



Govt examining proposal to raise upper age limit for JKCCE exam

The government today said the issue to enhance the upper age limit for candidates appearing in the Jammu & Kashmir Combined Competitive Examination (JKCCE) was under examination.

In response to cut motion of MLA Sajad Gani Lone, the minister in-charge of General Administration Department said that issue was under examination to assess its feasibility in the light of the existing provisions of

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5 HDFC Bank employees arrested for financial fraud

Five HDFC employees have been arrested in connection with an alleged financial fraud in Shopian district of the valley.

According to officials, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the crime branch carried out searches in Shopian and Budgam districts on Wednesday in connection with the matter.

"Five HDFC bank employees have been arrested so far," officials

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5 detained as manhunt for juvenile home escapee continues

At least five persons were detained for questioning amid intensified search for the gangster who remained at large after escaping a juvenile home, along with two Pakistani inmates, in the border R S Pura area of Jammu.

Both the Pakistani nationals were, however, arrested yesterday near Ambala railway station in Haryana while they were heading for Nepal.

Karajeet Singh alias Gugga of Dablehar, R S Pura, and Pak nationals - Mohammad Sanaullah

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India beat Netherlands in T20 WC match



NEW DELHI, FEB 18: India rode on the batting heroics of Shivam Dube and the mystery spin of Varun Chakravarthy to edge out Netherlands by 17 runs in their final Group A match of the T20 World Cup 2026 in Ahmedabad on Monday.

Opting to bat first, India lost both openers in the powerplay, with Abhishek

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Death-cum-retirement gratuity ceiling raised to Rs 25 lakh

Himalayan Mail News JAMMU, FEB 18

The government has clarified that the maximum limit of Death-cum-Retirement Gratuity (DCRG) for employees working in regular pay levels under the 7th Pay Commission has been enhanced from Rs 20 lakh to Rs 25 lakh, effective January 1, 2024, following the Dearness Allowance reaching 50 pc of basic pay.

In a clarification circular issued by the principal

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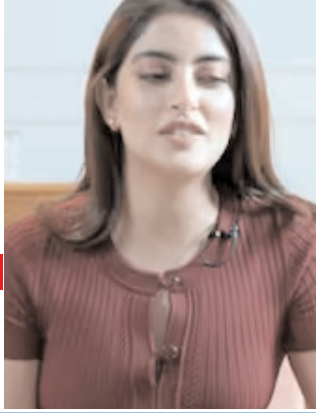


Mark Zuckerberg set to testify in watershed social media trial

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Navya Naveli Nanda Talks About How There Was No 'Pressure' To Join Bollywood

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J&K's debt at Rs 1.37 lakh cr to be offset by increased GSDP: Omar

Himalayan Mail News JAMMU, FEB 18

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has said that Jammu and Kashmir's total debt in the financial year 2024-25 is estimated at Rs 1,37,067 cr, 48 pc of the Union Territory's GDP, which has expanded significantly to Rs 2,88,422 cr.

Defending his government's fiscal management strategy, he said the increase in the gross state domestic product (GSDP) has helped in reducing the debt-to-GSDP ratio to 48 per cent in the current fiscal from 51 per cent a year ago.

The chief minister detailed the trend of the Union Territory's debt-to-GSDP ratio for the past six years.

In 2019-20, liabilities stood at Rs 89,037 crore, which was 54 per cent of that year's GSDP of Rs 1,64,103 crore, he said in a written reply in the legislative assembly.

Liabilities increased to



Rs 98,244 crore in 2020-21, with the debt-to-GSDP ratio rising to 59 per cent, largely due to economic contraction during Covid pandemic, he said.

In 2021-22, liabilities rose to Rs 1,06,753 crore, but the debt-to-GSDP ratio declined to 53 per cent as economic recovery gained momentum, he added.

A year later in 2022-23, liabilities stood at Rs 1,09,825 crore, and the ratio further declined to 48 per cent, the chief minister said, adding, "In 2023-24,

liabilities increased to Rs 1,25,205 crore, with the ratio at 51 per cent."

Abdullah said that in the current fiscal year, liabilities were projected at Rs 1,37,067 crore, while GSDP had expanded significantly to Rs 2,88,422 crore, again bringing the debt-to-GSDP ratio down to 48 per cent.

The chief minister highlighted that fiscal sustainability had improved over the years, with economic growth helping to moder

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13 demands moved in LA

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today moved 13 demands and 19 supplementary demands in the legislative assembly which were subsequently presented before the House for discussion by Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather.

"I move that a sum not exceeding the aggregate amount mentioned in Demand No 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 19, 20, 24, 31 and 33 be granted to government to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending March 31, 2027 in respect of Heads indicated in the List of Business against each demand," he said.

These Demands for Grants pertain to General Administration Department, Planning, Monitoring and Development, Information, Power, Finance, Parliamentary Affairs, Law &

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PM meets Google CEO, discusses AI collaborations



NEW DELHI, FEB 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday had a meeting with Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and its parent company Alphabet Inc, and discussed the work India is doing in artificial intelligence and how the technology giant can work with Indian students and professionals in this field.

Pichai is here to attend the

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House hails J&K's historic entry into Ranji Trophy finals

Himalayan Mail News JAMMU, FEB 18

Legislative Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, together with other MLAs, today congratulated the J&K cricket team for scripting history in the prestigious Ranji Trophy 2026 by securing a berth in the final for the first time.

In a thrilling semi-final encounter, J&K defeated West Bengal cricket team to book their place in the summit clash, marking a landmark moment in the cricketing history of the J&K.

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India focused on practical applications of AI: Vaishnaw



NEW DELHI, Feb 18: IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday said India is focused on practical applications of AI, including enterprise productivity, and solutions for population-scale challenges such as healthcare, agriculture, and climate change.

Speaking at a research symposium at the AI Im

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Foundation stone of Shankaracharya temple laid SMVDSB enhancing puja samagri procurement from SHGs to Rs 12 cr: LG

Himalayan Mail News JAMMU, FEB 18

LG Manoj Sinha, who today laid the foundation stone of Sri Shankaracharya temple in the holy Katra town, about 40 km from here, said that Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board was enhancing the procurement of puja samagri from Self-Help Groups from Rs 5 cr to Rs 12 cr.

"The board is enhancing annual procurement of puja samagri & prasad from SHGs from the current procurement value of Rs 5 cr to Rs 12 cr, significantly strengthening livelihood generation in the region," he said.

"A stand-out measure is to prioritise purchases from local self-help groups, women, and young entrepreneurs to boost the regional economy. This initiative will onboard 20 additional self-help groups into the supply chain, providing livelihood support to



around 1,500 women from villages in Reasi, Udhampur and Jammu districts," the LG announced.

"Total annual purchases from these groups will be scaled to Rs 50 cr in the coming years," he said.

Marking a historic milestone, he laid the foundation stone of the temple perched on hillocks beside the highly revered Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Trikuta Hilla of Katra. This project has become a reality after decades, realising a vision which was first conceived in 1960s.

Expenditure for the temple complex, amounting to Rs 31.51 cr, would be fully

borne by the board. The LG announced that the board would also construct 50 commercial shops within the temple complex, which would be allotted to the landowners who had donated it for the sacred cause.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SMVDSB and the concerned landowners was executed in 2025, wherein the landowners consented to donate 41 kanals for the sacred cause.

"In the years ahead, Sri Shankaracharya Temple will serve as a spiritual anchor for millions of devo

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Union Budget

Allocations for women, children jump 11.55 pc to Rs 5.01 trn

NEW DELHI, FEB 18: Allocation for women and girls under various schemes has increased by 11.55 per cent to Rs 5.01 lakh crore in 2026-27, up from Rs 4.49 lakh crore in the previous financial year, as per the Gender Budget Statement (GBS) released by the government.

Gender budget statement includes allocations for schemes exclusively for women and girls, as well as proportion of spending in broader schemes that benefit them, bringing together total allocations across

ministries aimed at promoting gender equality.

The share of allocation of gender budget in the Union Budget has also risen to 9.37 per cent 2026-27 from 8.86 per cent, the Ministry of Women and Child Development said in a statement on Wednesday.

The allocations were announced as part of the Union Budget 2026-27, which was presented in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1.

A total of 53 ministries/departments

and five Union territories have reported allocations in the gender budget this year -- compared to 49 ministries/departments and five UTs in the previous fiscal.

Of the total allocation, Rs 1,07,688.42 crore (21.50 per cent) has been reported by nine ministries and one UT under Part A of the GBS, which includes schemes that are 100 per cent women-specific.

Under Part B, covering schemes with 30-99 per cent allocation for women,

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Indian Navy vigilant in safeguarding maritime interests: Murmu

VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB 18:

President Droupadi Murmu today said that the Indian Navy is vigilant in safeguarding the country's maritime interests and has been contributing to stability across wider maritime commerce.

"Indian Navy is deployed in the region to serve as a credible instrument of deterrence and defence against threats and challenges arising in the sea," she said in his address while presiding over the International Fleet Review (IFR) off Vizag coast aboard an Indian Naval



warship in the Bay of Bengal.

"Indian Navy is vigilant in safeguarding India's maritime interests and is contributing to stability

across wider maritime commerce," Murmu said.

She noted that the Indian Navy plays a vital role in promoting goodwill and

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AI emerging as key enabler of inclusive growth: Kavinder

NEW DELHI, FEB 18: Ladakh LG Kavinder Gupta today said 'as India advances decisively on the path of becoming a global technology leader, Artificial Intelligence is emerging as a key enabler of inclusive growth, good governance and sustainable development'.

"The hosting of the India AI Summit, with participation from over 20 countries, stands as a testament to India's growing stature as a trusted global partner in shaping the future of responsible, ethical and human-centric artificial intel-



ligence," he said after his visit to the India AI Summit being held at Bharat Mandapam here.

Ladakh's IT commissioner Shashanka Ala also accompanied the LG.

The LG visited several technology pavilions and in-

teracted with representatives of leading global and Indian companies, including Google, Meta, Amazon, Airtel, CoRover and other IT firms actively working in the field of artificial intelligence.

He appreciated the inno

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