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DIPK-10618/25  
Dated: 04-02-2026

## Cancer cases on rise in J&K, need to strengthen oncology services: CM Omar

Calls for affordable treatment solutions | Says govt plans support for weaker sections | Inaugurates maternity block at SMGS Hospital



Sajid Raina

Jammu, Feb 04: Stressing that the underlying causes of Cancer must be assessed by medical professionals, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said that cases are rising steadily in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking on the occasion of the World Cancer Day, CM Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, “The state cancer institutes must function with adequate

manpower and infrastructure.” He called for strengthening oncology services across Jammu and Kashmir to ensure timely and effective treatment.

The Chief Minister outlined the government’s priority to address the issue of rise in cancer case in the region.

“There is no doubt that the incidence of cancer is increasing. What are the reasons behind this? Only doctors can tell us?” he said.

The Chief Minister said the

government had three major responsibilities in dealing with the growing burden of cancer. “One is to fund research and development and create proper infrastructure for it. Second is to improve the healthcare system. Our state cancer institutes should function properly, have adequate infrastructure, and doctors should be able to work effectively,” he said.

He said access to cancer treatment remained a major challenge for | [More on P6](#)

### Oncologists call for wider screening, advanced treatment facilities

‘35–38 new cancer cases daily across UT; Proton Therapy vital’

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Feb 04: On the occasion of World Cancer Day, leading oncologists in Jammu and Kashmir have raised serious concern over the steadily increasing incidence of cancer in the Union Territory, while underlining the importance of prevention, early diagnosis and strengthening advanced treatment infrastructure.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Dr Zahoor

Ahmad, a senior oncologist at SKIMS Soura, said cancer cases are rising at an alarming pace across J&K.

“Cancer is rapidly increasing in Jammu and Kashmir. On average, we are witnessing around 35 to 38 new cancer cases every single day across the UT, and this number is likely to grow further in the coming years,” he said.

Dr Zahoor added that the Valley currently has cancer treatment facilities in major government tertiary care | [More on P6](#)

## CM Omar highlights heritage preservation efforts in J&K

- ◆ Outlines initiatives at Parihaspora, Pattan, Tappar
- ◆ Details Rs 279.83 lakh investment in Bhaderwah Yatri infra



KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 04: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the Department of Culture is mandated with the revival, restoration and conservation of Jammu and Kashmir’s valuable heritage sites, and several initiatives have been undertaken in this regard at key locations including Parihaspora, Pattan and Tappar.

The Chief Minister was replying to a question in the Legislative Assembly, raised by MLA Pattan, Javid Riyaz Bedar, regarding the promotion of Heritage Tourism.

In his reply, the Chief Minister, who also holds the portfolio of Culture and Tourism departments, informed the House that the mandate for promotion of Heritage Tourism at the heritage sites of Parihaspora, Pattan and Tappar vests with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Accordingly, the conservation, protection and major | [More on P6](#)

## Omar introduces Jan Vishwas, Anti-Discrimination bills

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday tabled Jan Vishwas and Anti-Discrimination Bills in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly. The Chief Minister introduced “The Jammu and Kashmir Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026” (L.A. Bill No. 1 of 2026). The Bill seeks to amend certain enactments of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir by | [More on P6](#)

## 3 terrorists killed in Udhampur, Kishtwar encounters

Yogesh

Jammu, Feb 04: Three terrorists were killed in twin encounters in Udhampur and Kishtwar districts on Wednesday, officials and reports said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that three terrorists, believed to be affiliated with the terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad, were killed in Jophar area of Udhampur and Dichhar area of Kishtwar.

He said the encounter in Jophar broke out around 4 pm on Tuesday, following specific intelligence inputs, and additional reinforcements were rushed to the area to tighten the cordon. “The terrorist were eliminated in a fierce gunfight,” the official added.

The Army on Tuesday had written on X: “In an intelligence-based joint operation, contact has been established with the terrorists by the troops of CIF Delta, White Knight Corps, Jammu and Kashmir Police and CRPF at around 4 pm today in the general area of Basantgarh. Cordon has been established. Firefight is on. Operation is in progress.”

Another official said, “The forces cordoned off the targeted area to prevent the escape of terrorists, while additional reinforcements were rushed to the spot soon after contact was established. Officials said the terrorists were holed up inside a cave and were later eliminated during the operation.”

“A large cache of arms and ammunition, | [More on P6](#)

## Budget Session 2026

## Discussion on Motion of Thanks continues for second day

KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 04: The discussion on Motion of Thanks on Lieutenant Governor’s Address continued for the second day on Wednesday, with Legislators raising issues and concerns of their respective constituencies besides Jammu and Kashmir’s overall development.

Legislator Shamim Firdous raised the issue of students and youth prisoned in Central jails of other states. She urged the government to take up the matter with the Union Government for their early release or transfer from outside jails to Srinagar Central Jail.

While participating in the debate, Sajjad Shaheen said that LGs address is the



continuity of government’s development vision of J&K which includes robust power system, regular water supply, better road infrastructure, improved health facilities, education and tourism.

Irfan Hafiz Lone, in his address raised the issue of Kashmiri students and workers being harassed in other parts of the country. He urged that government should take up the matter | [More on P6](#)

## Weather to remain dry in J&K till Feb 8: IMD

Light rain, snowfall likely on Feb 9, 10

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Feb 04: The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday predicted largely dry weather across Jammu and Kashmir till February 8, with scattered light rain or snow at many places between February 9 and 10.

According to the IMD’s latest bulletin, accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), weather is expected to remain generally dry from February 4 to February 6 evening,

though light snowfall may occur at isolated higher reaches during the night of February 6. Dry conditions are likely to continue till the evening of February 8.

The IMD said that from February 9 to 10, the Union Territory may witness light rain or snowfall at scattered to many places. “The weather will turn generally dry again on February 11, with the possibility of light snow at isolated higher reaches. Dry weather is likely to prevail from February 12 to 15.”

The IMD | [More on P6](#)

## New rules set for J&K coaching centres, ‘but registrations expired’

Banned: Misleading promises, hiring convicted individuals or govt employees

Required: Police, building safety clearances, registrations, proper infra, separate toilets

Classes limited to 5 hours daily; weekly offs, festival breaks mandatory

Fees must be fair, reasonable

10% reservation for students of BPL families, orphans

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Feb 04: The government has set new rules to regulate the private coaching and study centres in Jammu and Kashmir with strict focus on registration, reservation, tuition fee and safety of the students.

An official however said that the registration of the private coaching institutes in Kashmir region has not been renewed post COVID-19 period.

“As of now, no private

coaching centre in Kashmir region has a registration and many others who have applied for the renewal have not got their registration yet. The registration process is in progress,” the official said.

Another official informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that “There are approximately 241 private coaching centres functioning in the Kashmir region and their registration is in progress.”

“In Srinagar alone, more



than 50 private coaching centres are functional and

their registration is in progress from the past one year.

Renewal progress got halted post COVID-19 period and the change in academic session that was earlier shifted from November-December to March,” he said.

Commissioner Secretary to government for School Education Department Ram Niwas Sharma in an order said the Government of India has framed model guidelines namely ‘Guidelines for regulation of Coaching Centre’ in January 2024, for adoption by States and UTs for its

implementation in their respective territorial jurisdiction. The Supreme Court of India in Criminal Appeal out of has issued the direction that reads, “All States and Union Territories shall, as far as practicable, notify rules within two months from the date of this judgment mandating registration, student protection norms, and grievance redressal mechanisms for all private coaching Centers. These rules shall require compliance with the mental health safeguards

prescribed herein.”

Sharma said that the new rules shall come into force from the date of their publication in the official gazette. “The object of these rules shall be to establish a framework for regulating and regulating coaching or study centres and it shall suggest a minimum standard for effective operation of coaching or study centers.”

The new rules shall be to protect students’ interests by ensuring quality education and support | [More on P6](#)



## CS calls for time-bound, result-oriented implementation of traffic management plans for Jammu, Srinagar

### Chairs MDC meeting on traffic management

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Multi-Disciplinary Committee (MDC) on Traffic Management Systems for Jammu and Srinagar cities to review plans and proposals aimed at easing congestion, strengthening road safety, and improving overall urban mobility in the twin capital cities.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by senior administrative and police officers, including Additional Chief Secretaries of Tourism and Public Works Departments; Principal Secretary, Home; Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD); Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir; Inspector General of Police, Traffic; Secretary, Transport; Deputy Inspectors General of Traffic, Jammu/Kashmir; Senior Superintendents of Police, Traffic, Srinagar/Jammu; Commissioners of Municipal Corporations, Jammu and Srinagar; Vice Chairman, Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA); Vice-Chairman, Jammu Development Authority (JDA); Director, Urban Local Bodies, besides officers from other concerned departments.

Reviewing the progress, the Chief Secretary impressed upon the departments of Housing & Urban Development, Traffic Police, and the Municipal



Corporations to move towards ground-level execution of the identified projects after finalisation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) and completion of other statutory and procedural requirements. He directed the departments to issue necessary notifications and amend rules wherever required to facilitate timely implementation and strict enforcement of traffic management measures.

The Chief Secretary observed that since the projects have already been identified in consultation with the Divisional Administrations, it was now imperative to begin implementation by making appropriate budgetary provisions, particularly as the budget exercise is currently underway. He also stressed the need for notifying changes in traffic routes, no-parking zones, and no-honking areas to ensure adequate public awareness and compliance. Principal Secretary,

Home Department, Chandraker Bharti, suggested that all approved traffic management projects be mapped on the Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) platform to enable effective monitoring and tracking of their progress.

Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur, while outlining the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the MDC, detailed the components of the comprehensive traffic management plan for both cities being implemented here. She stated that an efficient traffic management system envisages the strengthening of the Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS), development of rotaries, junctions and T-points, and integration with Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) for centralized traffic monitoring.

She further elaborated that the plan includes ensuring lane discipline and strict enforcement against traffic violations through e-challans, cancellation of driving

licences, registration certificates, and route permits, besides identification of high-traffic and congested corridors for alternative traffic solutions.

The traffic management strategy, as elaborated, also encompasses encroachment control, traffic flow regulation, decongestion measures such as relocation of vending zones, identification of pedestrian corridors, installation of dividers, development of bus stops and shelters, IT-enabled parking systems, enhancement of road capacity, and implementation of road safety and accident reduction measures.

Additionally, the plan proposes introduction of shikara and water transport management, improvement of footpaths, capacity building, public awareness initiatives, and enhanced inter-departmental coordination to ensure effective and sustainable traffic management in Jammu and Srinagar.

## DC Baramulla disburses Rs 12.78 lakh compensation to dependents of accident victim

KT NEWS DESK

BARAMULLA, FEBRUARY 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, in the presence of ALC Baramulla, Rahil Amin, Wednesday distributed a compensation cheque worth 12.78 Lacs to the dependents of accident victims under the provisions of the Employees Compensation Act, 1923 at his office chambers.

The compensation, as per an official statement, pertains to the unfortunate death of Mohammad Ashraf Malik, who lost his life in a work-related accident on 13 October 2025 at the work site at Kanispora, Baramulla. The amount was disbursed to the dependants of the deceased in accordance with the statutory provisions of the Employees Compensation Act.

On the occasion, the DC

expressed deep sympathy with the bereaved family and emphasized that the district administration remains fully committed to safeguarding the welfare and rights of workers and their families.

Minga Sherpa further stated that timely disbursement of compensation in cases of workplace fatalities is a priority for the administration, ensuring that affected families receive financial support without undue delay.

## Bandipora gears up for Wullar Bird Watch Festival, DC reviews arrangements

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, Wednesday chaired a meeting to review preparations for the WUCMA-centred Wullar Bird Watch Festival, scheduled between 9th-14th February, aimed at promoting eco-tourism and creating diversified livelihood opportunities for local communities.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was informed that all necessary instructions have been issued to the concerned departments.

Eco-guides and homestays are in readiness, while students have been trained to support festival activities. It was also appraised that police verification of all stakeholders involved in the festival has been completed.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner said that a temporary market will be established for NRLM groups, Cooperative Societies and Fisheries to showcase local products including lotus stem and water chestnuts. Shikara rides will also be available for visitors.

Five prominent locations have been identified for festival activities, with reception centres and camps at Banyari and Nadihal, and stalls at S.K. Payeen and Watlab. The DC directed the constitution of a Rate Fixation Committee to finalize rates for eco-guides, shikara rides and fisheries-related services. She also reviewed transport arrangements to ensure smooth movement during the festival. On the occasion, the

DC stressed the importance of promoting sustainable tourism around Wullar Lake by highlighting its rich biodiversity and the seasonal arrival of migratory birds. She emphasized that the Wullar Bird Watch Festival should not only enhance environmental awareness but also serve as a platform for generating sustainable and diversified livelihood opportunities for local communities.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commis-



sioner Development Bandipora, Coordinator WUCMA, District Information Officer Bandipora, Deputy Chief Education Officer Bandipora, Assistant Regional Transport Officer Bandipora, Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council Bandipora, Tehsildar Bandipora, District Programme Manager RLM Bandipora and other concerned officers.

## Kerala, J&K share spiritual, cultural bonds: Governor Arlekar

### Media delegation from J&K calls on Governor of Kerala

KT NEWS DESK

Thiruvananthapuram, February 4: Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar Wednesday said that Kerala and Jammu & Kashmir are bound by profound spiritual and cultural connections that transcend geography and time while interacting with a media delegation from Jammu & Kashmir at Lok Bhavan on Tuesday. The visit, as per the PIB statement, was part of a media tour organised by the Press Information Bureau, Srinagar, under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Highlighting Kerala's rich spiritual and cultural legacy, the Governor cited the historic link between the two regions through Adi Shankaracharya, the philosopher-saint born in Kerala, who is believed to have established the Sharada Peetha in Srinagar. This, he said, stands as a lasting symbol of the civilisational ties between Kerala and Kashmir.

Members of the visiting delegation lauded Kerala's warm hospitality during their tour. They noted that the State's cleanliness, efficient public transport system and overall civic standards left a strong impression on them.

The 14-member delegation, comprised of two officers and 12 journalists. As a gesture of



goodwill, the Governor presented the members with commemorative mementoes. The delegation, in turn, honoured the Governor with a traditional Kashmiri shawl and a samovar. The delegation was accompanied by V. Palanichamy IIS,

Additional Director General, Press Information Bureau, and Majid Pandit, Media and Communication Officer, PIB Srinagar.

The team concluded the visit by inviting the Governor to Jammu & Kashmir.

## DLSA Srinagar conducts awareness programme on SC/ST Act

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 04: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar conducted an awareness programme under the guidance of Haq Nawaz Zargar, Chairman DLSA, Srinagar and overall supervision of Secretary DLSA, Srinagar on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in tribal areas of Dara, Faqir Gujri Srinagar.

The programme, as per an official statement, was organized through Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and members of the Samvaad Committee with the aim of educating tribal communities about their legal rights and protections available under the Act.

During the programme, the resource person highlighted the key provisions of the Act, emphasizing the safeguards provided to members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes against atrocities,

discrimination, and exploitation. The participants were informed about the legal remedies available, the procedure for lodging complaints, and the role of legal aid institutions in ensuring justice to victims.

The PLVs actively interacted with the local population and distributed informative material to enhance awareness regarding free legal services available through DLSA Srinagar. The members of the committee stressed the importance of timely reporting of offences and assured necessary legal assistance to the victims.

The programme witnessed active participation from members of the tribal community, who appreciated the initiative taken by DLSA Srinagar in spreading legal awareness and empowering marginalized sections of society.

DLSA Srinagar reiterated its commitment to continue conducting such awareness programmes to ensure access to justice for all, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized communities.

### GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

## OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE, SRINAGAR

Near Petrol Pump Baghi Ali Mardan Khan, Srinagar -190011

Email id: gmdic-srinagar@jk.gov.in

Tel Fax: 0194-2427478

### PUBLIC NOTICE

M/s Syco Trading Co., I/E Zainakote Srinagar stands formally registered with this office under No.: 01/003/0954 PMT/MSME dated 31.03.2003 for the line of activity "Processing/packing of walnuts and spices grinding", as partnership concern of (I). Mr. Shahid Gul Sin (ihulam Mohammad Guroo R/o Maharajpora 13atmaloo. Srinagar (2).Mr. Mohammad Sycd Khan SA) nap Inayat Ullah Khan R/o 29- Ilalmatpora, Kupwara presently at Umerahad, IIMT Zainbakote, Srinagar.

Now one of the partners of the unit namely Mr. Shahid Gut S/o Ghulam Mohammad Guroo R/o Maharajpora Batmaloo, Srinagar intends to take retirement from the partnership, thereby leaving the unit as proprietorship of Mr. Mohammad Sycd Khan Sha Dap Inayat Ullah Khan R/o 29-Nalmarpora, Kupwara presently at Umerabad, IIMT Zainbakote, Srinagar.

Any person having any objection for above proposed change shall report to the office of General Manager. District Industries Centre, Srinagar within a period of 07 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which no objection shall be entertained

DIPK-10603/25  
DATED: 04-02-2026

Sd/-  
General Manager  
District Industries Centre  
Srinagar

### GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

## PUBLIC WORKS(R&B) DEPARTMENT

## CIVIL SECRETARIAT, JAMMU/SRINAGAR

Subject: Compassionate appointment case of Ms. Afrooza Bano W/o Late Showkat Ahmad Guroo, R/o Narayan

Bagh, Tulmulla Wakora, Ganderbal, under J&K Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme -2022 - Notice thereof.

Reference No: O.M. No. GAD-RAS/42/2025-09-GAD (7660073) dated 20.01.2026, from the General Administration Department.

### NOTICE

Smt. Afrooza Bano, Wd/o Late Sh. Showkat Ahmad Guroo (Ex-Road Worker), R/o Narayan Bagh, Tulmulla, Wakora, District Ganderbal, is hereby informed through this notice to furnish her email address and mobile/contact details to the Public Works (R&B) Department, Civil Secretariat, Jammu/Srinagar, for registration under the EVS Portal (Employee Verification System).

The requisite details may be furnished either in person or through email at clericalhallrnb121@gmail.com within a period of 15 days from the date of issuance of this notice, in terms of Circular No. 18-3K(GAD) of 2022 dated 20.05.2022, issued by the General Administration Department..

It is further informed that failure to furnish the above- mentioned information within the stipulated time frame shall be construed as unwillingness to accept appointment in the Public Works (R&B) Department under the Jammu and Kashmir Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme-2022, and the claimant shall forfeit her right to appointment without any further notice.

Namrita Wanchoo  
Under Secretary to the Government  
DIPK-10596/25  
DATED: 04-02-2026



## Jammu division gets 92% of J&K's EWS certificates

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Feb 04: The Jammu division accounts for the bulk of Economically Weaker Section (EWS) certificates issued in Jammu and Kashmir, with over 24,500 certificates granted so far in two years, while the Kashmir Valley remains much lower with just 2,013 certificates.

Government data reveals that a total of 26,558 EWS certificates have been issued across the Union Territory. Of these, 24,545 were issued in the Jammu division alone.

District-wise figures show Kathua leading with 6,972 certificates, followed by Jammu district with 5,881

and Samba with 4,436. In the Kashmir division, Anantnag recorded the highest number with 483 certificates, followed by Kulgam with 390 and Baramulla with 332.

The government said all applications are examined strictly as per rules and guidelines. It clarified that EWS certificates are denied only when applicants fail to meet the eligibility conditions prescribed under SRO 518 of 2019.

It further stated that cases involving shared residential property with married siblings or other legal shareholders are assessed individually, and rejection is made only where the prescribed criteria are not fulfilled—(KNO)

## Elected representatives should focus on public issues: Sakeena Itoo

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Jammu, Feb 04: Health and Education Minister Sakeena Itoo on Wednesday called for prioritising public issues over divisive narratives, saying people have sent elected representatives to serve them. She said discussions should focus on public concerns rather than personal agendas, religion, or region-wise differences.

"For us, Jammu and Kashmir is one, and all public representatives should work for the people," Itoo told reporters on the sidelines of the ongoing Assembly session in Jammu.

The minister urged political representatives to work for the welfare of all regions



and focus on fulfilling promises such as statehood.

"The BJP had promised statehood to the people before the elections. That must remain part of our discussions," she said, highlighting key public demands, including water issues.

Addressing attempts

to push communal narratives, Itoo added, "The Hindu-Muslim narrative has already been rejected by the people. Jammu and Kashmir's voters have shown in the elections that they will not accept negative politics, and we will continue to uphold this approach."—(KNO)

## Statehood demand should have been in LG's address: MLA Irfan Hafeez

KNO

Jammu, Feb 04: In a subtle snub to the National Conference, Congress MLA Irfan Hafeez Lone on Wednesday said that the demand for statehood should have been reiterated in the Lieutenant Governor's address.

Speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the Lieutenant Governor's Address, Irfan Hafeez Lone—who is also a petitioner in the statehood case—said that the demand for statehood should have been included in the LG's speech.

"In the last LG's address, it was said that 'My Government recognises the emotional and political significance of statehood for the people and is actively engaging with all stakeholders to facilitate this process in a manner that ensures peace, stability and progress.' The Supreme Court also reflected submissions about the cabinet resolution on statehood. In its order, the Court noted: 'It is also submitted that the cabinet of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

passed a resolution on 18.10.2024, requesting the Union of India to take up the matter of restoration of statehood,'" Lone said.

He added that the Solicitor General had submitted before the Supreme Court that the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and the Government of India are in consultation over the issue of statehood.

"I want to say that the demand for restoration of statehood should have been mentioned in this LG's Address," he asserted.

Lone further said that the way Kashmiris are being harassed across the country is a matter of serious concern.

"This is a matter of serious concern," he reiterated.

He stressed that all citizens are equal before the law and argued that MLA Mehraj Malik's detention amounted to "imprisoning the Assembly and undermining it."

"If he has spoken rudely, it does not warrant action under the Public Safety Act," Lone added—(KNO)

## ‘Kakapora hospital building to be handed over by June 2026’

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 04: The 50-bedded hospital building in Kakapora is expected to be handed over to the Health Department in June 2026, the government said on Wednesday.

In a written reply to MLA Hasnain Masoodi, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo said that the civil component of the hospital building has been completed by the executing agency, the J&K Housing Board.

"The internal electrification has been finished, while work on the electric sub-station is currently in progress. Construction of the boundary wall is also underway. The J&K Housing Board is expected to formally hand over the building to the Health Department in June 2026," she said.

The minister said that the shifting of the existing hospital to the newly constructed building is expected in June 2026, as per timelines communicated

by the executing agency. "However, the facility currently functions as a Primary Health Centre (PHC), and there is no proposal for its upgrade to a Sub-District Hospital (SDH) as of now. It is pertinent to mention that PHC Kakapora is located approximately 14 km from AIIMS Awantipora and 10 km from SDH Pampore," Itoo said. "Given its present catchment population, the PHC does not fulfil the criteria prescribed under the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norms, 2022, for upgrade to an SDH."

The minister further provided figures from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, revealing that outpatients numbered 86,227, inpatients 2,831, and surgeries performed totalled 745.

"As of now, there is no proposal under consideration for any supplementary staff," Itoo said, adding that vacant posts are being filled through the National Health Mission (NHM) to ensure continuity of services and meet patient care requirements—(KNO)

## Pandemonium in Assembly over LoP Sharma's Pir Panchal remarks

KNO

Jammu, Feb 04: Pandemonium broke out in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday over Leader of Opposition (LoP) Sunil Kumar Sharma's objection to referring to the Rajouri and Poonch districts as the Pir Panchal region.

After the Question Hour concluded, Congress MLA Iftikhar Ahmed, who represents the Rajouri assembly segment, demanded that Sharma apologise for objecting to the reference to Rajouri and Poonch districts of the Jammu region as Pir Panchal.

"Konsa Khita (which region?), Kya Khita (what region?), Kaha Se Naam Pada Hai (where did it get this name?)," Sharma had told reporters when he was asked about the demand for setting up a National Law University in the Pir Panchal region.

As Iftikhar persisted with the demand, other legislators from the ruling alliance, especially those representing these twin districts, also stood up and supported the Congress MLA. Shouting slogans of



"Jeevay Jeevay Pir Panchal," the MLAs of the ruling alliance continued with their demand.

Soon, BJP legislators were on their feet, countering the ruling alliance MLAs. "We will not allow the Dixon Plan to succeed," the BJP MLAs shouted.

Amid the din in the House, Deputy CM Surinder Choudhary accused the LoP of insulting the sacrifices of the people of Pir Panchal. "He

should apologise. This is an insult. From the time of the tribal invasion to the wars with Pakistan to the militancy of the past 36 years, thousands of people of Pir Panchal have rendered countless sacrifices," he said.

As the uproar continued in the House, the Speaker adjourned proceedings for 15 minutes—the first adjournment during the ongoing budget session—(KNO)

## BJP MLAs stage walkout, accuses Speaker of bias in allocating time

YOGESH

Jammu, Feb 04: Accusing the Speaker of bias in allocating time to MLAs, all the legislators of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday staged a walkout from the House.

During discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the LG's address, the BJP MLAs questioned the time given to NC's Sajad Shaheen, who was speaking at that time.

The BJP MLAs accused the Speaker of bias and alleged that he was giving more to MLAs of the ruling party and ignoring the opposition.

The Speaker denied the charges of the principal opposition party, saying that he was running the House as per established convention and procedures.

He tried to pacify the agitating lawmakers but they didn't relent and staged a walkout from the House.

Later, the BJP legislators staged a dharna outside House, accusing the Speaker of the bias.

Talking to reporters, Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma said the Speaker was muzzleing the voice of the opposition and showing bias.

"The Speaker is protecting the government from answering questions. He is suppressing the opposition's voice," Sharma told reporters.

Sharma alleged that opposition legislators were not allowed to effectively participate in the discussion—(KNO)

## Use your 50 MLAs to hear people out: Para tells CM Omar

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 04: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Pulwama, Waheed ur Rehman Para launched a strong attack on the Omar Abdul-lah-led government in the Assembly on Wednesday, urging it to focus on issues within its control instead of "avoiding responsibility".

Para said that the ruling alliance enjoys the support of over 50 MLAs and must use this strength to engage directly with the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"We understand that restoring special status and other political issues requires time. But why not address issues that are in your hands?" Para asked. "You were voted for human dignity, as developmental works were taken up during the LG administration as well, but what has actually changed on the ground in the last one year?"

He said stability should not come at the cost of people's rights and self-respect. "What was happening in the LG administration continues – employee termination, NIA raids, and attachment of properties were going on then and are going on now. It clearly indicates that your vision document lacks compassion and any roadmap for healing," he said.



The PDP leader accused the government of showing aggression only against political opponents within Jammu and Kashmir while lacking the same resolve during meetings with central leadership. "You fight fiercely with the Leader of the Opposition and BJP leaders here, but that energy disappears when you meet the PM, HM, and others in Delhi," he observed.

Para urged that constant blame games between the PDP and NC over past mistakes would not shape the future of Jammu and Kashmir. He added that since Home Minister Amit Shah is visiting J&K, the local government must ask him to

engage with local people here, as Shah "always says he will talk to the people of J&K, not Pakistan".

The MLA said that nobody is listening to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. "This has led to a growing sense of defeat among them, with unresolved issues of merit, reservations, and empowerment adding to their concerns," he said. "People are losing hope because fairness is not being delivered."

Para revealed that none of the 15 development works sanctioned in his constituency last year had been tendered, while 300 crore sanctioned under the Special Assistance Scheme had seen zero expenditure. "What is the fun of sanctioning then?" he questioned.

He also alleged that 28 departments submitted "copy-paste replies" in the Assembly, reflecting the same project status as one year ago. "This is a sign of stagnation, not governance," he said.

The PDP leader said that structural changes in Jammu and Kashmir's administrative framework had weakened all legislators, including BJP members. "Today, all of us in this House are weaker than before, and there is no reason for Kashmiris to fight each other. The Chief Minister must fight for Kashmiris, not

Kashmiri versus Kashmiri," he said.

He claimed that smaller parties were being "silenced" in the House. "Don't dehumanise us because PDP has four MLAs and PC has one. Democracy is about voice, not numbers," he said.

On the reservation issue, Para said it could have been resolved administratively through a Social Welfare Department order instead of prolonged political drama. He also proposed establishing two campuses of the National Law University, one in Jammu and one in Kashmir, to avoid regional controversy.

Alleging favouritism, the PDP MLA claimed that NC leader and CM's Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani was given ministerial status and his son received a state award without justification, while persons such as Irfan Sarkar, who organised the Valley's first day-night cricket tournament, along with many other deserving people, were ignored.

Following Para's remarks against NC's Aslam and his son, several National Conference MLAs raised counter-questions regarding PDP's past decisions, including how Tas- aduq Mufti was appointed as a minister during the previous PDP government, leading to a heated exchange in the Assembly—(KNO)

## BSNL cellular service reaches 4,489 J&K hamlets: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 04: The Government of India on Wednesday informed Parliament that BSNL has extended cellular connectivity to 4,489 out of 6,553 villages in Jammu and Kashmir, while efforts are underway to cover the remaining areas.

In a written reply to an unstarred question in the Lok Sabha, the Union Ministry of Communications stated: "BSNL is in the process of rolling out indigenously developed 4G services, which are technology-upgradable to 5G, under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative."

It said that BSNL has placed purchase orders for one lakh 4G sites for pan-India deployment. As on January 15, 2026, a total of 97,672 4G sites have been installed, out of which 95,511 sites are already operational across the country.

The ministry said BSNL continues to expand its

network, including in Jammu and Kashmir, based on techno-commercial viability to improve coverage, especially in rural and remote areas.

To strengthen BSNL and make it competitive, the Centre has approved multiple revival packages, including Rs 69,000 crore in 2019, Rs 1.64 lakh crore in 2022, Rs 89,000 crore for allotment of 4G/5G spectrum in 2023, and an additional Rs 6,982 crore CAPEX support in 2025 for nationwide 4G rollout.

"As a result of these revival measures, BSNL has started earning operating profits from the financial year 2020–21," the government said.

The Ministry added that network modernisation and expansion, including in Jammu and Kashmir, remains a priority to ensure reliable connectivity and strengthen BSNL's presence as a public sector telecom operator—(KNO)

## Mansar has 4G cellular coverage: Centre

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 04: Dismissing reports of no mobile connectivity in Jammu's Mansar village, the Centre on Wednesday informed the Parliament that the area has 4G cellular coverage.

In a written reply to an unstarred question in the Lok Sabha, the Union Ministry of Communications, said, "As per data from the Registrar General of India, nine villages across six States and Union Territories bear the name Mansar, including one village in J&K, and all of them have 4G mobile coverage."

The Ministry informed the House that since 4G services are already available in Mansar village of J&K, there is no proposal at present to install additional mobile towers under the 4G Saturation Project in the area.

The Ministry further said that questions regarding installation of towers using DBN funds or inclusion of Mansar village under the 4G Saturation Project do not arise in view of the existing mobile connectivity.

The clarification came amid concerns raised over mobile network availability in some rural areas, with the government reiterating that connectivity status is being regularly monitored, including in Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)



## EDITORIAL

# Building A Holistic, Future-Ready Education System

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's address at the Inspirational Teachers Award ceremony offers a timely and compelling vision for education that moves decisively beyond rote learning. By urging teachers to "think beyond the curriculum's rigid map" and nurture creativity over mere content delivery, he has precisely identified the transformative shift required to prepare students for a future defined by artificial intelligence, climate challenges, and rapid technological

disruption. The LG's metaphor of a classroom as a "glowing forge" where "raw futures are hammered and shaped anew" is powerful. It reframes the teacher's role from that of an information dispenser to that of a master artisan and mentor. In an age where AI can replicate and deliver vast amounts of information, the true value of education lies in fostering what machines cannot: critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and collaborative innovation. As the LG rightly emphasised, humanity's

greatest future asset will be innovative thinking, and classrooms must become incubators for this skill. The call to cultivate a "culture of collaboration" is equally astute. The complex problems of the 21st century, from public health to sustainability, will not be solved in isolation. Classrooms must evolve into hubs of teamwork and collective inquiry, where students learn to research, debate, and create together. This shift from passive listening to active, collaborative exploration is fundamental

to building a dynamic, knowledge-based economy and a resilient society. This vision aligns perfectly with the spirit of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates for holistic and flexible learning. Honouring 101 inspirational teachers underscores that the system already possesses the talent to lead this change. The challenge now is to systematically empower all educators with the training, resources, and institutional freedom to break preconceived boundaries. The administration

must support this pedagogical revolution by reducing bureaucratic overload on teachers and incentivising innovative teaching methods. Ultimately, the LG's remarks are a clarion call to re-centre education on the student as an explorer and creator. By championing teachers as the "soul of the nation" who ignite curiosity, we can ensure our youth are not merely prepared for the future but are equipped to boldly shape it. This is the true foundation of a Viksit Bharat.

## BUDGET 2026-27 SERIES

# Transforming India Into A Global Biopharma Hub

Press Information Bureau

The Union Budget 2026-27 marks a decisive shift in India's approach to pharmaceuticals by placing biopharma and biologic medicines at the centre of its healthcare and manufacturing strategy. This aligns with the Government of India's vision of transforming India into a leading global biopharma industry and capturing 5% of the global biopharmaceutical market share.[1] [2] Acknowledging the growing burden of non-communicable diseases and the increasing global reliance on biologics and biosimilars, the Budget positions biopharma as a high-value, future-facing segment critical for both public health and economic growth.

Biopharma involves production, manufacturing, or extraction of therapies through biological organisms, such as human cells, fungi, or microbes. Some examples of biopharmaceuticals include vaccines, antibody treatments, gene therapies, cell implants, modern insulin, and recombinant protein drugs.[3]

Union Budget 2025-26: Biopharma SHAKTI Initiative  
Key Budget Announcements for Biopharma:

Launch of Biopharma SHAKTI, a dedicated national initiative with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crores over five years, aimed at strengthening India's end-to-end ecosystem for biologics and biosimilars. The initiative is designed to support domestic development and manufacturing of high-value biopharmaceutical products and medicines, reduce import dependence, and enhance India's competitiveness in global biologics supply chains.

Expansion and strengthening of the Biopharma-focused network through the establishment of three new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPERs) and the upgradation of seven existing NIPERs. This measure seeks to address the growing requirement for highly specialised human resources in biopharma research, development, manufacturing and regulation.

Creation of a large-scale clinical research ecosystem, with a proposal to develop over 1,000 accredited clinical trial sites across the country. This is expected to significantly improve India's capacity to conduct advanced clinical trials for biologics and biosimilars, accelerating innovation, and positioning the country as a preferred global destination for ethical, high-quality, and efficient clinical trials.

Strengthening of the regulatory framework for biologics, including enhancing the capacity of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) through the induction of specialised scientific and technical personnel. The focus is on improving regulatory efficiency, aligning approval timeframes with global standards, and enabling faster evaluation of complex biopharmaceutical products.

Why This Matters

The Budget links manufacturing scale, skilled human resources, clinical research capacity and regulatory credibility into a single framework. This signals a clear intent to move India up the pharmaceutical value chain—from being a cost-efficient producer of generic medicines to a global hub for high-quality, innovation-driven biopharmaceutical products.

This Budget push further strengthens the groundwork for India to compete in the global biopharma market while improving domestic access to advanced and affordable biologic therapies.

What is Biopharma?

In recent years, medicines have increasingly moved beyond traditional chemical drugs to therapies that are developed using biology itself. This shift has brought biopharma to the forefront of modern healthcare. Biopharma, or biopharmaceuticals, refers to the part of the pharmaceutical industry that focuses on developing and manufacturing medicines using living



biological systems, rather than relying solely on chemical synthesis.

In simple terms, biopharma medicines are produced by working with cells, microorganisms or other biological materials. These may include human or animal cells, bacteria, fungi or similar biological platforms that are used to grow or produce therapeutic substances.[4] Using biotechnology-based research methods, these living systems are guided to produce medicines that can prevent, diagnose or treat disease. Because they are created through biological processes, biopharma products are often more complex and targeted than conventional drugs, allowing them to interact more precisely with biological pathways.

Some of the most widely used modern medicines fall under biopharma, including vaccines, therapeutic proteins, biosimilars and other advanced biologic therapies. These products have become essential to public health programmes and clinical care, particularly for infectious diseases, chronic conditions and disorders where traditional drugs may be less effective. The Government of India has launched various programmes for the development of the industry. This evolving biopharma ecosystem and targeted policy support strengthen the foundation of India's push to emerge as a globally competitive biopharma hub.[5]

Government Initiatives to Strengthen India's Biopharma Sector

The Indian pharmaceutical industry is no longer limited to making low-cost generic medicines; it is increasingly investing in research and developing complex, high-value products such as biopharmaceuticals and biosimilars. The country has emerged as a global hub for affordable, high-quality medicines, ranking 3rd in pharmaceutical production by volume and 14th by value. [6] [7] [8]

Over the past several years, the Government of India has implemented a series of policy initiatives and schemes aimed at strengthening the biopharmaceutical sector across the value chain, from research and early-stage product development to manufacturing, innovation and commercialisation.

Various initiatives focus on bringing together government, academia, industry and start-ups. They aim to build shared infrastructure, encourage innovation, and strengthen domestic manufacturing, with the goal of making India a global biopharma and biomanufacturing hub.

National Biopharma Mission (NBM) – "Innovate in India (i3)"

The National Biopharma Mission (NBM) – Innovate in India (i3) was launched in May 2017 with an aim of transforming India into a \$100 billion leading global biotech industry by 2025 and capturing 5% of the global pharmaceutical share. The scheme's total cost is Rs. 1,500 crore.[9] It is co-funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).[10] The mission focuses on the development of new vaccines, biopharmaceuticals, diagnostics and medical devices to address the rising burden of diseases in the country. The mission also aims to make drugs more affordable and accessible.

NBM supports 101 projects, involving over 150 organisations and 30 MSMEs. It has also generated over 1,000 jobs, including 304 scientists and researchers. Additionally, the Genome India Programme, which involves sequencing 10,000 genomes, is expected to shape future global healthcare strategies, both in treatment and prevention. [11]

It works by bringing together industry, academia and the government. The initial focus of the mission is on developing vaccines for human papillomavirus (HPV), dengue and biosimilars for cancer, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis and medical devices and diagnostics.[12]

NBM As Catalyst of India's Health Innovation Ecosystem

A key outcome of the Mission has been the emergence of a new generation of biotech entrepreneurs translating scientific innovation into affordable healthcare solutions.

One such example is Arjun Arunachalam, whose Bengaluru-based start-up, Voxel Grids Innovations Private Ltd, has become the first in India to indigenously develop and market an MRI scanner comparable to global standards at a fraction of the cost of imported machines. These lightweight, energy-efficient scanners are already in use at cancer hospitals in Mumbai and Assam, improving access to advanced diagnostics. The Mission received initial funding from Tata Trusts. But he got the most essential funding – Rs. 12.4 crores – by the BIRAC.

A few people in white protective suits working in a laboratory AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Similarly, Jatin Vimal of Chennai-based Levim Lifetech Pvt Ltd has produced India's first biosimilar of Liraglutide for Type 2 diabetes, priced at nearly one-third of the imported version. The mission covered 85% of his clinical trial costs.

Private ventures backed by the mission are developing antibiotics and vaccines for

diseases such as UTIs, pneumonia, dengue, chikungunya, malaria and Hepatitis E. The mission also supported the world's first DNA-based COVID-19 vaccine, ZyCoV-D, developed by Zydus Cadila.

The National Biopharma Mission (NBM) has provided early-stage funding to many of the nearly 10,000 bio-based startups since 2014, with Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) establishing about 100 incubation centres.

Over 7,000 participants (45% women) have been trained in global regulatory and intellectual property rights practices; seven Regional Technology Transfer Offices have handled 850+ IP filings and nearly 120 technology transfers.

NBM has established clinical trial sites, supported by a database of around 8 lakh volunteers, enabling trials in cancer, rheumatology, diabetes and ophthalmology.

"India has the capability and the will to make a mark in the \$1.1 trillion global pharma industry," said NBM's Director Dr Raj K. Shirumalla.[13]

BIRAC-led Biotech Innovation Support BIRAC, established in 2012 under Department of Biotechnology, supports innovation through funding schemes, incubation infrastructure and mentorship, with 95 bio-incubation centres established across the country. Its programmes are aligned with national biotechnology and innovation policies and focus on addressing nationally relevant product development needs.[14]

Key schemes include: Biotechnology Ignition Grant (BIG): Up to Rs. 50 lakh for 18 months to support early-stage startups; nearly 1,000 innovators supported.

SEED Fund: Rs. 30 lakh equity support for proof-of-concept stage startups.

LEAP Fund: Rs. 100 lakh equity support for commercialisation-ready innovations.

CARE – Amrit Grand Challenge: Supported 89 digital health tech innovations in artificial intelligence, machine learning, telemedicine, and blockchain, with a focus on tier-II, tier-III cities and rural areas.[15]

Manufacturing and Industrial Strengthening Measures

To strengthen domestic pharmaceutical and biopharma manufacturing, the Government has implemented schemes such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Pharmaceuticals, Strengthening of Pharmaceutical Industry (SPI) scheme and the Bulk Drug Parks Scheme. These initiatives focus on enhancing manufacturing capacity, reducing import dependence for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and intermediates, upgrading MSME facilities to WHO-Good Manufacturing Standards, and creating common infrastructure facilities within pharmaceutical clusters.[16]

The SPI Scheme includes assistance for common facilities in pharmaceutical clusters, support for technology upgradation of MSMEs, and promotion and development activities for pharmaceuticals and medical devices. Together with PLI schemes and bulk drug parks, these measures aim to enhance supply chain resilience, improve quality standards, and support domestic and export-oriented production of medicines.[17]

Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech (PRIP)

The Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech (PRIP) scheme, launched in 2023 by the Department of Pharmaceuticals with an approved outlay of Rs. 5,000 crore, seeks to transform India into an innovation-driven and globally competitive Pharma-MedTech sector. The scheme supports early- and late-stage R&D in new drugs, biosimilars, complex generics, precision medicine and novel medical devices. It also encourages industry-academia collaboration through Centres of Excellence at NIPERs.[18]

BioE3 Policy and Bio-RIDE Scheme The BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy,

## Key Takeaways

Union Budget 2026-27 proposed the Biopharma SHAKTI with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crores over five years, aimed at strengthening India's ecosystem for production of biologics and biosimilars.

The initiative aligns with aim of transforming India into a leading global biopharma industry and capturing 5% of the global biopharmaceutical market share.

The National Biopharma Mission and other schemes launched over the past few years are working towards the same goal.

Environment and Employment) Policy was approved by the Union Cabinet in August 2024. The scheme aims to establish biomanufacturing, Bio-AI hubs and Biofoundry for a sustainable Viksit Bharat. The salient features include innovation-driven support for research and development, and entrepreneurship across the sector. The innovations will address critical social issues such as diseases, food security and climate change.

The BioE3 Policy focuses on the following strategic/thematic sectors:

Bio-based chemicals, polymers and enzymes  
Functional foods and smart proteins  
Precision biotherapeutics  
Climate resilient agriculture  
Carbon capture and its utilization  
Marine and space research[19]

The Bio-RIDE scheme launched in September 2024 merged two umbrella schemes of Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under one scheme: 'Biotechnology Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development (Bio-RIDE)' with a new component namely Biomanufacturing and Biofoundry. The outlay for the scheme is Rs. 9197 crore, covering the 15th finance Commission period from 2021-22 to 2025-26. Like other schemes, this one too aims at using bio-innovation to tackle national and global challenges across sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, environmental sustainability, and clean energy.

The scheme has three broad components: Biotechnology Research and Development (R&D)

Industrial & Entrepreneurship Development (I&E)

Biomanufacturing and Biofoundry The scheme aims to promote bio-entrepreneurship, support cutting-edge research, facilitate industry-academic collaboration, encourage sustainable biomanufacturing, fund researchers, and provide support to students, young researchers and scientists working in the biotechnology field.[20]

## Conclusion

All these measures signal a deliberate and coordinated policy approach by the government to build a resilient biopharma ecosystem in India, spanning research, innovation, manufacturing and entrepreneurship. This alignment is increasingly vital as India's disease burden shifts toward non-communicable conditions such as diabetes, cancer and autoimmune disorders, where access to biologic therapies is essential for long-term health outcomes.

The Biopharma SHAKTI scheme announced in the Union Budget 2026-27 therefore represents a key policy intervention in this direction. Backed by an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore over five years, the scheme is designed to further strengthen domestic capabilities in biologics and biosimilars through targeted investments in workforce development, nationwide clinical trials infrastructure and enhanced regulatory capacity, reinforcing India's ambition to become a global biopharma manufacturing hub.

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BUDGET SESSION 2026

# Govt to fast-track forest clearances for road projects: Deputy CM

## Say centre to fund 90% of PMGSY-IV works in J&K



KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Wednesday said that the government will expedite the forest clearance for speedy execution of road projects in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that the cases shall be taken up with the concerned agencies for hassle-free work execution on the road network projects.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement stated that the cost-sharing pattern for PMGSY IV construction in J&K is 90 percent funded by the Centre and 10 percent by the

Union Territory.

This information was given by the Deputy Chief Minister in the Legislative Assembly while replying to a question raised by Legislator Payare Lal Sharma.

Regarding land compensation on account of road construction under PMGSY IV, he informed that the UT government is responsible for providing hindrance-free and encumbrance-free land for PMGSY-IV projects, including compensation for land acquisition.

The supplementary questions were raised by Legislators Nazir Ahmad Khan and Balwant Singh Mankotia on the subject.

## No enquiry ordered into construction of 4th Tawi Bridge: Deputy CM

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Wednesday said that as per the reports of the Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Chief Engineer Public (R&B) Department Zone, Jammu and Managing Director, JKPCCL Limited, no enquiry has been ordered against the Executing Agency responsible for construction of 4th Tawi Bridge.

This information, as per an official statement, was given by the Deputy Chief Minister in the Legislative Assembly while replying to a question raised by Sham Lal Sharma.

He stated that the recent floods in Jammu damaged the bridge's approaches but the bridge itself remained intact.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that as per the inputs furnished by the Managing Director, JKPCCL, the 4th Tawi Bridge project

was awarded to JKPCCL in 2010, with an estimated cost of Rs 93.12 crore. The project was approved and JKPCCL floated an e-tender, which got matured.

The Deputy CM added that consequent upon the decision of the Contract Committee and subsequent approval of Chairman JKPCCL Limited, the allotment was made to the lowest bidder, M/S S.P Shingla Construction Private Limited, for an amount of Rs 67.088 crore on turnkey basis. He further informed that the said contractor took up the work and completed the bridge in time, which was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister in the year 2013 and thrown open for public traffic.

The Deputy CM added that after commissioning of the said bridge and during the heavy floods which occurred in 2014, the bridge components remained intact and no part of the bridge was damaged.

## Permanent restoration of Larnoo Bridge underway at cost of Rs 2 crore: Deputy CM

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary Wednesday said that the works worth Rs. 2 crore are being carried out by the R&B department for permanent restoration of Larnoo Bridge in Kokernag constituency of Anantnag district.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement was replying to a question raised by Legislator Zafar Ali Khatana in the House.

He added that the Larnoo Bridge, located on the T03 Dessu Lehenwan Marg, was previously built by the R&B department.

He said that the Bridge Abutment wing and approach walls got partially damaged during the floods in the months of August and September 2025 and permanent restoration is being carried out at an estimated cost of Rs. 200.00 Lakh.

He further informed that the road from Bidhard to Khirty is a single lane BT road, in good condition, with a carriage width of 3.65 meter.

## J&K govt rolls out multiple measures to strengthen economic resilience of industrial units, MSMEs: Deputy CM

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Wednesday said that the government has undertaken numerous initiatives to improve cash flow, address financial stress and strengthen economic resilience of industrial units, MSMEs, artisans, weavers and farmers of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a question raised by Legislator Waheed ur Rehman Parra in the House.

He added that the government has launched the JKMSME Health Clinic as an institutional mechanism to identify early signs of industrial stress using analytics and facilitating systematic assessment and customized remedial measures for revival.

He said that access to finance has been further strengthened under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) programme through enhanced linkage with the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the J&K Industrial Policy 2021-30 continues to provide multiple incentives, including turnover and SGST incentives, green initiatives, 100% subsidy on diesel generator sets, exemptions from stamp duty and court fee besides subsidies for quality certification, automation and pollution control.

He said that the revival and rehabilitation of sick MSMEs are being guided by the RBI's

Framework for Revival and Rehabilitation of MSMEs, enabling restructuring of liabilities and need-based financial assistance.

Regarding the welfare of artisans and weavers, the Deputy Chief Minister said that several targeted schemes are being implemented on this account. These included the Credit Card Scheme for Artisans and Weavers, offering credit up to Rs.2 lakh with 7% interest subvention; financial support to cooperatives and SHGs; Karkhandar Scheme for skill upgradation; Weavers MUDRA Scheme and the Education Scheme for Children of Artisans and Weavers.

He said that GI-certified unit holders are also being provided rent-free stalls and full support for participation in exhibitions. Additionally, master craftsmen facing indigent circumstances receive monthly assistance under the Direct Benefit Scheme.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the Agriculture Production Department is extending robust financial relief to the farmers through interest subvention on crop loans under the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme, credit restructuring in case of natural calamities and comprehensive crop insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

Further, he said that the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) and Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) are promoting long-term investment in agriculture and livestock infrastructure through interest subvention and credit guarantees.

## J&K govt imposes moratorium on new polluting units in Khrew-Khonmoh to curb air pollution: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: The government has taken a slew of measures to control air pollution in Khrew and Khonmoh areas of Pulwama, reiterating its commitment towards safeguarding public health and ensuring environmentally sustainable industrial development through strict monitoring and enforcement.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Hasnain Masoodi, Minister for Forest, Ecology, Environment Javed Ahmed Rana Wednesday, as per an official statement, informed the Legislative Assembly that Cement industries operating in the Union Territory have been directed by the J&K Pollution Control Committee (J&K PCC) to install Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Systems (CAAQMS) for regular monitoring of air quality. Two CAAQMS have been installed in Khrew and Khonmoh, respectively, for continuous monitoring, he added.

He informed that Cement Industries with production capacity of 200 Tonnes Per day (TPD) have installed Online Continuous Emission Monitoring System (OCEMS) and real time data generated is being uploaded on Central Pollution Control Board.

He added that the Cement plants have been advised to install advanced emission control devices, including Automatic Pulse Jet Bag Filters, Reverse Air Bag Filters and Electrostatic Precipitators (ESPs) to minimize the air pollution. To scientifically assess the air quality scenario, the J&KPCC has assigned a study on air quality in Khrew and Khonmoh areas to the



University of Kashmir, he added.

Regarding the grant of mining lease, the Minister said that the government has granted 9 mining leases in the Khrew-Wuyan area of Pulwama district, of which, four are operational and functioning strictly in accordance with the approved Mining Plans, Environmental Clearances (EC), Consents to Operate (CTO) and other statutory provisions. The remaining five (05) mining leases are non-operational due to want of EC and CTO, he added.

The Minister said that all leases had been granted under the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act and Rules and are made operational only after obtaining necessary No-Objection Certificates from the concerned stakeholders.

In order to further curb pollution, Javed Rana informed the House that J&K PCC imposed a moratorium on establishment of new air-polluting industries in Khrew and Khonmoh areas.

The moratorium shall remain in force for cement plants,

stone crushers, hot mix plants, brick kilns and mining activities until the annual average Air Quality Index (AQI) falls below 100 or the Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI) falls below 60, he apprised the House.

The Forest Minister said that the J&K PCC has advised the concerned departments and stakeholders to ensure proper macadamization and maintenance of roads, transportation of cement in sealed conditions, covered transportation of raw materials and crushed material without overloading besides regular sprinkling of water on roads.

Regarding the use of Pet Coke, the government clarified that its usage is being regulated under the Jammu and Kashmir Pet Coke and Furnace Oil Policy. He added that the Industries using Pet Coke are required to obtain authorization under the Hazardous Waste (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016 and install Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) systems with sulphur removal efficiency of more than 90 percent.

## Govt prioritising enrolment growth, optimal use of resources in degree colleges in J&K: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Minister for Education Sakeena Itoo Wednesday said that the government is presently prioritizing enhancement of overall enrolment, strengthening of academic offerings and improving utilization of existing institutional resources for the benefit of students in Government Degree Colleges across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said this while replying to a question of Legislator Nizam-ud-Din Bhat regarding H.K Government Degree College (GDC) Bandipora in the House.

The Education Minister informed the House that at present Science-cum-Administrative Block equipped with laboratories, 12 Room Lecture Hall Block and three



Pre-fabricated Huts are being utilised for academic activities at H K GDC Bandipora. She added that various projects like Girls Hostel, Medication and Yoga Centre, Skill Centre and three Pre-fabricated Huts are under execution, while tendering process for playground is also underway.

The Minister also informed

the house that the government is prioritizing enhancement of overall enrolment in colleges across Jammu and Kashmir. As such, establishment of a separate Degree College for Women in district Bandipora may not be viable at this stage, as the same shall further fragment the enrolment in the existing college, she added.

## Regular market inspections, rice sampling conducted across J&K to check adulteration: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Minister for Health and Medical Education Sakeena Itoo Wednesday informed the House that regular market inspections and sampling of rice is being conducted by the Health department across Jammu and Kashmir, including Srinagar, to check sale of adulterated rice.

This was stated by the Minister while replying to a question raised by Legislator

Shamim Firdous regarding 'Adulterated Rice' in the House.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said that during the financial year 2025-26, 121 rice samples had been lifted and sent to NABL accredited food testing laboratories for analysis. Of which, 110 test reports have been received, so far. She informed that seven samples were reported as 'Not of Standard Quality (NSQ)' and cases have been filed in the competent courts in terms of provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

The Minister said that the department is conducting regular market inspections and sampling of rice under the provisions of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 in the entire Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, including Srinagar. She also informed the House that out of 7 NSQ samples, 3 have been found with Folic Acid content less than prescribed standards under FSSAI, while 4 have been found with Chalky kernels exceeding the prescribed limits under FSSAI.

## Relief commissioner reviews Maha Shivratri arrangements in Jammu

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 04: Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (M) J&K, Dr Arvind Karwani Wednesday reviewed the arrangements for annual Maha Shivratri festival, scheduled on February 14-15, 2026.

Deputy Commissioner (Relief), Vijay Kumar Sharma; Joint Director (Exn), Sheep

Husbandry Department Jammu, Dr Tara Chand; Assistant Commissioner (Relief), Kailash Devi; Assistant Commissioner (Relief), Tej Krishan Koul; Assistant Commissioner (Relief), Sanjeev Kumar and officers from FCS&CA, Fisheries, Floriculture, Horticulture & Marketing, Jal Shakti, JPDCL, R&B (PW) Department, besides the representatives of Kashmiri Pandit

Community from migrant camps and prominent non-camp areas attended the meeting.

The chair, as per an official statement highlighted the importance of Maha Shivratri festival, particularly for the Kashmiri Pandit Community and emphasized the constitution of checking squads to monitor the quality and the rates of the essential commodities like flowers, pooja items, mutton, fish,

vegetables, dairy products etc.

The Floriculture, fisheries and Horticulture Departments were asked to make available flowers (Bael/Bael leaves and Marigold), good quality Fish and Walnuts, green vegetables, especially Nadru at the migrant camps of Jagti, Muthi, Purkhoo and Nagrota and Non Camps areas, besides Durga Nagar, Roop Nagar, Janipur Colony, Anand

Nagar, Bohri, Gangyal, Subash Nagar, Muthi, Udhaywala, Talab Tillo etc. during the festival days.

It was further informed that Trout Fish will be made available in migrant camps and other areas on demand. "Besides, a mobile van will be pressed into service to cater to the requirement from different areas," the meeting was told.

The Jammu Municipal Corporation informed that a

special cleanliness drive will be launched in all migrant camps and other non-camp areas where Kashmiri Pandits have a sizeable population. The Sheep Husbandry Department assured to make available adequate supply of mutton at reasonable rates in close coordination with Jammu Municipal Corporation.

JPDCL and Jal Shakti Departments were asked to take

preemptive measures to provide uninterrupted electricity and water supply to all the migrant camps and non camps areas during the festival days. The officers of Jal Shakti Department and Jammu Municipal Corporation also assured to keep provision of potable drinking water supply through tankers also. The Jal Shakti Department was asked to conduct regular drinking water quality tests.



Cancer cases on

economically weaker sections due to the high cost of medicines.

“For our financially weaker sections, getting cancer treatment is very difficult because medicines are very expensive. We have thought about a special package for them, which will be announced later,” he said.

QUESTIONS CONTINUING PRESENCE OF TERRORISTS IN UT

Referring to terrorism, the Chief Minister questioned the continuing presence of terrorists in the Union Territory, saying incidents of terrorism were still taking place.

Reacting to the killing of two terrorists in an encounter in Udhampur district, CM Omar said security forces have neutralised the terrorists but several questions remain unanswered. “They were killed, but where did they come from? How did they reach Udhampur? Since when were they there, and how long will this continue? We were told that after 2019 this movement would stop, but now it is 2026 and it has not stopped,” he said.

CM Omar said that such incidents were now being reported from areas that had remained free from terrorism earlier.

“These incidents are now happening in areas which were completely free of terrorism before 2014-15. We need answers to these questions,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister inaugurated the new maternity block at Shri Maharaja Gulab Singh (SMGS) Hospital here.

Minister for Health & Medical Education Sakina Itoo, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi, Secretary Health & Medical Education Syed Abid Rasheed, Managing Director J&K Medical Supplies Corporation Limited Tariq Hussain Ganai, Principal Government Medical College Jammu Dr Ashutosh Gupta, Administrator (Associated Hospitals), Jammu, R.K. Katoch, Medical Superintendent, SMGS Hospital, Dr. Dara Singh, Head of Department, Pediatrics, Dr. Sanjiv Digra, Head of Department, Gynaecology, Dr. Robina Mirza, other senior officers of Health & Medical Education Department and officers of PWD, Mechanical Division & Electric Division.

The maternity block has been constructed at a project cost of 31.59 crore, with the Public Works (R&B) Department as the executing agency.

The multi-storey maternity block has been equipped with enhanced maternal and neonatal care facilities, including 50 beds on the ground floor with critical care and delivery services, a 24-bed OT complex on the first floor, and 84 beds each on the second and third floors.

The Chief Minister also inspected various units and wards of the new block and interacted with hospital staff to review the facilities available for patients.

The block, constructed with modern facilities including labour rooms, five Operation theatres (OTs), One Emergency Operation Theatre, NICU wards, recovery areas and other support services has been built to address the heavy patient load and improve delivery and newborn care capacity at the hospital.

The newly inaugurated maternity block, equipped with modern infrastructure and advanced medical facilities, is a major step towards strengthening maternal and child healthcare services in the Jammu region. The facility is expected to significantly reduce patient load and enhance the quality of care for mothers and newborns.

Medical Superintendents from Associated Hospitals, Doctors of other Departments, para-medical staff, and other officials were also present during the event.

**Oncologists call**

hospitals and a few private institutions. “Most of the required treatment modalities are available within J&K. Only a few highly advanced technologies like Proton Radiotherapy are not available here, which are limited to very few centres in the entire country,” he said.

Sharing insights into the regional cancer profile, Dr Manzoor, Head of the Department of Radiation Oncology at GMC Srinagar, said the cancer trend in Kashmir broadly matches national and global patterns, but with some regional differences. “The overall cancer burden here is similar to what is seen across India and the world. However, due to our unique geographical and lifestyle factors, the spectrum of cancers in Kashmir is slightly different,” he explained.

According to him, gastrointestinal cancers, particularly of the oesophagus and stomach, are more common in the region, along with a high incidence of breast and lung cancers. “This makes it extremely important to focus not just on treatment but on large-scale screening and prevention strategies, especially for gastrointestinal cancers,” Dr Manzoor said.

He called for an integrated cancer screening and early detection system across J&K. “We require mass screening programs, early diagnostic facilities and widespread public awareness so cancers can be detected at an early stage, where cure is possible. The government must take concrete steps to establish these programs at the community level,” he added.

While appreciating the availability of most cancer treatment options in the UT, Dr Manzoor said that cancer care is evolving rapidly with new technologies emerging every year. “One of the most modern radiotherapy technologies today is Proton Beam Therapy, which causes less damage to surrounding healthy tissues and improves treatment outcomes. Currently, it is available only at three centres in India, with a few more in the pipeline,” he said. “J&K should also be included among the regions where this advanced facility is established in the future.”

Noted oncologist Dr Ashraf Ashia highlighted the growing role of preventive oncology in reducing cancer risk. “Most established cancer treatment modalities are already available in our UT. However, the future lies equally in prevention,” he said.

He said that vaccines, such as those against HPV, are playing a major role in preventing certain cancers, while lifestyle modifications are becoming increasingly important. “Alongside this, genetics-based therapies and biotherapy are also emerging as strong tools in modern cancer treatment,” Dr Ashraf added.

Doctors stressed that while improving hospital infrastructure is crucial, public participation through healthier lifestyles, regular health

check-ups, and awareness about early symptoms can significantly reduce cancer-related deaths.

They urged authorities to strengthen screening programs, expand awareness campaigns in rural and urban areas alike, and invest in modern medical technologies to ensure comprehensive cancer care for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

**CM Omar highlights**

developmental interventions at these sites are being undertaken by the ASI.

However, he said that with a view to facilitating tourists, the J&K Tourism Department has constructed a tourist cafeteria at Parihaspora to provide basic amenities to visitors. He added that the facility will be further renovated and upgraded to enhance service delivery.

Providing details of the initiatives taken by the Culture Department, the Chief Minister said that Goverdhan, Parihaspora is a State Protected Monument declared vide SRO-408 dated 19.09.2013. Protection measures, including the installation of chain-link fencing around the monument, have been completed during FY 2024-25 under the Capex Budget at an estimated cost of Rs. 39.89 lakh.

Similarly, he informed the House that Divar Yakhmanpora, Parihaspora is a State Protected Monument declared vide SRO-337 dated 31.08.1989. The site comprises an ancient temple complex currently under excavation.

The excavation work was initiated during FY 2023-24 under Phase-I of the Scheme for Revival, Restoration, Preservation and Maintenance of Architecture and Heritage in J&K, with an estimated cost of Rs. 373.10 lakh. About 60 percent of the excavation work has been completed. As the process involves manual excavation, the work is likely to continue into the next financial year. The site is being actively looked after by the Department.

The Chief Minister further stated that in Pattan, a heritage site comprising a temple & spring near Sukh Nag has been declared State Protected Monument vide SRO-517 dated 29.08.2019. Restoration and development works at the Sukh Nag Spring and Temple have been undertaken during FY 2024-25 under the same scheme at an estimated cost of Rs. 229.92 lakh.

He added that the site has been completely restored and is being maintained by the Department.

Regarding Tappar, the Chief Minister said that the Tappar Heritage Site is a Centrally Protected Monument under the administrative control of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and accordingly, no initiative has been taken by the Department at this site.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister informed the Legislative Assembly that an amount of Rs. 279.83 lakh was spent during 2014-15 on the construction of the Yatri Base Camp at Sungli and rain shelter sheds at Kailash Kund, Bhaderwah.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the Tourism portfolio, said that in 2017, the asset was outsourced for a period of three years at Rs. 24 lakh. He further informed that it was again outsourced for ten years during 2024-25 at Rs. 26.25 lakh per year, with a 10 percent escalation after every year.

He said that the outsourcing was undertaken to strengthen the revenue base of the Bhaderwah Development Authority (BDA), enabling it to meet day-to-day operational requirements such as the maintenance of parks and gardens, resorts, tourist huts, guest houses and other infrastructure.

Responding to a query on whether the government is planning to cancel the outsourcing of the Yatri sheds, the Chief Minister stated that the present government has inherited the situation, as the initial outsourcing took place earlier.

“It was outsourced before October 24, 2024, and has been given for ten years. The question of cancellation will require examination of the legal and financial implications. We will have to see whether it can be cancelled or not,” he said.

The Chief Minister added that while the decision was taken by the department at that time, the government will ensure that such outsourcing is avoided in the future.

“The existing contract is for ten years. After that, it should not be outsourced. New infrastructure that is to be created should be used for yatris and not outsourced,” he said.

The Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by MLA Bhaderwah, Daleep Singh, regarding steps taken for the construction of new Yatri sheds along the Roushra Mata, Kailash Yatra and Manimahesh Yatra routes in Bhaderwah constituency.

He informed the House that the Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Bhaderwah has been requested to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the construction of shelter sheds, kiosks and public convenience complexes at various tourist locations in Bhaderwah, including the pilgrimage routes.

“The project shall be taken up under the relevant scheme, subject to approval by the competent authority and availability of funds,” the Chief Minister added.

**Omar introduces**

decriminalising and rationalising offences, with the objective of further strengthening trust-based governance and promoting ease of living and doing business.

Similarly, the Chief Minister, who is also Minister Incharge of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, also introduced “The Jammu and Kashmir Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy Bill, 2026” (L.A. Bill No. 2 of 2026).

This Bill aims to amend relevant enactments to eliminate discrimination or denial of equal treatment against persons affected by leprosy, prevent their segregation and exclusion, and enable the Union Territory to discharge its positive obligations through affirmative action.

Both the Bills have already been published in the extraordinary issue of the Official Gazette.

**Weather to remain**

said no weather warning has been issued for either the Kashmir or Jammu divisions during the next seven days.

Advising caution, the IMD asked travellers and transporters to confirm the status of roads and highways from the concerned traffic authorities and follow official advisories.

People living in snow-bound higher reaches have been advised not to venture into sloppy and avalanche-prone areas.

Meanwhile, the Kupwara district administration

on Wednesday conducted an overnight rescue operation at Sadna Top after heavy snowfall stranded several vehicles on the high-altitude route, officials said.

The operation was launched late Tuesday night and continued into the early hours amid poor visibility and harsh weather conditions. Officials said at least 35 vehicles trapped due to heavy accumulation of snow were safely evacuated.

Snow clearance machinery and personnel were pressed into service to ensure the safety of stranded commuters and to prevent any medical or weather-related emergencies. Priority was given to vulnerable stretches of the road to facilitate movement.

Fresh snowfall had severely disrupted traffic at Sadna Top, bringing vehicular movement to a standstill.

Officials said timely intervention helped prevent the situation from worsening and enabled partial restoration of traffic.

The administration has advised residents and travellers to avoid non-essential travel to high-altitude areas and to adhere to traffic advisories until weather conditions improve. Authorities said the situation is being closely monitored. (KNO)

**Discussion on Motion**

with the Union Government for their safety.

Surjit Singh Slathia, while participating in the debate, raised the issue of daily wagers. He drew attention towards increasing unemployment and closing of industrial units in J&K. He urged the government for revival of SIDCO and SICOP.

Balwant Singh Mankotia urged the government to conduct Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies election. He also raised the issue of unscheduled power cuts creating inconvenience for the people in these harsh winter conditions.

Speaking in support of Motion of Thanks, Legislator Reyaz Ahmad Khan said that the government has taken several initiatives for overall development of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that power, health, education and other sectors have witnessed significant improvement since the past 14 months. He added that the path of development and progress has begun since the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah took over the charge.

Muzaffar Iqbal Khan, while speaking during the debate, said that there has been tremendous improvement in the power and Jal Shakti and road connectivity sectors but there is need to do more in various areas of his Constituency.

He said an impactful change is being witnessed on the ground particularly in education, health and water supply facilities being provided to the people. He also spoke on restoration of statehood and safeguarding the land and employment rights of the people.

Legislator, Waheed ur Rehman Parra, during the debate spoke about various issues, particularly related to youth of J&K. He raised issues regarding reservation, merit, special assistance schemes and also demanded early resolution of reservation issue.

Legislator Dr. Narinder Singh Raina said that development of country depends on the development of States and UTs. He raised issues including electricity charge, encroachments and demanded opening of veterinary hospital and industrial estates in his Constituency.

Mubarik Gul, while speaking in favour of Motion of Thanks, highlighted various initiatives started by the government for overall development of Jammu and Kashmir.

In his address, Legislator Satish Kumar Sharma spoke about the issue of daily wagers, Asha Workers and others. He also spoke about the damage being caused to agriculture produce by the wild animals in his constituency and sought due compensation for the same.

Participating in the debate, Legislator Itfikar Ahmed appreciated the step of government, particularly Education Ministry, for regularising CPWs in J&K. He raised the issue of regularisation of daily wagers and casual labourers in the house. He also demanded recruitment policy for all newly established GMCs for plugging the gaps of staff deficiency.

Speaking in support of Motion, Legislator Qaysar Jamshaid Lone appreciated the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers for initiating a new dawn of development since the past 15 months. He also appreciated the government and particularly Education Minister for change of academic session in schools.

Prof. Gharu Ram Bhagat, while participating in the debate, raised various constituency specific issues of public importance.

Legislator, Abdul Majeed Larmi, while speaking in support of Motion highlighted various initiatives launched by the government for development of Jammu and Kashmir. He demanded compensation for the farmers whose fruit produce was affected by highway closure. He also demanded creation of a stop for Vande Bharat Train at Anantnag Railway Station.

Participating in the debate, Legislator Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi raised the issue of political prisoners and other issues concerning his constituency.

Speaking during the debate, Legislator Darshan Kumar raised constituency specific issues, including upgradation of schools and shortage of staff in educational institutions.

Speaking in favour of Motion, Legislator Khurshied Ahmed commended the efficient performance of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. He also lauded the government for restoration of Darbar Move, increase in marriage assistance scheme as well as removal of educational bar in the scheme.

**3 terrorists killed**

including an M4 carbine and an AK-series assault rifle, was recovered from the neutralised terrorists,” he added.

In another post on X, the Army’s White Knight Corps said that based on specific intelligence provided by Jammu and Kashmir Police, troops of CIF Delta and White Knight Corps launched a focused counter-terror operation in the Jophar forest area of Basantgarh in coordination with JKP and CRPF, who reinforced the cordon to prevent any escape.

“Contact with the terrorists was established on Tuesday, and they were continuously engaged to stop them from breaking the cordon. Following a calibrated and coordinated response, two terrorists have been successfully neutralised,” the post read, adding that the operation demonstrated seamless inter-agency coordination, tactical precision and high levels of professionalism.

The Army further stated that the operation has

concluded successfully, while the area remains under surveillance.

TERRORIST KILLED IN ONGOING KISHTWAR ENCOUNTER

Meanwhile, a terrorist was killed in an ongoing encounter between terrorists and joint security forces in Kishtwar district on Wednesday, the Army said.

The White Knight Corps, in a post on X, said that contact was re-established with the hiding terrorists during a joint operation in the Dichhar area of Kishtwar.

“In the continuing search and elimination of terrorists in the Kishtwar region, where the hunt has already led to several contacts in dense forests and challenging terrain, contact was re-established with the terrorists on the run in the ongoing joint Operation Trashi-I by troops of CIF Delta, White Knight Corps, Jammu and Kashmir Police and CRPF at around 5:45 pm today in the general area of Dichhar, Kishtwar,” the post read.

It added, “One terrorist has been successfully neutralised. Operation is in progress.”

Figures available with KNO suggest that a total of four terrorists have been eliminated so far this year, as the security grip remains tight across Jammu and Kashmir. “One security personnel lost his life in an encounter in Kathua. Till today, four terrorists have been killed—Kathua: 1, Udhampur: 2, Kishtwar: 1 (ongoing encounter),” data reveals.

A police official said due to heightened vigilance and a tight security grid, no civilian has fallen victim to terror so far this year. (KNO)

**New rules set**

and shall be to encourage integration of co-curricular activities for holistic development.

Registration or establishment of coaching or study centres

The government said that no person shall impart coaching or establish, run, manage or maintain a Coaching or study center unless prior registration is obtained from the competent authority.

“An application for registration, including fees and required documents, shall be submitted to the competent authority in the manner and form as may be notified,” it reads.

It also said that the competent authority shall, within one month from the date of receipt of the application for registration, either grant the registration certificate in the prescribed form, or shall communicate to the applicant his order of refusal to grant such registration after recording reasons in writing, for such refusal. “Provided that no order refusing the registration shall be passed except after giving to the person concerned a reasonable opportunity of hearing.”

The government also said that the registration certificates shall be valid for a period of two years, unless cancelled earlier for any reason.

“Every registered coaching center shall apply for renewal of registration certificate to the competent authority two months prior to the date of expiry of such registration, in such form, with such fees and documents as may be specified by the government,” the new rules read.

It also said that the competent authority may on receipt of an application for renewal of registration in the prescribed form and on payment of the prescribed fees, shall decide on the application for renewal of registration number before the expiry of the registration period and may renew the certificate or may communicate the refusal thereof to the applicant before the expiry of the registration period, after recording the reasons for such refusal in writing.

“Provided that no order refusing the registration shall be passed except after giving to the person concerned a reasonable opportunity of hearing,” it reads.

Conditions for registration

The new rules suggest that no coaching centre shall engage tutors having qualification less than graduation for 10th class and post graduate in the relevant subjects to the Senior secondary classes;

It also said that no coaching centre shall make misleading promises or guarantee of rank or good marks to parents or students for enrolling them in the coaching center. “No coaching centre shall be registered, if it has less than a minimum one square meter area per student.”

The rules further reveal that no coaching centre shall hire the services of any tutor or person who has been convicted for any offence involving moral turpitude.

The government further said that there shall be no registration to the coaching centres unless it has a counselling system. “No coaching centre shall hire the services of a government employee.”

“No coaching centre shall be registered unless NOC is obtained from Criminal Investigation Department and no coaching centre shall be registered unless Building safety certificate has been obtained from PWD department,” it reads.

Documents to be accompanied with registration application

Every application for registration of a coaching center shall be accompanied by an undertaking by the person or proprietor stating that he shall use only the word registered coaching center and shall not use the words ‘recognized’ or ‘approved’ on any sign board or any prospectus or correspondence or communication of whatever nature or at any place;

Coaching classes for those students who are also studying in institutions and schools shall not be conducted during their institutions schools’ hours.

The necessary information regarding the qualification of the tutors, time table of the coaching class, the fee charged and general information, as specified, regarding the coaching class shall be displayed on the website and notice board at prominent places in the premises of the coaching center.

Any tutor or person employed, in any manner in the coaching center has not been convicted for any offence involving moral turpitude and that any change in employment of tutor shall be immediately intimated to the competent authority;

They shall abide by the condition regarding the specified number of students to be admitted in the coaching class.

They shall abide by the other terms and conditions of this guidelines.

The application for renewal of the registration shall be accompanied by a copy of the statement of accounts audited by Chartered Accountant.

Website requirement

The Government shall in consultation with the Information Technology Department establish an online system for feeless registration, while each coaching/study centre must maintain a website

with current information on tutors, qualifications, courses, fees, policies, student outcomes, and comply with all relevant laws. Website should specifically publish the fee structure of the various courses.

Regulation and monitoring

Every Coaching or study Center shall notify any changes in teaching faculty or class schedule one week in advance.

Every Coaching or study Center shall publish a summary of results at the end of each session and send detailed results with names to the Competent Authority.

They shall establish a complaint redressal mechanism (CRM) and report each complaint and its resolution to the Competent Authority and Monitoring Committee within a week.

Fees Refund

Every coaching or study center shall refund the entire fee if a student withdraws from the course within 10 days of registration.

In case of mid-session faculty changes, allow students to withdraw within 10 days with a proportional fee refund, the competent authority’s refund decision is binding and must be implemented within 10 days.

Infrastructure requirements

The coaching or study center must be located in a noise-free area. Within the basic structure of the coaching center, a minimum one square meter area may be allocated for each student during a class or batch. There shall be sufficient infrastructure in proportion to the number of students enrolled.

The coaching centre building shall adhere to fire safety codes, building safety codes and other standards and shall obtain a Fire and Building Safety Certificate from the local body concerned.

For the assistance of the students, the coaching centre shall have a first aid kit and medical assistance or treatment facility. List of referral services like hospitals, doctors for emergency services, police helpline, child helpline details, fire service helpline, women helpline etc shall be displayed at conspicuous place;

The coaching centre building shall be fully electrified, well ventilated.

Safe and potable drinking water shall be available for all students and staff of the coaching centre.

The coaching centre may be suitably fitted with CCTV cameras wherever required and security shall be well maintained;

A complaint box or register may be placed at the coaching centre for the students to raise a complaint. Coaching centre shall have a committee for redressal of complaints or grievances of students.

Provision of separate toilets for males and females shall be made within the coaching centre building premises.

Curriculum and classes

For the purpose of achieving holistic development of students and to provide psychological counselling for mental well-being of the students, in respect of curriculum and classes, along with coaching, the coaching Centers shall make efforts to complete the classes in the stipulated time as mentioned in the prospectus.

They shall provide remedial or support classes to students who require additional support in their academics.

The coaching centres shall chalk out a time-table to allow the students to relax and recuperate and thus, not build additional pressure on them.

They also shall ensure weekly off for students as well as tutors.

The coaching centres shall not conduct assessment-test or exam on the day after weekly off;

They shall customize leave in such a manner that the students are able to connect with their family during the important and popular festivals.

The coaching centres shall conduct coaching classes in a way that it is not excessive for a student and it should not be more than 5 hours in a day.

They shall endeavour to organize co-curricular activities a t regular intervals in addition to conducting regular classes.

The coaching centres shall make efforts to organize counselling sessions for the development of students’ mental health and life skills.

Special provisions should be made for students with disabilities or special needs to ensure inclusive participation.

Fees

Fees must be fair and reasonable, with receipts provided and the coaching or study centres must issue a prospectus with course details and fees.

Study materials must be provided without additional charges and the refund fees on a pro-rata basis if a student leaves mid-course.

Fees cannot be increased during the course duration course completion and the mode of fee payment will be online only.

Inclusivity and accessibility

The coaching or study centres must ensure no discrimination based on religion, race, caste, or other personal attributes during admission and teaching.

They should increase representation from vulnerable groups, including female students, those with disabilities, and marginalized communities.

The coaching or study centres must admit 10 percent of students from BPL families or orphans based on the Competent Authority’s recommendation.

The Directors of School Education of both regions will verify and select eligible students forwarding their names to the Centers. Centers must report the number of such students for renewal compliance.

Annual report

The coaching or study centers must maintain records and documents as prescribed by Government authorities and submit an annual report to the competent authority. This ensures transparency, accountability, and compliance with regulatory standards.

Penalty

In case of violation of any of the terms and conditions of registration, the Coaching or Study Center shall be liable for penalties as Rs 25,000 for first offence, Rs. 50,000 for the second offence and revocation of registration for subsequent offence.

Cancellation of registration

The certificate of registration granted to the coaching center, without prejudice to any other penal action that may be taken for violation of relevant law, at any time be cancelled, if the competent authority is satisfied that the coaching center has contravened any of the provisions of these rules or violated any of the terms and conditions subject to which the registration was granted. (KNO)



## SC seeks reports from all high courts over pendency of bail matters



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 04: The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought reports from all high courts on the pendency of bail matters, saying it was disappointing that pleas for personal liberty were not being expeditiously heard.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi directed the registrar generals of high courts to provide details of all bail pleas, including regular and anticipatory applications, filed after January 1 this year.

The bench said the dates of filing, next hearing and decision, if any, have to be provided. It also sought details of pending bail pleas filed before January 2025.

It observed, "We are

extremely disappointed to see how the prayers pertaining to the liberty of individuals are not being entertained. Dockets may be heavy, and there may be matters requiring consideration, but there can be nothing more important than the prayer for bail."

Underlining the delay in disposal of bail pleas across high courts, the bench said that in the Patna High Court, bail matters were not urgently listed, and petitioners approached the apex court seeking listing of bail pleas before the high court.

"We are conscious of the fact that listing is the exclusive prerogative of the chief justices since they are masters of the roster. People are languishing in jail, and bail pleas are not heard, and there is complete uncertainty as to when they

will know the fate of their application."

"This court is under the bounden duty to issue certain mandatory guidelines," the bench said, requesting the chief justices to revisit their rosters, and expand them for listing the bail pleas if there was a "mismatch between the total pendency and bench".

It said that before such directions were issued, it was imperative to seek the details regarding the pendency of bail matters. The bench also asked the state agencies to cooperate with the courts to ensure expeditious disposal of bail matters.

The apex court was hearing a petition regarding the adjournments in a bail matter pending in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

## Entire Sikh community anguished over Rahul calling Bittu traitor: BJP

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 04: The BJP slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday for calling Union minister Ravneet Singh Bittu a traitor and said the entire Sikh community is anguished over his remarks.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri alleged that Gandhi called Bittu a traitor simply because the latter had quit the Congress. "This word, traitor, can not be taken lightly. The word is used for someone who has betrayed his country. This is a very sensitive issue for the Sikh community," Puri said.

"Ravneet Singh Bittu is not just an MP elected from Ludhiana, he is not just a member of a Sikh family that has served the country, his

grandfather, Sardar Beant Singh, who was the chief minister of Punjab, fell to an assassin's bullet. And you call him a traitor. This is unacceptable," the senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader added.

Slamming Gandhi for his remarks, BJP leader Arvinder Singh Lovely said the entire Sikh community is extremely anguished over the Congress leader calling Bittu a traitor.

"It is unfortunate," Lovely said.

Gandhi exchanged barbs with former party colleague Bittu in the Parliament House complex on Wednesday.

In videos released by the Congress, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha was heard calling Bittu a "traitor" and the minister retorting with the "desh ke dushman" (enemy of the nation) jibe.

## India free to buy oil from any supplier: Kremlin

PTI

Moscow, Feb 04: India is free to buy oil from any country, and there is nothing new about its decision to diversify its crude suppliers, the Kremlin said on Wednesday.

"We, along with all other international energy experts, are well aware that Russia is not the only supplier of oil and petroleum products to India. India has always purchased these products from other countries. Therefore, we see nothing new here," Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said while responding to a question.

He was asked about US President Donald Trump's claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had agreed to stop buying Russian oil and switch to purchasing crude from the United States and, potentially, from Venezuela.

A day earlier, Peskov said that Russia has not received any statements from India regarding the cessation of Russian oil purchases.

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova on Wednesday said that the hydrocarbons trade is beneficial for both India and Russia.

"We remain convinced that



India's purchase of Russian hydrocarbons is beneficial to both countries and contributes to maintaining stability in the international energy market. We are ready to continue close cooperation in this area with our partners in India," Zakharova said at a press briefing.

Private Kommersant FM business radio noted that, unlike President Trump, PM Modi did not mention any agreement on stopping Russian oil imports.

Igor Yushkov, a leading expert at the National Energy Security Fund, said that Indian refiners cannot fully stop the import of Russian crude. "The American

shale oil they export is light grades, similar to gas condensate. Russia, on the other hand, supplies relatively heavy, sulfur-rich Urals. This means India will need to blend US crude with other grades, which incurs additional costs, meaning a simple substitution won't be possible," he said.

"Russia typically exports 1.5 million to 2 million barrels per day to the country. America won't be able to cover that volume. So, one gets the sense that Trump is simply trying to show that he won these trade negotiations and the deal was concluded entirely in line with US demands," he said.

Last time, when Russia switched

to the Indian market from European and American markets in 2022, it cut production by 1 million barrels per day. This led to prices rising to \$120 per barrel, and the US set an all-time high for gasoline and diesel prices, Yushkov recalled.

Trump last year imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, among the highest in the world, including 25 per cent levies for its purchases of Russian energy.

India buys about 88 per cent of its crude oil, which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel, from overseas.

Russian oil made up hardly 0.2 per cent of all crude oil that India imported till 2021. India, the world's third-largest oil importer, became the largest buyer of discounted Russian crude after Western countries shunned Moscow following its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

India's import of Russian crude oil dropped to around 1.1 million barrels per day in the first three weeks of January, from an average of 1.21 million bpd in the previous month and over 2 million bpd imports in mid-2025, according to data from real-time analytics company Kpler.

## Sustained double-digit growth for India possible: Ambani



PTI

Mumbai, Feb 04: Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani on Wednesday said sustained double-digit growth for India is possible, and that stable economic leadership defines a country.

Speaking at a JioBlackRock event here, Ambani also said that in the next decade, India will not be importing 80 per cent of its energy.

Every Indian village has a 5G network that is better and cheaper than any other country, he noted.

Sustained law and order for 15-20 years and social harmony are prerequisites for economic growth, Ambani said, adding that "I can clearly see 100 new Reliances coming up in the country".

## Over 15.8 lakh cases pending in Delhi trial courts

‘Lawyer absence, court stays major causes’

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 04: Delhi's trial courts are burdened with over 15.8 lakh pending cases, with counsel not available, court stays and procedural delays emerging as the primary contributors, according to data from the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).

The NJDG, maintained by the e-Committee of the Supreme Court, provides real-time data on pendency and disposal of cases across courts in the country, with the objective of improving transparency and monitoring judicial performance.

The data showed that magisterial cases account for the largest share, with 10,05,813 cases pending across Delhi district courts. These are followed by 2,92,670 miscellaneous criminal applications, 96,495 civil suits, and 40,964 sessions cases.

Other pending matters include 20,955 miscellaneous civil cases and 20,043 motor accident claim petitions. Besides, over 17,000 miscellaneous civil applications, 17,623 execution petitions, 15,502 marriage petitions, 8,322 criminal appeals, 7,847 industrial disputes and 7,169 arbitration cases are also pending in Delhi courts.

In total, the pendency across categories stands at 15,85,216 cases.

Among the reasons for delays, "counsel not available" emerged as the single biggest factor,

accounting for 3,27,732 stalled cases, followed by 2,17,905 matters stayed for various reasons, the data said.

A substantial number of cases -- 26,123 -- are also due to the accused absconding, and 20,571 cases are awaiting documents.

The data further shows that 9,183 cases are delayed due to non-availability of witnesses, while several others remain pending because



of lack of interest by parties, repeated appeals and missing records.

As per the NJDG, 590 cases are stayed by the high court, while 42 cases are stayed by the Supreme Court.

An age-wise analysis indicated that a large portion of the backlog relates to relatively recent filings. Cases instituted in 2022 alone account for 1,51,278 pending matters, followed by 72,774 in 2021 and 45,970 in 2020.

## CJI Kant's Paris visit strengthens judicial cooperation between India, France

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 04: Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, who was on an official visit to France recently, held a series of bilateral meetings in Paris with senior judicial functionaries to strengthen judicial cooperation and promote exchanges between the two countries.

The CJI was accompanied by India's Ambassador to France and Monaco, Sanjeev Singla. He met with French Constitutional Council president Richard Ferrand and discussed judicial training and the use of technology. Both sides emphasised sharing best practices to enhance justice delivery in their respective jurisdictions.

The CJI-led delegation also met Didier Tabuteau, vice president of the Council of State, where the two sides exchanged views on their respective judicial systems, court structures and approaches to case adjudication.

During the visit, the



CJI delivered the keynote address at the Indo-French General Counsel and Business Conference, organised by the Indo-French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in association with the Paris Bar Association, highlighting the significance of the Indo-France Year of Innovation 2026 and the growing role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in India.

"We have witnessed a

remarkable acceleration in our bilateral trade, which has more than doubled over the last decade, surging from USD 6.4 billion in 2009-10 to an impressive USD 15.11 billion in the last fiscal year," he said at the conference.

On "Cross-Border Dispute Resolution: Courts, Arbitration and India-France Year of Innovation 2026," Justice Kant said, "The relationship between France and India is

not a creation of convenience; it is a bond forged over centuries. Today, standing on the shoulders of this history, we face a world transformed by uncertainty."

"The forces of disruption and geopolitical tension threaten to destabilise the very framework of international cooperation. In such a world, the France-India partnership is not a luxury; it is a lifeline," he added.

During the visit, the Supreme Court delegation also met with the president of the Commercial Chamber of the Cour de Cassation, Vincent Vigneau, to discuss developments in arbitration and mediation, and resolved to deepen engagement between the legal communities of the two countries.

Before concluding the visit, the CJI had interacted with members of the Association of South Asian Lawyers France and underlined their role in fostering links between different legal systems.

## ‘Aerosol components of PM2.5 particles more strongly linked with mental health disorders’

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 04: Exposure to PM2.5 pollution can increase chances of depression and anxiety, with aerosol constituents of the pollutant particles more strongly linked with the mental health effects compared to other constituents, according to a study.

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, and National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru, also found that the cumulative effect due to PM2.5 constituents exceeded that due to total mass of PM2.5 particles.

Findings published in the journal iScience indicate that relying solely on weight of PM2.5 particles can undermine mental health effects, the team said. The study supports emission controls targeted at sectors producing the most toxic species which may result in greater health benefits, they said.

The researchers said exposure to PM2.5 is known to influence mental disorders, but the varying effects due to chemical components remain poorly understood, especially in low- and middle-income countries. They looked at links between



PM2.5 components and depression and anxiety among 34,802 adults from the National Mental Health Survey. Data from satellite and models were combined to relate one-year-long exposures to PM2.5 components with residential addresses of the participants.

Mental health of the participants was assessed using standard diagnostic interviews. The authors found that an increase of 14.44 micrograms per cubic metre in PM2.5 "raised the odds of depression and anxiety by eight per cent and two per cent, respectively."

"Secondary inorganic aerosols and carbonaceous aerosols showed stronger associations than other constituents," they said.

"Our analysis is the first of its kind in India, providing strong epidemiological evidence that exposures to total PM2.5 and its constituents are associated with depression and anxiety among adults, and the association varies with exposure to

individual species," the team said. According to Dr Vatsya, it is completely fine to drink instant black coffee every day without worrying about the risk of cancer.

When it comes to daily beverages, the popularity of coffee across the globe can rarely be contested. While coffee beans have been used to create hearty drinks for ages, the fast-paced modern life has contributed to the increasing popularity of instant coffee.

Traditionally, coffee is brewed from ground coffee beans that involve various steps such as grinding, brewing and filtering. While there are various methods that can be used, they require time and precision.

On the other hand, instant coffee is made by brewing real coffee beans, dehydrating them, and then processing them into a fine powder or granules. It can be prepared by simply adding hot water.

With people becoming more conscious about their health, a rumour was floated that instant coffee can increase the risk of cancer. Taking to Instagram on January 4, Dr Shubham Vatsya, gastroenterologist and hepatologist at Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj, Delhi, decided to put it to rest.



## Russia, Ukraine envoys meet in Abu Dhabi for US-brokered talks

AP

Kyiv, Feb 04: Envoys from Russia and Ukraine met in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday for another round of US-brokered talks on ending the almost four-year war, a Ukrainian negotiator said.

The delegations from Moscow and Kyiv were joined in the United Arab Emirates by US officials, Rustem Umerov, Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council chief, who was present at the meeting, said on social media.

Umerov said the planned two-day negotiations started with all three delegations present, after which negotiators were to break into groups according to topics and then meet as a full group again at the end.

The American team was due to include special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who also attended last month's meeting, according to the White House.

The current talks also coincide with the expiry of the last remaining nuclear arms pact between Russia and the United States on Thursday. Trump and Putin could extend the terms of the treaty or renegotiate its conditions in an effort to prevent a new nuclear arms race.

Last month's discussions in the Emirati capital, part of a US push to end the fighting, yielded some progress but no breakthrough on key issues, officials said.

Russia targets Ukrainian energy



infrastructure

The Abu Dhabi talks were held amid Ukrainian outrage over major Russian attacks on its energy system, which have occurred each winter since Russia launched its all-out invasion of its neighbor on Feb. 24 2022.

A huge Russian bombardment overnight from Monday to Tuesday included hundreds of drones and a record 32 ballistic missiles, wounding at least 10 people. This came despite Ukraine's understanding that Russian President Vladimir Putin had told Trump he would temporarily halt strikes on Ukraine's power grid.

Ukrainian civilians are struggling with one of the coldest winters in years, which saw temperatures around minus 20 degrees Celsius.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov wouldn't offer any details on the Abu Dhabi talks and said that Moscow wasn't planning any comment

on their results.

He said that "the doors for a peaceful settlement are open," but noted that Moscow will press its military action until Kyiv meets its demands.

Russia is hitting Ukraine's energy facilities because its armed forces believe the targets are associated with Kyiv's military effort, Peskov said.

There has been a lack of clarity about how long Putin promised to observe a pause on power grid attacks, and Moscow hasn't stopped its aerial attacks on other targets in Ukraine despite a Kremlin official saying last week that Russia had agreed to halt strikes on Kyiv for a week until Feb. 1.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said late Tuesday barely four days had passed and a fresh wave of attacks targeted Ukraine's power

grid, accusing Putin of duplicity.

Trump claimed Tuesday that Putin "kept his word" on the temporary pause. Meanwhile, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump was "unfortunately unsurprised" by Moscow's resumption of attacks.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said the developments were part of Moscow's negotiating strategy.

"The Kremlin will likely attempt to portray its adherence to this short-term energy strikes moratorium as a significant concession to gain leverage in the upcoming peace talks, even though the Kremlin used these few days to stockpile missiles for a larger strike package," it said late Tuesday.

Overnight attacks Russia launched 105 drones against Ukraine overnight, and air defenses shot down 88 of them, the Ukrainian air force said Wednesday. Strikes by 17 drones were recorded at 14 locations, as well as falling debris at five sites, it said.

In the central Dnipropetrovsk region, a Russian strike on a residential area killed a 68-year-old woman and a 38-year-old man, regional military administration head Oleksandr Hancha said.

The southern city of Odesa also came under a large-scale attack, regional military administration head Oleh Kiper said. About 20 residential buildings were damaged, with four people rescued from under the rubble, he said.

## AFC confirms India's bid to host 2031 Asian Cup

PTI

Kuala Lumpur, Feb 04: The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Wednesday confirmed India's bid to host the Asian Cup in 2031, having listed the country among the six bidding member nations for the continental showpiece.

The United Arab Emirates Football Association had withdrawn from the bidding process.

India will compete with Australia, Indonesia, Korea, Kuwait and there is also a joint bid from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

"The bidding process for the AFC Asian Cup 2031 was completed last year and attracted strong interest from across the continent.

"Subsequently, and in line with the AFC President's forward-looking approach, invitations to bid for the 2035 edition were circulated to MAS (member associations) on August 27, 2025, with the submission window closing on December 31, 2025," the AFC said in a statement.

Last year the All India Football Federation (AIFF) had submitted the country's 'Expression of



Interest (Eol)' to host the 2031 edition of the continent's most prestigious tournament.

Soon after the submission, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya extended the government's full support to India's bid for the tournament, saying hosting major events would only boost the global stature of the country which is aiming to stage the 2036 Olympics.

India has never hosted the tournament. It had submitted bids to host the 2023 and 2027 editions when Praful Patel was the AIFF president.

The bid for the 2023 edition was withdrawn in 2018 and the same happened in case of the 2027 tournament also.

In December 2022, a few months after

incumbent Kalyan Chaubey took charge as AIFF president, India withdrew its bid to stage the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, declaring that hosting big-ticket events is not among its "strategic priorities" at that juncture.

The AIFF's decision had left Saudi Arabia as the lone candidate to host the 2027 Asian Cup.

Meanwhile, the AFC said Australia, Japan, Korea, and Kuwait have formally expressed their interest in hosting the Asian Cup in 2035.

The AFC will next engage with the respective bidding member associations to coordinate the submission of the required bidding documentation, in accordance with the established timelines, regulations and evaluation processes.

## Man convicted of attempting to assassinate Trump to be sentenced

REUTERS

Fort Pierce (Florida): Ryan Routh, a man accused of hiding in the bushes of a Florida golf course with a semi-automatic rifle to try to assassinate Donald Trump less than two months before the 2024 US election that returned him to the presidency, is set to be sentenced on Wednesday.

Prosecutors have asked US District Judge Aileen Cannon to sentence Routh to life in prison during the hearing in Fort Pierce, Florida. Routh, 59, was convicted by a jury last September of five criminal counts including attempted assassination after serving as his own defense lawyer at trial.

Prosecutors said in a court filing that Routh's crimes "undeniably warrant a life sentence" because he had plotted the assassination for months, was willing to kill anybody who got in the way and has

expressed neither regret nor remorse. Routh has asked the judge, a Trump appointee, to impose a 27-year term.

In a court filing, Routh denied that he intended to kill Trump, and said he was willing to undergo psychological treatment for a personality disorder in prison. Routh suggested that jurors were misled about the facts of the case by his inability to mount a proper legal defense at trial.

Routh, who at the time of his arrest had resided most recently in Hawaii after previously living in North Carolina, also was convicted of three illegal firearm possession charges and one count of impeding a federal officer during his arrest.

Secret Service agents spotted Routh hiding in bushes a few hundred yards (meters) from where Trump was golfing at Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach on September 15, 2024. Routh fled the scene and left behind an assault-style rifle but was later arrested.

## King Charles' brother Andrew leaves Windsor home after latest Epstein revelations

REUTERS

London, Feb 04: Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, the younger brother of King Charles, has moved out of his mansion on the royal estate in Windsor, a royal source confirmed on Wednesday, following new damaging revelations about his links to the sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

His exit from Royal Lodge, his home for decades, marks a new low for the former prince, following years of scrutiny over his connections to Epstein, a scandal that has cast a shadow over Britain's royal family.

Mountbatten-Windsor, 65, had hoped to stay at the 30-room Georgian mansion for longer, the Sun newspaper said, but he moved under the



cover of darkness on Monday and was driven to a cottage in Sandringham, the king's estate in Norfolk, in eastern England.

No more Windsor horse rides

The royal, who had in recent days been pictured riding his horse in Windsor, just west of

London, has always denied any wrongdoing in connection with Epstein.

But in light of the latest release of files by the US Justice Department, Thames Valley Police on Tuesday said they were reviewing a new allegation against Andrew.

The former prince's move to Norfolk was confirmed by a royal source, who said Andrew might occasionally return to Windsor in the coming weeks while a transitional phase was completed.

"With the latest batch of Epstein files it was made clear to him that it was time to go," the Sun quoted an unnamed friend as saying. "Leaving was so humiliating for him that he chose to do it under the cover of darkness."

## Chanu lifts 205kg, breaks three national records to win 48kg gold at Nationals C'ships



PTI

Modinagar, Feb 04: Olympic silver medalist Mirabai Chanu delivered a statement performance, bettering three of her own national records while clinching the women's 48kg title at the National Weightlifting Championships here on Wednesday.

The multiple-time World Championships medalist registered a combined lift of 205kg (89kg in snatch + 116kg in clean and jerk), setting new national marks in snatch, clean and jerk and total effort.

"I am delighted. This performance has boosted my confidence. Earlier, I was

competing in 49kg, to be able to achieve this result in 48kg is great.

"I hope in the next competition I cross the 90kg mark. Today also I tried but since I had not had proper training I was not able to do it. But once the training is in full flow I'm sure I'll lift 90kg," Chanu told PTI after her gold-winning performance.

As is often the case at domestic competitions, Chanu was never under threat of missing out on gold, needing only two successful lifts each in the snatch and clean and jerk to seal the title.

However, there was a noticeable shift in strategy with India chief coach Vijay Sharma

pushing her instead of adopting a conservative approach.

The 31-year-old opened with a higher-than-usual starting weight of 86kg in the snatch and 116kg in the clean and jerk.

She responded confidently, clearing 86kg with ease before producing a flawless lift of 89kg. The effort improved upon her previous personal best snatch record of 88kg, set at the 2020 Nationals in the 49kg category.

Over the past few years, the diminutive Manipuri lifter has repeatedly chased the elusive 90kg barrier, often coming agonisingly close. On Wednesday too, she made an attempt at 91kg in her final lift but failed to maintain balance.

In the clean and jerk as well, Chanu completed lifts of 112kg and 116kg before being pushed to attempt 120kg in her final effort, which she could not execute. Notably, Chanu had set a world record with a lift of 119kg in clean and jerk at the 2021 Asian Championships.

While she has consistently remained among India's most decorated weightlifters, she had not bettered her personal best in snatch and clean and jerk since 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Wednesday's performance, therefore, signals renewed progress and sharpness as Chanu gears up for a packed season that includes the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and the World Championships.

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