academic engagement and livelihood support, reinforcing culture as a development asset.

One of the year's most consequential governance interventions was civilian rehabilitation. In response to damage caused by cross-border shelling during Operation Sindoor in May 2025 and recurring natural disasters, the administration launched a large-scale smart housing programme in partnership with High-Range Rural Development Society, a Kerala-based organisation that provided full funding. Foundation stones were laid for 1,500 prefabricated houses across Ramban, Udhampur, Rajouri and Poonch. Designed to be earthquake- and flood-resistant, each unit included essential amenities, cowsheds and long-term maintenance support. Beneficiaries were also provided life insurance, health check-ups and internet connectivity, reflecting a shift from symbolic compensation to durable rehabilitation.

Women's economic empowerment gained further traction. By December 2025, Jammu and Kashmir had established over 1.84 lakh women-led micro, small and medium enterprises, employing more than 95,000 women directly. Over five years, MSMEs reported engagement of over 5.36 lakh women workers. Initiatives such as the Lakhpati Didi programme, Tejaswini scheme and Mission Youth continued to scale up, while marriage assistance for Antyodaya Anna Yojana category girls was enhanced to ¹ 75,000.

Underlying these developments was a sustained security consolidation. The administration reported a sharp decline in youth recruitment into militant ranks, the disappearance of shutdowns and an end to routine stone-pelting incidents. The governance narrative increasingly linked security gains with economic opportunity, framing peace as the foundation for jobs, mobility and growth.

The year also witnessed an unusual diplomatic outreach, with the Lieutenant Governor leading a delegation to Kalmykia, Russia, in October 2025 for an exhibition of sacred Buddhist relics. The event drew nearly 100,000 visitors and laid the groundwork for future cultural and economic cooperation, including an India Festival planned for 2026.

Addressing remaining challenges, the Lieutenant Governor acknowledged delays in industrial proposals worth ¹ 60,000 crore due to procedural hurdles, signalling a willingness to confront institutional constraints. As 2025 closed, Jammu and Kashmir appeared to have moved decisively from recovery to reconstruction, with governance outcomes measured less by intent and more by visible change.

Our Stories, Our Words - ..

world has grown complex and deceitful. It is difficult to distinguish a friend from a foe. In the old order, an enemy could be identified easily; fights were fought on battlefields with visible swords. But this age is different. Wars are now fought and won with information. Narratives and agendas are built on social media, and public opinion is shaped by electronic and social platforms.In such an age, a wronged community, so small that it seemed insignificant in the larger scheme of things, was left to fend for itself. But, with its resilient DNA, it fought back. To everyone's surprise, it rose from the ashes like a phoenix through sheer grit and determination, wielding the only and strongest weapon it has always carried: knowledge.To the surprise of its adversaries, this community kept the real story of its pain and torment alive. There were attempts to change the narrative, to embed and concoct falsehoods. But the community managed to hold on to the truth and present it to the world. Every contribution mattered—whether it was telling the story as it happened to friends and colleagues, writing about it in various media, countering falsehoods on social media, or presenting facts in a TV studio. Every participant realized the vital role they were playing in preserving the truth.But this story is not only about the political side of their tragedy. It is about an entire legacy and heritage created over five millennia on the banks of the Vitasta. It is about knowledge, culture, history, literature, performing arts, the social fabric, food, traditions, rituals, and a unique way of life.Two brothers, who were part of this story, realized that in the new media age, this community needed a voice of its own. Thus, for the world to understand the language it speaks, The Right News (TRN) was born. Over the last five years, TRN has tried to document stories around everything aforementioned. It is a small contribution, but a vital one, given that TRN operates from ground zero. That matters and will always matter. In a fragmented digital world, TRN became a familiar space, especially for a community spread across the globe. Videos and digital storytelling allowed for instant connection and conversation. Yet, over time, another truth became clear. Digital media is powerful, but it is also fleeting. Algorithms change, platforms rise and fall, and content scrolls past, disappearing into the digital ether. For a community that has already lost so much, permanence matters. Print still carries a different weight: it is archival, citable, and it carries institutional credibility. It becomes part of recorded history. A printed newspaper does not just inform the present—it preserves the past for the future. hus, the Vitasta Herald is born. he Vitasta Herald is the print face of this media ecosystem, the collective and credible voice of this community. This voice will tell the stories of how this community lived then and how it lives now; of how it is striving to make its resurgence complete. The Vitasta is calling. The wait has been long, and the longing is painful. Yet, a new hope has been heralded. It is waiting for this community – the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Kashmiri Man Detained After Attempt to Offer Namaz Inside Ayodhya's Ram Mandir

Security Agencies Probe Intent as Family Cites Mental Health Concerns

Vitasta Herald News Bureau

Jammu, January, 2026: A 55-year-old man from Kashmir was detained by security personnel after he allegedly attempted to offer namaz inside the Ram Mandir complex in Ayodhya, raising slogans when stopped, officials said. The incident occurred inside the high-security temple premises and prompted immediate intervention by security agencies.

According to official sources, the individual has been identified as Ahmed Sheikh, a resident of Shopian district in south Kashmir. Officials said Sheikh entered the Ram Mandir complex on Friday as a visitor and completed darshan at the shrine. After moving towards the Sita Rasoi area within the complex, he reportedly sat down and appeared to prepare for offering namaz, which drew the attention of on-duty security staff.

Temple security personnel intervened promptly and restrained the man before any religious activity could take place. He was subsequently detained and handed over to the local police for questioning. Some sources claimed that during the intervention, the man allegedly raised slogans, further alerting security officials.

Police officials said the matter is being treated with seriousness given the sensitivity and security status of the Ram Mandir complex. Investigating and intelligence agencies are jointly questioning Sheikh to determine his intent and to assess whether the act was deliberate, symbolic, or linked to any wider motive. Officials are also examining his travel history, including the circumstances under which he reached Ayodhya and whether he had any contacts or assistance during his journey.



During preliminary checks, police reportedly recovered items such as cashews and raisins from his possession. Sources said that during questioning, Sheikh told investigators that he was travelling to Ajmer, though the route and purpose of his visit to Ayodhya are part of the ongoing probe.

Meanwhile, the man's family has claimed that he is mentally ill and has been under medical treatment for psychiatric issues. Relatives reportedly shared medical records from the psychiatry department of Srinagar Medical College with authorities to support their claim. Officials said the documents are being examined as part of the investigation, and medical assessment may be sought to corroborate the family's assertion.

Senior police officers said no conclusion has yet been drawn regarding the man's motive. "All aspects are being looked into, including his mental health condition, travel pattern and behaviour inside the temple premises," an official said, adding that no immediate security breach was reported.

In the aftermath of the incident, senior police officials and intelligence agencies have initiated a review of the existing security arrangements at the Ram Mandir complex. The review is aimed at identifying any procedural gaps and strengthening surveillance in sensitive zones within the premises. The district administration and the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust have so far declined to issue any official statement on the incident. Authorities said further details would be shared once the investigation reaches a clearer stage.

Police sources emphasised that the situation was handled swiftly and without disruption to temple activities. They added that appropriate legal and procedural steps would follow based on the findings of the ongoing inquiry.

Empowering Ladakh Farmers: Training under MIDH Sponsored Project Unlocks Sustainable Farming at Basgo Village

LEH, January 2026: A one-day training and awareness programme was organised under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) at Basgo village by the School of Agriculture Science and Technology (SAS&T), University of Ladakh, Stakna Campus, in collaboration with KVK-Nyoma. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of more than 50 farmers from the region.

The programme commenced with a detailed session by Dr. Phuntsog Tundup, Head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Nyoma, who enlightened the participants on soil health management through natural farming practices. He highlighted the importance of using Jeevamrutha, composting, and other organic fertilizers for sustainable agriculture and compared different organic nutrient sources, recommending the most effective options suitable for local conditions.

Following this, Dr. Kunzes Angmo, Junior Scientist (Forestry), spoke on the scope for the cultivation of asafoetida (Hing) in the Ladakh region. She motivated the farmers to explore this high-value crop as a potential source of income diversification and regional development. She also created awareness about pursuing a career in agriculture by seeking admission to BSc Agriculture programmes, highlighting their future scope and opportunities for youth in the region.

In the next session, Dr. Sonam Spaldon, Junior Scientist (Vegetable Science), emphasized the importance of protected cultivation and strategies for off-season vegetable production, focusing particularly on leafy vegetables. She also elaborated on the immense potential of vegetable seed production in Ladakh's unique agro-climatic conditions.

Concluding the technical sessions, Dr. Tsering Lanzes (Pomologist) delivered a talk on orchard management, emphasizing orchard sanitation, canopy management, and the problem of alternate bearing its causes and control measures. She also addressed farmers' queries on pest management in fruit crops and suggested practical solutions to enhance orchard productivity.

The event was well-received by the farming community, who appreciated the expert guidance and recommendations provided by the scientists. The programme successfully enhanced farmers' awareness of sustainable farming, crop diversification, and scientific management practices tailored to Ladakh's unique environment.

Modi realising Mahatma Gandhi's dream of Ram-Rajya, Cong used MGNREGA for votes only: Zorawar



JAMMU, January 2026: J&K BJP spokesperson Zorawar Singh Jamwal, while reacting to the VB-GRAM G Bill replacing MGNREGA, said, "It was Mahatma Gandhi's dream that farmers and villages be empowered so that India becomes self-reliant. That was his vision. Today, on the same foundation, Modi ji has unleashed waves of progress over the last 11–12 years, which is why the BJP has come to power."

Taking a sharp dig at the Congress, the BJP spokesperson said that Congress only used MGNREGA as a political tool and failed to ensure transparency and sustainable livelihoods in rural areas. He alleged that under Congress rule, corruption, leakages and vote-bank politics weakened the scheme, while villages remained dependent and underdeveloped.

Zorawar Singh Jamwal further said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP has focused on outcome-based governance, rural infrastructure, skill development and self-employment. "Unlike Congress, which believed in temporary relief, the BJP believes in permanent solutions. VB-GRAM G is aimed at empowering villages, strengthening farmers, and making rural India economically independent," he added.

Zorawar Singh Jamwal also said that calling policy reforms an "assassination" of Gandhi's vision reflects Congress's frustration after losing public trust. "Congress ruled for decades but failed to fulfil Gandhiji's dream of strong villages, while the BJP is working to realise it on the ground. He further castigated Congress leadership for misleading the people of the Country on the issue and pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi's dream of establishing Ram Rajya in India was never given a second thought by Congress in its 70 years of rule. Instead, its none other than BJP led NDA government under the dynamic and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who in just last 11 to 12 years brought revolutionary reforms to make Country self-reliant as dreamt by Mahatma Gandhi.

The empowerment of Villages, farmers, labourers and women are examples to this fact, that has literally made Congress leadership in frustration mode.

"Which party or leader has objection on the name of Lord Ram? Who used to enchant Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram, Patit Paavan Sita Ram?," questioned Zorawar Singh Jamwal and added that "Even when Mahatma Gandhi breathed his last, "Hey Ram, Hey Ram and Hey Ram" were his last words.

" "Except lip service, Congress didn't nothing to promote Gandhi's vision like promoting Swadeshi, however, it was BJP that has made production of Khaadi four times more in past just one decade," added Zorawar Singh Jamwal.

CEC Kargil Meets J&K Chief Minister in Jammu; Discusses Issues of Mutual Interest

JAMMU, January 2026: The Hon'ble Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor (CEC), LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoon, met the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Shri Omar Abdullah, at Jammu and held detailed discussions on issues of mutual interest concerning the people of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir.



During the interaction, the Hon'ble CEC highlighted the concerns of students from Ladakh seeking admission in educational institutions of Jammu & Kashmir, and stressed the importance of continued cooperation to support their academic future. The Hon'ble Chief Minister assured full cooperation and extended all possible support in this regard.

The Hon'ble CEC also raised issues related to Ladakhi colonies in Jammu & Kashmir, particularly the need for basic civic amenities and essential facilities for the residents. The Hon'ble Chief Minister responded positively and assured that necessary steps would be taken to address these concerns.

Later, the Hon'ble CEC separately met the Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of J&K, Shri Surinder Kumar Choudhary; Advisor to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Nasir Aslam Wani; and MLA Zadibal, Shri Tanvir Sadiq, and exchanged views on various matters concerning public welfare and regional development.

The Hon'ble CEC also met the Hon'ble Cabinet Minister for Education, Health & Medical Education, Ms. Sakina Itoo, and discussed the issue of lecturers' One Time Exemption (OTE). The Hon'ble Minister responded positively and assured that the issue would be examined at the earliest.

The meetings reflected a shared commitment to working together for the welfare, development, and well-being of the people of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir.

AJKPC Established its office in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, January, 2026: All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Conference (AJKPC), a registered organisation committed to strengthen grassroots level democracy in J & K formally inaugurated its office in Srinagar, marking an important organisational expansion in the Kashmir region. The office was inaugurated by Anil Sharma, President of AJKPC, in the presence of senior functionaries of the organisation. Addressing the gathering, Sharma appreciated and thanked the AJKPC leadership from Kashmir for their sustained efforts in establishing the office, describing it as a significant milestone towards empowering local democratic institutions in the region and ensuring wider democratic participation. He stated that the Srinagar office would serve as a common platform not only for AJKPC members but also for former Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) representatives. He further emphasized that the office would play an important role in encouraging the youth of Kashmir to actively participate in Panchayat and Urban Local Body elections, which he termed as their fundamental democratic right and constitutional responsibility. Sharma also urged the AJKPC leadership of the Kashmir division to remain prepared for upcoming Panchayat as well as Urban Local Body elections, stressing the organisation's commitment to democratic participation at all levels and inclusive political engagement.



The establishment of the AJKPC office in Srinagar is expected to strengthen coordination, outreach, and institutional support, thereby enhancing the organisation's engagement with grassroots stakeholders across the Kashmir region and facilitating smoother interaction with democratic institutions. The prominent members of the AJKPC who were present on the occasion includes mohed Safi Khan, Nazir ahmed rather,Bashir maik,jaan mohd,razia maik,,mohed younes, faiyez ahmed.Nazia jaan, shaan mohed, maqbul ahmed,chaudhry anwar,

Wangoo Sisters Rise as Icons of Sporting Excellence from Jammu and Kashmir

From National Podiums to International Gold, Arzath and Praznath Script an Inspiring Wushu Journey

SUSHMA KUMARI

Jammu, January, 2026: Arzath and Praznath Wangoo, widely known as the Wangoo Sisters, have carved a remarkable place for themselves in Indian sport, emerging as powerful symbols of talent, discipline, and perseverance from Jammu and Kashmir. Their journey from the modest village of Traperpora in Shopian district to national and international Wushu arenas stands as a story of sustained hard work, family support, and inspired coaching.

Born to Vinod Bushan and Ranjita Pandita, the sisters began their sporting journey at the Khadi Mill Ground in Srinagar. It was here that their potential was first recognised by **Kuldeep Handoo**, Dronacharya Awardee and Chief National Coach of India. Observing Praznath's exceptional flexibility, he guided her towards the Taolu discipline of Wushu. Both sisters then undertook rigorous training under expert coaches, laying a strong technical foundation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when formal training was disrupted, they continued their physical conditioning through yoga, practised regularly under the supervision of their mother, ensuring continuity and discipline.

Their competitive breakthrough came in March 2021 at the 20th Sub-Junior National Wushu Championship held in Ranchi, Jharkhand. Representing Jammu and Kashmir, both sisters made their mark, with Praznath winning a bronze medal in the group event. Her performance drew appreciation from judges and coaches alike and served as an early confidence booster.

In 2022, the family shifted to Jammu, opening a new phase in the sisters' sporting careers. Training under coach Sher Bahadur at the M.A. Stadium, they went on to compete at the 22nd Sub-Junior National Wushu Championship in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. Their efforts resulted in four bronze medals across individual and group events, an achievement acknowledged by the Wushu Association of Jammu and Kashmir and praised by Kuldeep Handoo.

The sisters continued to scale new heights in 2024. At the 23rd Sub-Junior National Wushu Championship held in Jammu, **Arzath Wangoo** delivered an outstanding performance, winning three gold medals. **Praznath Wangoo** followed closely with two gold and one silver medal. Their combined effort helped the Jammu and Kashmir Taolu team secure the runner-up trophy at the championship.

Later in December 2024, at the 24th Sub-Junior National Wushu Championship in Tarn Taran, Punjab, Arzath added one gold and two silver medals to her growing tally, while Praznath secured one silver and one bronze medal, underlining their consistency at the national level.

Their success was not limited to national championships. The Wangoo Sisters made a strong impact at the Khelo India Wushu Women's Leagues, where they won multiple gold, silver, and bronze medals at both zonal and national stages. In the same year, at the 4th All India Inter-SAI Championship held at NSNIS Patiala, Punjab, both sisters showcased exceptional individual performances, each winning three gold medals.

The year 2025 further elevated their stature. Arzath achieved international acclaim by winning two gold medals at the Moscow Wushu Stars Championship 2025, held in Moscow, Russia, in June. She later added one gold and one bronze medal at the 24th Junior National Wushu Championship held at Gachibowli, Hyderabad, in July 2025. Praznath continued her medal run in 2025 by winning a silver medal at the 25th Sub-Junior National Wushu Championship in Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu, in May, followed by a bronze medal at the Khelo India National Women's League held at RRU, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in April.

Beyond Wushu, the sisters have also excelled in yoga competitions. At the KVS Regional Sports Meet held at Kendriya Vidyalaya Nagrota, Praznath won a gold medal, while Arzath secured a bronze. Praznath further achieved sixth rank at the KVS National Sports Meet held in Odisha in 2024, reflecting her versatility and commitment to holistic fitness.

Despite their demanding training and competition schedules, both sisters have maintained strong academic performance. Arzath is currently studying in Class IX, while Praznath is in Class VI at Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, Jammu Cantt., earning admiration for their ability to balance education and elite sport.

From a small village in Shopian to national arenas and international podiums, the Wangoo Sisters' journey reflects what determination, structured guidance, and family support can achieve. Their growing list of accomplishments has brought pride to Jammu and Kashmir and inspired young athletes, especially girls, to pursue sport with confidence. As their careers continue to unfold, Arzath and Praznath Wangoo stand not only as medal winners, but as role models shaping the aspirations of the next generation.



FORM IV
(See Rule 8)

Statement of ownership and other particulars

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