



Valley's hospitality sector hums back to life as snowfall revives Kashmir tourism

Hotels, houseboats, ski slopes buzz with life again

Director hails all stakeholders for 'making tourism breathe again'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jan 29: The first blanket of snow this winter not just covered Kashmir's peaks but has dusted off months of anxiety for those whose livelihoods depend on the rhythm of arriving footfalls and clinking tea-cups.

From Dal Lake to the slopes of Gulmarg, and Pahalgam to Sonamarg, the Valley's tourism heartbeat is gaining momentum once again.

Qamar Sajad, the Director of Tourism Kashmir, speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the turnaround of visitors reflects not just nature's grace but the teamwork behind the industry's revival.

"We are witnessing a steady rise in tourist footfall, and that is



PIC: JAHANGIR SHAH KNO/KT

because everyone, from shikara operators to hoteliers and from the government to ground-level workers, has played their part," he said. "This is not just about snowfall, but about the spirit of

people who have worked tirelessly to make Kashmir shine.

The government and stakeholders together have made tourism breathe again."

The revival is visible

everywhere. On Dal Lake, the reflection of houseboats shines again as Manzoor Pakhtoon, Chairman of the Houseboat Owners Association Kashmir, said they are getting back on track.

"We are getting queries again," said Pakhtoon with a smile. "After the recent snowfall and New Year rush, tourists have started showing interest. We expect a good summer season ahead if this continues."

Across the Valley, the optimism echoes.

Mushtaq Chaya, Chairman of the J&K Hoteliers Club, said the hospitality sector is regaining its lost confidence.

"Over 70 per cent of hotels in Gulmarg and nearly 75 per cent in Sonamarg are booked. The snowfall has

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Budget Session

J&K Assembly's business advisory committee to meet today

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Jan 29: Ahead of the upcoming budget session, the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly is set to meet tomorrow afternoon to discuss legislative business.

The BAC, comprising MLAs from the National Conference, Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress, Peoples Democratic Party, Peoples Conference, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), is scheduled to meet tomorrow at 3:00 PM under the chairmanship of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in his office chamber.

Those invited to the meeting

include Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma (BJP), Ali Muhammad Sagar (NC), Mubarak Gul (NC), Muhammad Yousaf Tarigami (CPI-M), Ghulam Ahmad Mir (Congress), Sajad Gani Lone (PC), Mir Muhammad Fayaz (PDP), and Choudhary Muhammad Akram (Independent), as per the meeting notice, a copy of which is in possession of the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

The function of the Committee is to recommend the time that should be allotted for the discussion of government legislative and other business, as the Speaker, in consultation with the Leader of the House, may direct to be

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Can't advise J&K people to seek employment outside UT: CM Omar

Cites recent incidents in HP, Uttarakhand as cautionary warning

Says our goal is to nurture culture of entrepreneurship, start-ups

Terms unemployment as major challenge

'First time since 1990, J&K witnessing central package, incentives for industry'

Yogesh

Samba, Jan 29: Citing recent incidents in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand as a cautionary warning, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday



said he cannot advise the J&K people to seek employment outside the Union Territory.

Talking to reporters here, CM Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Unemployment is a major challenge. We cannot solve it solely through government jobs. Like other states, I cannot tell my people to leave J&K for employment elsewhere."

He stressed the urgent need to build a strong industrial and entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir to engage the youth.

The Chief Minister said, "Our goal is to nurture a culture of

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Farmers backbone of J&K's economy: CM Omar



after inaugurating the receiving station, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, while interacting with the locals, said that the foundation stone for the 10 MVA receiving station at Harminder was laid with sole objective of

enhancing power availability and improving voltage stability across Samba, particularly this area. He added that once commissioned, the receiving station is expected to reduce load stress on existing infrastructure

and ensure a more reliable and uninterrupted electricity supply for households, farmers, commercial establishments and industrial units.

Terming farmers as backbone of J&K's economy, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said like soldiers at borders who protect us from adversaries, farmers protect us from hunger. He added that both soldiers and farmers need support and protection, and the Government is committed to their welfare and wellbeing.

While listening to various issues and demands of locals on the spot, the Chief Minister said that Government is committed to strengthen the basic facilities in every nook and corner of Jammu and Kashmir, adding that this

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Rare Kashmir Musk deer, wild goat rescued

'Harsh winter forces animals to enter residential areas'

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Srinagar, Jan 29: A rare female Kashmir musk deer and a wild goat were rescued from different parts of the Valley after they strayed into residential areas, officials said. Experts said such movements take place due to harsh winter conditions in the higher reaches.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that a female Kashmir musk deer had strayed into

Verinag village of south Kashmir's Anantnag district following heavy snowfall in the upper reaches.

The animal was safely captured by the Wildlife Protection Department with the assistance of locals and police and later shifted to the Mini Zoo in Pahalgam, they said.

The Kashmir musk deer (Moschus cupreus) is listed as an endangered species on the IUCN Red List.

Meanwhile, locals rescued a wild goat after it strayed into Sukhdar village in the Uri area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district. The animal had entered

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DIPR organizes essay writing competition

Kavya Singh wins top prize

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 29: The Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) organized a UT level essay writing competition on the theme "My Constitution, My Pride" for the students below 12 years.

The competition saw an overwhelming participation of young talents, with Kavya Singh securing the first position, Ananya Mahajan getting second and Arwah Rafiq clinching the third place.

Kavya Singh, | More on P6

Smart cities projects nearing completion in Srinagar, Jammu

Of 288 projects, 281 completed; Rs 885 cr utilised under Smart Cities Mission

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 29: Jammu and Kashmir has completed 281 of the 288 projects approved under the Smart Cities Mission, achieving a completion rate of nearly 97.6 per cent, according to government data tabled in Parliament.

The figures, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), place the Union Territory slightly above the national average as the centrally sponsored mission transitions into an operations and

maintenance phase. The data from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs show that Jammu and Kashmir claimed central assistance of Rs 941 crore under the mission, of which Rs 885 crore has been utilised so far.

Across the two cities, only seven projects with a combined cost of Rs 140 crore remain under execution.

In Jammu, 127 projects with an estimated cost of Rs 2,969 crore were sanctioned, of which 125 have been completed. Srinagar | More on P6

Kashmir Valley shivers as Chillai-Kalan nears conclusion

Sonamarg dips to -11.2°C, Gulmarg -9°C

Met predicts partly cloudy skies till Jan 31

WD may bring snow, rain from Feb 1-2

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 29: Kashmir continued to experience cold conditions on Thursday, with night temperatures several



degrees below freezing at most places, officials said.

According to details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the central Kashmir town of Sonamarg recorded

the lowest temperature in the region at minus 11.2 degrees Celsius, down from minus 9.8°C the previous night.

Other tourist and hill stations also recorded low temperatures, with Gulmarg at

minus 9°C, Pahalgam at minus 4.5°C, Kupwara at minus 3.5°C, and Qazigund at zero degrees Celsius.

In Srinagar, night temperatures were slightly above seasonal norms, settling at minus

0.6°C, compared to 0.1°C the previous night.

Kokernag recorded a low of minus 0.6°C. Officials said this reflects a relatively warmer night for the valley's summer capital.

The Meteorological Department noted that the 'Chillai-Kalan' period of extreme cold, which began on December 21, is nearing its end on January 30.

This 40-day phase is traditionally the coldest period of winter, often accompanied by heavy frost and snowfall in higher reaches.

Even after Chillai-Kalan ends, cold weather is expected to continue. It will be followed by a 20-day 'Chillai Khurd' (small cold) | More on P6

Deputy CM reviews post-snowfall situation in Kashmir

Orders uninterrupted essential services

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 29: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Thursday convened a review meeting at the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar, to assess the post-snowfall situation across Kashmir region besides reviewing the availability of essential services in the region.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, deliberated on the overall progress of snow clearance measures and restoration of essential services in the affected areas.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, stressed that a coordinated and proactive approach among all departments is essential to effectively manage the post-snowfall situation. He directed the Deputy Commissioners to remain on their toes and ensure unhindered availability of essential services, including power, water supply, healthcare, food supplies and road connectivity.

He instructed that snow clearance operations be intensified, with priority given towards ensuring two-lane road clearance wherever possible, particularly on major roads and the National Highway, to facilitate smooth to-and-fro traffic and normal public movement. He assessed the district-wise status of snow clearance and directed the officers to strictly follow the directions issued by the MLAs, MPs, the Divisional Commissioner and district administrations.

Reviewing the power sector, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the KPDCL to maintain adequate



buffer stock of transformers and ensure prompt restoration of electricity in affected areas. He also emphasized that adequate water supply be maintained, with water tankers deployed in vulnerable and affected localities.

On food and health services, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the concerned departments to plug any loopholes in supply chains and ensure sufficient availability of essentials. He asked for maintaining cleanliness in hospitals and ensuring uninterrupted medical services.

The Srinagar Municipal Corporation was directed to remain fully prepared for sanitation and allied services.

The Director, Airport Authority of India, informed the meeting that the Srinagar Airport was made functional within eight hours and around 11,200 tourists have arrived in the Valley yesterday. The BRO informed that snow clearance operations are underway in various areas including Pahalgam.

The Deputy Chief Minister emphasized the need for continuous

inter-departmental communication, improvement in tanker services wherever required with timely updates to the concerned ministries. He appreciated the collective efforts of all the departments and called for sustained coordination to facilitate early restoration of normal life across the Kashmir region.

The meeting was attended by MLA Lolab, Qaysar Jamshaid Lone, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone; Deputy Commissioners of Kashmir; Brigadier Chirag from BRO, Managing Director, KPDCL (through VC); SSP Traffic, Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation; Chief Engineers KPDCL, Jai Shakti; PMGSY, MED and PWD (R&B); Directors of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Health Services, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Tourism and Urban Local Bodies besides Director Airport Authority of India, Srinagar.

Besides, Regional Officers of NHA/NHIDCL; Chief Engineer, BRO; Chief Area Manager, Northern Railways and other senior officers and officials also attended the meeting.

CS reviews digital connectivity projects

Calls for faster 4G, BharatNet rollout in J&K



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 29: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Thursday chaired the 10th State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting to review the status of key digital infrastructure initiatives, including 4G Saturation Project, Amended BharatNet Programme (ABP), 5G Readiness, Call Before You Dig (CBuD) and other allied telecom projects being implemented across J&K.

The meeting, as per an official statement, convened by the Information Technology Department was attended by ACS, PWD; Commissioner Secretary, Forests; DDG, LSA, J&K; Secretary, Information; Secretary, RDD; Representatives from BSNL and other concerned officers from different departments here.

Deputy Commissioners attended through video conferencing from their respective offices.

During this meeting, a detailed presentation was made by the Secretary, IT, Dr Piyush Singh on the incremental progress achieved since the last SBC meeting held in October. The Chief Secretary took note of the steady advancement across multiple verticals and emphasized the need for accelerating execution timelines to ensure timely completion of all sanctioned sites.

While reviewing the 4G Saturation Project, the Chief Secretary was informed that work orders have been issued for 775 mobile tower sites, aimed at providing 4G mobile connectivity to uncovered and remote villages, particularly in border, hilly and far-flung areas. The project is being implemented under the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) of the Government of India, with BSNL as the executing agency. The Secretary further apprised that

land has already been allotted at all identified locations, and power supply has been extended to most sites with the support of the Power Development Department (PDD). The Chief Secretary impressed upon the implementing agencies to further pace up installation and commissioning works, particularly for the 269 sites targeted for completion by March 31, 2026, and to fast-track approvals for the remaining locations.

The meeting also reviewed the status of border village saturation, covering 1,421 border villages, and stressed the importance of ensuring seamless connectivity in strategically important areas to bridge the digital divide and enhance service delivery.

Reviewing the Call Before You Dig (CBuD) platform, the Chief Secretary stressed strict adherence to its usage by all departments and agencies to prevent damage to underground utilities. He directed that the matter be regularly monitored through District Level Telecom Committee (DLTC) meetings, which are now being convened across all districts.

The Amended Bharat Net Programme (ABP) was also reviewed in detail. It was informed that the project, funded by Digital Bharat Nidhi and owned by the Department of Telecommunications, aims to provide optical fibre connectivity to all Gram Panchayats with a minimum 98 percent network uptime. Key milestones achieved include signing of agreements with Project Implementation Agencies, establishment of a Network Operations Centre (NOC) at Jammu, centralized billing mechanisms, and resolution

of inter-departmental issues through a tripartite MoU.

On 5G preparedness, the IT Department highlighted initiatives taken for Right of Way (RoW) facilitation, 5G street furniture mapping, and capacity building, including a one-day workshop on 5G and RoW organized in November 2025 in collaboration with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

The Chief Secretary while assessing the rollout of the Samridh Gram Panchayat Pilot Project, which seeks to digitally empower rural institutions through FTTH connectivity, covering 2,234 schools and 1,138 Primary Health Centres in rural areas. He observed that digital connectivity at the grassroots level is critical for improving governance, education, healthcare and entrepreneurship.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary reiterated the importance of close coordination between BSNL, district administrations and line departments, directing that district-level issues be addressed promptly to avoid project delays. He also called for regular DLTC meetings and time-bound redressal of issues through relevant mechanisms.

The meeting concluded with the Chief Secretary reiterating the Government's firm commitment to achieve the universal digital connectivity across Jammu & Kashmir. He emphasized that timely completion of these flagship projects would play a transformative role in strengthening governance, improving service delivery, and ensuring inclusive socio-economic development, particularly in remote and border areas of the Union Territory.

DC Baramulla felicitates winners of DIPR competitions

KT NEWS DESK

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 29: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, in presence of Additional Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Altaf Hussain Musvi and District Information Officer Baramulla, Iftikhar Naseem, on Thursday felicitated the district level winners of the Vande Mataram Singing and Essay Writing Competitions from Baramulla district.

The competitions, as per an official statement were organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Jammu and Kashmir, on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day.

The felicitation ceremony was held in the office chamber of the DC Baramulla, where the participants were handed over the winner certificates, celebrating the spirit of patriotism and national pride among the youth.

Students from across the district participated showcased their talent and creativity, reflecting a deep sense of respect and love for the nation through music and literary expression.

While interacting with the winners, the DC congratulated them for their commendable performances and emphasized the importance of involving young minds in activities that promote constitutional values, unity, and patriotism.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER, POSHAN KANGAN

(Address : Opposite Jamia Qadim near ZEO Office Kangan -191202)

Advertisement Notice: No. 01- CDPO of 2026.

Dated: 28 - 01 - 2026

Subject: Advertisement for Recruitment of Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) and Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helpers) in Anganwadi Centres of Poshan Project Kangan.

Reference: 1. Government order No. 222-JK (SWD) of 2022, Dated: 30.11.2022

2. Government Order No. 103-JK (SWD) of 2023, Dated: 28.04.2023

In pursuance of the above Government Order Nos. & Dates, and pursuant to the Orders issued by Mission Director Mission Poshan vide No.: MD/Poshan/Estt/13550-56 dated: 11-05-2023 & MD/Poshan/47167 -72, Dated.24-12-2025, the necessary approval has been accorded for filling up of various vacancies of Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) and Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helpers) in Anganwadi Centres of Poshan Project Kangan, as per the details given below:

S. No.	Name of The District	Name of the Poshan Project	Name of the Post	Number of Posts	Remarks
01	Ganderbal	Kangan	AWW	08	
			AWH	06	

Applications are invited in the prescribed format annexed as "Annexure -"A" from the eligible female candidates for engagement as Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) and Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helpers) on Honorarium basis, in the Panch-wards as shown against the below mentioned Panchayat Halqas, for the Anganwadi Centres of Poshan Project Kangan. The application along with the required documents should reach to the office of Child Development Project Officer, Poshan Kangan by or before 15th of February - 2026 against the proper receipt.

08 Post of Sangini (Anganwadi Worker)

S.No.	Name of District	Name of the Poshan Project	Name of the Panchayat Halqa	Details of Vacancies of Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers)	
				Name & Number of the Panch Ward	Name of the AWC Location
1	Ganderbal	Kangan	Mamer-B	Sangoo Pati-1	Pakhtoonpati-Mamer
2	Ganderbal	Kangan	Ganiwan-A	Jharapati -03	Ganiwan Jharapati
3	Ganderbal	Kangan	Ganiwan-A	Ganai Mohalla-05	Ganiwan Raina Mohalla
4	Ganderbal	Kangan	FrawHaknar-B	Paswalpati -01	AwanpatiHaknar
5	Ganderbal	Kangan	Rayil	Bonpora -3	Rayil Bonpora
6	Ganderbal	Kangan	Yachihama	Awan Mohalla -6	Dardwoder-B Loharpatti
7	Ganderbal	Kangan	Chattergul-C	Habilward --06	Habilward Chattergul
8	Ganderbal	Kangan	Prang-A	Prang -01	Prang-A Sheikh Mohalla

Criteria for selection of Sanginis (Anganwadi worker).

1. The candidate must be domicile of the UT of J&K.
2. Women candidates in the age group of 18-37 years shall be eligible.
3. The candidate should be a resident of the electoral ward where Anganwadi Centre is situated. Name in the voter list for the ward shall be considered as the proof of residence of the candidate.
 - In case the name of the candidate appears in the voter list along with her parents, then she must provide certificate of being unmarried issued by the concerned Tehsildar.
 - Wherever, there is any dispute as to residence for any reason, and then a residence proof certifying the ward of residence from the concerned SDM/ACR shall be considered.
4. Minimum qualifications for Anganwadi Worker shall be 10+2 and maximum graduation.
5. Weightage shall be given on the basis of marks obtained in 10+2 and selection shall be done purely on merit basis and no other criteria is to be considered.
6. In case of tie in merit of the eligible candidate, candidate with higher age will be preferred.
7. Candidate with qualification higher than graduation shall not be considered.
8. In case no candidate is available in the proper concerned ward of Pakhtoonpati-1, the candidate from the adjacent ward of "Mir Pati -2 or Pakhtoon Pati-3" shall be considered.
9. In case eligible candidate is available with the family of retiring AWW/AWH, the said candidate shall qualify for additional 2 points.
10. The vacant posts of AWWs of Mamer Pakhtoonpati & Ganiwan Jharapati are hereby readvertised due to poor response of candidates during previous advertisements.

Self-attested copies of documents to be attached with the application form.

1. Panch ward certificate issued by BDO concerned, as per format annexed with the application form.

2. Domicile Certificate issued by Tehsildar concerned.

3. Date of Birth Certificate.

4. Academic Qualification with marks card of 10+2.

5. Self addressed envelope with postage stamp of Rs. 5/-

6. Unmarried certificate wherever required.

7. Affidavit/undertaking as per format annexed with the application form, duly attested by the Executive Magistrate 1st Class authenticating the applicant's maximum qualification.

06Posts of Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helper)

S.No.	Name of District	Name of the Poshan Project	Name of the Panchayat Halqa	Details of Vacancies of Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helpers)	
				Name & Number of the Panch Ward	Name of the AWC Location
1	Ganderbal	Kangan	Fraw-Haknar-B	Haknar - 3	Haknar Malla Mohalla
2	Ganderbal	Kangan	Cherwan-A	Jahanger -07	Bonobagh
3	Ganderbal	Kangan	Laman-A	Laman -06	Laman -A
4	Ganderbal	Kangan	Arigoripora	Harpura -01	Goripora-E Gujerpatti
5	Ganderbal	Kangan	Anderwan-A	Dardpora -02	Anderwan-A Dardpora
6	Ganderbal	Kangan	Yachihama	Awan Mohalla-06	Dardwoder-B Loharpatti

Criteria for selection of Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helper).

- 1) The selection of Anganwadi helper shall be restricted to the electoral ward where Anganwadi Centre is located.
- 2) Women candidates in the age group of 18-37 years shall be eligible.
- 3) The candidate must be domicile of the UT of J&K.
- 4) Minimum qualification for Anganwadi Helper shall be matriculation.
- 5) In case no matriculate candidate is available in the ward, candidate with qualification not less than 8th standard shall be considered.
- 6) The eligible candidate (So selected as AWH for Rented AWC) shall have to provide sufficient accommodation for smooth functioning of Anganwadi Centre.

7) The committee shall select the most destitute/needy married women of the ward as Anganwadi Helper from amongst those who full fill the qualification criteria. In case no married candidate is available, unmarried may be considered.

Self-attested copies of documents to be attached with the application form.

1. Panch ward certificate issued by BDO concerned, as per format annexed with the application form.

2. Domicile Certificate issued by Tehsildar concerned.

From Pampore, a push for tulip self-reliance

JAHANGEER GANAEI

Srinagar, Jan 29: In a very bold and forward-looking agriculture experiment, a young farmer from Pampore area of Pulwama district has launched Kashmir's first independent initiative for tulip bulb production. The move could significantly reduce the Valley's dependence on imported bulbs and open new avenues for rural employment and Agri-tourism.

Irshad Ahmad Dar, a progressive farmer from Patal Bagh, Pampore, has planted 1500 tulip bulbs on his saffron land along the



Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. He has undertaken this initiative at his own expense without any support from the government.

Irshad said he started with 1,500 bulbs on his own land. The seed material has been imported from Holland, and bulb multiplication will begin in May, he said.

"I brought everything myself, without any government support, purely based on my own idea and belief that tulips can be successfully grown and multiplied here," Dar added.

According to Irshad, the initiative holds strong economic potential,

nature lovers.

He said that Kashmir's soil and climatic conditions are naturally suited for tulip bulb multiplication, but, as of now, the sector remains largely untapped.

"There is immense scope for local youth to enter this field as tulip farming can become a new commercial and employment-generating activity in the valley," he said.

Irshad said that with the government's support, this sector can prosper and provide employment opportunities to many youths in Kashmir—(KNO)

Dy CM leads post-snowfall review, directs swift restoration

KT NEWS DESK

Ramban, Jan 29: Continuing outreach to snow-affected areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Thursday undertook an extensive tour of the snow-bound areas of Ramban district to assess the post-snowfall situation and review the progress of ongoing restoration works.

During the visit, the Deputy Chief Minister chaired detailed review meetings with the heads of concerned departments at Ramban. He reviewed snow clearance operations, restoration of road connectivity, essential services, and the status of ongoing development works across the district.

The Deputy Chief Minister was accompanied by MLA Banihal Sajjad Shaheen, MLA Ramban Arjun Singh Raju, and other public representatives. Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan, SSP Ramban Arun Gupta, SSP Traffic NHW Raja Adil Hameed, Chief Engineers of PWD, PMGSY and Mechanical Department, along with senior district and sectoral officers, attended the meetings.

The Deputy Chief Minister visited several snow-affected areas including Banihal, Batote, Patnitop



and adjoining localities to assess ground conditions and ongoing restoration efforts.

The Deputy Chief Minister fixed timelines for restoring road connectivity on all snow-affected roads and directed the Chief Engineers to personally monitor restoration works being carried out by their respective departments to ensure timely resumption of traffic. He also instructed the Chief Engineer, Mechanical Department, to submit a detailed plan for deployment

of required machinery and to depute an officer at Ramban for smooth functioning of the department.

The Deputy Chief Minister reviewed department-wise and area-wise progress of snow clearance, restoration of essential services, and road connectivity. He issued strict directions to ensure uninterrupted power and water supply, smooth availability of food grains, petrol, diesel and LPG, and effective healthcare services across the district.

The MLAs raised various public issues and demands, upon which the Deputy Chief Minister issued directions on several matters and assured that remaining demands of public interests would be taken up on priority.

Emphasising public convenience and safety, the Deputy Chief Minister directed all departments to work in close coordination and adopt a time-bound approach to mitigate hardships faced by residents due to snowfall. He stressed that all available manpower and machinery must be pressed into service to ensure swift and effective restoration.

Earlier, the Deputy Chief Minister also inspected various areas of Banihal to assess ongoing snow clearance and availability of essential services across all snow bound areas.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioner briefed the Deputy Chief Minister on the restoration measures undertaken by various departments across the district.

During the tour, the Deputy Chief Minister also interacted with public delegations, patiently heard their grievances, and assured them that all genuine issues would be addressed at the earliest in coordination with the concerned departments.

Rana reviews restoration of essential services

KT NEWS DESK

Mendhar, Jan 29: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, Thursday convened a virtual meeting with senior officers of the Jal Shakti and Forest departments to review the restoration of water supply schemes and other essential services across the Kashmir division, in the wake of inclement weather conditions occurred over the past week.

During the meeting, the Minister had a comprehensive assessment of availability of drinking water, damage caused to water supply infrastructure and the progress achieved, so far, in restoring the disrupted schemes.

Detailed briefings were presented by the concerned officers, who informed the Minister that restoration works are being executed on war footing.

They apprised that dedicated departmental teams have been deployed across the affected areas which are working round-the-clock to address the issues arising from snowfall, rainfall and other weather-related disruptions.

Expressing concern over the convenience and well-being of the public, the Minister directed the departments to ensure complete restoration of all affected water supply schemes within the next two to three days. He further emphasized that, during the interim period, adequate



arrangements must be made through deployment of water tankers, wherever required.

The Minister also stressed the need for effective public outreach through control rooms to ensure timely supply of drinking water and transparent dissemination of information regarding the ongoing restoration efforts.

The Forest Department apprised the Minister that firewood has already been supplied to the targeted beneficiaries in vulnerable areas. It further informed that the field teams are continuously monitoring the ground-level requirements and will ensure additional supplies wherever necessary to meet the public demand.

The Minister also advised the Forest Department to

carry out a detailed assessment of any damage or loss to vegetation once weather conditions normalize, particularly in areas affected by avalanches and severe weather events.

He underscored the importance of undertaking plantation drives and soil conservation measures in a planned and scientific manner, aimed at protecting the flora and fauna and reducing environmental risks in the future.

The meeting was attended by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Suresh Rai, Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir, Irfan Rasool, Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti Department, Kashmir along with other senior officers from the Jal Shakti and Forest Departments.

Saboteurs to face action for snow clearance delays

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Jan 29: The government has identified the individuals responsible for delay in snow clearance during the first spell of snowfall and they are all set to face strict disciplinary action.

Speaking to reporters after a review meeting, Farooq Ahmed Shah, MLA Gulmarg said, "Nobody will be allowed to sabotage government works. Yes, there were challenges in the first phase of snowfall and lapses occurred, however, the government has taken serious note of that".

Shah added that in the second spell, the administration swung into early action to prevent repeats.

He said that lapses, ranging from inadequate response to non-performance by contractors have been traced, with those accountable, including errant contractors, now identified. "Action as per rules will be taken against them," the MLA stated.

He, meanwhile, asked officers to exercise utmost care in future decisions, always prioritizing public interest. "Gulmarg holds immense significance and is famous worldwide, lapses in such places are unacceptable, as people form their impression of government from such places".

Highlighting snowfall's critical role in the region, Gulmarg MLA said it sustains winter tourism in Gulmarg, a prime snow destination and serves as a vital water source for over four constituencies. Amid the ongoing snow tourism surge, the government is organizing events to draw more visitors, he said.

It is noteworthy that residents in snowbound areas complained about delayed clearance operations during the initial snowfall. Government, earlier on Tuesday initiated departmental proceedings and placed five engineers of the Public Works (R&B) Department under suspension after reports of unauthorized absence from duty and delays in snow clearance operations—(KNO)

Republic Day celebrations culminate with 'Beating Retreat' ceremony

KNO

Jammu, Jan 29: The customary 'Beating Retreat' ceremony on Thursday marked the culmination of the four-day-long Republic Day celebrations, at the MA Stadium here.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

The atmosphere was filled with national pride as the Brass and Pipe Drum bands of the Armed Forces and J&K Police performed a series of

enchanting patriotic compositions. The audience was enthralled by soulful musical renditions of "Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon" and other classic melodies.

In recognition of their outstanding display and artistry, the Lieutenant Governor felicitated the contingents of Jammu Kashmir Police and Security Forces; Parade Commander, Ex-Servicemen; Pipe and Brass bands, marching contingents (Boys & Girls), daredevils, commentators, cultural performers

and best Tableaux. The ceremony also featured the felicitations of winners of the Vande Mataram singing competition and UT-level online essay writing competition organized by the Department of Information and Public Relations.

The Beating Retreat ceremony concluded with the ever-popular 'Saare Jahan Se Achha' with simultaneous display of spectacular fireworks and sound & light display followed by the National Anthem—(KNO)

Three critical patients among 8 airlifted from snow-covered Tangdhar

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Jan 29: Following recent heavy snowfall that shuttered key border roads in Kupwara district, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shrikant Suse on Thursday said that eight people have been airlifted to and from Tangdhar, with operations resuming after a weather-induced pause.

Shrikant, while briefing the media, said the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is working tirelessly to clear snow-covered stretches, though a few remain amid avalanche warnings and slides.

"We have repeatedly urged patients from these areas to respond promptly,"

the DC said.

He said the heli services restarted today, and so far, eight individuals have been evacuated, including three critical patients now receiving treatment at Srinagar hospitals.

The DC said the snow clearance in Keran and Machil sectors is nearly complete, with Keran road fully open for traffic. Operations continue in Tangdhar.

"Roads under Public Works Department (PWD), Mechanical and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) jurisdictions stand cleared, and directives have been issued to address remaining patches swiftly," DC Kupwara added—(KNO)

Kakapora residents decry waterlogging, deteriorated roads

JAHANGEER GANAEI

Pulwama, Jan 29: Residents of Kakapora town in south Kashmir's Pulwama district have expressed strong resentment over severe waterlogging and the dilapidated condition of roads, particularly at Kakapora Main Chowk, which has become a major source of inconvenience for commuters, patients and students. Locals said that even a light snowfall of barely one inch has exposed the poor drainage system in the area, with rain and melted snow accumulating on roads and turning the main chowk into a virtual pool of water.

Residents said the road surface has deteriorated badly, with potholes filled with stagnant water, posing a serious risk to pedestrians and two-wheeler riders.

They claimed that the problem has persisted for years despite repeated representations to the concerned authorities.

Students and patients are among the worst sufferers, locals said. "Children going to school have to wade through water every morning.

Their uniforms and shoes get soaked, and there is always a risk of slipping."

main chowk is submerged in water. It shows how bad the drainage system is," said Abdul Rashid, a local shopkeeper. "Customers avoid coming here, vehicles get stuck, and pedestrians are forced to walk through dirty water."

Residents said the road surface has deteriorated badly, with potholes filled with stagnant water, posing a serious risk to pedestrians and two-wheeler riders.

Students and patients are among the worst sufferers, locals said. "Children going to school have to wade through water every morning. Their uniforms and shoes get soaked, and there is always a risk of slipping."

The situation, they said, worsens during minor spells of rain or snowfall, making movement extremely difficult.

"This is shocking and unfortunate. Just one inch of snow and the entire

Pattan road accident claims one life, injures another

KNO

Baramulla, Jan 29: A man was killed and another injured in a road accident in Pattan area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Thursday, officials said.

An official said that a collision took place between a truck and a Maruti Eco at Hyderbeigh Pattan, resulting in the death of one person and injuries

to another.

He said one of the victims, identified as Rayees Ahmad Najar, son of Ghulam Nabi Najar, a resident of Hygam, succumbed to his injuries at the hospital.

Another, Javid Ahmad Najar, sustained serious injuries in the mishap and was shifted to JVC Srinagar for specialized treatment.

Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance of the incident—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: Discipline As Divine Framework For Flourishing Life

In the Islamic worldview, discipline is far more than a regimen of rules; it is a sacred spiritual and moral architecture that elevates the human soul and fosters a just, harmonious society. Rooted in the Quran and exemplified by the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), it is the conscious submission of one's desires to the divine will, transforming raw potential into refined character and purposeful action. The very word Islam derives from *silm*, meaning

peace, and *aslama*, meaning to submit—a profound linkage that defines discipline as the pathway to inner and outer peace through willing submission to Allah's guidance. The Quran repeatedly calls believers to "hold fast to the rope of Allah" (3:103) and to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, a command that necessitates self-regulation before societal reform. It praises those "who are humble in their prayers, who avoid idle talk, who are observant of zakah" (23:24), outlining a life of

ritual, ethical, and social discipline. Prophetic tradition provides the practical blueprint. The life of the Prophet (PBUH) was a perfect model of structured discipline in worship, time management, speech, and ethical conduct. He taught that the strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, defining strength not merely as physical power but as "self-control in anger" (Sahih Muslim). This reframes discipline as mastery over one's ego and impulses. His meticulous attention

to prayer times, personal hygiene, and even sleep patterns (advising early retirement and rising) instils a holistic discipline that integrates the spiritual with the mundane. Islamic discipline is built on five foundational pillars, each a school of self-restraint and devotion. *Salah* instils temporal discipline and mindfulness; *Sawm* cultivates control over physical desires; *Zakah* disciplines the soul against greed; and *Haji* is a monumental exercise in patience, unity, and sacrifice. Ultimately, this

divine discipline is not for suppression but for liberation. It frees the individual from the tyranny of base desires, chaotic habits, and societal discord. It fosters a community where rights are honoured, justice is upheld, and peace prevails. By internalising the Quranic injunction to "walk steadily on a straight path" (11:112), the believer builds a life of balance, purpose, and profound spiritual contentment, contributing to a society that reflects the order and mercy of its Creator.

India's Expanding Role In The Global Energy Transition

India's Energy Imperative in a Changing World

Energy is fundamental to economic activity, social development, and human well-being. It enables industrial production, transportation, agriculture, healthcare services, digital connectivity, and daily household needs. India, one of the world's fastest-growing economies, is the third-largest consumer of crude oil, reflecting the continued importance of petroleum in mobility, logistics, and industrial activity. At the same time, India's energy demand is projected to grow faster than almost any other major economy through 2035, and the country is expected to account for over 23 per cent of global incremental energy demand by 2050, the highest for any country.

In order to meet this growing demand, India has focused on strengthening its energy systems through policy reforms, infrastructure expansion, and cleaner energy pathways. In June 2025, India achieved the milestone of 50 per cent of its cumulative installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources, five years ahead of its 2030 target under the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement. Reforms across the hydrocarbons sector, expansion of energy infrastructure, and rapid growth of renewable energy are collectively supporting economic growth, job creation, and India's evolving role in global energy markets.

Hydrocarbon Energy Governance and Sectoral Reforms

As India's energy demand continues to rise, the effectiveness of its energy transition depends not only on expanding infrastructure and cleaner fuels but also on the strength of its governance and regulatory framework across the energy value chain. Clear policies, predictable regulations, and streamlined approval processes are essential to attract investment, reduce project timelines, and ensure a reliable energy supply. Against this backdrop, India has undertaken a series of reforms to modernise energy governance and align it with evolving market conditions and transition requirements.

India's hydrocarbons sector spans the upstream, midstream, and downstream segments. The upstream segment relates to the exploration and production of oil and natural gas. The midstream segment covers the transportation and storage of fuels, and the downstream segment includes refining and distribution. Reforms across these segments are aimed at improving efficiency, enhancing supply security, and supporting a gradual transition to cleaner energy systems.

Upstream Sector Reforms:
Oilfield (Regulation and Development) Amendment Act, 2025; ORDA (Amendment) Act, 2025 modernises India's upstream regulatory framework by simplifying procedures, enabling integrated energy development, and strengthening investor confidence. The reform aims to enhance domestic oil and gas production, improve energy security, and support a stable, transparent policy environment.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 2025: The Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 2025, provide a modern and transparent regulatory framework for the exploration and production of oil and natural gas. The Rules strengthen ease of doing business, improve regulatory certainty, and support India's energy security objectives.

The sector underwent reform with the enactment of the ORDA (Amendment) Act, 2025, and notification of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 2025. Under the Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy, 172 blocks covering more than 3.78 lakh sq km were awarded, attracting committed investments of about USD 4.36 billion. Exploration activity intensified through seismic surveys, drilling programmes, and government-funded initiatives.

Midstream and Downstream Reforms:
Reforms in the midstream and downstream segments have focused on improving fuel transportation, pricing transparency, and market access.

Unified Pipeline Tariff (UPT): Introduced in 2023, under "One Nation, One Grid, One Tariff," the UPT was launched to address



regional disparity in gas transportation costs. The UPT system standardizes transportation charges across the national gas grid, replacing the earlier distance-based tariff structure. As of December 2025, approximately 90 percent of operational pipelines are covered under UPT, improving the affordability and competitiveness of natural gas.

Strengthening Energy Security through Infrastructure Expansion

Alongside governance reforms, efforts have focused on expanding energy infrastructure across the country to improve fuel supply chains, gas connectivity, and mobility systems. This has contributed to enhanced energy access, improved system reliability, and cleaner energy use.

Fuel and Gas Infrastructure:

The nationwide fuel retail network expanded from around 52,000 outlets in 2014 to over one lakh by 2025, improving last-mile fuel availability across urban and rural areas.

Cleaner fuel infrastructure witnessed rapid growth, with CNG stations increasing from about 968 to over 8,477 and PNG household connections rising from 25 lakh to over 1.59 crore, supporting cleaner mobility and household energy use.

Under the vision of One Nation, One Gas Grid, the natural gas pipeline network expanded to over 25,400 km, with an additional 10,459 km under construction, enabling pan-India transportation of gas.

The integrated gas grid has supported 100 percent City Gas Distribution (CGD) geographical coverage, strengthening energy security and the transition towards a gas-based economy.

Petroleum Marketing and Electric Mobility Infrastructure:

Petroleum marketing infrastructure was strengthened with over 90,000 retail outlets enabled with digital payment facilities, supported by more than 2.71 lakh POS terminals.

Over 3,200 fuel bowsers were commissioned to expand door-to-door fuel delivery, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

Electric mobility infrastructure expanded with 8,932 EV charging stations installed at retail outlets under Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME) Phase-II, along with over 18,500 additional charging stations set up by

Oil Marketing Companies. Logistics and Wayside Amenities: Over 500 APNA GHAR truckers' wayside amenities were established to improve road safety, rest facilities, and welfare for logistics workers.

1,064 integrated Energy Stations were commissioned as of 1 November 2025, offering conventional fuels alongside alternative energy options along major transport corridors.

Clean Energy Transition and Low-Carbon Pathways

With energy access and infrastructure expansion providing the physical foundation for India's energy system, the focus has increasingly shifted towards reducing the carbon intensity of energy use while meeting rising demand. Clean energy transition and low-carbon pathways are therefore central to balancing energy security, economic growth, and climate objectives.

India is advancing its clean energy transition through a diversified approach that combines renewable energy expansion with alternative and low-carbon fuels. The ethanol blending programme has resulted in foreign exchange savings of about 1.59 lakh crore, reduction of 813 lakh metric tonnes of CO₂ emissions, and substitution of 270 lakh metric tonnes of crude oil since 2014, reflecting the role of biofuels in reducing import dependence and emissions.

Biofuels form an important bridge between conventional fuels and cleaner energy systems, allowing emission reductions without large-scale changes to existing vehicle and fuel infrastructure. Alongside biofuels, India is scaling up initiatives in green hydrogen, sustainable fuels, and other emerging low-carbon technologies, supported by rapid growth in renewable energy capacity and grid modernisation. These efforts align with India's Net Zero emissions target for 2070, while ensuring energy security and economic growth.

The National Policy on Biofuels, 2018, as amended in 2022, advanced the target of 20 percent ethanol blending in petrol from 2030 to Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26. Under the Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme, average ethanol blending reached 19.05 per cent as on 31 July 2025, with 19.93 per cent achieved in July 2025, indicating steady progress towards the target.

Energy transition outcomes also depend on household-level adoption of cleaner fuels, particularly in cooking, where traditional fuel use has health and environmental implications. Accordingly, access to clean cooking energy has been significantly expanded under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), with the number of beneficiaries reaching about 10.41 crore as of January 2026. To achieve saturation of LPG coverage, the Government has approved the release of 25 lakh additional LPG connections during FY 2025-26, supported by simplification of the eligibility process through a single Deprivation Declaration, making access faster and more inclusive.

Ensuring affordability is critical for sustained adoption of clean cooking fuels beyond initial access. Affordability is being ensured through a targeted subsidy of 300 per 14.2 kg cylinder for up to nine refills per year for PMUY beneficiaries. As a result, LPG usage has shown a sustained increase, with average per capita consumption rising from about three refills in 2019-20 to 4.85 refills per annum during FY 2025-26, indicating deeper adoption of clean cooking fuel.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF): Indicative Blending Targets: The union government has set indicative blending targets for SAF in Aviation Turbine Fuel for international flights at 1 per cent from 2027, 2 per cent from 2028 and 5 per cent from 2030.

Indian Oil Corporation Limited became the first Indian company to receive International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC) Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) certification for SAF production at its Panipat Refinery, followed by an MoU with Air India for SAF supply.

India's Global Energy Leadership and Future Commitment

As India's energy transition progresses, engagement with international energy platforms has become important for understanding global market developments, sharing implementation experiences, and contributing to collective responses on energy security and sustainability. As a large and growing energy-consuming economy, India participates in international discussions on energy security, transition pathways, and clean fuels, drawing on lessons

Key Takeaways

- Natural gas pipelines exceed 25,400 km, enabling near-100% CGD geographical coverage nationwide.
- Ethanol blending reached 19.05% in ESY 2024-25, approaching the 20% national target.
- PMUY coverage expanded to 10.41 crore households, with rising LPG refill rates indicating sustained usage.
- India Energy Week 2026 convenes global stakeholders to examine energy security and transition issues.

from domestic programmes implemented at scale.

India's participation in platforms such as the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) and the G20 Energy Transitions Working Group reflects its emphasis on practical and inclusive approaches to energy transition. These engagements provide opportunities to exchange perspectives on biofuels, alternative fuels, and gas-based systems, and to examine issues related to supply diversification, affordability, and emissions reduction in the context of differing national circumstances.

In addition to formal multilateral forums, India Energy Week serves as an international platform for dialogue among governments, industry, financial institutions, and technology providers. The event supports structured knowledge exchange platforms on energy markets, investment, clean energy technologies, and transition pathways, complementing ongoing international and multilateral engagements.

India Energy Week (IEW)

India Energy Week 2026 is underway in Goa from 27-30 January 2026. Hosted by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the platform highlights India's expanding role in shaping global energy conversations, particularly from the perspective of emerging and developing economies. The event will see participants from over 120 countries and more than 6,500 conference delegates at a critical moment for global energy markets, geopolitics, and climate action.

Launched in 2023, India Energy Week has evolved as a platform for international dialogue across the global energy value chain. The fourth edition of the event will bring together energy ministers, top leaders, financial institutions, international organisations, technology providers, and academic institutions to examine issues related to energy security, investment, affordability, and clean energy transition, with perspectives relevant to both emerging and advanced economies.

The IEW 2026 conference programme brings together policy-level discussions and implementation-focused exchanges through its strategic and technical tracks. These discussions will be held on varied issues such as energy security, investment mobilisation, clean energy transition, digital technologies, energy equity, and operational challenges across the energy value chain, including oil and gas, renewable energy, hydrogen, biofuels, carbon capture, power systems, and future mobility.

Together, India's international participation and forward-looking energy objectives underscore a commitment to cooperative solutions that balance development needs with climate action.

Conclusion

India's energy landscape has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, supported by policy reforms, infrastructure expansion, and targeted clean energy interventions. Progress across hydrocarbons governance, gas connectivity, fuel and mobility infrastructure, biofuels, and clean cooking has strengthened energy access, improved system resilience, and reduced emissions intensity. These developments reflect a transition approach that emphasises scale, implementation, and inclusion while responding to rising energy demand.

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

Chief Justice releases 2026 Activity Calendar of J&K Legal Services Authority

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 29: In a significant step towards reinforcing access to justice and strengthening legal awareness across the Union Territory of J&K, Justice Arun Palli, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority, Thursday released the Activity Calendar (Wall Calendar) 2026 of the J&K Legal Services Authority in presence of Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, Justice Rajesh Oswal, Justice Sanjay Dhar, Justice Mohd. Akram Chowdhary, Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal, Justice Rajesh Sekhri and Justice Sanjay Parihar, Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh.

The release, as per an official statement, of the Activity Calendar 2026 marks an important milestone in charting a structured and coordinated roadmap for legal services activities to be undertaken during the year across the UT of J&K. The calendar encapsulates key programmes and initiatives, including National and Special Lok Adalats, legal awareness and outreach activities, training programmes for legal aid stakeholders, helpline services for enhanced accessibility, and initiatives aimed at strengthening



Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms.

While releasing the calendar, the Chief Justice appreciated the sustained efforts of the J&K Legal Services Authority in ensuring that legal aid and justice delivery mechanisms effectively reach the marginalized, underprivileged and vulnerable sections of society. His Lordship emphasized that the Activity Calendar would serve as a guiding and monitoring tool for all legal services institutions and functionaries to ensure timely and effective implementation of legal aid initiatives in alignment with the constitutional mandate of access to justice.

On the occasion, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, highlighted the importance of systematic planning

and coordinated execution of legal services programmes. His Lordship underscored that the Activity Calendar would function as a strategic instrument for organizing legal literacy programmes, Lok Adalats, victim support initiatives, prison legal aid activities and pro bono legal services across the Union Territory.

The Activity Calendar 2026 lays special emphasis on priority areas such as legal assistance to prisoners, empowerment of women and children, awareness on cyber laws, environmental justice, rehabilitation of victims of crime, and implementation of special campaigns launched by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

The event was also attended by M. K. Sharma, Registrar

General: Shazia Tabasum, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority; Naseer Ahmad Dar, Director, J&K Judicial Academy; Rajiv Gupta, Registrar Vigilance and other officers of the High Court Registry, who appreciated the comprehensive and forward-looking approach of the J&K Legal Services Authority in planning and execution of legal aid activities.

The unveiling of the Activity Calendar 2026 reaffirms the unwavering commitment of the J&K Legal Services Authority towards enhancing legal awareness, strengthening justice delivery mechanisms and ensuring that legal services remain accessible, inclusive and effective for every citizen, irrespective of socio-economic background.

IGNOU launches B.Sc. Fabric, Apparel Design programme from January 2026



KT News Desk

Srinagar, JANUARY 29: Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has launched a new programme, B.Sc. Fabric and Apparel Design, under the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme from the year 2026. The programme aims to provide comprehensive knowledge and practical skills related to fabric production, apparel manufacturing processes, garment construction, quality control, supply chain management and product development, with a focus on textile science and fashion design.

Director, IGNOU, Regional Centre Srinagar, Dr. A.H. Rizvi, as per PIB statement said that the programme follows the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 guidelines, offering a flexible and multidisciplinary approach to fashion education.

The course has been structured to equip learners with industry-relevant technical expertise and an understanding of manufacturing

processes specific to the fabric and apparel sector, including the clothing and boutique industry.

The programme is recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), placing it at par with regular university degrees and making graduates eligible for both government and private sector jobs globally, Dr. Rizvi added.

The programme offers wide employment opportunities as Textile/Fabric Designer, Fashion Designer, Apparel Pattern Maker/Technical Designer, Fashion Illustrator, Fashion Merchandiser, Visual Merchandiser, and Fashion Educator/Trainer, besides opportunities in entrepreneurship and start-ups.

The programme will be on offer from the January 2026 admission cycle, which is presently ongoing. Eligible students interested in seeking admission to this programme can apply online through the admission portal of the university.

BRO steps up snow clearance on Mughal Road



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 29: The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has commenced intensive snow clearance operations on the historic Mughal Road, starting from Heerpura towards Pir Ki Gali, with the objective of restoring vehicular connectivity at the earliest.

Heavy snowfall in the higher reaches had led to the temporary closure of the road. BRO teams, equipped with heavy

snow-cutting machinery and experienced manpower, are working relentlessly despite harsh challenges to clear accumulated snow and ensure safe passage.

The road, as per an official statement, had been cleared upto Heerpura already. In view of the good weather conditions along the route since yesterday, snow clearance from Heerpura uphill towards Pir Ki Gali has commenced and has been cleared upto Dubjan Bridge.

Poetry promotes unity, cultural harmony: Speaker J&K LA

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 29: "Poetry plays a vital role in promoting unity, harmony and cultural exchange in a multilingual nation like India", stated Speaker J&K Legislative Assembly Abdul Rahim Rather while addressing the prestigious All India Urdu Mushaira at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu, as chief guest.

The Mushaira was organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages (JKAACL) in which a galaxy of writers, poets and intellectuals representing diverse languages and regions from across the country participated.

The Speaker, as per an official statement, said that the primary objective of the Mushaira is to celebrate India's rich diversity through the universal language of poetry, which serves as a bridge connecting people from varied backgrounds and regions.

Highlighting the role of Urdu poetry in fostering social harmony, brotherhood and cultural unity, the Speaker said that such events promote art and literature, strengthening the community's cultural fabric and creating shared, joyous experiences.

Lauding the efforts of JKAACL, the Speaker said they offer a platform for both the established and emerging poets to present poetry that resonates with the public, often emphasizing love, humanity



and unity.

Rather exhorted that the All India Urdu Mushaira has emerged as a significant cultural platform for nurturing literary excellence and strengthening the country's composite cultural ethos.

The Mushaira was organized as part of the 77th Republic Day celebrations bringing together the renowned poets from Jammu and Kashmir as well as other States and Union Territories.

Eminent poets from across the country who enthralled the audience with their captivating poetic renditions were Moin Shabab (Delhi), Jyoti Azad (Gwalior), Imran Faiz (Nagpur), Ismail Nazar (Indore), Asrar Chanderi (Madhya Pradesh), Kaleem Kaiser (Gorakhpur), Mohan Muntazir (Nagpur), Dr. Ana Dehlavi (Delhi), Dr. Majid Deobandi (Delhi), and Khushbir Singh Shaad (Jalandhar).

Local poets also enriched the Mushaira with evocative and thought-provoking verses. Notable participants included Pritpal Singh Betaab (Jammu), Amir Samri (Bhadrawah), Dr. Daleep Kumar Sharma (Jammu), Liyakat Ali Jaffri (Jammu), Ahmad Shinas (Jammu), Parvaiz Gulshan (Anantnag), Dr. Ahmad Manzoor (Baramulla), Dr. Nazir Azad (Pulwama) and Rukhsana Jabeen (Srinagar).

Each poet mesmerized the audience with soulful poetry, blending classical traditions with contemporary sensibilities and reaffirming the timeless relevance of Urdu literature.

Principal Secretary Culture, Brij Mohan Sharma, presenting welcome address, said that the event underscored the importance of literary gatherings in fostering creativity, encouraging fresh ideas and preserving India's rich cultural and linguistic heritage.

Additional Secretary, JKAACL, Lal Chand presented the vote of thanks.

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DC Sgr, Principal GMC review infra upgradation, dev issues of GMC & Associated Hospitals

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jan 29: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo along with the Principal, Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, Prof. Ifrat Hassan Shah on Thursday reviewed infrastructure upgradation and developmental requirements of GMC & Associated Hospitals operating under GMC Srinagar.

The review was aimed at addressing several issues that require inter-departmental coordination for further strengthening of healthcare infrastructure, improving patient care, medical education and enhancing overall hospital facilities across the Associated Hospitals, including SMHS Hospital, Super Speciality Hospital-Shireen Bagh, LD Hospital, Bone & Joint Hospital, Chest Disease (CD) Hospital, Psychiatry Hospital and the Children's Hospital, Bemina.

Administrator GMC Srinagar, Mohammad Ashraf Hakak, Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aadil Fareed, Joint Commissioner SMC, Nuzhat Khurshid, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B North Division, Shabir Ahmad, Superintending Engineer R&B South Division,



Tatheer Manzoor, Medical Superintendent SMHS Hospital, Dr. Andleeb, Medical Superintendent Speciality Hospital, Shireen Bagh, Dr. Rubina, Executive Engineers from R&B, Water Works and Master Plan Division, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Traffic) and other senior officers of the District Administration and GMC Srinagar were present in the spot review.

During the review, the DC and the Principal GMC assessed ongoing projects and proposed works and deliberated on

measures to complete ongoing projects in a time bound manner through multi-departmental coordination so as to enhance patient care, medical education and patient amenities at the associated hospitals.

On the occasion, the DC emphasized upon the concerned officers to work together cohesively in a coordinated manner to come up with practical and feasible solutions to the issues pertaining to GMC & its associated hospitals and directed them to conduct follow-up spot visits in the coming week.

He assured the GMC administration of all possible support from the District Administration to strengthen healthcare infrastructure and improve patient care and service delivery, with the objective of enhancing the functionality of all associated hospitals.

During the visit, the Officers also inspected the ongoing construction of the Multi Facility Centre (MFC) at GMC Srinagar, Additional Surgery Block at SMHS and other newly sanctioned projects aimed at improving patient convenience and healthcare services. The DC stressed the need for

coordinated efforts among all line departments to ensure timely execution of works undertaken for upgradation of healthcare infrastructure.

Earlier, in the meeting, the Principal GMC Srinagar highlighted priority areas of the Associated Hospitals requiring attention through multi-departmental coordination to enhance healthcare facilities and improve patient-centric services and convenience. She also underlined measures to accommodate the increasing patient load and provide advanced treatment facilities.

Additionally, she highlighted the need for support from the District Administration in areas such as efficient traffic management, removal of encroachments, mitigation of waterlogging issues, macadamization of roads, construction of an Attendant Sarai, additional land for further expansion and newer projects.

The Deputy Commissioner assured all possible support, in a time bound manner, from the side of district administration for these projected issues and also said that a follow up meeting shall be conducted next month to take stock of the progress made in implementation of the decisions taken during today's meeting.

Javid Dar chairs JKAIIDCL's 70th BoDs meeting

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 29: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, on Thursday chaired the 70th meeting of the Board of Directors of Jammu and Kashmir Agro Industries Development Corporation Limited (JKAIIDCL) at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu.

The meeting was attended by Financial Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary Shailendra Kumar, Managing



Director JKAIIDCL, Directors of Agriculture and Horticulture Jammu and Kashmir besides representatives of the concerned departments.

The Managing Director presented a review of the Corporation's performance for 2023-24.

Special ticket checking drive conducted on SMVD Katra to Srinagar rail section

Action taken against ticketless travellers

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 29: Due to disruptions in air and road traffic caused by recent heavy snowfall and inclement weather in the Jammu division, and considering the rising number of railway passengers, a special ticket checking drive was carried out on January 27 and 28 along the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to Srinagar rail section.

The drive was organized by teams led by Senior Divisional



Commercial Manager, Jammu, Uchit Singh, in coordination with the Railway Protection Force and the Government Railway Police. The primary objectives were to enhance passenger amenities, prevent revenue loss, and take action

against ticketless travellers.

Given the transportation disruptions, the ticket checking staff deployed at all entry and exit points of stations including Katra, Sangaldan, Banihal, Srinagar, and Budgam, conducted thorough checks on both arrival and departure trains. During the drive, they also assisted stranded passengers and helped those with valid tickets reach their destinations safely.

During these two days, action was taken against 316 ticketless travellers, resulting in a fine of approximately Rs. 4.15 lakh. Singh emphasized, "This initiative was necessary due to the

weather conditions and the increased passenger load. Our goal is to ensure a comfortable and reliable travel experience for ticketed passengers while taking firm action against those travelling without tickets, especially when other modes of transport are affected. Such drives are crucial to uphold railway rules and safeguard revenue."

The railway authorities continue to prioritize passenger safety and convenience, especially during challenging weather conditions, by conducting periodic ticket verification drives and raising awareness among travellers.

CONT'D. FROM FRONT PAGE

Valley's hospitality

built trust again people are coming back in numbers," Chaya said. "Visitors are focusing on Gulmarg, enjoying skiing and the snow rides. But we hope the government opens more destinations soon, so the benefits spread evenly."

At Gulmarg, the hum of joy is unmistakable. Bilal Ahmad, who runs a hotel, said the rush has surpassed expectations. "We have been full for two weeks now. Guests are waking up to the sight of snow-covered pine trees and calling it a dream. Many are extending their stays, and some do not want to leave at all."

In Pahalgam, too, winter has found its admirers.

Adil Shah, who manages a resort, said tourists are rediscovering the calm of the snow-fed Lidder valley. "January is usually quiet for us, but this time, the snowfall changed everything. Families and people are slowly coming back. For us, that is the sound of life returning."

In Sonamarg, the air is also seeing winter visitors this year.

Nissar Ahmad, a hotel owner, said, "We used to wait for summer to see numbers. But now, our rooms are 70 per cent booked, and tourists are thrilled by the white landscape. They are calling it their best winter trip ever."

He said the Sonamarg Tunnel has become a point of attraction for visitors as they are coming in good numbers to see it.

The people of Kashmir are once again welcoming strangers as friends with offering warmth, kahwa and stories. "When the snow returns, hope returns with it," said an elderly shikara riding man with a smile. (KNO)

77th R-Day celebrations

Forces; Parade Commander, Ex-Servicemen; Pipe and Brass bands, marching contingents (Boys & Girls), daredevils, commentators, cultural performers and best Tableaux.

The ceremony also featured the felicitations of winners of the Vande Mataram singing competition and UT-level online essay writing competition organized by the Department of Information and Public Relations.

The Beating Retreat ceremony concluded with the ever-popular 'Saare Jahan Se Achha' with simultaneous display of spectacular firework and sound & light display followed by the National Anthem. (KNO)

LG interacts with

organized by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) under its Civic Action Programme.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the initiative aimed at fostering a spirit of national integration, unity, and cultural understanding among the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. The students also shared their first-hand experiences and insights from their meeting with the President of India.

The group comprised 26 students hailing from

various districts, including Srinagar, Kishtwar, Baramulla, and Anantnag. The students undertook educational and cultural visits to major landmarks in Hyderabad and New Delhi.

Ajay Nirmalkar, Commanding Officer, 21 BN ITBP; Dr Suraj S.R., Assistant Commandant, ITBP; Mukesh Kumar Ganesh and Umaisa Farooq, teachers and other officials who have accompanied the students were present during the interaction.

Is J&K ready for

and Kashmir is importing electricity ranging from 2900 MWs to 3100 MWs during the peak hours.

It had said that during the other hours, the region is importing electricity ranging from 2400 MWs to 2800 MWs.

The official however had clarified that the power import includes all the sources including the power allocated from the centre and other Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs).

The actual power demand for Kashmir region is around 2400-2500 MWs and in case of Jammu division, it varies from 1400-1500 MWs.

"As of now Jammu and Kashmir has a power deficiency of nearly 800 MWs. The total power availability as of now is 3100-3200 MWs," the official said. (KNO)

Can't advise J&K

entrepreneurship and start-ups in J&K. A foundation has already been laid and it is now our responsibility to build upon it."

The CM stressed importance of policy reforms and timely interventions, stating, "We need to introduce policy changes that facilitate entrepreneurship, ensure funding for ideas and highlight local success stories so that people are inspired to innovate."

Responding to questions about remarks made by a local National Conference MLA regarding Kashmiri Pandits: "He is my MLA, but he has his own opinion. BJP's MLA has also issued statements, but the party has clarified that this is not its official position."

Referring to industrial challenges, the CM said, "Many factories have closed down. We will try to assist those who have shut down their operations. We will help struggling businesses and, if a need arises, reallocate land to more productive ventures."

He said, "This is the first time since the 1990's that J&K is witnessing a central package and incentives for industry. We are working with the Centre to secure a comprehensive package that will promote industrial growth in the region." (KNO)

J&K Assembly's business

referred to the Committee. The Committee, on its own initiative, may also recommend to the Government that particular subjects be

brought forward for discussion in the House and suggest the allocation of time for such discussions.

The budget session of the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly, beginning on February 2, is expected to be stormy, with opposition parties especially the BJP-set to corner the government on a gamut of issues ranging from the regularisation of daily wagers to pre-election matters.

On the other hand, Kashmir's small but divided opposition comprising PDP, PC and AIP may also raise issues such as reservation.

All political parties are expected to call their legislative party meetings on February 01 in Jammu to chalk out strategies for the upcoming session. (KNO)

DIPR organizes

the first prize winner, was today felicitated at the Beating Retreat ceremony of the 77th Republic Day at MA Stadium, Jammu. Similarly, the winners of Vande Mataram singing competition 2026 from Jammu division, Arishi Gupta and Nandani Thakur, were also honoured on the occasion.

The event recognized the winners' achievements and celebrated their talent and patriotism.

Rare Kashmir Musk

a residential locality after being chased by stray dogs.

Raja Suhail, Block Head of the Wildlife Department in Uri, said that locals played a big role in rescuing the wild goat. "We will shift the animal to Baramulla headquarters for medical examination and later transfer it to Pahalgam," he said, adding that wild goats in Uri block are mostly found in the border areas.

Speaking to KNO, Dr Tanushree Srivastava, expert on mountain ungulate ecology and Senior Manager and Head of J&K Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), said both Kashmiri musk deer and Kashmiri markhor are found only in Kashmir.

"Markhor is near threatened, while the Kashmiri musk deer is critically endangered," she said, adding that these species migrate to lower elevations in winter to escape harsh weather and access forage.

Dr Srivastava said WTI has been working on the Markhor Recovery Project for the past 20 years in J&K. "The last census was conducted in 2023, during which the Markhor population in Kazinag National Park was estimated at 221, while sightings in Hirpora and Tatakutti wildlife sanctuaries remained very low," she informed.

Kazinag National Park is located on the northern bank of the Jhelum near the Line of Control in Baramulla district, while Hirpora sanctuary lies in the Pir Panjal range in Shopian district and Tatakutti sanctuary in Poonch district.

WTI carried out the first comprehensive survey of the Markhor population and distribution in 2004 across its historical range, she added. (KNO)

Farmers backbone

initiative of establishing receiving station at Harminder, reflects the government's sustained focus on upgrading power infrastructure to meet growing demand and support economic activity of farmers in the area. He assured the locals that the road connectivity to Harminder will be improved and gave on-spot directions to Deputy Commissioner Samba for formulating a proposal on same.

Later, Chief Minister also inaugurated the newly constructed modern bus stand at Thandi Khui, Vijaypur, developed to provide safe, convenient, and commuter-friendly transport facilities.

Interacting with the officers on the occasion, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that the facility should be dedicated for the public use at the earliest and the other infrastructure developed with this Bus Stand should be properly utilised.

He noted that investments in power and transport sectors are crucial for improving quality of life, boosting local commerce and creating employment opportunities.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister was informed that the bus stand is equipped with improved passenger amenities, organized parking spaces, and modern design features aimed at easing traffic congestion and enhancing the overall travel experience for the public. He was also informed that the facility is expected to significantly benefit daily commuters, students and travellers by ensuring better connectivity and operational efficiency.

Advisors to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani; Chairperson District Development Council Keshav Dutt Sharma, MLA Samba, Surjeet Singh Salathia; MLA Vijaypur, Chander Prakash Ganga; MD, JPDCL, Gurpal Singh; DC Samba, Ayushi Sudan; Chief Engineer, JPDCL, senior officers of district administration Samba and large number of locals were also present on the occasion.

Smart cities projects

accounted for 161 projects costing Rs 3,634 crore, with 156 completed, the data showed.

At the national level, the Smart Cities Mission has taken up 8,064 projects with a total outlay of Rs 1,64,811 crore. Of these, 7,767 projects worth Rs 1,55,859 crore have been completed, while 297 projects costing Rs 8,952 crore are ongoing across the country.

The parliamentary annexe noted that Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) have been established in all 100 smart cities, forming the backbone for urban

LG Sinha meets International Roll Ball players



KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 29: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday met the International Roll Ball players Suvidha Sarin and Hiteshwar Singh, who have represented India in the 7th Roll Ball World Cup held in Dubai.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated the athletes hailing

from Jammu Kashmir for their remarkable achievements at the international sporting arena.

He extended his best wishes to them for their future games.

Prof. B L Zutshi, President, Hindu Education Society Kashmir

also called on the Lieutenant Governor. He was accompanied by Ramesh Hangloo, Managing Director, Radio Sharda.

weather conditions and the increased passenger load. Our goal is to ensure a comfortable and reliable travel experience for ticketed passengers while taking firm action against those travelling without tickets, especially when other modes of transport are affected. Such drives are crucial to uphold railway rules and safeguard revenue."

The railway authorities continue to prioritize passenger safety and convenience, especially during challenging weather conditions, by conducting periodic ticket verification drives and raising awareness among travellers.

monitoring and governance.

Digital infrastructure such as SCADA-based water network monitoring and CCTV surveillance systems for public safety have been developed as part of the mission's long-term urban management framework.

Officials said the relatively small value of the remaining projects in Jammu and Srinagar indicates that pending works are limited in scope and could be completed within short timelines, subject to administrative clearances and seasonal construction conditions.

The Smart Cities Mission focuses on improving core urban services including water supply, urban mobility, waste management, public spaces and heritage conservation.

According to national data, the mission has resulted in the installation of nearly 17,000 kilometres of water networks under SCADA systems, deployment of more than 83,000 CCTV cameras and development of over 1,300 public space projects.

Once fully operational, officials said the completed interventions in Jammu and Srinagar are expected to help reduce non-revenue water

Baramati mourns as Ajit Pawar cremated with full state honours

• Amit Shah, Nabin attend funeral

PTI

Baramati, Jan 29: Grief swept through Baramati in Pune district on Thursday as Maharashtra bid farewell to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who lost his life in a tragic plane crash, with his last rites performed with full state honours.

At the packed Vidya Pratishthan ground in Baramati, Pawar's sons Parth and Jay lit the funeral pyre as his wife Sunetra, who is a Rajya Sabha member, struggled to hold back tears, while the air resonated with chants of "Ajit Dada amar rahe".

Union ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Murlidhar Mohol, former Union minister Sharad Pawar, who is Ajit Pawar's uncle, and BJP president Nitin Nabin attended the 66-year-old Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief's funeral.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde were also present at the Vidya Pratishthan ground in Baramati, the Pawar family's hometown,



located 100 km from Pune.

Thousands of mourners gathered for Ajit Pawar's last rites chanted "Ajit Dada amar rahe", when his mortal remains, draped in the national flag, were brought from his village Katewadi to the Vidya Pratishthan ground.

His cousin Supriya Sule, the NCP (SP) Lok Sabha member from Baramati, stood with Sunetra Pawar to console her as she paid tributes to her late husband.

NCP working president and former Union minister Praful Patel was also present.

Announcements over loudspeakers urged people to maintain silence and discipline, and to pay their respects to the late leader from their seats, calling it the greatest tribute to Ajit Pawar, known for his strict sense of discipline. As the funeral pyre was lit, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar sat in silence. His younger brother Prataprao Pawar was also present.

Earlier, Shah, Gadkari, Nabin, Fadnavis, Union minister Ramdas Athawale, Goa CM Pramod Sawant, Eknath Shinde, former Union minister Sushilkumar Shinde,

Maharashtra assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar and Andhra Pradesh minister Nara Lokesh were among the leaders who placed floral wreaths on Pawar's mortal remains.

Ajit Pawar's younger brother Shrinivas Pawar, sisters and other family members, including cousin Abhijit Pawar, also paid tributes to their late brother.

Former CMs Sushilkumar Shinde and Ashok Chavan, state Congress president Harshwardhan Sapkal, party leader Manikrao Thakare and actor Riteish Deshmukh also paid homage.

Earlier, Shiv Sena (UBT) head and former CM Uddhav Thackeray and MNS chief Raj Thackeray offered floral tributes at Ajit Pawar's residence in Katewadi.

On Thursday morning, the mortal remains of Ajit Pawar were taken from the Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Hospital in Baramati, where they were kept overnight, to his village.

Pawar and four other persons on board the aircraft were killed after it crashed barely 200 metres from the edge of the tabletop airstrip.

Economy on stable footing, likely to expand by 6.8-7.2 pc in FY27: Survey

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Economic Survey on Thursday projected the GDP growth in the range of 6.8-7.2 per cent for the next fiscal year on the back of the cumulative impact of reforms, and said the economy remains on a stable footing.

The projection is a tad lower than the estimates of 7.4 per cent in the current fiscal. Amid the domestic currency depreciating steeply in recent months, the Economic Survey 2025-26 said the rupee's valuation does not accurately reflect India's stellar economic fundamentals and that the rupee is punching below its weight.

"Of course, it does not hurt to have an undervalued rupee in these times, as it offsets to some extent the impact of higher American tariffs on Indian goods, and there is no threat of higher inflation from higher-priced crude oil imports now. However, it does cause investors to pause. Investor reluctance to commit to India warrants examination," it said.

The document, prepared by a team of economists led by Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran, however, added that a strong and stable currency is a natural corollary for achieving the

goal of the Vixit Bharat and global influence.

Rupee is a casualty of foreign capital flows drying up, it added.

The document tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasised that India is relatively better off than most other countries due to its strong macro fundamentals.

The cumulative impact of policy reforms over recent years appears to be lifting India's medium-term growth potential to near 7 per cent, it said, and made a strong case for a deeper system-level institutional capacity that factors in geopolitical implications of India's rise.

India needs to prioritise domestic growth in an uncertain global environment, as well as greater emphasis on buffers and liquidity, it added.

The global environment is being reshaped by geopolitical realignments that will influence investment, supply chains and growth prospects, it added.

On the price situation, it said a subdued trajectory of core inflation indicates strengthening of supply-side conditions across the economy.

The pre-Budget document further said that based on the broad trends observed



during the year, the central government remains well on track to achieve its envisaged fiscal consolidation path, aiming to attain a fiscal deficit target of 4.4 per cent of GDP in 2025-26.

As of November 2025, the Union government's fiscal deficit stood at 6.2 per cent of the Budget Estimates.

"Markets have acknowledged and rewarded the government's commitment to fiscal discipline through lower sovereign bond yields, with the spread over US bonds declining by more than half," it said.

It noted that despite heightened tariffs imposed by the United States, merchandise exports grew by 2.4 per cent (April-December 2025), while services exports increased by 6.5 per

cent. Merchandise imports during April-December 2025 increased by 5.9 per cent.

The Survey said that GST rejig and other reforms converted global uncertainty into an opportunity, and the next fiscal year would be a year of adjustment as the economy adapts to these changes.

In the backdrop of India entering into host of free trade agreements, the Survey said realising potential of trade agreements requires India to produce competitively.

The FTA with Europe will strengthen India's manufacturing competitiveness, export resilience and strategic capacity, the Survey said.

The document also said that, in most years, remittances have surpassed gross FDI inflows, underscoring

their importance as a key source of external funding. As a result, the current account deficit remains moderate at 0.8 per cent of GDP in H1 FY26.

The document has also said that there is no space for pessimism, but we need to be cautious amid global uncertainty.

Possible eruption of multiple global crises presents an opportunity for India to play a role in shaping global order, it added.

The Economic Survey has a separate chapter on AI and its impact.

Correction in overly optimistic asset valuations will happen if the AI boom fails to deliver the anticipated productivity gains, it said.

On India's fast-growing aviation sector, the Survey said India's civil aviation sector is on a sustained growth trajectory supported by a conducive policy environment, rising demand, and steady infrastructure expansion.

India has emerged as the world's third-largest domestic aviation market, but current passenger volumes represent only a fraction of the country's potential, it added.

The DFS confirmed that Loreto Convent in Delhi Cantonment, Don Bosco in Chittaranjan Park, and Carmel Convent campuses in Anand Niketan and Dwarka have received threats.

On the other hand, Sardar Patel Vidyalaya in Lodhi Estate sent out a message to the parents of its students, informing them about the security threat.

Police and fire authorities were immediately informed, triggering evacuation protocols and anti-sabotage checks.

"Following standard operating procedures, nothing suspicious was found," a DFS officer said, adding that the threat had been declared a hoax.

Five Delhi schools receive bomb threats; declared hoax after thorough check

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 29: Five schools in the national capital received bomb threats via email on Thursday morning. It was later declared a hoax following sweeping searches by security agencies.

According to the Delhi Fire Services (DFS), a call about the threats was received around 8.30 am, which led to a thorough checking of the premises by multiple security agencies.

The DFS confirmed that Loreto Convent in Delhi Cantonment, Don Bosco in Chittaranjan Park, and Carmel Convent campuses in Anand Niketan and Dwarka have received threats.

Vidyalaya administration informed parents that a security threat had been received in the morning, and authorities were immediately alerted. The school said a bomb squad team conducted a thorough inspection of the entire campus.

"We are relieved to inform you that the premises have been declared completely safe for use. Student safety remains our highest priority, and all necessary protocols were followed promptly and responsibly. Classes will



continue as usual today," the message read.

Police sources said local police personnel, bomb disposal squads and dog squads were deployed to sweep the campuses. Students and staff were moved to safe areas in some schools, they added.

Further investigation is underway to trace the origin of the threats, police said.

On Wednesday, the Dwarka court complex received a similar bomb threat, which was declared a hoax.

As many as 11.86 cr FASTags issued till Dec 2025: Govt

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 29: As many as 11.86 crore FASTags have been issued till December 2025 to commercial and non-commercial vehicles, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Road Transport and Highways minister Nitin Gadkari said that presently, more than 98 per cent of user fees on National Highways are collected through FASTag (electronic toll collection).

Gadkari said the national highways user-friendly annual pass, available at a discounted rate, was launched for highway users under the National Highway Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules 2008.

"Since its launch on August 15 2025, around 42 lakh annual passes have been activated, facilitating over 19 crore transactions as on December 31, 2025," he said, adding that currently around 25 per cent non-commercial vehicles are doing FASTag transactions using annual pass.

The minister said the Request for Proposal (RFP) to implement a barrier-less tolling system has been invited/ finalized for 18 national highway stretches.

He also said that average daily collection via FASTag at the NH fee plaza is around Rs 186 crore, and the average daily ETC transactions at the NH fee plaza are around 105 lakhs in the financial year 2025-26 (till December 2025).

The constant growth and adoption of FASTag by high-way users are encouraging and have helped increase efficiency in toll operations, Gadkari added.

He also informed that the impact assessment conducted for the National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) Programme during 2024-25 indicates that the average time taken by a vehicle to cross a fee plaza under ETC operations is 40 seconds, as compared to 12.23 minutes per vehicle under the earlier manual tolling system.

Current pilot-aircraft ratio 'adequate' at domestic airlines: Govt

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 29: The civil aviation ministry on Thursday said the current pilot-aircraft ratio at domestic airlines is "adequate".

The comments also come against the backdrop of last month's massive disruptions at IndiGo that were caused by multiple factors, including inadequate planning to comply with the new flight duty norms that are aimed at addressing fatigue among pilots.

Under the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) norms, the number of flight crew and cabin crew should not be less than three sets of crew per aircraft.

"To ensure operational stability, all airlines assess the pilot-aircraft ratio while keeping into account the fleet expansion and dynamic operational requirements.

"Periodic reviews are undertaken by respective airlines to ensure continued compliance and smooth functioning of air services without compromising flight safety, crew rest requirements and work-life balance of pilots," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, the minister said that currently, the pilot-aircraft ratio at domestic airlines in India is found to be adequate.

Specific details were not disclosed.

Over-optimisation of operations, inadequate regulatory

preparedness along with deficiencies in system software support and shortcomings in management structure and operational control were among the primary causes for the disruptions that happened at IndiGo in early December.

According to the minister, the revised pilot duty rules were formulated after studying and comparing the norms of FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), EASA (European Union Safety Agency) Transport Canada and other nations.

"Further, DGCA has also taken into consideration International Civil Aviation Organisation's Standard and Recommended Practices and other International best practices to formulate FDTL norms," he said in another written reply.

A monitoring mechanism to track flight cancellations and delays of network planning has also been set up by the regulator.

DGCA has been conducting periodic review of FDTL and Fatigue Risk Management of all schedule operators. Quarterly fatigue reports are being submitted by all schedule operators and analysed by DGCA...," the report said.

Mohol, in a separate written reply, said DGCA has issued

warnings to IndiGo's senior management for deficiencies in oversight, planning and implementation of revised FDTL (Flight Duty Limitation) norms.

The regulator has also directed "removal of the concerned SVP from operational responsibilities, and instructed the airline to take further action and submit a compliance report," the minister said.

Fines totalling Rs 22.20 crore have been imposed on the airline and has been directed to furnish Rs 50 crore bank guarantee in favour of

DGCA to ensure compliance with directives and long-term systemic corrective measures.

"IndiGo has formally assured DGCA that it will have sufficient pilots and crew to meet operational requirements without exemptions after February 10, 2026. It expects to maintain operational stability and avoid further cancellations once temporary relaxations expire," Mohol said.

The newly developed method uses a routine MRI measurement

Researchers develop non-invasive MRI-based technique for assessing heart failure patients

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 29: A routine MRI scan may help a doctor assess a heart failure patient, according to a new study, offering an alternative to invasive, risky procedures that measure oxygen levels in blood.

"One of the most important markers in advanced heart failure is how much oxygen is left in blood returning to the right side of the heart," lead researcher Pankaj Garg, from the UK's University of East Anglia and a consultant cardiologist at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, said.

Patients of heart failure are required to undergo a 'right heart catheterisation' test, in which a tube is inserted in the heart to measure oxygen levels in the blood – this helps doctors understand the severity of the condition.

The procedure can be risky, especially for older, frail or unwell patients, researchers said.

The magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)-based method, described in a paper published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC) Advances, could potentially spare thousands from undergoing the risky tube procedure in future, they said.

The newly developed method uses a routine MRI measurement



called 'T2 mapping' to estimate the amount of oxygen left in the blood that returns to the heart.

"Blood with different oxygen levels behaves slightly differently in a magnetic field. By measuring how that blood reacts (to a magnetic field), we were able to develop a formula that predicts the oxygen reading without ever inserting a tube or taking a blood sample," Dr Garg said.

The technique was initially tested in 30 patients, results from which revealed that the MRI values closely matched the invasive catheter readings.

Nearly 630 people newly diagnosed with heart failure were then analysed using the MRI method and were followed for around three years.

Those with healthier oxygen readings on MRI were significantly less likely to die or end up in hospital due to their condition

'Trump weighs Iran strikes to inspire renewed protests'

REUTERS

Dubai, Jan 29: US President Donald Trump is weighing options against Iran that include targeted strikes on security forces and leaders to inspire protesters, multiple sources said, even as Israeli and Arab officials said air power alone would not topple the clerical rulers. Two US sources familiar with the discussions said Trump wanted to create conditions for "regime change" after a crackdown crushed a nationwide protest movement earlier this month, killing thousands of people.

To do so, he was looking at options to hit commanders and institutions Washington holds responsible for the violence, to give protesters the confidence that they could overrun government and security buildings, they said.

One of the US sources said the options being discussed by Trump's aides also included a much larger strike intended to have lasting impact, possibly against the ballistic missiles that can reach US allies in the Middle East or its nuclear enrichment programs.

The other US source said Trump has not yet made a final decision on a course of action including whether to take the military path. The arrival of a US aircraft carrier and supporting warships in the Middle East this week has expanded Trump's capabilities to potentially take military action, after he repeatedly threatened intervention over Iran's crackdown.

Four Arab officials, three Western diplomats and a senior Western



source whose governments were briefed on the discussions said they were concerned that instead of bringing people onto the streets, such strikes could weaken a movement already in shock after the bloodiest repression by authorities since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Alex Vatanka, director of the Iran Program at the Middle East Institute, said that without large-scale military defections Iran's protests remained "heroic but outgunned."

The sources in this story requested anonymity to talk about sensitive matters. Iran's foreign office, the US Department of Defense and the White House did not respond to requests for comment. The Israeli Prime Minister's office declined to comment. Trump urged Iran on Wednesday to "come to the table and make a deal on nuclear weapons, warning that any future US attack would be more severe than a June bombing campaign against three

nuclear sites. He described the ships in the region as an "armada" sailing to Iran. A senior Iranian official said that Iran was "preparing itself for a military confrontation, while at the same time making use of diplomatic channels." However, Washington was not showing openness to diplomacy, the official said.

Iran, which says its nuclear program is civilian, was ready for dialogue "based on mutual respect and interests" but would defend itself "like never before" if pushed, Iran's mission to the United Nations said in a post on X on Wednesday.

Trump has not publicly detailed what he is looking for in any deal. His administration's previous negotiating points have included banning Iran from independently enriching uranium and restrictions on long-range ballistic missiles and on Tehran's network of armed proxies in the Middle East.

Limits of air power
A senior Israeli official with

direct knowledge of planning between Israel and the United States said Israel does not believe airstrikes alone can topple the Islamic Republic, if that is Washington's goal.

"If you're going to topple the regime, you have to put boots on the ground," he said, noting that even if the United States killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran would "have a new leader that will replace him."

Only a combination of external pressure and an organized domestic opposition could shift Iran's political trajectory, the official said.

The Israeli official said Iran's leadership had been weakened by the unrest but remained firmly in control despite the ongoing deep economic crisis that sparked the protests. Multiple US intelligence reports reached a similar conclusion, that the conditions that led to the protests were still in place, weakening the government, but without major fractures, two people familiar with the matter said.

The Western source said they believed Trump's goal appeared to be to engineer a change in leadership, rather than "topple the regime," an outcome that would be similar to Venezuela, where US intervention replaced the president without a wholesale change of government.

Khamenei has publicly acknowledged several thousand deaths during the protests. He blamed the unrest on the United States, Israel and what he called "seditionists."

US-based rights group HRANA has put the unrest-related death toll at 5,937, including 214 security personnel, while official figures put the death toll at 3,117. Reuters

President Xi tells British PM to jointly advocate, practice true multilateralism

AP

Beijing/London, Jan 29: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday told UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer that the two countries, as supporters of free trade, should jointly advocate and practice true multilateralism.

President Xi made the remarks during his meeting with Starmer, the first British prime minister to visit China in eight years, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

The international law can only be truly effective when all countries abide by it, Xi was quoted as saying by the state-run news agency Xinhua.

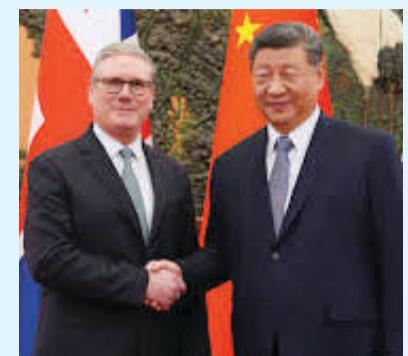
President Xi said that major countries should take the lead in particular, otherwise, the world would risk regressing into the law of the jungle, according to Xinhua.

He said China will never pose a threat to other countries, no matter how it grows. In a statement issued in London, Downing Street said that both leaders affirmed their shared commitment to building a consistent, long-term, and strategic partnership that will benefit both countries.

"They agreed they would continue to enhance co-operation on areas of mutual interest, while maintaining frank and open dialogue on areas of disagreement. The Prime Minister raised areas of concern to the UK," it said.

Starmer, who is accompanied by a delegation of nearly 60 of Britain's biggest businesses and cultural organisations, said that he hoped new partnerships could be forged and new opportunities unlocked for them in China.

"Growth and prosperity at home is



directly linked to our engagement with the world's biggest powers abroad," the Prime Minister said.

Downing Street said that PM Starmer will clinch a new border security agreement with China to stem the flow of Chinese-made small boat parts used by smuggling gangs to illegally transport migrants into the UK.

Besides the prospect of lower Scotch whisky export tariffs and visa-free travel for British travellers to China, both sides are set for the first joint UK-China law enforcement action before Chinese boats and engines can reach criminal networks in Europe.

"Organised immigration crime and the business model of the smuggling gangs goes beyond borders, and our approach to shut them down must do the same," said Starmer, in the statement released by 10 Downing Street in London.

"This deal will help us cut off the supply of boats at source – stopping crossings before lives are put at risk and restoring control to our borders. This is Britain back at the top table, delivering real results for the British people through our international relationships," he said.

Denmark hails 'very constructive' meeting with US over Greenland

AFP

Brussels, Jan 29: Denmark's foreign minister said Thursday he was "more optimistic" after technical talks kicked off with the United States over Greenland.

"We have had the very first meeting at senior official level in Washington yesterday regarding the Greenlandic issue," Lars Løkke Rasmussen told journalists at an EU meeting in Brussels. "It went well in a very constructive atmosphere and tone, and new meetings are planned. It's not that things are solved, but it's good." The trilateral talks come after



US President Donald Trump last week backed down from his threats to seize the autonomous Arctic territory of EU and NATO member Denmark. "There was a major detour. Things were escalating, but now we are back on track," Rasmussen said. "I'm slightly more optimistic today than a week ago." Trump's threats over Greenland

plunged the transatlantic alliance into its deepest crisis in years.

The unpredictable US leader backed off his desire to take control of Greenland after saying he had struck a "framework" deal with NATO chief Mark Rutte to ensure greater American influence.

But few concrete details appear to have been agreed – with authorities in Denmark and Greenland refusing to discuss handing over any sovereignty. "I have stated on many occasions, we, of course, share the US security concerns regarding the Arctic, this is something we want to solve in close cooperation," Rasmussen said.

Pakistan's T20 WC boycott unlikely, team to leave for Colombo on Feb 2: Sources

PTI

Lahore, Jan 29: The Pakistan Cricket Board has already scheduled its T20 World Cup squad to depart for Colombo early on February 2, virtually ruling out any possibility of boycotting either the tournament or the marquee clash against India on February 15, sources close to the board said on Thursday.

"The PCB has already made travel arrangements for the World Cup squad to leave early morning on February 2 for Colombo," he said. The source added that PCB had shown its full support to Bangladesh Cricket Board over their "security concerns" in playing in India and could



not do anything further without damaging its own position within the ICC.

The BCCI, PCB and ICC had also entered into a tripartite agreement under which all India-Pakistan matches in ICC events until 2027 will be played at neutral venues. "Keep in mind Pakistan's entire World Cup schedule is in Sri Lanka, including the

final if they qualify. So on what grounds can they boycott the tournament or the match against India?" he asked.

It is expected that the PCB would confirm their participation on Friday.

There has been speculation in sections of the media that Pakistan could pull out of the tournament or refuse to play India.

But an insider dismissed such reports as rumours.

"When the PCB Chairman, Mohsin Naqvi, met with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, he made it clear that all options under consideration should ensure a stable and prosperous future for Pakistan cricket and maintain good relations with the ICC and member boards," the insider said.

Rashid Khan shrugs off 'figured out' tag ahead of T20 World Cup

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 29: Afghanistan skipper Rashid Khan has brushed aside suggestions that batters have "figured him out", insisting that precision, not re-invention, will define his impact as his side gears up for next month's ICC T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

After redefining the role of leg-spinners in T20 cricket over the last decade, Rashid endured comparatively modest returns in the previous two Indian Premier League seasons with Gujarat Titans, prompting debate around predictability.

"Well, I feel like it's not about like I should be changing my variation or the line and length...things like that," Rashid told PTI in an interaction facilitated by Red Bull.

Rashid's IPL numbers over the last two seasons tell the story of a dip in form after years of elite performance.

After finishing second on the Purple Cap list with 27 wickets in 17 matches in 2023, his wicket tally dropped to 10 in 12 matches in 2024. It further slipped to only nine in 15 matches in 2025 even as his economy climbed above 9 runs per over.

The Afghanistan skipper, however, said the margins in T20 cricket are small and that execution remains decisive.

"...I miss my line a little bit, which I used to be very good at earlier. There is nothing much to worry about...Whenever I miss my line and length, I give runs, that's the only thing I believe," the Afghan skipper said



added.

Rashid said predictability is often misunderstood, pointing out that elite bowlers succeed because of precision rather than mystery. The World Cup starts February 7 and Afghanistan are placed in group D alongside Nepal, Scotland West Indies and UAE.

"There are lots of bowlers about whom people know what they're going to do, but still they're getting out to them," he said.

"If someone is like Mitch (Mitchell Starc) usually bowls an in-swinger with the new ball, everyone knows but he still gets you out. He only gets you out because he hits the right area consistently and that what matters," he added.

"And I feel like for me also, it's about hitting that area. Even if the batter knows me well, still it's going to be difficult."

Afghanistan head into the World Cup on the back of a convincing 2-1 T20I series win over West Indies, a result Rashid said

has reinforced belief within the squad. "...there's good preparation and I think everyone is doing great. Batting-wise, fielding, I think bowling, everything is going well...And hopefully we'll have a good World Cup," Rashid added.

With the tournament scheduled across India and Sri Lanka, Rashid believes familiarity with conditions could work in Afghanistan's favor.

Several players, including Rashid, Mohammad Nabi, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Noor Ahmad, have extensive experience bowling in India.

"All the top players have played a lot of cricket in India and everyone is quite used to the condition," Rashid said.

But he stressed that reputation alone will not carry the team forward.

"You can have the best bowling unit, but still you have to bring up your best game into the match and keep hitting the right area consistently," he said.

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