



## Govt committed to all-weather road connectivity across J&K, Deputy CM tells House

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 05: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Thursday said that the government is committed to connecting every habitation with robust road connectivity across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a question raised by legislator Javid Hassan Baig in the Legislative Assembly.

He further informed that a structured and phased approach is being adopted for road development through flagship schemes such as PMGSY, CRIF, NABARD (RIDF), and UT Capex, in accordance with the J&K Road Policy-2021. He added that the planning, sanctioning and execution processes of projects under these schemes



are time bound and subjected to regular reviews and monitoring. This will ensure timely completion and delivery of safe, durable and all weather road connectivity

across the Union Territory, he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that under the Supreme Court directions for well maintained and safe motorable roads, the Public Works (R&B) Department is undertaking construction, upgradation and systematic maintenance of road infrastructure across the UT under various Central Sector Schemes (CSS) and UT Sector schemes.

He said that the J&K Road Policy-2021 has been notified to ensure assured funding, transparency and planned maintenance. He added that the roads are being planned and executed as per IRC standards, with in-built safety provisions such as crash barriers, signage, road furniture, identification of accident-prone locations and mandatory maintenance during and after construction.

The Deputy Chief Minister also said that special emphasis is being laid on connectivity to remote, hilly, and inaccessible areas to ensure equitable development. He said that the Directorate Investigation & Quality Control (DIQC) wing of the Public Works (R&B) Department is mandated to ensure planning excellence, technical soundness, and uncompromising quality in the creation and maintenance of road and bridge infrastructure. He added that the DIQC is entrusted to ensure road infrastructure across J&K is safe, durable, reliable, and serviceable in all seasons, thereby supporting economic activity, social inclusion, and regional integration.

The Deputy CM said that DIQC is responsible for technical vetting, quality assurance, and compliance with prescribed standards.

**Budget Session 2026**  
**Baba Reshi-Gulmarg road project under review: Deputy CM**

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 05: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Thursday said that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for construction of the Baba Reshi-Gulmarg Road has been prepared at an estimated cost of Rs. 40.34 crore. He was replying to a question raised by the legislator Irfan Hafiz Lone in the Legislative Assembly Thursday.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, said that the project is presently under examination. He informed that the estimates for the balance work of up-gradation, macadamization and completion of the Dandmouh- Setrisem-Nagbal road is under preparation stage.

However, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the work shall be taken up under the appropriate head of account, subject to availability of resources.

## PIB media delegation from Srinagar visits ICAR-CMFRI Vizhinjam

KT NEWS DESK

Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala), February 05: As part of the ongoing media tour organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), Srinagar, a media delegation from Srinagar visited the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Vizhinjam Regional Centre, Thursday to gain first-hand insight into marine fisheries research and advanced aquaculture technologies.

During the visit, the delegation, as per the PIB statement, interacted with Dr B. Santhosh, Head, Vizhinjam Regional Centre, ICAR-CMFRI, who briefed the journalists on the mandate, research focus and ongoing scientific interventions of the institute in the marine fisheries sector. He highlighted CMFRI's role in sustainable marine resource management, mariculture development and technology dissemination aimed at enhancing fish production, livelihoods and nutritional security.

The delegation was also guided by Dr Rathi Bhuvaneswari, Senior Scientist, through the Sagarika Marine Research Aquarium, which



showcases marine biodiversity and research-driven awareness initiatives. The team also was given a walkthrough of the Silver Pompano Broodbank, developed for quality seed production.

The team further visited the Breeding and Hatchery Complex of Giant Trevally and Silver Pompano, the Bivalve Hatchery, the Microalgal Photobioreactor, and the Live Feed Copepod Unit, where detailed explanations were provided on scientific breeding, larval rearing, live feed production, and innovative technologies supporting marine aquaculture and coastal livelihoods.

The interactions and facility

visits provided the media delegation with comprehensive exposure to CMFRI's efforts in advancing climate-resilient, sustainable and technology-driven fisheries and mariculture practices.

The visit to ICAR-CMFRI, Vizhinjam, forms part of a five-day media outreach programme organised by PIB Srinagar to familiarise journalists from Jammu and Kashmir with key national research institutions, infrastructure projects and development initiatives in Kerala. The delegation is being led by Shri Majid Pandit, Media & Communication Officer, PIB Srinagar, who is the Conducting Officer for the programme.

## My Bharat Srinagar hosts ISYEP 2026, welcomes 37 youth from Punjab

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, February 05: My Bharat Srinagar organised the inauguration ceremony of the Inter-State Youth Exchange Programme (ISYEP) 2026 at SCERT Bemina, Srinagar, on Thursday. The programme, as per the PIB statement, was attended by SDM West Srinagar, Irfan Ah-

mad Lone, as Chief Guest. A total of 37 youth participants from Punjab participated in the exchange programme, while overall attendance exceeded 200.

Pradip Kumar, Deputy Director, Mera Yuva Bharat Srinagar, presided over the event and delivered the welcome address, highlighting the vision of My Bharat in nurturing responsible, aware, and united youth across the country.

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MACHINERY DIVISION KASHMIR MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT, KASHMIR

### GIST of e-Tender

e-NIT No:	MDSK/TS /2025-26/95
Date	05.02.2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from registered contractors for the below mentioned work:-

Name of the Work	Cost of Tender Doc. (In rupees)	Estimated Cost (In Rs)	Bid security (EMD) in Rs	Position of AA
1	2	3	4	5

SITC of Multistage Horizontal Pumping Unit and allied works for Bore well no 120 in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission on Saffron.

The bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q),

Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Govt. website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) as per schedule of dates given below:-

01 Publish date	05.02.2026 (18:00hrs)
02 Period of downloading of bidding document	05.02.2026 (18:30hrs)
03 Bid submission start date	05.02.2026 (18:55hrs)
04 Bid submission end date	16.02.2026 (18:55hrs)
05 Date and time of opening of bids (online)	17.02.2026 (14:00hrs)

Sd/

Executive Engineer,  
Machinery Division, Srinagar

No: MDSK/ TS/5878-81  
Date: 05.02.2026

DIPK-10656/25  
DATED: 05-02-2026

DIPK-10632/25  
DATED: 05-02-2026

Atul Kumar JKAS,  
Secretary, J&K Services Selection Board

No: JKSSB-PLAN/15/2024-03 (E-7597568) Dated: 31-01-2026

### Annexure- "A"

- Live face capture using your device camera is mandatory.
- The application cannot be submitted without successful face verification.
- Uploaded photographs or screenshots are NOT allowed for this Advertisement.
- Use a working camera (laptop webcam or mobile camera).
- Allow camera access when prompted by the browser.
- Ensure a stable internet connection during face capture.
- Supported browsers: Chrome / Edge / Firefox (latest versions). Sit in a well-lit area with even lighting on your face.
- Avoid:
  - Very dark rooms
  - Bright backlight or sunlight behind you
  - Harsh shadows on the face
  - Your face should be clearly visible and sharp, not blurred. Look directly at the camera.
- Keep your face:
  - Centered in the frame
  - Straight (do not tilt head) Close enough (face should cover most of the frame)
  - Only one face must be visible.
- Do NOT wear or use:
  - Masks, caps, hats, or helmets
  - Sunglasses or dark glasses
  - Face coverings or hands on face
  - Printed photographs or mobile screen images Any obstruction may lead to verification failure.
- The system may ask you to retry if quality checks fail.
- If verification fails, follow the on-screen message (e.g., improve lighting, move closer).
- You may retry the live capture until verification is successful.
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## Zojila Tunnel achieves 59% progress: Economic Survey

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Feb 05: Stating that the 13.15-km Zojila Tunnel has achieved around 59 percent physical progress and is expected to be completed by 2027-28, the Economic Survey Report 2025-26 revealed that Jammu and Kashmir's major tunnel projects aimed at improving all-weather road connectivity are making steady headway.

The report said the tunnel projects are being executed under the Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) and National Highway schemes to enhance mobility and reduce travel time across the hilly

terrain of the Union Territory.

According to the Economic Survey, the 6.5-km Sonamarg (Z-Mor) Tunnel, located near Gagangir in Ganderbal district, was completed in July 2024 at a cost of Rs 2,379 crore. "Connecting the Srinagar-Sonamarg stretch of NH-01, the tunnel ensures year-round connectivity between Srinagar and Leh."

The survey also said the Sonamarg Tunnel holds strategic importance by enabling reliable movement for civilians and security forces toward the border regions. It also mitigates risks from heavy snowfall and avalanches, ending the seasonal closure of the Srinagar-Leh road that previously remained cut off for nearly seven

months every year.

Other key projects, including the Panthal-Magarkot Tunnel, Diddole-Khooni Nallah Tunnel, Jammu Ring Road Tunnel, Bimber Gali Tunnel and Sungal Tunnel, are at different stages of construction, the report stated.

The Kundti Tunnel and Naushera Tunnel have already been completed, it added.

According to the Survey, the completion of these tunnel projects will strengthen road infrastructure, ensure smoother traffic flow, improve access to remote areas, and bolster the long-term economic and strategic development of Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)



**J&K govt's policies a 'golden veil over failures': LoP Sharma**



SAJID RAINA

Jammu, Feb 05: A proposed amendment to the Lieutenant Governor's Address regarding the attacks on Kashmiris working in other states was defeated in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday.

## JKLA Question Hour

### Speaker rejects amendment on attacks against Kashmiris

YOGESH

Jammu, Feb 05: A proposed amendment to the Lieutenant Governor's Address regarding the attacks on Kashmiris working in other states was defeated in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday.

After the CM's reply to the LG's Address, Peoples Conference president Sajad Lone pressed that his amendment be put to vote. When the amendment was put to voting, National Conference MLAs voted against it, while Peoples Conference and Peoples Democratic Party MLAs voted in its favour. Following the

voice vote, the Speaker declared that the amendment had been rejected by the House. The amendment was taken up in the House after the CM's reply to the LG's Address.

When the Speaker asked Lone whether he would withdraw the amendment or press it, Lone said he would withdraw it if the government gave an assurance that they would create an institutional mechanism, such as a cabinet subcommittee, to look into these incidents.

Responding to Lone, CM Omar Abdullah said that an institutional mechanism is already in place to address such



incidents. At this, Lone asked him to reveal details about

such incidents. The CM did not respond, prompting Lone to press the amendment for voting.

Only Lone and PDP members in the House supported the amendment.

In a post on X, PC president Sajad Lone said that NC and BJP together voted against the amendment in the Assembly to defeat it. "I had moved amendments to the Honourable LG's Address. The concept was that these points be added to the Honourable LG's Address. The amendments were put to vote, and NC and BJP voted against them," Lone said. He expressed gratitude to PDP members for

supporting his amendments. "Thanks to PDP members. They supported them," Lone added.

Lone's amendment read: "But to regret that there is no mention of the strongest possible condemnation in the Address about attacks on Kashmiri students, traders, and hawkers in different states and Union Territories, in their own country. Besides, there is no mention of any communication with the Union Government and different states to take strict action against the culprits involved in such dastardly acts."—(KNO)

## Health Dept refers over 2400 vacancies to PSC, JKSSB

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 05: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has reiterated its commitment to strengthen the healthcare system by ensuring adequate availability of doctors, specialists, nurses and paramedical staff across the Union Territory.

Acknowledging that human resources form the backbone of efficient and quality health services, the Health and Medical Education Department has initiated a large-scale recruitment drive to address staff shortages in government health institutions.

Replies to a question of MLA, G A Mir, Health Minister, Sakina Ito stated: "The Government recognizes importance of availability of doctors, specialists, nurses

and paramedical staff for efficient and proper health delivery services."

"The Department recently referred 480 posts of Medical Officers to the J&K Public Service Commission for recruitment. After completion of the selection process, the newly selected doctors shall be posted to far-flung/under-served areas and health institutions facing shortage of staff, as per requirement and policy in vogue," she said, adding, "Further, the 292 vacancies in the non-gazetted/paramedical category from the Directorate of Family Welfare, Maternity and Child Health (MCH), and Immunization have been referred to the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board for recruitment, which stands advertised by the JKSSB for making selection of suitable

candidates. Also 290 vacancies in the non-gazetted/paramedical category from the Directorate of Health Services Jammu have also been referred to the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (J&K SS) for recruitment. Besides 608 posts of Directorate of Health Services, Jammu are also in the process of referral to JKSSB for recruitment, after having concurrence of Finance Department," she said.

The Minister added that 802 non-gazetted, MTS vacancies and Sanitation Worker posts pertaining to Directorate of Health Services, Kashmir are under examination in the department for further referral to JKSSB. These posts shall be referred after having concurrence of Finance Department

"Contractual recruitment of doctors and

paramedical staff is already being undertaken under the National Health Mission, J&K, which provides a policy-approved mechanism to address manpower shortages at district and block levels, especially in far-flung and under-served areas," she added.

"Recruitment at constituency or district level outside the NHM framework is not feasible, as appointments to public posts must be made strictly in accordance with prescribed recruitment rules and statutory procedures. Any parallel arrangement may lead to administrative and legal complications," she said adding that the Department continues to fill regular posts through constitutional recruiting agencies, while immediate gaps are bridged through NHM contractual engagements, ensuring uninterrupted healthcare services—(KNO)

## J&K gets 4.5 lakh MT food grains annually: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 05: The Centre on Thursday informed the Parliament that Jammu and Kashmir received around 4.5 lakh metric tonnes of food grains annually under the National Food Security Act (NFS), while Ladakh received around 0.32-0.35 lakh metric tonnes per year, under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

In a written reply in Lok Sabha, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution stated that Jammu and Kashmir was allocated about 4.50 LMT in 2020-21, 4.49 LMT in 2021-22, 4.51 LMT in 2022-23 and around 4.50 LMT in 2023-24, with similar allocations continuing in 2024-25. For 2025-26 (up to December 2025), the UT has received around 3.75 LMT under NFS.

For Ladakh, the ministry said around 0.32 LMT was allocated in 2020-21, which increased marginally to about 0.33-0.35 LMT between 2021-22 and 2024-25, while around 0.28 LMT has been allocated in 2025-26 (up to December).

Earlier, the government had told Parliament that over 910 thousand metric tonnes of food grains were allocated to Jammu and Kashmir and nearly 59 thousand metric tonnes to Ladakh under PMGKAY during the COVID-19 period, in addition to NFS.

The Ministry said that advance stocking and special transportation arrangements are made for snow-bound areas of Kashmir and high-altitude regions of Ladakh to ensure uninterrupted supply during winter months—(KNO)

## Cyber Forensic Laboratory available, functioning in J&K: Centre

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Feb 05: The Union Government has informed Parliament that a Cyber Forensic Laboratory is available and functioning in Jammu and Kashmir as part of efforts to strengthen digital crime investigation and forensic capabilities in the Union Territory.

In a written reply to an unstarred question in Lok Sabha, the Ministry of Home

Affairs said that the Central Government is providing continued support for upgrading of State and Union Territory Forensic Science Laboratories, including cyber forensic divisions, under centrally funded schemes.

The Ministry said that projects worth Rs 244.89 crore have been approved for 30 States and Union Territories under the Nirbhaya-funded scheme for strengthening

DNA analysis and cyber forensic capacities. Jammu and Kashmir is among the UTs where a cyber forensic facility is already available, it said.

The government further informed Parliament that police and public order being state subjects, the responsibility for investigation and maintenance of forensic facilities rests with the respective State or Union

Territory administrations, while the Centre extends financial and technical support.

Meanwhile, the Ministry said that details of pending cases and sanctioned posts in cyber forensic laboratories are not maintained centrally, adding that training and upskilling of cyber professionals is an ongoing process through institutions such as the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU)—(KNO)

**'Over 4.36 lakh pre, post-matric scholarships sanctioned in J&K'**

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 05: The Union Government on Thursday informed Parliament that over 3.89 lakh pre-matric and more than 47,000 post-matric scholarships were sanctioned in Jammu and Kashmir during the year 2021-22 under minority welfare schemes.

In a written reply to an unstarred question in Lok Sabha, the Ministry of Minority Affairs said that 389,132 pre-matric scholarships and 47,574 post-matric scholarships were sanctioned in J&K during the period.

Continued on  
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## 5 new toll plazas in J&K in 6 years: Gadkari

RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Feb 05: The Government of India on Wednesday informed the Parliament that five new toll (fee) plazas have become operational in Jammu and Kashmir during the past six financial years as part of National Highway infrastructure expansion.

In a written reply to an unstarred question in the Lok Sabha, Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Jairam Gadkari said that fee plazas are opened on completed National Highway projects in accordance with the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008, and the terms of concession agreements, including prescribed distance norms between plazas.

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## GoI identifies 224 accident-prone spots on highways in J&K, Ladakh

RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Feb 05: The Government of India on Wednesday informed the Lok Sabha that 224 accident-prone black spots have been identified on National Highways across the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, out of which short-term rectification has been completed at 170 locations and long-term corrective measures at 62 spots.

The information was shared in a written reply to an unstarred question (No. 1124) raised by Dr Bholi Singh regarding road safety improvements on National Highways.

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## Over 5.76 lakh smart meters installed in J&K: Power Ministry

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Feb 05: Over 5.76 lakh smart meters have been installed across Jammu and Kashmir under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) till January 2026, the Government of India informed the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

Continued on  
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## EDITORIAL

### Friday Brief: Sha'baan Is The Bridge To Ramadhan

The month of Sha'baan holds a unique and profound position in the Islamic calendar, serving as a spiritual bridge between the two blessed epochs of Rajab and Ramadhan. While not a month of obligatory fasting like Ramadhan, its significance, particularly its concluding days, is deeply rooted in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). It is a time of preparation, elevation, and divine anticipation. The Prophet

(PBUH) is reported to have fasted more in Sha'baan than in any other month apart from Ramadhan. When asked about this, he explained, "It is a month people neglect between Rajab and Ramadhan... and I love that my deeds are lifted up while I am fasting." This highlights Sha'baan's role as a period for spiritual rejuvenation and increasing voluntary worship (nafil) to smoothly transition into Ramadhan's intensity. It is a time for the heart to reorient itself towards

obedience and for minor sins to be erased through increased devotion, ensuring one approaches Ramadhan with a cleansed slate and heightened consciousness. The pinnacle of Sha'baan is the night of the 15th, known as Laylat al-Bara'ah or the Night of Emancipation. While interpretations vary, many scholars hold it as a night of immense mercy when Allah's forgiveness descends, destinies are recorded, and prayers are answered. The Prophet (PBUH) urged believers

to spend this night in prayer, seeking forgiveness, and to fast the following day. It is a night for introspection, repairing relationships, and seeking pardon—a divine opportunity for spiritual rectification before the holy month. Thus, the last days of Sha'baan are a final call to readiness. They are not for laxity but for polishing one's intentions, increasing Quranic recitation, and making sincere repentance (tawbah). It is the believer's final spiritual tuning before entering

the marathon of Ramadhan. Sha'baan is the soul's runway for Ramadhan. By honouring it through fasting, night prayers, and seeking forgiveness, a Muslim does not merely wait for Ramadhan but actively builds the spiritual momentum to embrace its blessings fully. It is a merciful gift from Allah, allowing His servants to arrive at the gates of Ramadhan not as strangers to worship, but as prepared and eager guests of the Most Merciful.

## Union Budget FY 2026-27: Strengthening Capital Goods Sector

### Press Information Bureau

India's capital goods sector is a strategic cornerstone in India's industrial policy, supported by government infrastructure investments and a strong manufacturing push. The sector is a critical driver of infrastructure expansion, industrial capacity creation, and technological advancement across the economy.

With a view to building high-precision manufacturing capacity, promoting technologically advanced equipment, and creating globally competitive industrial ecosystems, the capital goods sector has remained a key focus of government policy. Given its critical importance to the country's economic development, the sector's expansion has been consistently supported through targeted incentives and strengthened regulatory frameworks. The Union Budget 2026-27 further reinforces this direction, emphasising the need to support a rapidly expanding economy characterised by rising trade volumes and increasing capital requirements.

Guided by the framework of three kartavyas, the Union Budget identifies its first priority as accelerating and sustaining economic growth by proposing interventions in various key areas. Capital goods development remains a key component of the strategy, with continued emphasis on sector-specific schemes and sustained capital expenditure aimed at strengthening domestic manufacturing capabilities and infrastructure creation.

The proposed measures seek to boost investment, enhance domestic capacity, and support long-term economic growth in the Capital Goods sector.

### Capital Goods

"Capital Goods" means any plant, machinery, equipment or accessories required for manufacture or production, either directly or indirectly, of goods or for rendering services, including those required for replacement, modernisation, technological up-gradation or expansion.

Capital goods may be used in manufacturing, mining, agriculture, aquaculture, animal husbandry, floriculture, horticulture, pisciculture, poultry, sericulture and viticulture as well as for use in services sector.

### Capital Goods Sector Strengthening India's Growth Engine

The capital goods sector plays a vital role in India's economic strategy by supporting large-scale manufacturing and infrastructure projects. Driven by rapid urbanization, ongoing infrastructure investments, and strong policy support, the sector is set to foster long-term industrial growth and strengthen India's standing in the global economy.

Capital goods are widely regarded as foundational to strengthening domestic manufacturing capacity. The sector also exerts a strong multiplier effect on the economy, significantly influencing growth and employment across user industries by supplying critical inputs such as machinery and equipment to the entire manufacturing ecosystem, as well as to other related sectors.

### Role of Capital Goods in Industrial Growth

India's industrial growth momentum in FY26 has become more broad-based, with manufacturing emerging as major driver and gaining further pace during the year. The Economic Survey 2025-26 notes that manufacturing GVA growth accelerated in FY26, reaching 7.72% in Q1 and 9.13% in Q2, supported largely by ongoing structural transformations within the sector.

Further, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) registered a growth of 7.8% in December 2025, supported by broad-based expansion in manufacturing (8.1%) and continued growth in mining (6.8%). A key contributor to this performance was the capital goods segment under the use-based classification, which recorded an 8.1% year-on-year increase during the same period.

The export performance of the capital goods sector since FY22 has been closely linked to the expansion of domestic production capacity and the strengthening of



investment activity within the economy. Exports recorded steady growth, increasing to 33,356 crore in FY25 from 31,621 crore in FY24. Similarly, production also witnessed a notable rise, reaching 2,05,194 crore in FY25 compared with 1,85,858 crore in the previous financial year. On the import front, merchandise imports rose by 6.3% year-on-year in FY25 to reach USD 721.2 billion, driven largely by stronger demand for critical intermediate goods and capital equipment, reflecting resilient domestic demand. Further, capital goods imports expanded by 6.6% in Q1 FY26 and further accelerated to 9.2% in Q2 FY26. The overall dual trends highlights sustained domestic investment activity as well as reliance on technologically advanced machinery sourced from abroad.

Also, High-frequency indicators suggest healthy investment activity in capital goods. The overall growth in the sector indicates rising industrial activity, reflecting improved performance and expanding economic momentum.

### High-frequency indicators signalling firming investment momentum (YoY growth, %)

High-frequency indicators are signalling a firming investment momentum, as evidenced by the year-on-year growth percentages. Specifically, capital goods imports increased from 6.6% in the first quarter of FY26 to 9.2% in the second quarter, and further rose to 13.4% in the third quarter. The monthly average year-on-year growth during the period from FY16 to FY20 was 7.1%. Additionally, capacity utilization rates improved from 74.1% in Q1 FY26 to 74.8% in Q2 FY26; data for Q3 FY26 was not available. These trends suggest an overall strengthening in investment activities.

### What are Capital Goods Imports?

Capital goods imports are defined as the aggregate of imports of electric machinery and equipment; base metals excluding iron and steel; industrial machinery, including machinery for dairy and allied uses; machine tools; other construction machinery; project goods; and transport equipment.

### Government Capex has continued to rise steadily since FY22

The Government's capital expenditure between FY19 and FY22 spending grew by about 92%, increasing from 3.07 lakh crore to 5.92 lakh crore. This upward trajectory has continued in subsequent fiscal years, supporting the broader objective of expanding high-quality infrastructure nationwide.

Additionally, the government's capital outlay has further increased by nearly 4.2 times, from 2.63 lakh crore in FY18 to a budgeted 11.21 lakh crore in FY26(BE), whereas effective public capital expenditure for FY26 (BE) stands at 15.48 lakh crore.

### Sectoral Impact of Capital Goods Expansion

India's expanding capital goods sector is supporting strong growth across several industrial segments. It is experiencing significant attention because of its pivotal role in advancing industrial activity and overall economic development. The sector also encompasses other industries such as, machinery, and construction, which are essential for the country's infrastructure development. For instance, the electrical equipment segment has consistently recorded double-digit output growth in power equipment, driven by strong demand in both domestic and export markets.

Together, these trends highlights that India's capital goods sector is emerging as a central pillar of its investment-led growth strategy, reinforcing industrial capacity, accelerating infrastructure creation, and sustaining the country's long-term economic momentum.

### Budget Focus on Capital Goods: A Push for the Economy

The Union Budget 2026-27 underscores the capital goods sector as a key driver of India's growth and industrial transformation. It prioritises expansion of manufacturing capacities in seven strategic and frontier sectors, supported by focused interventions for capital goods. The Budget strengthens the sector's role across manufacturing, and the energy transition to enhance productivity and quality standards. These measures aim to reinforce domestic capacity while supporting India's deeper integration with global markets.

### Public Capital Expenditure: Infrastructure-led Growth

Reinforcing the role of public investment as a key driver of economic growth, the Budget delivers a strong push to infrastructure development. Public capital expenditure is proposed to be increased by ~9% from FY 2025-26 (Budget Estimates) to 12.2 lakh crore in FY 2026-27. Public capex has increased manifold from 2 lakh crore in FY 2014-15. This underscores the continued emphasis on infrastructure-led growth, crowding-in of private investment and enhancement of productive capacity across the economy.

### Strengthening Manufacturing through Capital Goods Development

Recognising the strong capital goods capability underpins productivity and quality across industries, several targeted interventions have been proposed to build domestic capacity.

To enhance high-precision manufacturing, Hi-Tech Tool Rooms are proposed to be established by CPSES (Central Public Service Enterprise) at two locations. These facilities will function as digitally enabled, automated service bureaus, providing localised design, testing and manufacturing of high-precision components at lower cost.

Further, a Scheme for Enhancement of

Construction and Infrastructure Equipment (CIE) is proposed to strengthen domestic manufacturing of high-value and technologically advanced construction and infrastructure equipment. This includes a wide range of equipment, from lifts used in multi-storey buildings and fire-fighting equipment to tunnel-boring machinery for metro projects and high-altitude roads.

To support logistics and trade infrastructure, the Budget also proposes a Scheme for Container Manufacturing, aimed at creating a globally competitive container manufacturing ecosystem. The scheme has a proposed budgetary allocation of 10,000 crore over a five-year period.

### Support to Toll Manufacturing and Electronics Manufacturing

To provide a fillip to toll manufacturing in India, the Budget proposes an income tax exemption for a period of five years to any non-resident entity that provides capital goods, equipment or tooling to a toll manufacturer operating in a bonded zone.

In addition, specific support has been extended to toll manufacturing engaged in electronics manufacturing. Under the proposal, a tax exemption is provided to any foreign company supplying capital goods, equipment or tooling to a toll manufacturer located in a bonded zone and engaged in manufacturing electronic goods. The exemption is proposed for five tax years beginning 1st April, 2026.

The measure aims to reduce the capital investment burden on Indian contract manufacturers, thereby lowering production costs and promoting electronics manufacturing in India. The proposed amendment is applicable up to tax year 2030-31.

### Energy Transition and Critical Minerals: Capital Goods Facilitation

In support of energy transition and energy security, the Budget proposes to extend the basic customs duty exemption on capital goods used for manufacturing Lithium-Ion cells for batteries to those used for manufacturing Lithium-Ion cells for battery energy storage systems as well.

Further, the basic customs duty on the import of capital goods required for processing critical minerals in India is proposed to be exempted, with a view to strengthening domestic value chains for critical minerals.

### Recent Policy Support Strengthening Capital Goods Sector

The Government's policy support for the capital goods sector has expanded significantly, with multiple schemes aimed at improving domestic capability and aligning with India's investment-led growth phase. Some of the recent policy support includes:

### Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes

The core objective of the PLI Scheme is

### Key Takeaways

- Government capital outlay rose 4.2x from ₹2.63 lakh crore in FY18 to ₹11.21 lakh crore in FY26 (BE)
- Union Budget FY 2026-27 announces public capital expenditure at ₹12.2 lakh crore
- Capital goods under IIP grew 8.1% YoY in December 2025
- ₹10,000 crore Container Manufacturing Scheme and new CIE & Hi-Tech Tool Room initiatives announced
- Five-year tax exemptions for toll and electronics manufacturing, along with customs duty exemptions for capital goods in various sectors

to attract investments in key sectors, facilitate the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, enhance operational efficiency, and achieve economies of size and scale, thereby strengthening the global competitiveness of Indian manufacturers. The Economic Survey 2025-26 highlights key sectoral gains such as:

PLI-Auto Scheme promotes manufacturing of advanced automotive technology vehicles and components. It attracted 35,657 crore in investments and created 48,974 jobs till September 2025.

PLI-Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Scheme aims at localising battery manufacturing, with 40 GWh capacity awarded thus, strengthening India's EV ecosystem.

### Rising Impact of PLI Schemes in Strengthening India's Manufacturing Sector

According to the Economic Survey 2025-2026, an actual investment of over 2.0 lakh crore has been realised till September 2025, leading to incremental production/sales of over 18.70 lakh crore and employment generation of over 12,60 lakhs (direct and indirect).

Additionally, cumulative incentives of 23,946 crore have been disbursed across 12 sectors, with 806 applications approved across all 14 sectors. The PLI Schemes have witnessed exports surpassing 8.20 lakh crore, driven by key sectors under the Scheme.

Scheme for Enhancement of Competitiveness in the Indian Capital Goods Sector

The Government is undertaking focused measures to strengthen the competitiveness of the capital goods sector through Phase II of the Scheme on Enhancement of Competitiveness in the Indian Capital Goods Sector, introduced in 2022. The scheme covers six major components, including technology identification through innovation portals, setting up Advanced Centres of Excellence (CoEs), establishing Common Engineering Facility Centres (CEFCs), upgrading testing and certification infrastructure, and implementing comprehensive skill development initiatives.

As of November 2025, 29 projects have been approved under Phase II, involving a total project cost of ₹891.37 crore, with a government contribution of ₹714.64 crore. Technologies developed under the scheme have also captured markets in countries such as France, Belgium, and Qatar, demonstrating the sector's improving global competitiveness.

The Scheme for Enhancement of Competitiveness in the Indian Capital Goods Sector is a demand-driven scheme under which industry, in partnership with eminent academic and research institutions, proposes projects for government funding, with the objective of fostering long-term industry-academia collaboration for critical R&D.

### Conclusion

Building on its kartavya and the government's resolve to drive comprehensive economic growth and development, the capital goods sector plays a significant role in advancing this agenda. With existing policy support and new measures introduced in the Union Budget 2026-27, the sector is well positioned to make a strong contribution to India's economic development in the coming years.

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

## CS consults NITI Aayog to strengthen food safety regime in J&K

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 05: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Thursday held high-level consultative meeting with Member, NITI Aayog, Dr. V.K. Paul, along with senior experts and advisors from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), to deliberate on a comprehensive strategy for strengthening and augmenting food safety mechanisms across the districts of J&K.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Secretary, Health & Medical Education (H&ME); Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Director, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Jammu/Kashmir; Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) and other concerned senior officers.

During the discussions, Dr. V.K. Paul shared expert insights on framing a future-ready roadmap aimed at ensuring uncompromising food safety standards across Jammu and Kashmir. He, along with FSSAI experts,



outlined a six-point strategic framework to be pursued in the coming months for strengthening both awareness and enforcement mechanisms under the Food Safety regime.

The roadmap emphasized the launch of a vigorous Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign to create widespread public awareness about food safety practices, consumer rights, and statutory provisions under the Food Safety and Standards Act. This would be complemented by simultaneous efforts to plug gaps in enforcement

mechanisms, including necessary notifications and regulatory measures to empower the Food Safety Organization with stronger enforcement authority.

A key focus area discussed was capacity building of human resources, along with strengthening of food testing infrastructure. It was agreed that priority would be accorded to upgrading and strengthening of existing laboratories in the first phase, with expansion to follow in a calibrated manner.

The meeting also resolved to constitute a joint panel of experts from FSSAI and J&K,

Health Department to prepare a detailed action plan within the next three months, with implementation scheduled to commence from April 2026.

Earlier, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo highlighted the specific requirements of Jammu and Kashmir for developing a comprehensive and long-term roadmap to make the food safety system among one of the best in the country.

He sought guidance from NITI Aayog on preparing a multi-year blueprint for optimal utilization of the Food Safety Act to safeguard public health. He also

requested expert recommendations on strengthening laboratory infrastructure, enhancing human resources, improving training and capacity building, and addressing systemic bottlenecks to make the Food Safety Organization more effective and empowered during this period.

Providing an overview of the current scenario, Secretary, H&ME, Dr. Syed Abid Rashid Shah, presented the status of food safety enforcement in the Union Territory. He briefed the experts on existing institutional mechanisms, including the functioning of two Food Safety Appellate Tribunals and two NABL/FSSAI-accredited laboratories at Jammu and Srinagar, and underscored the need for the present consultations to further strengthen enforcement outcomes.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to reinforcing food safety governance in Jammu and Kashmir through coordinated institutional efforts, robust enforcement, and sustained awareness for the safety and welfare of its people.

MAHA SHIVRATRI FESTIVAL

## Ensure comprehensive arrangements: Div Com Kashmir



KT News Desk

He emphasized the availability of essential items including walnuts, nadru, fish, marigold flowers, and other festival-related requirements for the community. The Food Safety Department was instructed to conduct intensive market-checking drives to ensure the quality and safety of edible goods.

The Div Com laid special focus on arrangements at the Shankaracharya Temple, where over 25,000 devotees are expected to perform religious rituals. He directed departments to ensure uninterrupted power supply, adequate water storage, proper sanitation, replacement of defunct streetlights, decoration of approach roads, deployment of volunteers, floral decorations at designated locations, and deputation of magistrates.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Deputy Commissioners, Senior Superintendents of Police, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner, religious leaders and officers from all concerned civil departments.

Maha Shivratri, locally known as Herath, is an important religious festival for Kashmiri Pandits and will be celebrated on February 15.

Addressing the meeting, the Div Com directed all the officers to ensure detailed arrangements at the major congregational places and transit camps across the division.

## Child Marriage Free Bharat Mission Vatsalya Bandipora holds awareness programme

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 05: Under the 4th spell of the "Child Marriage Free Bharat" Campaign, which focuses on Gram Panchayat-led community engagement, Gram Sabha action, and Panchayat resolutions to declare areas child-marriage-free, Mission Vatsalya (Child Protection Services) Bandipora organized an awareness and sensitization programme at Mantrigam Panchayat Halqa B, of District Bandipora, with active participation from various stakeholders.

During the programme, a resolution was passed in line with Spell 4, reaffirming the Panchayat's commitment to prevent child marriage, strengthen local vigilance, and promote community ownership in safeguarding children.

Village heads including Ex.Sarpanch, Chowkidars, Lumberdars, Ex.Ward Members, Auqaf Committee President, along with Anganwadi Workers, chair about the progress achieved in processing of applications at various stages under Mission YUVA in the district.

ASHA Workers, and local residents were sensitized about the harmful consequences of child marriage, legal provisions, and preventive strategies.

Emphasis was placed on the collective responsibility of families and community leaders to protect Child Rights and ensure education and overall well-being.

Officials from DCPU, CWC, CHL and CHD highlighted the negative physical, mental, and social impacts of child marriage and urged participants to remain vigilant and report incidents.

As per an official statement, the Child Helpline number 1098 was widely shared, and informative posters were displayed at schools and Gram Panchayats to enhance awareness. The programme concluded with a collective pledge by community members to support government initiatives and work towards making District Bandipora child-marriage-free, ensuring a safer future for children.

## DC Srinagar launches vaccination programme for Hajj 2026 pilgrims

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR FEBRUARY 05: In connection with Hajj-2026, Deputy Commissioner(DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Thursday kick started 3 days immunization/vaccination programme for Hajj pilgrims of Srinagar District here at Bait-ul-Hujaj(Haj House), Bemina.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz, Chief Executive Officer, J&K Hajj House, Dr Shujat, SDM West, Irfan Bahadur, Chief Medical Officer, Dr Tahir Sajad, Tehsildar Shalteng, Rayees Ahmad, Zonal Medical Officer Batamaloo, Dr Sameena, District Immunization Officer and other officers of Haj House were present on the occasion.

During the visit, the DC, as per an official statement, took stock of the vaccination process and inspected the arrangements put in place to facilitate the pilgrims of district and to ensure smooth vaccination of pilgrims.

While interacting with the



Hajj Pilgrims, the DC greeted them for Holy pilgrimage of Hajj-2026.

On the occasion, the DC said that the vaccination is aimed to protect the Hajj pilgrims from various infections, ensure their health and safety, and protect them from any contagious diseases. He emphasized on ensuring seamless conduct of the vaccination process.

The DC was informed that the vaccinations process is scheduled for 3 days from

Wednesday during which vaccine for Meningococcal Meningitis, Poliomyelitis and Seasonal Influenza (SIV) are being administered to the Hajj-2026 Pilgrims for which special counters have been setup for smooth conduct.

The CEO, J&K Hajj House, briefed the DC that a total of 1173 pilgrims from Srinagar district shall be taking their pilgrimage for Hajj-2026 and are being vaccinated at Bait-ul-Hujaj (Haj House), Bemina.

## DC Ganderbal reviews Mission YUVA implementation, approves 202 cases

KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, FEBRUARY 05: In a significant push towards youth empowerment and entrepreneurship, a meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) of Mission YUVA was held Thursday at Ganderbal under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore.

At the outset, the Additional District Development Commissioner apprised the



While reviewing the progress of the scheme, the DC highlighted the pivotal role of Mission YUVA in fostering

entrepreneurship, enhancing skills, and creating employment opportunities for young aspirants in the district.

He directed the concerned department to dispose-off cases timely and stressed that there should be no pendencies. He also directed the Lead District Manager (LDM) to immediately process all loan cases currently under process to ensure timely financial support to beneficiaries.

The DC called for wide

publicity and promotion of the posts of External Trainers under the scheme. He further stressed the need for early finalization of mentors under Mission YUVA.

During the meeting, the committee examined cases related to the establishment of nano-enterprises under the Mission YUVA scheme. After detailed scrutiny, 202 fresh cases were unanimously approved, aimed at promoting self-employment and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for local youth.

## DC Budgam inauguates 3-day 'Naqsh-e-Meeras' heritage workshop at NIFT

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 05: District Administration Budgam Thursday inaugurated a three-day cultural and heritage workshop titled "Naqsh-e-Meeras", aimed at promoting, preserving and reviving the rich and diverse traditional art and craft heritage of Jammu & Kashmir.

The workshop is being organised from 5th to 7th February, 2026 at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Budgam.

The programme was formally inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, along with distinguished guests from the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), in the presence of senior district officers, artisans, students, Self Help Groups and members of the local community.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner said that Naqsh-e-Meeras is a significant initiative of the District

Administration to reconnect the younger generation with the rich legacy of Kashmir's hand-crafted traditions, while also providing a strong platform for local artisans to showcase their skills, products and creativity.

The DC emphasized that such heritage-based programmes are vital for preserving traditional knowledge systems that have been passed down through generations. He stated that Kashmir's handicrafts are not just economic activities but are an important part of the region's cultural identity, history and collective memory.

"We want our local art and crafts to flourish in a sustainable manner so that our younger generations understand the true value of handcrafted products and can clearly differentiate between machine-made and hand-made items. This understanding will help in preserving authenticity, quality and cultural heritage," the DC said.

He further added that such seminars and workshops play



a crucial role in boosting the morale of local artisans, craftsmen and children by giving them recognition, exposure and confidence.

"These platforms not only provide visibility to our artisans but also generate awareness among the masses to adopt and

promote local products. This is fully aligned with the spirit of Vocal for Local, where people are encouraged to support indigenous crafts and local economies," he said.

The DC also highlighted that showcasing traditional techniques and live demonstrations

can significantly enhance the financial stability of artisans by opening new market avenues, increasing demand for authentic handmade products and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

By demonstrating old and traditional crafts in a modern, organised setting, we are creating linkages between heritage and contemporary markets. This will ultimately strengthen the economic position of our artisans and contribute to overall economic growth of the district and the region," he added.

The DC stressed that the District Administration will continue to support such initiatives in collaboration with reputed national institutions to ensure that local craftsmanship receives the recognition, protection and promotion it truly deserves. He reiterated that District administration is committed to continue organising such heritage-focused programmes to promote cultural preservation, artisan empowerment, youth

engagement and sustainable economic development across the district.

The event witnessed the presence of several senior district officers including GM DIC Budgam Zahid Rashid, SDM Beerwah Taufeeq Gazi, Chief Planning Officer Budgam Javaid Ahmad Najar, CEO Municipal Council Budgam Bilal Ahmad, CEO Budgam Rifaat Irfan, District Information Officer Budgam Iram Khan, EO Municipal Committee Beerwah Zamir Lone, besides other senior officers of the district administration.

Large participation was also recorded from students of various schools and colleges, local youth, traditional artisans, Self Help Groups (SHGs), craftspeople and members of the general public, reflecting strong community engagement and interest in heritage preservation.

On the first day of the workshop, various competitions were organised including calligraphy, painting and sketching, aimed at nurturing creativity among students and young artists. Multiple stalls were set up showcasing a wide range of traditional crafts such as Paper Machie, Kani weaving, Sozni embroidery, cooper making, Kangri making, wood carving and other indigenous art forms.

An exclusive art gallery was also displayed featuring iconic paintings depicting old Jammu & Kashmir, offering visitors a glimpse into the region's historical, cultural and artistic evolution.

Traditional activities such as yarn weaving and other heritage processes were also demonstrated live, giving participants a hands-on understanding of aged-old techniques.

The workshop is being organised by District Administration Budgam in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Budgam, ensuring expert guidance, technical support and national-level exposure for local talen

## HM Amit Shah arrives

the borders," the official added.

"Later in the day, the Union Home Minister will chair a Jammu & Kashmir Security Review Meeting at Lok Bhawan, Jammu, at 2:30 PM, to take stock of the prevailing security situation and ongoing measures to maintain peace and stability in the region," the official said, adding, "At 3:00 PM, the Union Home Minister will interact with the families of martyrs and participate in a compassionate appointment programme at Lok Bhawan, reaffirming the government's commitment to supporting the families of those who have laid down their lives in the service of the nation."

He said, "On February 7, the Union Home Minister will chair a meeting on the development of Jammu and Kashmir at 10:30 AM at Lok Bhawan, Jammu, to review progress on key development initiatives and future plans for the Union Territory. He will leave for New Delhi on Saturday afternoon."

Referring to the Jammu visit of the Union Home Minister, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah told the Legislative Assembly that he would raise the issue of reopening tourist destinations closed after the Pahalgam terror attack with Shah. "Several tourist locations in Kashmir have remained shut. The issue will be taken up with the Home Minister," he said.

Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma welcomed Shah's visit and said the scheduled security review would accelerate development in the Union Territory. "There will be a review of development-related schemes run by the Central Government. This will accelerate the pace of development and boost the morale of security forces," he said.

Tanvir Sadiq, Chief Spokesperson of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, said the visit "brings a ray of hope" and called for restoration of statehood and action against attacks on Kashmiris outside the Union Territory.

PDP MLA Waheed Parra said that Shah's visit should be used to promote development and address concerns of youth. He called for measures on employment, dignity, and political outreach to restore confidence among young people in the region.

It may be recalled that during his previous visit to the Union Territory, HM Shah had similarly combined security consultations with administrative and development reviews, meeting local leadership and senior security commanders to assess operational priorities and progress on central projects. (KNO)

## Entire world respects

pride in the youth and weave India into a tapestry of unity. "I believe that after enduring a long journey of struggle, we have arrived at a momentous juncture where India must once again guide the world."

"I am confident that the strength of unity and its spirit will elevate India to the status of a developed nation by 2047, enabling us to reclaim our ancient glory and rightful place in the world," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The ceremony was also graced by Governor of Bihar, Arif Mohammed Khan; Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Pushkar Singh Dhami; Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Mohan Yadav; saints, spiritual leaders, heads of religious organisations and followers of Swami Satyamitranand Giri Ji Maharaj. (KNO)

## Omar: Will raise

tourist spaces will be taken up with the Home Minister, who is visiting Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

He further said that the registration process in the tourism sector is cumbersome and needs to be revised.

"We agree that the registration process is cumbersome. We have not reviewed the rules and procedures since 1978. We are working on it," he said.

The CM explained that linking the registration of tourism units with the Public Service Guarantee Act—a law that ensures the delivery of government services in a time-bound manner—does not prevent corruption.

He added that the Government is contemplating simplifying the registration process either through self-declaration or deemed approval. (KNO)

## CM reaffirms push

and future, but also reminded members that the address alone does not constitute the entire business of the budget session.

"The budget has to be presented. There are many things to be discussed in the budget. After that, there will be grants," the Chief Minister said, underlining that several occasions would arise during the session where the government would present its agenda before the people.

CM Omar Abdullah observed that Governor's or President's address is scheduled at first session each year and are not meant to be repeated again. He said the government deliberately avoided reiterating points already mentioned in the previous two LG addresses to prevent the opposition from accusing it of offering nothing new.

However, he reiterated that the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference government remains firmly committed to the promises made to the people, including the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

"They have less to say on the LG's address and more to say on the National Conference Manifesto," he remarked, adding in a lighter vein that the manifesto has become the central focus of the opposition's attacks.

He stated that no government fulfills all promises in the first year, as the foundation and preparation take time. Drawing comparisons, he pointed to long-pending promises made by previous governments, including commitments to address water scarcity in Kishtwar through a tunnel project that has remained unfulfilled even after 12 years.

Turning to the promise of 200 units of free electricity, the Chief Minister said the government is deeply conscious of its credibility and has already initiated implementation in the current financial year. He explained that the government has begun rolling out the benefit through the PM Suryaghar Muft Bijli Yojana,

ensuring that the promise is met through available means.

"I had never said that I will start new projects. I said that I will provide you with electricity. Now, there are many ways to provide electricity," he stated, adding that the scheme has been started for AAY households and will be expanded to other categories as financial conditions improve.

The Chief Minister said that every year, progress will be made on manifesto commitments, and continuous discussion will ensure that the government remains accountable.

On the issue of statehood, CM Omar Abdullah reminded the House that the biggest promise made to the people by the opposition was the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. He questioned why it has not yet been delivered despite repeated assurances during Parliamentary and Assembly elections.

He strongly condemned remarks suggesting separation of Jammu from Kashmir and statements reflecting mistrust. Calling such rhetoric deeply unfortunate, he said the common people of Kashmir are not against peace or the nation and have repeatedly shown courage and solidarity, including during incidents such as Pahalgam where locals came forward and even sacrificed their lives to save tourists.

Referring to the sacrifices of Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel since 1947, he recalled the historic slogan raised in Kashmir:

"Hoshyar Khabardar, Hum Kashmiri hai Tayhaar."

The Chief Minister cautioned against divisive politics and urged members to reflect on the consequences, pointing to the situation in Ladakh. He also questioned the logic of linking statehood to complete cessation of violence, asking who bears responsibility for recent incidents of militancy, bomb blasts and attack on tourists.

He recalled that in 2019 it was claimed that removing Article 370 would end separatism, militancy, corruption and other issues, yet encounters, crackdowns and militancy persist even in 2026.

Speaking on Jammu-related concerns, CM Omar Abdullah said discrimination narratives are often raised when there is nothing else to present before the people. He described the cancellation of the Darbar Move as the biggest betrayal of Jammu in recent years, which his government has corrected.

He reiterated his government's consistent approach of balancing development between Jammu and Kashmir, citing establishment of universities, agricultural universities and central institutions. He recalled requesting former Prime Minister Late Dr. Manmohan Singh to provide two central universities to avoid regional conflict, which was accepted.

He expressed disappointment that promised projects like the IIT branch campus remain only on paper, and criticised past decisions such as the closure of a medical college allegedly due to communal considerations.

On the demand for a National Law University, he cautioned that admissions are merit-based, and urged that institutions should not be politicised or shut down due to prejudice.

The Chief Minister proposed that the closed medical college be granted minority status so that the investment of around Rs 300 crore is not wasted and doctors can continue to be produced for all regions including Kishtwar, Doda, Kathua, Srinagar, Kupwara, Baramulla, Ganderbal and beyond.

"Doctors do not treat the world of religion," he said, urging members to revive the institution for the benefit of Jammu and Kashmir.

Highlighting governance challenges under the UT with Assembly model, CM Omar Abdullah described it as extremely difficult to function when authority is constrained. He questioned who devised such a system and called for its abolition, saying either UTs should not have Assemblies or such regions should be granted full statehood.

He cited administrative disruptions, including the transfer of the Finance Secretary just days before the budget preparation, calling it unprecedented. He also raised concern over the Resident Commissioner post being assigned additional burdens, affecting effective liaison with the Government of India.

The Chief Minister expressed satisfaction that business rules are expected to be finalised soon, which will reduce confusion and allow smoother governance.

On reservations issue, CM Omar Abdullah noted that the issue gained prominence only after the National Conference included it in its manifesto. He said his government fulfilled its commitment within six months through a Cabinet Sub-Committee led by Minister Sakina Ito, submission of the report, preparation of a Cabinet Note, approval by the Council of Ministers and forwarding to the Lieutenant Governor, who has now referred it to the Home Ministry.

He urged those protesting to take their demands directly to the Union Home Minister, noting that if J&K were a state, such matters would not require central referral.

Regarding pre-budget consultations, the Chief Minister asserted that across all 90 constituencies, work has been initiated based on MLA priorities. He invited any member who feels otherwise to approach him personally, promising to provide lists of works undertaken.

He pointed to long-pending promises made by previous governments, including commitments to address water scarcity in Kishtwar through a tunnel project that has remained unfulfilled even after 12 years.

The Chief Minister said he has raised concerns about Kashmiris being silenced or targeted in other parts of the country, including at the North Zone Chief Ministers' Conference, urging that such actions increase distances rather than building unity. He said he would reiterate these concerns in his meeting with the Union Home Minister later tonight.

Drawing contrasts with opposition leaders, he recalled instances when they failed to speak during sensitive moments such as the 2008 Amarnath land row and the 2016 unrest, remarking that sometimes silence would have been better than insensitive statements.

The Chief Minister also raised concern over reports regarding an Indo-US trade deal, particularly the possibility of zero percent duty on agricultural imports from America. Expressing deep anxiety for apple growers in Rafiabad, Baramulla, Sopore, Shopian, Wachir and other apple-producing belts, he sought assurance that local agriculture will be protected.

Concluding, CM Omar Abdullah stressed that integration cannot be achieved through speeches, schemes, arrests or PSA alone. True integration, he said, can only come through winning hearts.

"Integration will only be done by winning hearts," he asserted, adding that the dream of integration belongs to all.

## Hopeful Business

of India. We will play our role. Those who expressed concern here should also play their role," he said.

He said that the government has fulfilled the promise made to the people regarding reservation.

"We have done whatever was possible. We fulfilled our promise. We assured the people that the cabinet subcommittee report on reservation would be completed within six months. The subcommittee, headed by Sakina Ito Ji, completed its report within the timeframe. The report was sent to the government, which examined it. After examination, the government prepared a cabinet memorandum. The Council of Ministers discussed and approved it, and then sent it to the Lieutenant Governor. The LG has forwarded it to the Home Ministry for further reference," he said.

He added that nobody was talking about reservation until the National Conference incorporated it into its manifesto.

"Many members expressed concern over reservation. Nobody was talking about it until the National Conference included it in its manifesto. Their tongues were tied on the issue of reservation. I remember during the Parliament elections, PDP members were told not to speak about reservation because their President was contesting from Rajouri and Poonch and wanted votes there," he said.

The cabinet has recommended a 10 percent increase in the open category by reducing 10 percent overall, including a proposed reduction of seven percent in the Economically Weaker Sections quota. (KNO)

## Amit Shah launches

He clarified misconceptions about government involvement in the taxi sector, stating that the government is not entering the business but facilitating cooperation (Sahakar), which is about collective ownership and empowerment.

Shah described Sahakar Taxi as possibly the world's first cooperative taxi company where the real owners are the drivers (Sarathis). Unlike traditional models, where earnings go to companies or external owners, in Sahakar Taxi, the drivers themselves are the owners. This model is expected to significantly improve the economic conditions, self-confidence, and dignity of taxi drivers. He drew parallels with successful cooperative ventures like Amul, which began with just 11 milk producers and now supports over 36 lakh women livestock-rearers earning over 125,000 crore annually, some earning up to 1 crore a year. The success of such models demonstrates that ordinary people, when made owners, can achieve remarkable progress.

The Home Minister urged drivers to understand that while they will continue driving taxis, their earnings will now directly benefit them, as the cooperative model ensures profits go into their own accounts. He explained that the cooperative structure pools small capital contributions—starting with as little as 500—for forming the foundation for economic independence. Governance will involve elected representatives from among the drivers, who will sit on the board and make decisions, ensuring ownership rights.

Bharat Taxi integrates various vehicle types—four-wheelers, three-wheelers, and two-wheelers—and prioritises women's safety through the 'Sarathi Didi' initiative. Under this, women drivers (Didis) will operate two-wheelers to pick up women customers, promoting safe, affordable, and dignified travel for women, contributing to their safety and empowerment.

The service has already signed MoUs with nine major institutions, including Delhi Traffic Police, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), Airport Authority of India (AAI), IFFCO Tokio Insurance, State Bank of India, and Paytm, among others. These partnerships will enhance operational efficiency, digital integration, safety, and customer convenience. For example, Bharat Taxi will operate 34 prepaid taxi booths at 21 locations in Delhi, with real-time ride monitoring, SOS alerts, and emergency response mechanisms. It will also be integrated with DigiLocker, UMANG, and API Setu to enable paperless onboarding and cashless payments, making operations seamless for drivers and passengers.

Airport collaborations will facilitate last-mile connectivity at major terminals, with Bharat Taxi services permitted at IGI Airport, offering discounts and regulated operations. Insurance coverage of 5 lakh for drivers will be provided by IFFCO Tokio, and digital payment integration will be supported by Paytm, strengthening the fintech ecosystem for drivers. The partnership with GMR will further expand Bharat Taxi's airport mobility services.

Financial support is also a key element. Under the partnership with SBI, priority loans will be available for eligible driver-owners under schemes like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, facilitating easier access to capital. This financial backing aims to promote driver ownership, economic growth, and social security.

Union Minister Shah emphasized that Bharat Taxi embodies the principles of ownership, security, dignity, and equitable distribution of profits, with the model designed to benefit drivers directly. Since its establishment on June 6, 2025, Bharat Taxi has seen rapid growth, with

over 2.5 lakh drivers and 8.5 lakh passengers in Delhi-NCR alone, surpassing other taxi services in registration and reach.

The launch was marked by a rally of 100 cars from Indira Gandhi International Airport to Vigyan Bhawan, symbolizing unity and collective strength of India's taxi community. During the event, top-performing driver partners were felicitated, receiving accident and health insurance coverage, underscoring Bharat Taxi's commitment to driver welfare.

Shah expressed confidence that Bharat Taxi would be a transformative model for the cooperative sector, expanding into new sectors and empowering unorganized workers across India. The initiative aims to foster self-reliance, dignity, and prosperity for millions of drivers, aligning with Prime Minister Modi's vision of inclusive growth and cooperative development.

## J&K Govt to table

for examination," he said.

The Minister further said that 49276 cases of drug abuse have been reported in Jammu and Kashmir since 2022.

She said 16759 such patients have been registered in Kashmir and 32517 in Jammu. (KNO)

## 23,000 jobs outsourced

and accountability, besides improvement in efficiency in delivery of services and minimizing public spending. Further, manpower strength can be adjusted as per work load, project duration and seasonal or scheme-based requirements.

He added that for selection of outsourcing agencies, the departments follow the procedures as laid down in GFR-2017 and manual for procurement of consultancy and other services and the important provisions of the RFP (Request for Proposal) have been laid down in the manual for procurement of consultancy and other services and the departments are required to follow the same.

The jobs are outsourced in terms of CSS guidelines or to MoUs executed by the Departments. Besides, outsourced manpower complements the workload of the Government in lesser important assignments, rather than replacing the existing sanctioned strength of Government staff," he added.

As per the details, over 16000 jobs were outsourced to different companies while over 6,000 to Government Medicals colleges and hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

## J&K Assembly passes

Mir Saifullah, while speaking on Motion, highlighted various achievements of the Government.

Legislator, Rajiv Jasrotia in his speech raised various issues of public importance. He also raised issue of daily wagers and compensation to the families of flood victims, besides fund allocation to the Legislators.

Participating in the debate, Legislator, Sajjad Gani Lone raised issues concerning the youth. He spoke about wide range of issues including reservation and unemployment, saying that youth of J&K are suffering due to unemployment and reservation.

Speaking on the Motion of Thanks, Legislator, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi) highlighted various initiatives of government which led to development of Jammu and Kashmir. He remarked that people of Jammu and Kashmir have given lot of sacrifices for the sake and sovereignty of the country.

Legislator, Shabir Ahmad Kullay in his address, urged the government to allocate more funds to horticulture sector in budget. He also asked for snow clearance from the roads in higher region of his constituency.

While participating in the debate, Legislator, Pawan Kumar Gupta raised the issues of unemployment and timely filling up of vacant post in government departments. He urged the government to set up two skill development centres besides revising the minimum wages of the daily wagers and contractual employees.

Speaking in support of Motion, Legislator Tanvir Sadiq said that the present government has amplified the developmental activities across Jammu and Kashmir, including in his constituency. He also appreciated the government for restoration of Darbar Move, adding that this step has boosted economic activities in Jammu city. He asserted that no discrimination was made in allocation of funds provided to the Legislators.

Participating in the debate, Legislator, Tarig Hamed Karra urged the government for rationalisation of reservation for the benefit of youth.

Legislator, Khurshed Ahmed Sheikh raised the issue of cabinet expansion. He also highlighted the long pending demand for compassionate appointments, urging the government to take concrete steps to provide relief to the deserving families.

Legislators Bawant Singh Mankotia and Sajad Gani Lone had moved amendments on the Motion of Thanks. The amendments were put to voting and both amendments were defeated through voice vote.

Legislator, Muhammad Yousuf Rather (Tarigami) withdrew the amendment after assent by the Chief Minister.

Later, the Motion was adopted through voice vote.

## Centre signs tripartite

of Nagaland viz. Tuensang, Mon, Kiphire, Longteng, Noklak and Shamator, and devolution of powers in respect of 46 Subjects to the FNTA.

On this occasion, Union Home Minister said, "Today is a very significant day for a dispute-free North East. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has envisioned a North East that is free from insurgency, violence, disputes, and developed. Today, we have taken one more step forward in

## World confident of stability after India's trade deals with EU, US: PM Modi

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 05: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said in the Rajya Sabha that the world is feeling more confident of stability after India's trade deals with the EU and the US.

Replies to a discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address, Modi said India does not have to either look back or stop, but only move forward to achieve the goal of *Viksit Bharat*.

"India is signing future-ready trade deals with several nations. In the last few days, we have signed trade deals with nine big nations, including the 'mother of all deals' with the 27-nation bloc of the European Union," he said.

He said the Opposition will



have to one day reply to what they did to the nation in the past and added that lot of his energy was spent in rectifying the mistakes

of the Congress-led governments. "When the trade deal with the European Union took place, the world became more confident of stability. After the trade deal with the US, the world has still more confidence... It is a good sign for the world," Modi said.

He said the President of India has expressed confidence in India's bright future in his address to the joint sitting of Parliament.

Earlier, the PM started his speech amid sloganising by the Opposition. Modi also took a dig at the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and suggested that he can keep raising slogans while sitting.

The Opposition later staged a walkout.

## SC agrees to hear PIL against poll freebies promises by political parties

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 05: The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to list for hearing in March a PIL seeking direction to seize the symbol or deregister a political party that promises or distributes "irrational freebies" before polls.

Lawyer-petitioner Ashwini Updhyay told a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi that the notices on his PIL were issued to the Centre and the Election Commission in 2022 itself, and urged it to list the matter soon.

"Except Sun and Moon, everything is promised by political parties to voters during elections and this amounts to corrupt practice," the lawyer said.

"This is an important issue. You please remind us and mention it at the end. We will list in March," the CJI said.

On January 25, 2022, a bench headed by the then Chief Justice N V Ramana had sought replies from the Centre and the Election Commission on the PIL seeking direction to seize the symbol or deregister a political party that promises or distributes "irrational freebies" before polls.

The bench had termed it a "serious issue" and said sometimes "freebie budget is going beyond regular budget".

The plea urged the court to declare that



the promise of "irrational freebies" from political parties to voters during elections and this amounts to corrupt practice," the lawyer said.

The petition filed through advocate Ashwini Kumar Dubey has, as an alternative, sought a direction to the Centre to enact a law in this regard.

"Petitioner submits that recent trend of political parties to influence voters by offering freebies with an eye on elections is not only the greatest threat to the survival of democratic values but also injures the spirit of the Constitution," said the plea.

The petitioner has urged the apex court to declare that the promise or distribution of private goods-services, which are not for public purposes, from public funds before the elections, violates several articles of the Constitution," it said.

"This unethical practice is just like giving bribes to the electorate at the cost of the

exchequer to stay in power and must be avoided to preserve democratic principles and practices," it said.

The petition has also sought a direction to the ECI to insert an additional condition in the relevant paragraphs of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order 1968, which deals with conditions for recognition as a state party, that a "political party shall not promise/distribute irrational freebies from the public fund before the election".

The petitioner has urged the apex court to declare that the promise or distribution of private goods-services, which are not for public purposes, from public funds before the elections, violates several articles of the Constitution," it said.

## India-US trade deal in final stages of detailing: Jaishankar

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 05: The historic India-US trade deal is in the final stages of detailing that will be completed "very soon", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday after holding wide-ranging talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Jaishankar, describing his visit to Washington DC as "productive" and "positive", said the bilateral trade deal will open up a "new phase" in the ties.

"The historic India-US trade deal is in the final stages of detailing that will be completed very soon. It opens up a new phase in our bilateral ties, with vast possibilities for the relationship," he said on social media.

## India's Asiatic lion population jumped from 674 to 891 in 5 years: Govt in RS

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 05: The population of Asiatic lion in the country has increased from 674 in 2020 to 891 in 2025, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday.

The information was shared by Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Kirti Vardhan Singh in response to a written question.

"The population of Asiatic lion in the country has increased from 674 in 2020 to 891 in 2025. As per the information received from the state of Gujarat, lion population has inhabited new areas like notified forest areas, river corridors as well as revenue wastelands," Singh said.

"The state has taken up various measures to manage human-wildlife conflicts and disease vulnerability by strengthening veterinary facilities. Barda Wildlife Sanctuary has been developed as a second home for lion population and corridor management initiatives have facilitated safe movement between sub-populations, for natural expansion into new habitats.

One person who sustained injuries in the blast was initially taken to Sutnga Primary Health Centre before being referred to a Shillong hospital for better treatment, East Jaintia Hills Superintendent of Police Vikash Kumar said.

The explosion is suspected to have occurred during coal mining activities at

## PM accuses Opp of insulting President, Constitution for not allowing debate in LS

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 05: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accused the Congress of insulting the tribal woman President of India, as well as the Constitution, by resorting to disruptions in the Lok Sabha and not allowing the debate on the Motion of Thanks on her address.

Terming the events in the Lok Sabha painful, he also accused the main Opposition party of insulting tribals, dalits, and people from the northeast.

Replies to a debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister accused the Congress of insulting the Constitution.

He had to skip his reply to the debate in the Lok Sabha because of repeated uproar by the Opposition.

Talking about disruptions in the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister said, "Congress insulted the President, who comes from a humble tribal community. It's shameful... Yesterday in the Lok Sabha, a discussion could not be held on the President's address. They have insulted the entire tribal community, a woman and India's top constitutional post, the office of the President. They

have also insulted the Constitution".

"Such people do not have the right to speak about the Constitution."

"The incident that took place in the Lok Sabha is very painful. We can understand your frustration, but it was done in the temple of democracy. At that time, there was an MP from Assam in the chair, and papers were thrown at him. Is it not an insult to the northeast? Not an insult to the people of Assam?"

He was referring to Dilip Saikia, a BJP MP from Darrang-Udalguri in Assam, and Krishna Prasad Tenneti, a TDP MP from Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh. Both are members of the Panel of Chairpersons in the Lok Sabha.

"They did it yesterday as well, at that time, a son of a Dalit family from Andhra Pradesh was sitting in the Chair. They are doing their job, but you are insulting him because he comes from a Dalit family?" he said.

He also accused the Congress of insulting the singer, composer, filmmaker, poet, and lyricist from Assam, Bhupen Hazarika.

"It was our fortune that we could give Bharat Ratna to him. They raised objections to that as well," he said.

## 16 labourers dead, several others feared trapped after blast in 'illegal' coal mine in Meghalaya



the site, which is believed to be an illegal operation.

Asked whether the mine was operating illegally, Kumar said, "Yes, it seems like that."

He said the cause of the explosion is yet to be ascertained, and an inquiry will be conducted.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had imposed a ban on rat-hole coal mining and other unscientific mining practices in Meghalaya in 2014, citing environmental damage and safety risks, while also restricting illegal transportation of coal extracted through such methods.

Rat-hole mining involves digging of narrow tunnels, usually 3-4 feet high, for workers to enter and extract coal. The horizontal tunnels are often termed "rat-holes", as each just about fits one person.

The Supreme Court later upheld the ban and allowed mining only under scientific and regulated procedures with environmental safeguards.

## Parkinson's treatment may be more effective if targeting cognition-action network in brain

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 05: A study has suggested that treatments for Parkinson's disease could potentially be doubly efficacious by targeting a brain network linking cognition and action, rather than brain regions responsible for movements.

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative condition affecting movements, sleep, motivation and thought processes. Common symptoms include tremors, stiffness and walking difficulties.

Researchers, led by those from China's Peking University and Washington University in St. Louis in the US, analysed data gathered from 863 people with Parkinson's disease receiving treatments shown in previous studies to improve symptoms, including deep brain stimulation and medication.

Deep brain stimulation involves sending electrical signals to a specific brain area via surgically implanted electrodes. Findings



were found to reduce this SCAN hyperconnectivity, bringing it closer to levels seen in healthy volunteers, they said.

For example, targeting the SCAN instead of brain regions associated with movement doubled the efficacy of transcranial magnetic stimulation treatments, a non-invasive method that stimulates neurons using magnetic fields.

The SCAN could be a potential candidate for explaining the broad

range of symptoms experienced in Parkinson's disease, the team said.

"This work demonstrates that Parkinson's is a SCAN disorder, and the data strongly suggest that if you target the SCAN in a personalised, precise manner, you can treat Parkinson's more successfully than was previously possible," co-author Nico U. Dosenbach, professor of neurology at Washington University's School of Medicine, said.

"Changing the activity within SCAN could slow or reverse the progression of the disease, not just treat the symptoms," Dosenbach said.

The findings suggest that changes to the brain network may be central to how Parkinson's disease affects the body's functioning and could help guide future treatments and brain-based therapies, the researchers said.

They added that further research is needed to confirm how best to use the study's findings in clinical care.

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, ELECTRIC DIVISION- GANDERBAL

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e-TENDER ABBREVIATED NOTICE

e-NIT No. EDG/V/113 of 2025-26, dt:05.02.2026

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Executive Engineer, Electric Division-Ganderbal invites online e-bids from registered A-Class Electrical Contractors/firms for as under:

S.No	Particulars	Estimated Cost (In Lacs)
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The complete tender document is available at website <http://jktders.gov.in>. Interested bidder/tenderers may view, download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bid online up to the date and time mentioned in the table below. Bidding Documents contain Qualifying Criteria for Bidders, Specifications, Bill of Quantities, Terms and Conditions of Contract and other details.

i)	Date and Time of download/Sale (Start) of Tender Document	05.02.2026; 16:00 Hrs
ii)	Date & Time of Download/ Sale (End) of Tender Document	26.02.2026; 16:00 Hrs
iii)	Date & Time of Bid Uploading (Start/End)	05.02.2026; 16:00 Hrs to 26.02.2026; 16:00 Hrs
iv)	Commercial/Technical Bid Opening Date & Time	27.02.2026 at 13:00 Hrs
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vii)	Cost of e-Bid document	Rs.200.00 (Rupees Two Hundred Only) (Non-refundable)
viii)	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	[Treasury Receipt/Demand Draft] Rs.5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only)

# UN rights chief appeals for \$400 million as crises mount, funding shrinks

REUTERS

Geneva, Feb 05: UN human rights chief Volker Turk appealed for \$400 million on Thursday to address mounting human rights needs in countries such as Sudan and Myanmar, after donor funding cuts drastically reduced the work of his office and left it in "survival mode."

The UN office is appealing for \$100 million less than last year, after a significant scale back of its work in some areas due to a fall in contributions from countries including the US and Europe.

"We are currently in survival mode, delivering under strain," Turk told delegates in a speech in Geneva, urging countries to step up support.

In the last year, Turk's office raised alarm about human rights violations in Gaza, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine, and Myanmar, among others.

However, due to slashes in funding, Turk's office undertook less than half the number of human rights monitoring missions compared to 2024, and reduced its presence in 17 countries, he



said. Last year it received \$90 million less in funding than it needed, which resulted in 300 job cuts, directly impacting the office's work, Turk said in December. "We cannot afford a human rights system in crisis," he stated.

Turk listed examples of the impacts of cuts, noting the Myanmar program was cut by more than 60 percent in the last year, limiting its ability to gather evidence.

A UN probe into possible war crimes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also struggling to become fully operational due to limited funding, while work to prevent gender-based violence and protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ people globally has been cut up to 75 percent, the office said.

"This means more hate speech and attacks, and fewer laws to stop them," Turk stated. The UN human rights office is responsible for investigating rights violations. Its work contributes to UN Security Council deliberations and is widely used by international courts, according to the office.

## Russia says 'progress' in talks with Ukraine in Abu Dhabi

REUTERS

Moscow, Feb 05: Russian President Vladimir Putin's envoy Kirill Dmitriev said on Thursday that there was progress and a positive movement forward in negotiations on peace in Ukraine, as delegations from Russia, Ukraine and the United States prepared for talks in Abu Dhabi.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 after eight years of fighting in the east, triggering the deadliest war in Europe since World War Two and biggest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the depths of the Cold War.

Dmitriev, Putin's envoy on investment who has played a



central role in US-mediated negotiations on Ukraine, said that "warmongers" from Europe and Britain were "constantly trying to interfere with this process, constantly trying to

meddle in it."

"And the more such attempts there are, the more we see that progress is definitely being made," he told reporters ahead of the talks. "There is positive movement

forward." He said active work was underway on restoring relations with the United States, including within the framework of a US-Russia working group on economy.

The two sides also agreed on a fresh prisoner swap, US envoy Steve Witkoff said Thursday, stressing that more work lay ahead.

"Today, delegations from the United States, Ukraine, and Russia agreed to exchange 314 prisoners — the first such exchange in five months," Witkoff said on social media.

"This outcome was achieved from peace talks that have been detailed and productive," though "significant work remains," he added in an X post.

## US, Russia agree to reestablish M-to-M dialogue after Ukraine talks

AP

Kyiv, Feb 05: The US and Russia have agreed to reestablish high level military-to-military dialogue following a meeting between senior Russian and American military officials in Abu Dhabi, the United States European Command said in a statement.

The agreement was reached following meetings in Abu Dhabi between Gen. Aleksandr Gulyaev, Commander of US European Command -- also NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe -- and senior Russian and Ukrainian military officials, the statement said.

Gulyaev was in the capital of the United Arab Emirates for talks between American, Russian and Ukrainian officials on ending the war in Ukraine. The channel "will provide a consistent military-to-military contact as the parties continue to work towards a lasting peace," the statement said.

High level military communication was suspended in 2021, just before Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine.

## UK PM apologizes to victims of Epstein for giving Mandelson ambassador job

AP

London, Feb 05: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer apologized Thursday to victims of Jeffrey Epstein for appointing Peter Mandelson as the UK's ambassador to Washington despite his ties to the disgraced financier.

The prime minister said Mandelson had "portrayed Epstein as someone he barely knew." In a speech on Thursday, he said "I am sorry ... for having believed

and a Canadian educator who taught a remote Arctic village of Inuit students. Last year's winner was Saudi educator Mansour Al-Mansour, who was known for his work with the poor in the kingdom.

GEMS Education, or Global Education Management Systems, is one of the world's largest private school operators and is believed to be worth billions. Its success has followed that of Dubai, where only private schools offer classes for the children of the foreigners who power its economy.

## India game not in our control, it's govt's decision: Pak skipper

PTI

Colombo, Feb 05: Echoing his cricket board's stance, Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha on Thursday stressed that the decision to boycott the T20 World Cup match against India was taken by their government and was "not in our control".

Pakistan on Sunday announced a boycott of its high-profile men's T20 World Cup group league fixture against India on February 15 here. However, the Pakistani government cleared the national team's participation in the rest of the global event starting February 7.

"Yeah, the India game, it's not in our control. It's a government decision, and we respect that. Whatever they are going to say, we do that," Agha said during the captain's conference.

Agha said in the event of the two arch-rivals clashing in the knockouts, they will again abide by the decision taken by the Pakistan government.

"Well, I have mentioned that before. It is a government decision and we respect that. We will do what they are going to say and we will do that."

"Regardless - I do not know if the game is going to happen or not, but the government has said one thing and we are going to do that. I do not know about the game."

"If we have to play them again in the semifinal or final, we will have to go back to them



and act on their advice," Agha said.

Pakistan's decision, which was conveyed through an official government statement, is a political protest against Bangladesh's removal from the tournament. The ICC declined Bangladesh's request to shift matches from India to Sri Lanka on security grounds.

Agha said it was unfortunate to see Bangladesh not playing in the tournament.

"Well, they are our brothers. I'll say they can support us in the tournament as well. And it's really sad to see them. They are not playing the World Cup." During the press conference here, Agha was also reminded about Pakistan's embarrassing defeat to lesser-fancied USA in the last edition of the tournament in the Americas.

Both Pakistan and USA are in the same group this time too.

"Yes, we lost to the USA in the last World Cup, but that's history now. It's a new World Cup, a new team and a new game."

combination, and we are very excited about it."

"It's my first World Cup as a captain, and I'm very excited about that. I don't know how to describe myself as a captain. "As a captain, I just want to lead from the front and do as much as I can for the team, get the best out of the team, and prepare an environment where they can play at their best," Agha said.

Looking to do well here after win against Australia

The Pakistan captain said the team will take confidence from their 3-0 series win against Australia last week at home though the visitors were without few of their top players.

Agha was relieved when the discussion switched to Pakistan's success after the queries on their government's decision to boycott the India game.

"Nice to have a question apart from the India game. We have been playing really good cricket. I think post-Asia Cup, we haven't lost a series yet and we have won most of our games."

## Indian teacher who created hundreds of learning centers wins \$1 million Global Teacher Prize

AP

Dubai, Feb 05: An Indian teacher and activist known for creating hundreds of learning centers and painting educational murals across the walls of slums won the \$1 million Global Teacher Prize on Thursday.

Rouble Nagi accepted the award at the World Government Summit in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, an annual event that draws leaders from across the globe.

Her Rouble Nagi Art Foundation has established more than 800 learning centers across India. They aim to have children who never attended school begin to have structured learning. They also teach children already in school.

Nagi also paints murals that teach literacy, science, math and history, among other topics.

The prize is awarded by the Varkey Foundation, whose founder, Sunny Varkey, established the for-profit GEMS Education company that runs dozens of schools in Egypt, Qatar and the UAE.

"Rouble Nagi represents the very best of what teaching can be — courage, creativity, compassion, and an unwavering belief in every child's potential," Varkey said in a statement posted to the Global Teacher



Prize website. "By bringing education to the most marginalized communities, she has not only changed individual lives, but strengthened families and communities."

Nagi plans to use the \$1 million to build an institute that offers free vocational training.

Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, said Nagi's prize "reminds us of a simple truth: teachers matter."

In comments carried on the prize website, Giannini said UNESCO was "honored to join the Global Teacher

Prize in celebrating teachers like you, who, through patience, determination, and belief in every learner, help children into school — an act that can change the course of a life."

Nagi is the 10th teacher to win the award, which the foundation began handing out in 2015.

Past winners of the Global Teacher Prize have included a Kenyan teacher from a remote village who gave away most of his earnings to the poor, a Palestinian primary school teacher who teaches her students about non-violence

Mandelson's lies and appointed him." Starmer fired Mandelson in September after emails were published showing that he maintained a friendship with Epstein following the late financier's 2008 conviction for sex offenses involving a minor.

But the prime minister now faces fresh pressure over the appointment after newly released documents revealed new details of Mandelson's close relationship with Epstein.

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(U/A 16+)  
HINDI - 06:45 PM

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