



Maximum : 06°C
Minum : -1°C
Humidity : 69%

SUNSET
Today 05:28 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 07:34 AM

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News Digest

JEE Mains In 13 Languages

Jammu: The joint entrance examination (JEE), mains is being held in 13 languages including Urdu for the next session in 2021, an official spokesperson said Thursday.

As per the exam conducting authority, National Testing agency the JEE mains 2021 would be held in 13 languages including Hindi, English Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi Odia, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu & Urdu as per the New Education Policy of India, the official spokesperson ● P08

LG Greets People On Christmas

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Thursday extended warm greetings to the people of J&K on the auspicious occasion of Christmas and also prayed for peace and prosperity in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. In his message, the LG observed that Christmas is a day to remember the pious teachings of Jesus Christ, an official spokesperson said. He said that the message of peace and compassion preached by ● P08

Missing Man Found Dead In Kangan

Srinagar: A middle aged man was found dead in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, three days after he went missing, reports said Thursday. 50-year-old Manga Khari was found dead on Thursday morning in Chattergul Bala village of Kangan in the central Kashmir district, news agency KNO reported. Khari, as per the report had gone missing on December 21. Quoting an unnamed official, the report says that inquest proceedings have been started to ascertain the cause of his death. He said that the body was handed over to the family after completion of legal and medical formalities.

Electric Shock Kills Youth In Anantnag

Srinagar: A youth died on Thursday after receiving an electric shock in Mattan area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district. Anees Ahmad Bhat of Hapatnara village, a labourer by profession, received electric shock when he was laying electric pole and wire with a private company in Nambal village of the south Kashmir district this afternoon, news agency GNS reported. The injured youth, the report said, was removed to the Public Health Centre (PHC) Mattan for treatment. However, the doctors there declared him ● P08

Building Guttled In Bhaderwah Blaze

Bhaderwah: A fire seemingly caused by an electrical short circuit burnt down a building in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district in the early hours of Thursday, destroying its three floors, as many shops and a car parked nearby, officials said. The fire started around 1:30 am at the building located in Ma-thola village of Bhaderwah belt, they said, adding that the property belongs to Sepoy Mukesh Kumar of Assam Rifles who is currently posted in Manipur. Fire tenders were immediately rushed to the spot, and ● P08

RACE FOR DDCs

Gupkar Alliance Fears Horse Trading Post-Poll Verdict

'Government Of The Day Acting In A Partisan Manner'

SRINAGAR: The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) on Thursday warned against disrespecting the people's mandate in the District Development Council (DDC) polls in Jammu and Kashmir, saying tinkering with democracy is totally unacceptable.

At the end of the first meeting of the alliance after the polls, in which it secured a majority (110 seats), PAGD spokesperson Sajad Lone said there were "disturbing" reports of "interference" in the people's verdict and the "government of the day acting in a partisan manner".

The meeting took place at PAGD president Farooq Abdullah's Gupkar residence here.

"There are some disturbing reports coming about interference in democracy, in the people's verdict, wherein the government of the day is acting in a partisan manner and in fact, becoming a participant by directly or indirectly facilitating moves by some people to attract independents towards them by confining them," Lone told reporters.



KO Photo Abid Bhat

Gupkar Alliance Will Continue In Future: Farooq

PAGD president Farooq Abdullah on Thursday said the government should immediately release all PDP leaders who were "detained" ahead of the announcement of the District Development Council (DDC) election results if it wants democracy to survive. ● P08

Flanked by other leaders of the alliance including Abdullah, he said the government should desist from humiliating the "great verdict" of the people of Jammu and Kashmir as history has been witness that such endeavours end up as disasters. "I think they should desist from this and not humiliate this great verdict of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. »PAGE 08

Winter Vacations In J&K Colleges From Dec 28

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday announced winter vacations for government colleges in the Kashmir Valley and winter zones in Jammu division from December 28.

As per an order issued here, the colleges will be closed from December 28 to February 13, 2021.

Colleges falling in the summer zone of Jammu division will close on December 26 and open on January 4, 2021, it added.

The winter vacation for all government educational institutions and recognised private schools up to higher secondary-level in the Kashmir division and winter zone areas of Jammu division is from December 21 to February 28. (PTI)

ACB Files Charges Against Ex-Chief Engineer, Wife

SRINAGAR: The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday produced charge-sheet against a former Chief Engineer, his wife and sister-in-law in a disproportionate assets case.

According to an ACB spokesperson, charge-sheet in case FIR No 29/2018 under sections 5(1)(e) r/w 5(2) J&K Prevention of Corruption Act & 109 RPC were filed against the then Chief Engineer (CE) of Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED) Mohammad Hanif Lone for possession of assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. Charges were also filed ● P08

Light Snow Predicted In Kashmir Valley Over Weekend

SRINAGAR: There was slight improvement in cold conditions in Kashmir as the minimum temperature rose across the valley on Thursday, even as the MET Office forecast the possibility of light snow over two days from Saturday. The night temperature marked an improvement but continued to settle below the freezing point, MET officials said.

The weather has remained dry and cold across Kashmir since the snowfall on December 12, with the night temperature staying several degrees below the freezing point, they said.

The officials said Srinagar the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir recorded a low of minus 3.8 de-

grees Celsius up from the previous night's minus 5 degrees Celsius.

They said the mercury in Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir went up from the previous night's low of minus 6.6 degrees Celsius to settle at a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius.

They said the famous ski-resort of Gulmarg, in north Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 5.6 degrees Celsius slightly up from Wednesday's minus 6 degrees Celsius. Gulmarg was the coldest recorded place in the valley.

Qazigund the gateway town to the valley recorded the minimum of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, in the north, registered a low of minus »PAGE 08

7 More Corona Deaths In J&K, 291 New Cases

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: At least seven more people, including a 92-year-old man succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, while the Union Territory reported 291 fresh cases of Covid-19, including 19 travellers and 2 minors during the last 24 hours.

In Jammu division, officials said, four more people lost battle with the deadly disease while in Kashmir three people died of virus, taking the total number of virus related fatalities across Union Territory to 1860.

Among the victims from Val-

ley, officials said, included an 80-year-old woman from Anantnag, an 85-year-old man from Srinagar and a 70-year-old man from Budgam. In Jammu, the victims included a 55-year-old man from Satwari, a 73-year-old man from Janipur, a 92-year-old man from Gole Gujral and a 65-year-old man from Samba.

With these deaths, the total fatality count in J&K reached 1860—1174 in the Valley and 686 in the Jammu region.

Srinagar district with 444 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (350), Baramulla (170),

No Talks With India For Now: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that there is no possibility of a diplomatic dialogue with India in the prevailing situation, according to a media report on Thursday.

"There is no possibility of a backdoor or diplomatic dialogue with India in the prevailing situation...The circumstances are not suitable for any dialogue at the moment," Qureshi was quoted as saying by Dawn newspaper.

Qureshi made the comments while talking to reporters in his hometown Multan on Wednesday, the paper said.

Ties between India and Pakistan nosedived after a terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in 2016. Subsequent attacks, including one on Indian Army camp in Uri, further deteriorated the relationship.

Withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special powers and bifurcating the state into two union territories in August last year also evoked a strong reaction from Pakistan, which has been unsuccessfully ● P08

Cross-LoC Shelling Continues In Poonch

JAMMU: India and Pakistani troops continue to trade heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said Thursday.

The Pakistani army opened heavy fire and shelled mortars at forward posts along the LoC in Poonch district on Thursday, they said.

Indian troops mounted an effective retaliation to the unprovoked ceasefire violation from the other side, they added.

"At around 1815 hours today, the Pak army initiated an unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along the LoC in Krishnagati sector in Poonch district," a defence spokesman said.

On December 1, Border Security Force Sub-Inspector Patinsat Guite was killed in a ceasefire violation by ● P08

...BARAMULLA ENCOUNTER

Footballer Turned Militant Among 2 Killed



KO File Photo Abid Bhat

SRINAGAR: Two militants, including an ace footballer from Sopore town were killed on Thursday in a fierce encounter with government forces in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, police said.

On a specific input about the presence of militants, police, army's 29 RR and the personnel of CRPF 176 battalion launched a cordon and search operation in Wanigam Payeen area of the district on Thursday morning, a police spokesperson said. He said the militants hiding in the house of one Me'raj-ud-din Wani were given an offer to surrender.

"However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter. In the ensuing encounter, two militants were killed and their bodies were retrieved from

CRPF Man Injured In Grenade Attack Succumbs

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, who was critically injured in Ganderbal grenade attack on Wednesday, succumbed to his injuries at a hospital here on Thursday. 24-year-old Constable Mritunjay Chutia, ● P08

the site of encounter," the police spokesperson said.

He identified the killed militant as Amir Siraj of Sopore and Abrar alias Langoo, a Pakistani national, both associated with Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM). »PAGE 08

INCRIMINATING MATERIALS including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes,"

SSB Trooper Injured In Sopore Attack

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) trooper on Thursday was injured in a militant attack in Watergam area of Sopore. Suspected militants lobbed a grenade towards SSB troopers in Watergam area of Sopore on Thursday evening leaving one of the troopers injured, news agency GNS ● P08

Militant Module Busted, 4 Held: Police

Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a module of Al-Badr outfit by arresting four militant associates from Tral area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district. Yawar Aziz Dar and Sajad Ahmad Parry of Larmoh village, and Abid Majeed Sheikh and Showkat Ahmad Dar of ● P08

Army Completes Summary Of Evidence In Shopian Encounter

SRINAGAR: The Army has completed the Summary of Evidence against two of its men involved in July's Amshupura encounter in South Kashmir's Shopian district in which three civilians were killed and a possible court martial could take place after completion of formalities, officials said.

General Officer in Command of the strategically located XV Corps Lt Gen B S Raju said the Summary of Evidence has been completed but refused to give away any details of the outcome.

"Yes, the Summary of Evidence has been completed and the army



FILE PIC

will take next course of action as per the law," Lt Raju said here.

The army had ordered a Court of Inquiry earlier this year after reports appeared on social media that three youths, labelled as militants, had been gunned down by its personnel.

The Court of Inquiry, »PAGE 08

In FOCUS 'Identity Wallpaper Gone': J&K Bank's Calendar Demise Creates Concern

Mohsin Manzoor

As J&K Bank's iconic calendar ran out of its days at the fag-end of the Covid-plagued year, many Kashmiris term it 'another dent to the already battered identity'.

It was the quintessential Kashmiri wit dominating the calendar discourse amid a torrent of disconcerting events in the frosty valley.

"Many of us joke about it, as how we would maintain our milkman's daily account in absence of the J&K Bank calendar in our home now," said Asad Rafiq, a Srinagar-based trader.

"I don't think this move is laughable. We Kashmiris always celebrated the cultural spirit and symbolic significance of this calendar. Its demise feels personal."

As per the circular leaked on social media sites, the J&K Bank received communication from the Ministry of Finance on September this year to stop printing of the annual calendar and diary.

The communiqué cited the growing digitalization around the world as the grounds for stopping the paper version.

"But after ending their signature household presence, J&K Bank



came out with a ridiculous calendar," said Sakib Hameed, an IT professional from Anantnag.

"This poorly-designed e-calen-

dar is a telling comment on the falling standards of the bank, just like its tumbling shares. One really feels sorry for the growing mediocrity in

Kashmir's premier institution."

The bank would reportedly publish around 25 lakh copies of calendar annually at the cost of Rs 3.5 crore.

"This Rs 3.5 crore was not a liability," Zahoor Ziyam, an online user, reacted to the demise, "it was publicity and love worth Rs 350 crores."

Even many bankers are not happy with the move.

"You can't disturb certain institutional practices maintaining the brand image," said Akhtar, a J&K banker employee.

"This step is like robbing the bank of its far and wide publicity. We must understand that J&K Bank cal-

endar was more than a day and date document for Kashmiris; it was the identity wallpaper, now gone in the rising institutional fiddling."

Such concern is also being witnessed in the virtual world where the demise is linked with the larger institutional crisis.

"Despite being in the state of war from last three decades, Kashmiris threw their weight behind J&K Bank, the institution now losing its say and identity," said Mushtaq Ahmad, a J&K Bank account-holder. "Who knows what's next stored for the bank?"

However, many bank officials are calling the calendar move as

the need of the hour.

"First of all, if people are holding us bankers responsible for this calendar issue, let me ask them: How could you resist a directive from Delhi?" a senior J&K Bank executive said.

But beyond this noise over the calendar, the banker continued, the goal is to strengthen digital operations of the bank.

"And therefore, most of us see this move as the need of the hour and a step towards digitization."

However, not many are buying this argument from J&K Bank executives facing the social media scrutiny over the move. »PAGE 08