

Key bills passed, debates see politically-charged attacks

125 days of guaranteed jobs for rural India, was passed amid opposition protests on Thursday, including tearing of papers.

The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, which seeks to open the tightly-controlled civil nuclear sector for private participation, was also passed during the session.

The Lok Sabha also passed a Bill to raise FDI in the insurance sector to 100 per cent from the current 74 per cent, which is expected to increase insurance penetration, lower premiums, and boost job creation.

The Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, was cleared by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote, a day after it was passed by the Lok Sabha.

The House also passed a Bill to repeal 65 Amendment Acts and six principal laws, which had lost relevance.

A Bill to set up a higher education regulator - the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 - was referred to a joint committee of the two Houses.

The Bill seeks to establish an overarching higher education commission along with three councils for regulation, accreditation and ensuring academic standards for universities and higher education institutions in India.

Another Bill on the market securities code was introduced and referred to a department-related standing committee for further examination.

Disruptions unbecoming of MPs: RS Chairman

Session."

The chairman noted that the House agreed to extend sittings or skip lunch recess on five days to transact business.

He said the session recorded an unprecedented rise in Zero Hour activity, with an average of over 84 notices received daily -- a 31 per cent increase over the previous two sessions -- while matters actually raised averaged more than 15 per day, up nearly 50 per cent.

Highlighting the quality of deliberations, Radhakrishnan said the House held a two-day special discussion on the 150th anniversary of the national song Vande Mataram, with 82 members participating. A three-day discussion on electoral reforms saw interventions from 57 members.

During the session, the Rajya Sabha passed or returned eight Bills and adopted a statutory resolution on the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Act, 2024, with participation from 212 members. As many as 59 Private Members' Bills were introduced, reflecting what he described as the "vibrancy of parliamentary democracy".

The Chairman also cited 58 starred questions, 208 Zero Hour submissions and 87 special mentions during the session, and said he issued a detailed ruling clarifying the scope of Rule 267.

Radhakrishnan thanked the Deputy Chairman, members of the panel of vice-chairpersons, the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and the media for their role in ensuring the smooth conduct of proceedings.

Cold conditions intensify in J&K

of Jammu region, were reeling under severe cold conditions, officials said.

Pulwama town was the coldest recorded place with a minimum of minus 4 degrees Celsius in Kashmir on Thursday night, officials said.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 2.1 degrees Celsius.

Searches launched in Rajouri villages

Army, police and SOG in some villages located between Thanamandi and Manjakote sub-divisions of the district, the officials added.

Searches were continuing when reports last came in tonight. Details were awaited.

Pak accuses India of attempting to undermine IWT

the Indus Waters Treaty with escalating consequences both for regional stability and the sanctity of international law," he said.

A day after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, India took a series of punitive measures against Pakistan that included putting the 1960 vintage Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in "abeyance."

The IWT, brokered by the World Bank, has governed the distribution and use of the Indus river and its tributaries between India and Pakistan since 1960.

Dar also mentioned that "India's manipulation of water" has prompted Pakistan's Indus Commissioner to write a letter to his Indian counterpart seeking clarification on the matter.

He also alleged manipulation of Indus basin waters at a critical time of agricultural cycle directly threatens the life and livelihood in Pakistan.

The minister said India had halted sharing information, hydrological data, and joint oversight required by the treaty, which had exposed Pakistan to floods and droughts.

He warned that suspension of water would be considered as an act of war.

ED attaches assets of Yuvraj Singh, Sonu Sood

dering Act (PMLA), according to official sources.

These include assets worth about Rs 1 cr of Sood, Rs 59 lakh of Chakraborty, Rs 2.5 cr of Yuvraj Singh, Rs 1.26 cr of Sharma, Rs 8.26 lakh of Uthappa, Rs 47 lakh of Hazra and Rs 2.02 cr of Rautela's mother, the sources said.

All these celebrities were questioned by the ED in the past and these assets have been categorised as the "proceeds of crime" (illicit money under the PMLA) of the alleged illegal betting app named 1xbet registered in Curaçao.

The agency had some time ago attached assets worth Rs 11.14 cr of former cricketers Shikhar Dhawan and Suresh Raina as part of this investigation.

Trump signs Def Bill backing deeper engagement with India

and open Indo-Pacific region through bilateral and multilateral engagements and participation in military exercises, expanded defence trade, and collaboration on humanitarian aid and disaster response; and to enable greater cooperation on maritime security."

The Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia, was set up in 2017 to counter China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Act states that the Secretary of Defence, in coordination with the Secretary of State, shall establish and maintain a security initiative to strengthen cooperation among the defence industrial bases of the US and allied and partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

This, it said, would strengthen the collective defence industrial base by expanding capability, capacity, and workforce, including enhanced supply chain security, interoperability, and resilience among participating countries.

The two Secretaries shall establish a process to determine which allies and partners of the US (including Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, the Philippines, and New Zealand) shall be invited to participate as member countries of the security initiative, it said.

In a section titled 'Joint Assessment Between The United States And India On Nuclear Liability Rules', the draft states that the Secretary of State shall establish and maintain within the US-India Strategic Security Dialogue a joint consultative mechanism with the Indian government.

This mechanism would convene regularly to "assess the implementation of the Agreement for Cooperation between the U.S. Government and Government of India Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, signed in Washington in 2008," it said.

The focus of this mechanism is to discuss opportunities for India "to align domestic nuclear liability rules with international norms; and to develop a strategy for the United States and the Republic of India to pursue bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagements related to analysing and implementing those opportunities."

It calls on the Secretary of State to submit a report describing the joint assessment about this not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Act, and annually thereafter for five years.

In another section, the Bill, now a law, states that an "ally or partner nation" means the government of any country that is a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development; "the Government of the Republic of India", and the Government of any country designated as an ally or partner nation by the Secretary of State for purposes of this section.

Ladakh on path of accelerated, inclusive development: Kavinder

vious editions held in 2023 and 2024 had received an overwhelming public response and wide appreciation.

On the occasion, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Ramesh Kumar, and film personality Preeti Sapru Walia were guests of honour. Also present on the occasion were DIG Jammu-Kathua Range Shri Shiv Kumar Sharma, Harinder Gupta (Convener, LEAD), and LEAD members Sunil Shah, Surinder Mohan Gupta, Rajesh Gupta, Rajeev Gupta and Sanjeev Sharma along with artists, youth, students, entrepreneurs and citizens from across the region.

Gupta, who was the chief guest, said that LEAD was not merely an event or a dialogue, but a strong movement towards a self-reliant future, reflecting the shared culture, aspirations and identity of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the Mahotsav provides a common platform for promoting local heritage, youth talent and entrepreneurship, while strengthening cultural unity and social harmony.

Highlighting the significance of the 2025 edition, the LG said this was the first time the Mahotsav was being organised as a three-day event, with each day dedicated respectively to Ladakh, Kashmir and Jammu, offering a unique opportunity to understand the region's diversity and foster deeper people-to-people connect.

He informed that the central theme of this year's Mahotsav is "Panch Parivartan", encompassing self-awareness, citizen duty, environmental protection, social harmony and family values, which together form the foundation of holistic and sustainable development.

Speaking on Ladakh's development journey, he said the Union Territory was receiving special focus from Prime

Minister Narendra Modi, with unprecedented commitment towards people-centric and transformative development.

He highlighted major clean energy initiatives including ONGC's 1 MW geothermal project at Puga, SECI's 11 GW solar project at Pang, and the recent inauguration of Ladakh's first geothermal-based space heating system at the Primary Health Centre, Thiksey, calling them historic steps towards making Ladakh a carbon-neutral and energy self-reliant region.

Gupta also spoke about efforts to promote winter tourism, strengthen infrastructure and connectivity in remote and border areas, aimed at creating opportunities for youth and positioning Ladakh on national and international platforms.

He said the PM's clear vision, strong political will and deep commitment to border and high-altitude regions had brought Ladakh into sharp national focus.

Despite its harsh climate and challenging geography, Ladakh is witnessing unprecedented transformation across sectors such as infrastructure, clean energy, connectivity, health, tourism and livelihoods. Flagship initiatives and people-centric policies of the Central Government are being implemented with speed and sensitivity to ensure that the benefits of development reach even the remotest villages and border areas, he added.

Gupta said that historic investments in renewable energy, road connectivity and social infrastructure were positioning Ladakh as a national model for sustainable and resilient development.

He added that the Prime Minister's emphasis on self-reliance, environmental protection and local empowerment was shaping Ladakh's future, enabling the Union Territory to emerge as a strong, confident and forward-looking region contributing meaningfully to India's growth story.

The LG appreciated the cultural performances, exhibitions of local products and the participation of artists, particularly those who travelled from Ladakh, for adding authenticity and vibrancy to the Mahotsav. He congratulated LEAD, organisers, artists and volunteers for their efforts in promoting cultural preservation, local livelihoods and self-reliance.

Gupta also extended an invitation to citizens across the country to visit Ladakh and experience its natural beauty, resilient communities, rich culture and innovative development initiatives, expressing confidence that the Mahotsav would further strengthen cultural unity and the vision of a self-reliant India.

3 IPS officers promoted as IGPs, 8 as DIGs

whichever is later.

Meanwhile, eight IPS officers of AGMUT cadre were promoted in pursuance to the recommendations of the Screening Committee meeting held on December 8.

The promotees are: Sargun Shukla, Sandeep Wazir, Anita Sharma, Jatinder Singh Johar, Swarn Singh Kotwal, Zahid Naseem Manhas and Koushal Kumar Sharma, while Sandeep Choudhary has been granted proforma promotion.

Meanwhile, on the recommendations of the Screening Committee, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, also ordered the promotion of nine J&K segment AGMUT cadre IPS officers to selection grade with effect from January 1, 2026.

Those promoted included Ashish Kumar Mishra, Nagpure Amod Ashok, Gurinder Pal Singh, Altaf Ahmed Shah, Bakar Hussain Samoon, Ajaz Ahmad Bhat, Ranjit Singh Samyal, and Mohammad Yaseen Kichloo, while Chandan Kohli, who is currently on central deputation, has been granted proforma promotion.

Dr Bilal's NIA custody extended; Soyab remanded to judicial custody

alias Danish, were also arrested.

On December 18, NIA arrested the ninth accused in the case, Yasir Ahmad Dar, a resident of Shopian, Kashmir. He is a close associate of Umar Nabi. An active participant in the conspiracy, Dar had taken an oath to carry out self-sacrificial operations, the agency said.

He was nabbed by NIA from New Delhi, and placed under arrest.

Dar was in close contact with the other accused persons in the case, including Dr Umar Nabi and Mufti Irfan.

His sustained questioning was in progress.

As part of its investigation into the case, NIA had on December 1 carried out raids at multiple locations in Pulwama, Shopian and Kulgam districts of Kashmir. Searches were also conducted at the residence of Moulvi Irfan Ahmad Wagay at Shopian.

Wagay had emerged as the mastermind of the radicalisation and recruitment of the 'white-collar' terror module busted early last month.

After the blast, Delhi police had reconstructed a chilling journey of Dr Umar Nabi, showing how he travelled from Haryana to Delhi through the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, halted for food at a roadside eatery, and spent the night inside his car before entering the national capital the next morning.

Umar's movements, captured in footage from over 50 CCTV cameras, indicated meticulous planning and deliberate attempts to avoid detection. He was first spotted leaving Faridabad, making multiple halts, including one at a dhaba where he ate and another at a mosque where he offered prayers.

Investigations revealed that before the blast, Umar went to Firozpur Jhirka in Haryana.

He appeared to be in hiding but not in panic. He had avoided major towns, preferring highways and small eateries.

Later, he was again seen on CCTV cameras installed along the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, driving slowly towards Delhi. The footage showed him stopping twice, once for tea and once apparently to check his mobile phone.

Police said Umar re-entered Delhi the following morning through the Badarpur border, using the same route he had taken earlier from Faridabad. He seemed to have planned every step, including his entry and exit routes, to avoid detection.

The route-mapping showed that Umar, who drove a white Hyundai i20, entered Delhi from Faridabad and made multiple loops across the city between 8 am and 3 pm before finally parking near the Red Fort at 3.19 pm.

The reconstruction using the CCTV footage showed that Umar had deliberately avoided major arterial roads and instead taken a zigzag path through crowded areas, possibly to confuse surveillance or to study crowd movements.

He was seen on cameras in multiple districts - starting from Southeast Delhi, then East, New Delhi, Central, and Northwest Delhi's Ashok Vihar, where he stopped at a roadside eatery around midday.

"He appeared calm, ordered food, and stayed for a while

before continuing his journey," police said.

After this stop, he drove back towards central Delhi, where he visited a mosque near Asaf Ali Road, close to the Ramlila Maidan. He offered prayers there and stayed for around three hours in the parking area, the footage showed.

"At 3.19 pm, Umar's car entered the parking area adjacent to the Red Fort complex, where it remained stationary for around three hours. CCTV footage showed the car parked quietly among other vehicles near the Sunehri Masjid parking," an officer said.

Around 6.22 pm, the car was seen leaving the parking area and heading towards the Red Fort Metro Station side. Barely 30 minutes later, at 6.52 pm, the vehicle exploded in a powerful blast that shattered windows, scattered body parts across the road, and triggered panic among visitors and commuters in the area.

The explosion was captured in traffic surveillance footage, which showed a slow-moving white car suddenly erupting into a ball of fire amid rush-hour traffic. The blast that killed 15 people also injured more than two dozen others.

Winter Session ended with insult of Gandhi: Cong

being a mere formality on Manipur and Supplementary demand for grants. Out of the 12 bills, five were not introduced. I don't know why they give this information when they don't want to bring bills," Ramesh said at a press conference.

"I had told Rajnath Singh at the all-party meeting that the meeting is a formality and usually at the end of session they come out with a Brahmos missile. He laughed. It happened this time as well and a bill was brought towards the end and was passed amid opposition uproar." Ramesh said in a reference to the Viksit Bharat Guaranteee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) or VB-G RAM G Bill.

He said the Vande Mataram debate during the session was all about government "defaming Nehru" and "twisting history."

"Tagore was insulted. It was on Tagore's recommendation in 1937, the CWC decided that the first two stanzas will be sung as national song," Ramesh said.

India's first PM, Jawaharlal Nehru, was also insulted, he said.

The session then ended with the "insult of Gandhi", he said in an apparent reference to the passage of G RAM G Bill that replaces MGNREGA -- a UPA-era law. "PM Modi's strategy was clear which was to insult the three people who built modern India," Ramesh said.

Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Friday, drawing curtains on the 19-day-long Winter Session of Parliament which saw the passage of crucial bills, including one to repeal the 20-year-old MNREGA and another on opening up the civil nuclear sector for private participation.

The G RAM G Bill, assuring 125 days of guaranteed jobs for rural India, was passed amid opposition protests on Thursday, including tearing of papers.

The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, which seeks to open the tightly-controlled civil nuclear sector for private participation, was also passed during the session.

The Lok Sabha also passed a Bill to raise FDI in the insurance sector to 100 percent from the current 74 percent, which is expected to increase insurance penetration, lower premiums, and boost job creation.

The Rajya Sabha was also adjourned sine die.

The Winter session of Parliament started on December 1.

The Upper House sat past midnight on Thursday to pass legislation that replaced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA).

B'desh on edge after unrest over uprising leader's death

after the August 5, 2024, fall of the then Awami League government.

Protesters also hurled bricks and stones at the residence the Assistant Indian High Commissioner in Chattogram at 1:30 am, but failed to cause any damage.

Police responded with tear gas and baton charges, dispersing the crowd and detaining 12 protesters. A few injuries were also reported.

Senior officials assured the assistant high commissioner of enhanced security.

Last night, the National Citizen Party (NCP), a large offshoot of Students against Discrimination (SAD) that led last year's violent protest - dubbed the July Uprising, which ousted the Hasina-led government - joined a mourning procession on the Dhaka University campus.

Supporters of the group chanted anti-India slogans alleging that Hadi's assailants fled to India after committing the murder. They called upon the interim government to close the Indian high commission until they were returned.

"The interim government, until India returns assassins of Hadi Bhai, the Indian High Commission to Bangladesh will remain closed. Now or Never. We are in a war!" said Sarjis Alm, a key leader of NCP.

Hasina, who fled Bangladesh after her ouster in August last year, is also in India.

In Dhaka, protesters attacked the office of a leading cultural group, Chhayanaout, and brought out the furniture, setting it on fire.

Sporadic violence was also reported from other parts of the country overnight.

A group of people, believed to be part of the protesters, attacked the offices of Bangla newspaper Prothom Alo's office and the nearby Daily Star at the capital's Karwan Bazar, near the Shahbagh intersection.

Reports said they vandalised several floors while journalists and staff of the newspaper were trapped inside, and the mob ignited a fire in front of the building.

Critically ill former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) strongly condemned the vandalism and said that the Yunus-led interim government will have to shoulder its responsibility.

In his address on Thursday, Yunus vowed to bring those involved in Hadi's brutal murder to justice quickly, saying, "No leniency will be shown" to the killers.

"I sincerely call upon all citizens - keep your patience and restraint," he said.

The chief adviser declared a one-day state mourning on Saturday, and said special prayers seeking forgiveness for Hadi's soul will be organised in every mosque across the country after Friday prayers.

"No one can stop the democratic progress of this country through threat, terrorist activities or bloodshed," he said, adding that the responsibility of realising Hadi's dream lies on the shoulders of the entire nation.

Cultural Unit of DIPR engages students in "Say No to Drugs" campaign

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, DEC 19

To spread awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and to motivate students towards a healthy and responsible lifestyle, the Cultural Unit Jammu of the Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR) today organised a Symposium Competition and Cultural Programme at Government Model Higher Secondary School, Marh on the theme "Say No to Drugs."

Programme was hosted by Dr. Bhupinder Kour and vote of thanks was presented by Bhawani Jamwal.

The programme was conducted under the direction of

Joint Director Information Jammu Deepak Dubey and under the supervision of Cultural Officer Mohit Sharma.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, who expressed their views against drug abuse through speeches and cultural performances.

Two thought-provoking skits presented by the students of Higher Secondary School Marh and Hr.Sec. School Gajansoo on drug addiction effectively conveyed the message of staying away from drugs and choosing a positive path in life.

The cultural segment also included theme-based songs on Nasha Mukti and Swachhta, along with soulful folk songs presented by the

artists of the Cultural Unit Jammu, which added colour and vibrancy to the event. SDM Marh Pallavi Mishra was the Chief guest of the event.

Guest of honour, the Principal of school Sarv Daman Kumar, in his address, highlighted the importance of such awareness programmes for the younger generation and urged students to act as ambassadors of a drug-free society. He congratulated the winners and appreciated the efforts of the Cultural Unit Jammu for organising a meaningful and socially relevant programme.

The Symposium competition was judged by Huma Jamwal, Shashi Sharma and

Shameem Akhter in which Mansi Chaudhary secured the first position for her impactful presentation, followed by Kanika in second place and Niharika in third place, while Gitanjali Sharma was awarded consolation prizes for her commendable participation.

At the end, prizes and certificates were distributed among the winners and participants in recognition of their talent and active involvement. Principal of Higher Secondary School Gajansoo Rita Angral, staff members of the school and a large number of students were present on the occasion and witnessed the programme with great enthusiasm.