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SCAN TO VISIT

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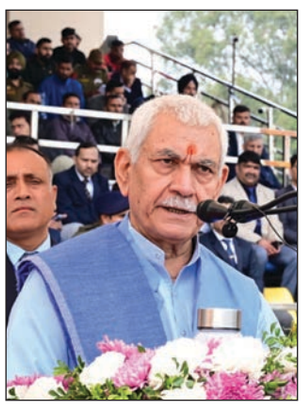
Hit terrorism hard, work with society to wipe out menace from UT: LG Sinha to J&K Police

Asks force to build strong bonds with people as weapons alone can't ensure security | **Says Civic Action Programme acts as effective bridge between police & public** | **'Let us pledge to protect youth from terrorism, drugs'**

Yogesh



Jammu, Feb 09: Calling upon the Jammu and Kashmir Police to hit terrorism hard and work hand in hand with society to wipe out the menace from the Union Territory, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that weapons alone cannot ensure security, peace has to be established by building strong bonds with the people.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the J&K Police's Martyrs Memorial Hockey Tournament at KK Hakku Hockey Stadium here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "J&K Police's unbreakable resolve and message to the nation is that - adversity will not crack our spirit. We will cross every barrier to claim new milestones as we advance."

The Lieutenant Governor said that the J&K Police's brave personnel, who sacrificed their today for the nation's tomorrow, wore their uniform as a duty towards all, and prized national honor above life- must live on in our memories.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that real tributes to brave hearts doesn't fade but pulses with life and runs through the veins of future generations.

"Our J&K Police martyrs embodied the philosophy of duty and self-sacrifice. Our duty is to pass those values and build strong character of the youth," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The LG said that the Civic Action Programme acts as an effective bridge between the police and the public, helping to strengthen trust and cooperation at the grassroots level.

He stated that J&K Police is making sustained efforts to positively engage youngsters by connecting them with sports, cultural activities and other constructive platforms. "J&K Police's Civic Action Program isn't just a government scheme—it's a mindset showing society that lasting peace flows from mutual trust. It proves security strengthens through relationships and community involvement," he said.

Expressing confidence, LG Sinha said that such initiatives, including tournaments and community programmes, would show the right path to the youth and keep them away from negative influences.

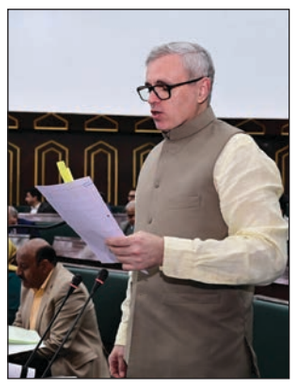
The Lieutenant Governor also expressed serious concern over the growing threat of drug abuse, saying that drugs destroy the future of youngsters and hit families hard. | More on P6

Fishermen cast their net in Wullar lake in north Kashmir's Bandipora district. Pic: Shah Jahangir (KNO/KT)

Every J&K household will be electrified, says CM Omar

'Will take time, but we're committed'

KT News Desk



Jammu, Feb 09: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said that with rising population, expansion of villages and new habitations coming up, it will take time, but the Government is committed to reaching every household and providing electricity.

"The population is increasing, villages are spreading, and new houses are being built. Electrifying them is not a matter of one day. It takes time for DPRs to be prepared. There is no village which is completely un-electrified. However, in some villages, certain habitations or parts remain without electricity and they need to be electrified," the Chief Minister told the Legislative Assembly.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the Power portfolio, was replying to a question raised by MLA Billawar Satish Kumar Sharma regarding un-electrified habitations in his constituency.

He said that electrification is being carried out through centrally sponsored schemes as well as under the UT CAPEX programme. "This is an ongoing process. The DPRs for the areas named by the honourable MLA are also being prepared. Every effort will be made to ensure that there is no house without an electricity connection, but this process will continue," he added.

The Chief Minister further informed that some rural and remote habitations/morhas — not entire villages — such as Thingnen, Kanodi and Hanok of Panchayat Madoon/Dehota in Billawar area remain un-electrified or partially electrified.

"Expansion of habitations in remote areas is a continuous process, which requires extension of | More on P6

Power generation capacity of J&K to rise by 47% in upcoming fiscal

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Feb 09: In the upcoming fiscal, 'Jammu and Kashmir is all set to have nearly 47 percent of extra hydro power generation capacity'.

According to the official figures available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Jammu and Kashmir will have an additional 1685.7 Megawatts (MWs) of power generation capacity in addition to the existing 3540.15 MWs.

It also said that by the financial year 2030-31, Jammu and Kashmir will have 7314.85 MWs of power generation capacity.

The figures revealed by the government in the Legislative Assembly states that "The UT of J&K has 32 existing power projects with aggregate capacity of 3540.15 MW. This includes projects of aggregate capacity 1197 MW in the UT sector, 6 projects of aggregate capacity 2250 MW in the Central sector and 12 Projects of aggregate capacity 92.75 MW in the IPP (private) sector."

"A capacity addition of 3704.5 MW is expected through eight proposed and six under construction Hydroelectric Power Projects (HEPs) in the UT of J&K in the next 5 years Viz 2026-27 to 2030-31," the government said.

Stating the breakup wise details, the government further informed that in the financial year 2026-27 four HEPs will be commissioned including the 1000 MWs Pakaldul, 624s MW Kiru and 12 MW Karnah as well as 49.70 MWs (IPP JAKEDA).

It also said that in the 2027-28 financial year, 540 MWs Kwar and 37.5MWs Parnai projects will be commissioned.

The government further informed that in the financial year 2029-30, the 850 MWs Ratle, 240 MWs | More on P6

SEC making arrangements to hold local bodies polls at earliest: J&K Govt

'Delimitation of 72 ULBs completed, 5 underway; Panchayats delimited in 2018'

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 09: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Thursday said the State Election Commission is making necessary arrangements to hold Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) elections in the Union Territory at the earliest.

In a written reply to a question raised by MLA Central Shalteng Tariq Hamid Karra, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Minister in charge of the Election Department stated that the Commission is making necessary arrangements for conducting Panchayat and ULB elections at the earliest.

"The superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the | More on P6

Noisy scenes in Assembly over SASCI schemes

PDP's Para says govt walking into 'debt trap', BJP stages walkout

Jahangeer Ganaie

Jammu, Feb 09: The Legislative Assembly on Monday witnessed noisy scenes over a Government of India (GoI) scheme for infrastructure development through interest-free loans, after Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) MLA Waheed-ur-Rehman Para alleged that the Union Territory was walking into a debt trap by implementing the scheme.

Participating in the budget discussion, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Para, who represents the Pulwama assembly segment, accused the government of pushing Jammu & Kashmir into a debt trap through the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI).

"This is the most dangerous scheme you are implementing after the abrogation of Article 370. You have been given the mandate to preserve Jammu & Kashmir and to reclaim it, but instead you are putting the entire region on sale," Para claimed.

He further argued that SASCI is not a grant. "Who will repay the loan after 50 years? We are mortgaging Jammu & Kashmir. SASCI means the destruction of Jammu & Kashmir. We are selling Jammu & Kashmir for petty loans," he alleged, demanding a discussion on the scheme in the House. Para's remarks were objected to by National Conference (NC) legislators, with Altaf Wani, Majid Larmi, | More on P6

Over 95% of visitors are domestic: Dir Tourism Kashmir

Hails steady tourist inflow in Valley, says dept eyes East Asia for foreign tourists

Waris Fayaz

Pic: Waris Fayaz (KNO/KT)

Srinagar, Feb 09: With domestic visitors forming the bulk of tourist arrivals in Kashmir, the Tourism Department is focusing on infrastructure-driven growth while eyeing East Asian markets to improve the number of foreign visitors.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Director Tourism Kashmir, Syed Qamar Sajad said the department is intervening in East Asian countries from where Kashmir already receives a good tourist response.

"Tourists are arriving from Malaysia, Indonesia and Kuala Lumpur following sustained engagement through travel marts held in these regions," he said, adding that | More on P6

Light rain, snow likely in J&K on Feb 10

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Feb 09: A weak western disturbance is likely to affect Jammu and Kashmir on February 10, bringing light rain and snowfall at many places across the Union Territory, weather officials said on Monday.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), there is no forecast of any major rain or snow activity over Jammu and Kashmir till February 20. However, light snowfall is likely at a few higher reaches during the night of February 9, followed by light rain or snow at most places on February 10.

From February 11 to February 20, weather conditions are expected to remain generally dry, the IMD said, with only brief spells of light snowfall at isolated higher reaches around February 14 and February 17.

Independent weather forecasters said the western disturbance expected on February 10 is weak in nature and may cause only light precipitation, with moderate rain or snow at a few locations.

Another weak western disturbance is currently expected to approach the region around February 17, though its impact is also likely to remain limited. | More on P6

Kashmir's natural beauty has left me spellbound: SL cricketer Thisara Perera

Visits Pahalgam, shares glimpses of his visit on social media

Jahangeer Ganaie

Pahalgam, Feb 09: Famous Sri Lankan cricketer, Thisara Perera, who recently visited Pahalgam in South Kashmir, has said that Kashmir's breathtaking natural beauty left him and his friends spellbound.

Perera, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer KNO, while sharing thoughts about his visit said, "Kashmir's breathtaking natural beauty left me and others spell bound. I will never forget serene landscapes and warm hospitality of the local people."

He said that this is an awesome feeling here to be in Pahalgam. "This is my second visit to Kashmir and we really enjoyed it here," he said, adding, "This kind of weather isn't available in Sri Lanka so we decided to stay in Kashmir for a few nights," he said.

"Entire Kashmir is very beautiful but Pahalgam is more beautiful and as a foreigner I am very happy to visit again and again," he said while urging others to visit Pahalgam.

"Kashmir made us fall in love all over | More on P6

Health, roads, tourism & regularisation dominate J&K Budget discussion

KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 09: The discussion on Budget 2026-27 resumed in Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Monday with Legislators holding detailed deliberations on the government's financial proposals and policy priorities.

Initiating the debate, Legislator Dr Sajjad Shafi Uri described the Budget as the best possible within the resources available to the government. He said that Budget reflects a balanced approach, addressing the key social welfare concerns while ensuring fiscal prudence.

He highlighted fee waivers for the students from economically weaker families, free transport facilities for persons with disabilities among other things, in the budget.

Legislator Altaf Ahmad Wani said that no decision should be taken without the consent of the concerned MLA. He stressed the need for upgradation of the health sector in Anantnag district and raised concerns over the closure of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence in Katra.

Legislator Balwant Singh Mankotia urged the government to fulfil promises made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the need to address the issue of daily wagers.

In his address, MLA Mohammad Yousuf Rather (Tarigami) said that industrial development should be a priority for the government to create employment opportunities for the youth. He stressed that locals must be preferred for employment | More on P6

Financial inclusion key to inclusive growth: Chief Secretary

Inaugurates Financial Literacy Week 2026 for J&K and Ladakh

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Monday inaugurated the Financial Literacy Week (FLW) 2026 for the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The week-long programme is being organised by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) from February 09 to February 13, 2026, with a focus on strengthening financial awareness and safe banking practices among citizens.

The event, as per an official statement, was also attended by Rachna Sharma, Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department; Vidhu Shekhar, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Jammu; Deepak Dubey, Joint Director Information, Jammu; Shri Vikas Mittal, GM/O-i-C, NABARD, Jammu; Sunit Kumar, CGM, J&K Bank; controlling heads of banks; and officers and representatives from Government departments, RBI, banks, financial institutions and UTLBC J&K and Ladakh.

Addressing bankers and stakeholders on the occasion, the Chief Secretary observed that financial inclusion reflects the Gandhian principle of "Sarvodaya through Antyodaya", both as a policy objective and as a shared responsibility of all institutions. He underlined that the importance of financial inclusion is evident from the fact that nearly seven of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are directly linked to financial access and empowerment of the masses.

Highlighting recent achievements, the Chief Secretary stated that during the three-month financial inclusion campaign conducted from July to October 2025, the Government, in collaboration with banking institutions, worked extensively at the Panchayat level to saturate benefits under various Government of India schemes including Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY). These efforts resulted in KYC updation of nearly 5.9 lakh accounts, covering about 51 percent of the targeted accounts.

He further noted that institutions such as RBI, NABARD, SEBI, PFRDA and banks are collectively working towards creating financial awareness among citizens. He added that financial integration through governance is also gaining momentum with the introduction of financial literacy lessons in JKBOSE curriculum, alongside livelihood training and skill development programmes.

Speaking about this year's theme, "KYC – Your First Step to Safe Banking", the Chief Secretary emphasised the need for adopting Centralised KYC mechanism, which, like UPI, can simplify financial transactions and credit access while ensuring account hygiene and strengthening defence against financial fraud and cyber threats. He reiterated that the vision of Viksit Bharat and sustainable development is closely linked to comprehensive financial inclusion.

Stressing the importance of grassroots outreach, he called for greater use of Common Service Centres (CSCs) as effective last-mile delivery platforms. He also emphasised leveraging the network of Self Help Groups (SHGs), which have nearly 8 lakh members across J&K, to enhance financial awareness at the community level. Additionally, he suggested using ATM kiosks, social media platforms and railways as tools for mass financial awareness, stating that financial literacy directly translates into financial empowerment.

This year's theme, "KYC – / KYC – Your First Step to Safe Banking", focuses on sub-themes including Basics of Know Your Customer (KYC), Central KYC Registry (CKYC), and Account Hygiene and Financial Discipline. The theme aims to highlight the importance of KYC as the foundation of safe and secure banking.

In his opening remarks, Chandrashekhar Azad, Regional Director, RBI Jammu, highlighted that last year a nationwide campaign was undertaken at the Gram Panchayat level to saturate Financial Inclusion schemes, including re-KYC of bank accounts. RBI Jammu, along with banks and stakeholders in J&K and Ladakh, actively supported the campaign to ensure re-KYC enrolment for eligible account holders.

Building on the awareness created through the campaign, FLW 2026 focuses on educating the public on all aspects of KYC compliance. The campaign emphasises that while KYC is a regulatory requirement, it is simple to complete through multiple safe and convenient modes. It also aims to familiarise citizens with facilities like Central KYC (CKYC), which simplifies the KYC process.

Further, the campaign encourages citizens to remain alert against fraudulent calls, messages and links related to KYC updation, which can result in financial loss. It also sensitises the public about the serious consequences of becoming money mules due to inducements.

During the week, RBI, in collaboration with banks and stakeholders, will conduct awareness programmes and outreach activities across the country, including the Uts of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. These initiatives will continue throughout the year to ensure sustained impact.

Through these collective efforts, RBI aims to reinforce the message that KYC is not merely a regulatory requirement, but a vital step towards building a secure, transparent and trustworthy financial ecosystem for all.

DIPR organises One Day workshop on 'Cyber Security'

Session aimed to raise awareness about growing online threats

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: A one-day workshop was organized on Monday by the Department of Information and Public Relations at the auditorium, Media Complex, Jammu under the guidance of Director Information Nitish Rajora. The workshop was conducted by the renowned cyber security expert Er. Neeraj Dubey.

The session, as per an official statement, aimed to raise awareness about growing online threats and equip participants with practical strategies to protect their personal and professional data.

The workshop covered key topics including cyber threats, safe internet practices, password security, phishing awareness, digital safety, social media privacy, and emerging risks in the digital world. Through real-life case studies and interactive discussions, participants gained valuable insights into how cyber criminals operate and how individuals can safeguard themselves against attacks.

Speaking on the occasion, Er. Neeraj Dubey emphasized the importance of cyber hygiene and responsible online behaviour, stating that awareness is the first line of defence in today's technology-driven society.

"Maintain separate email IDs for financial transactions to stay safe online. Awareness is key to prevent smishing and phishing attacks. If you fall victim to cybercrime, stay calm and report it immediately to the police. Use the Sanchar Saathi app to block or track lost or stolen phones, avoid clicking unverified links, and in case of any financial cyber fraud, dial 1930, the national toll-free cybercrime helpline," says Er. Neeraj Dubey.

District Admin Srinagar felicitates Specially-Abled Students of Abhinandan Home Solina

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR FEBRUARY 09: To encourage and honour the hard work of specially abled students of Abhinandan Home Solina who successfully passed the JK Board of School Education (JKBOSE) Class 10th and 12th examinations for the academic year 2025, the District Administration Srinagar on Monday organized a felicitation ceremony here at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The event, as per an official statement was presided over by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo along with Noted Neurosurgeon, Dr Sushil Razdan as the Guest of Honour and was marked by an atmosphere of pride and encouragement as students were applauded for overcoming challenges and excelling in acadamics.

On the occasion, the DC felicitated the meritorious students of Class 12th and 10th including distinction holders, with awards and certificates in recognition of their academic excellence and for their outstanding academic performance. The students with challenges of hearing and speaking demonstrated exceptional determination, resilience and excellence by securing distinctions and first divisions in the recent JKBOSE examinations.

KASHMIR THUNDER

IS AVAILABLE AT ALL LEADING STALLS

Kashmir Thunder
In past 9 months, no local youth joined terror outfit in J&K: HM Shah
'Op Sindoor' was trailer, every inch of Pak territory within Brahmos range: Rajnath
LG Sinha thanks PM Modi for opportunity to bring back holy relics from Russia
Rajya Sabha polls stir old ghosts of cross-voting in J&K
Dir Cons invites tourists to Kashmir
CM Abdullah seeks tangible steps to improve patient care in J&K

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU &KASHMIR (UT)

DEPARTMENT OF URBAN LOCAL BODIES KASHMIR SRINAGAR

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL BARAMULLA

Subject: Auction of Entry Fee / Terminal Tax Collection contract for the year 2026-27.

AUCTION NOTICE.

NIT No: MC/Bla/2026/01 **Dated: 05/02/2026**

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K UT, term e-tenders (in single cover system) are invited from the interested persons / parties for Auction of Adda/Entry Fee / Terminal Tax of Municipal Council Baramulla, for the year 2026-27 w.e.f. 01-04-2026 to 31-03-2027 The Minimum reserved bid is fixed as Rs. 2,11,84,000/- (Rupees Two Crore Eleven Lacs Eighty Four Thousand Rupees Only). The Tax Schedule of the vehicles is as under and the successful highest bidder is bound to recover Entry Fee as per the same schedule.

S. No	Name of Vehicle	Rates per day	S.No	Name of Vehicle	Rates per day
01	Govt. Vehicles / Security Forces Vehicles	Exempted	11	Buses (All Types)	Rs. 20/- per trip
02	All Private Light vehicles	Exempted	12	Sumo / Scorpios / Tavera / Toyota etc (commercial)	Rs. 20/- per day
03	Mini Tippers loaded (Commercial)	Rs. 40/- per Trip	13	Passenger Tempo / Auto including Electric	Rs. 20/- per day
04	Mini Tippers Unloaded (Commercial)	Rs. 20/- per day	14	JCB/Crane/Roller	Rs. 150/- per day
05	Tipper (Loaded)	Rs. 40/- per Trip	15	Mini Load Carriers / Auto Load carriers	Rs. 20/- per Trip
06	Tipper (Unloaded)	Rs. 20/- per Trip	16	Tata 407/207 (Passenger)	Rs. 20/- per day
07	Trucks/Troller 06 Tyers (Loaded)	Rs. 100/- per Trip	17	Tata 407/207 (Commercial))	Rs. 20/- per trip
08	Trucks/Troller 06 Tyers (Unloaded)	Rs. 50/- per Trip	18	Private School Buses	Rs. 50/- per day
09	Trucks/ Trolley 10 & 12 Tyers (Loaded/ Unloaded)	Rs. 200/- per Trip	19	Tractor (Loaded)	Rs. 40/- per Trip
10	Matadors / Tata Mini Buses	Rs.20/per day	20	Tractor (Un-Loaded)	Rs. 20/- per Trip

The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (BOQ) set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen / downloaded from the departmental website www.gem.gov.in, as per the schedule of dates given below:

1	Pre-Qualification submission Start Date & Time (Documents)	07.02.2026 from 10:00 am
2	Pre-Qualification Submission End Date &Time (Documents)	From 16.02.2026 upto 01:00 pm
3	Pre-Qualification assessment Start Date &Time	17.02.2026 from 11.00 AM
4	Pre-Qualification assessment End Date & Time	18.02.2026 upto 4.00 PM
5	EMD Payment Start Date & Time	19.02.2026 from 10:00 a.m
	EMD Payment End Date & Time	21.02.2026 upto 04:00 p.m
	Auction Start Date & Time	22.02.2026 from 10:00 a.m
	Auction End Date & Time	24.02.2026 upto 02:00 p.m
6	Submission of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR)	The bidders shall be bound to accompany the bid offers with call deposit receipt (CDR) of Rs. 6,00,000/- (Rupees Six Lac Only) drawn from any Nationalized Bank, pledged to the Account Officer, Municipal Council Baramulla, without which offers shall be liable for rejection.
7	Mode of Payment	10% to be deposited on spot as token money 65% to be deposited before taking over the possession. 25% after three months from date of taking over the possession for which the successful bidder is bound to produce an irrevocable bank guarantee from Nationalized scheduled Bank.

1. **Bids must be accompanied with the cost of ender Document Charges in shape of Bank Challan / Receipt (Credited to A/c No. SB. 0213040500009208 Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Council Baramulla amounting to Rs. 6000/- (Six Thousand Only) and Bid securing declaration instead of EMD as per format Appendix – 1, below on stamp paper duly attested by Notary in favour of Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Council Baramulla, failing which tender will be rejected.**
2. **The date and time of opening of bids shall be notified on website www.gem.gov.in. The bids of the responsive bidders shall be opened online on the same website in the office of the Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Council Baramulla.**
3. **The bids for the tender shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.**
4. **BID SECURITY.**

a) **Bid Security Declaration: If the successful bidder fails to sign the contract or to submit the performance security before the deadline defined in the request for the bid documents, the bidder will be suspended for the participation in the tendering process for the works / tenders for a period of one year from the bid due date of this Auction. The bid security declaration shall be submitted as per the Format appendix – 2 (format for the bid security declaration).**

b) **Any bid not accompanied by the BID security declaration shall be summarily rejected by the Authority as non-responsive.**

5. **The contract of collection of Entry Fee / Terminal Tax shall be for the year 2026-27 w.e.f 01-04-2026 to 31-03-2027, and no claim for extension on any pretext will be entertained beyond the allotted period.**
6. **That, the successful bidder has to execute an agreement duly registered in the Hon'ble court of law with the Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Council Baramulla before issuance of allotment and taking over the possession of the collection posts and no permission shall be granted for recovery fees until agreement / allotment is made in favour of successful contractor.**
7. **The successful Bidder shall be bound to effect recovery of Entry Fees as per approved schedule of MC Baramulla, which is available with this office as mention above. In case of any violation to the approved schedule, legal action against the contractor / allottee will be initiated.**
8. **That, the successful bidder shall have to bear /provide/arrange Manpower, Stationary, furniture, Sanitation, Toll posts etc without claiming any compensation thereof, from the office of the undersigned.**
9. **The Highest Bid offered shall be exclusive of all applicable taxes.**
10. **After expiry of the contract i.e on 31-03-2027, the successful bidder shall hand over the possession of the Entry posts to the MC Baramulla in its original position without any damage.**
11. **That, the successful contractor shall have to collect Entry Fee on the following toll Posts only;**

01. Khawaja Bagh Near Degree College Bla , 02. Khanpora 03. Stadium Colony, as per the approved schedule of this institution and the realization of the entry fee / terminal tax shall be in a public friendly manner without causing any inconvenience to visitors, and also the display of schedule of rates shall be visible at each Post in the Town.

12. **The contractor shall be responsible to maintain entry fee collection posts with special care to sanitation / hygiene of the environment and surroundings.**
13. **That, the Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof;**
14. **In case of any dispute arising between the parties with respect to any of the conditions as laid down herein above or any ambiguity will be referred to arbitrator and the decision of the arbitrator, Director Urban Local Bodies shall be final and binding upon the parties.**
15. **Instructions to the Bidders regarding E- Tendering process:**
16. **That the approved contractor shall repair and renovate the existing posts by way of installation of ACP sheets and paints with the proper lighting and sigh aggies at his own cost for which no compensation/payment will be made from this office.**

a) **Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.gem.gov.in acquaint bid submission process.**

b) **To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendor.**

c) **The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No financial bid will be accepted in physical form.**

d) **Bids will be opened online as per time schedule.**

e) **Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid.**

Note: - Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.

f) **The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.**

g) **Scanned copy of cost of tender document in shape of Bank Receipt/challan in favour of Executive Officer, Municipal Council Baramulla and bid securing declaration must be uploaded with the bid.**

h) **The Bidder must have to upload (soft copies) of the following documents (Photostat/Original should be clearly seen in all respect with Ink Signed and Seal):-**

i) **Valid original Bank Challan/Receipt**

j) **BID Securing Declaration on stamp paper duly attested by Notary.**

k) **Valid GSTIN/ PAN Card No.**

l) **The Bidder should upload the Tender Document form attached below (Not Mandatory).**

m) **Bidder must ensure to upload scanned copies of all necessary documents including**

n) **BID Securing Declaration and tender documents fee in terms of soft copies with technical bid. No document (s) which has /have not been uploaded shall not be entertained in the form of hard copy. However, in case of any clarification the bidders shall have to produce original documents in support of soft copies if need arises.**

o) **The Highest Bidder will have to submit hard copies of all documents uploaded on e-tending portal before issuance of Allotment.**

No: MC/Bla/Tax/2026/ 521-24
Dated: - 05/ 02/2026

Chief Executive Officer
Municipal Council Baramulla

DIPK-NB-3244/25 DATED: 09-02-2026

'48% of J&K under forest land'

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Feb 09: Forests cover nearly 48 per cent of the total geographical area of Jammu and Kashmir, with districts like Kupwara, Baramulla and Doda accounting for the largest share of forest land, according to official data released by the Forest, Environment and Ecology Department.

As per the district-wise forest cover figures for 2024–25, Jammu and Kashmir has a total geographical area of 42,241 square kilometres, out of which 20,194 square kilometres are under forest cover, translating to 47.81 per cent of the total area.

Doda district accounts for the highest forest area in absolute terms, with 5,555 square kilometres under forests. This constitutes 27.51 per cent of the total forest area of the Union Territory, while forests cover 47.52 per cent of Doda's geographical area. Baramulla follows with 2,690 square kilometres of forest land, making up 13.32 per cent of the total forest area and 58.63 per cent of the district's geographical area. Udhampur has 2,343 square kilometres of forests, accounting for 11.60 per cent of the total forest area and 51.49 per cent of its geographical area.

Kupwara district has one of the highest forest densities, with forests covering 71.58 per cent of its geographical area. The district has 1,703 square kilometres of forest land, contributing 8.43 per cent to the overall forest area of Jammu and Kashmir.

In south Kashmir, Anantnag has 2,068 square kilometres under forests, which is 10.24 per cent of the total forest area and 51.91 per cent of the district's geographical area. Pulwama, with a smaller geographical area, has 810 square kilometres of forests, covering 57.94 per cent of the district.

In the Jammu region, Rajouri has 1,267 square kilometres of forest area, accounting for 48.17 per cent of its geographical area, while Poonch has 951 square kilometres, covering 56.81 per cent. Kathua and Jammu districts have forest cover of 991 square kilometres and 959 square kilometres, respectively, with forests covering 37.38 per cent of Kathua's area and 30.97 per cent of Jammu district.

Srinagar district has the lowest forest cover, with 380 square kilometres under forests, which is 1.88 per cent of the total forest area and 17.06 per cent of its geographical area. Budgam has 477 square kilometres of forest land, covering 34.79 per cent of the district.

The data pertains to areas on this side of the Line of Control and excludes regions under illegal occupation of China and Pakistan, the department said—(KNO)

CS launches new website of Department of Culture

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Feb 09: Chief Secretary of Jammu & Kashmir, Atal Dulloo on Monday launched the newly developed official website of the Department of Culture, marking a major step towards digital governance and improved public access to cultural services. The portal has been designed to provide comprehensive information on the cultural heritage, activities, and initiatives of the Department.

The website was launched in presence of Principal Secretary, Culture Department; Secretary, IT; ED, Mubarak Mandi Heritage Society; Secretary, J&K AAC&L and other concerned officers.

The website, https://culture.jk.gov.in, serves as a single digital window for citizens, artists, researchers, and institutions to access departmental information, cultural resources, and public services in a transparent and user-friendly manner.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary described it as a significant step towards leveraging technology for preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, while enhancing citizen engagement and service delivery under the Digital J&K initiative.

A key upcoming feature of the portal as described by Principal Secretary, Culture, Brij Mohan Sharma is the Online Auditorium and Hall Booking Facilities belonging to the Department which will allow users to check availability and submit booking requests digitally. The system is aimed at ensuring transparency, efficiency, and ease of access to cultural infrastructure across the Union Territory.

The portal offers detailed sections on departmental profile, divisions, legislation, projects, and both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It also provides real-time updates on events, orders, circulars, and official notifications.The website hosts rich dig ital galleries showcasing monuments, festivals, performances, archaeological artefacts, sculptures, terracotta objects, traditional jewellery, and other cultural assets, reflecting the diverse and vibrant heritage of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Department of Culture reiterated its commitment to safeguarding, promoting, and digitally documenting the cultural legacy of Jammu & Kashmir through modern, accessible, and transparent platforms.

Speaker orders probe into 'use' of microphone by Para

KNO

Srinagar, Feb 09: Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Abdul Rahim Rather on Monday said he will investigate the alleged use of microphone by PDP MLA Waheed-ur- Rehman Para in the House.

The Speaker made the announcement after NC legislator Altaf Ahmad Wani accused Para of using microphone.

Rather said the Assembly Secretariat should examine the matter and that appropriate action would be taken under the Rules. "I will investigate the matter," the Speaker said after Wani raised the issue.

Wani alleged that after they pointed out Para's use of a microphone in the House, he handed it over to Muntazir Mehdi.

The Speaker described such acts as childish, saying they undermine the dignity of the House. "It is very sad. Do you want me to have members of the House frisked?" the Speaker asked.

However, PDP MLA Mir Muhammad Fayaz termed the allegations as baseless. "Don't defend the indefensible," the Speaker told Mir.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

MLA Para questions poor utilisation of budget funds

JAHANGEER GANIE

Srinagar, Feb 09: Peoples Democratic Party MLA Waheed-Ur–Rehman Para on Monday questioned the government's ability to translate massive allocations into real development on the ground.

Para acknowledged that Jammu & Kashmir is passing through unprecedented times and that the National Conference-led government is facing immense challenges.

Questioning poor utilisation of funds, Para pointed out that last year's budget stood at nearly Rs 1.40 lakh crore, yet only about 12 percent had reportedly been spent. "If almost 90 percent of the previous year's budget remains unutilised, will the government spend it in one month now? "he questioned.

He further revealed that more than 100 projects across crucial departments such as agriculture, horticulture, health and education recorded zero expenditure over the year. "Funds are being allocated, but nothing is happening on the ground. Either there are serious institutional failures or the government lacks capacity. If utilisation is not ensured, allocations become meaningless," Para said.

Para said that drug abuse is rapidly increasing across Jammu and Kashmir but is not being treated with the seriousness it deserves. "This is destroying our youth, our families and our future, yet there is no focused strategy or urgency from the government," he said.

Para also described cancer as a "silent pandemic" in the region, claiming that more people are now dying due to cancer than violence. "Despite alarming numbers, there is hardly any focused intervention. The government must appeal to the Prime Minister for a dedicated cancer hospital in Jammu and Kashmir so families are not forced to sell assets and travel outside the region for treatment," he said.

Para said that nearly 75 B.Ed colleges had gone defunct in the last one year. "These institutions functioned even during the peak of militancy, yet today they are being shut down. The government should have taken this up with the HRD Ministry to save these colleges and students' futures," he said—(KNO)

J&K job seekers paid Rs 48 Cr in application fees

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 09: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday said it has collected over Rs 48 crore in application fees from unemployed youth over the past two years through the Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) and the Jammu & Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB).

Responding to a question raised by MLA Pulwama, Waheed ur Rehman Para, the government said that Rs 14.48 crore was collected in 2023-24 - including Rs 7.39 crore by JKPSC and Rs 7.09 crore by JKSSB.

In 2024-25, JKPSC collected over Rs 10 crore, while JKSSB generated more than Rs 23 crore as application fee from job aspirants. The total amount collected over the two years stands at Rs 48.88 crore, the government said.

It further informed the House that around 10,400 posts have been advertised by JKSSB in the last two years, while JKPSC has advertised around 1,750 posts during the same period.

Speaking in assembly Para said that 70 percent of the population of Jammu and Kashmir yet there is nothing for them in the budget

He said that if you aren't providing them jobs at least don't charge them in huge amounts as there are candidates who are unable to submit forms.

"This is despite the Government's explicit promise that all application forms would be made free. Charging exorbitant fees from jobless youth not only contradicts the stated policy of the Government but also amounts to blatant exploitation of unemployed aspirants, who are already under severe economic distress," he said.

Parra said that due to unemployment issues, youth are suffering from anxiety, depression and other mental health issues as it can be checked from hospitals—(KNO)

'One-third of Dal-Nigeen Lake restored in 5 years'

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Feb 09: Nearly one-third of the Dal–Nigeen Lake stands rejuvenated over the past five years following sustained mission-mode conservation efforts, leading to the clearance of 6.5 square kilometres of aquatic vegetation and an increase in the open water area of Dal Lake to over 20.3 square kilometres for the first time, officials said on Monday.

They said that The conservation work covered the Dal–Nigeen Lake and its 337.17 square kilometre catchment area and was carried out by the Jammu and Kashmir Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA), they said.

According to officials, the LCMA undertook dredging operations and restored around 20 navigation channels spanning nearly 10 kilometres to improve water circulation. Several blocked water channels were reopened, intake channels and nallahs were developed, and protective and retaining structures were constructed to stabilise vulnerable areas of the lake.

To improve water quality and ecological health, the authority installed aerators, fountains and jetties at multiple locations and carried out large-scale plantation drives across the catchment to check soil erosion, they said.

Officials said houseboats on the lake are being progressively connected to sewage treatment plants to prevent untreated discharge into the water body. A new 30 million litres per day sewage treatment plant at Gupt Ganga, Nishat is under construction at a cost of 306 crore, while existing STPs are being upgraded under the AMRUT 2.0 programme.

Daily lake-cleaning operations are also being carried out with the involvement of 300 to 400 personnel through an outsourcing agency. The exercise is providing livelihood support to Dal Lake dwellers while ensuring regular removal of waste from the lake, officials said.

The government is also in the process of launching an Integrated Management of Dal and Nigeen Lake Ecosystem project under the Prime Minister's Development Programme (PMDP) at a cost of 212.38 crore to ensure long-term conservation and promote tourism, they said.

In addition, the LCMA has undertaken public outreach and community engagement initiatives, including lake cleaning, de-silting and plantation drives under Sewa Parv 2025, along with awareness programmes aimed at promoting community participation in lake conservation, officials added—(KNO)

Auqib Nabi powers J&K to historic Ranji semi-final

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 09: Jammu & Kashmir carved a historic chapter in domestic cricket on Monday, defeating Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy 2025–26 quarterfinal at Holkar Stadium, Indore, to secure their first-ever semi-final berth.

The landmark victory was built on a phenomenal bowling performance, spearheaded by pacer Auqib Nabi, who produced a match-winning spell across both innings. Nabi claimed 12 wickets in the match, repeatedly breaking through MP's batting lineup and swinging momentum J&K's way whenever the contest tightened.

Despite managing modest totals with the bat in both innings, J&K's bowlers ensured complete control of the game. Nabi's fiery spell in the first innings handed the team a crucial lead, and his relentless pace in the second innings triggered a dramatic collapse as Madhya Pradesh faltered under pressure.

Supported by disciplined bowling from the rest of the attack and sharp work in the field, J&K kept MP on the defensive through the decisive phases of the match. Madhya Pradesh were eventually bowled out as J&K clinched a memorable 56-run victory.

This historic win marks a major milestone for J&K cricket—ending years of quarterfinal heartbreak and showcasing the team's rising stature in India's premier domestic competition—(KNO)

J&K exported 637,000 tonnes of fruit in 2024–25

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Feb 09: Jammu and Kashmir exported more than 637,000 metric tonnes of fruit outside the Union Territory during 2024–25, generating a turnover of over rupees 3,171 crore, according to data released by the Agriculture Production Department (Horticulture).

Mandi-wise figures show that Sopore fruit mandi in Baramulla district accounted for the highest volume of fruit exports. Sopore alone exported 289.22 thousand metric tonnes of fruit during the year, generating a turnover of rupees 1,387.50 crore. Kanispora mandi in the same district exported 10.39 thousand metric tonnes, with a turnover of 47.94 crore.

Shopian's Aglar fruit mandi emerged as the second-largest contributor, exporting 121.19 thousand metric tonnes of fruit and generating 628.34 crore in turnover.

In south Kashmir, Jablipora fruit mandi in Anantnag exported 64.86 thousand metric tonnes of fruit, with a turnover of 282.90 crore. Pulwama district exported fruit through two mandis — Prichoo and Pachhar. Prichoo mandi handled exports of 22.44 thousand metric tonnes with a turnover of 116.99 crore, while Pachhar mandi exported 13.56 thousand metric tonnes, generating 70.56 crore.

Parimpora fruit mandi in Srinagar exported 32.29 thousand metric tonnes of fruit during the year, with a turnover of 165.06 crore. In Kulgam, the Kulgam fruit mandi exported 16.81 thousand metric tonnes, earning 67.62 crore.

In north Kashmir, Handwara mandi in Kupwara exported 36.16 thousand metric tonnes of fruit with a turnover of 113 crore, while the Kupwara mandi handled exports of 2.63 thousand metric tonnes, generating 132.38 crore. Zozna mandi in Ganderbal exported 4.67 thousand metric tonnes of fruit, earning 19.97 crore.

Budgam's Zaloosa mandi at Charar-e-Sharief exported 5.65 thousand metric tonnes of fruit, generating a turnover of 26.12 crore.

In the Jammu region, Narwal fruit mandi exported 17.70 thousand metric tonnes of fruit during 2024–25, with a turnover of 113.18 crore.

Overall, fruit exports from Jammu and Kashmir during 2024–25 stood at 637.57 thousand metric tonnes, with a cumulative turnover of 3,171.56 crore, the data shows—(KNO)

Kashmir Thunder

EDIT | TUESDAY | 10.02.2026 | 04

EDITORIAL

Time To Realise Vision Of Viksit J&K In Viksit Bharat

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's two-day visit to Jammu has sent a strong and clear message of commitment and a new direction for Jammu & Kashmir. The visit went beyond just security matters and focused on a long-term plan to boost the region's economy and restore its important place in the country. A key part of this plan is tourism. By stating that tourists' interest in visiting J&K "has not diminished," Shah expressed strong confidence in the region's safety and appeal. He promised full support from the central government to develop new tourist spots and called for bold marketing. This shows a shift from a cautious approach to a proactive strategy aimed at building a sustainable tourism industry that can provide jobs all year round. Adding to this, a Rs 200 crore plan to build sports facilities could turn J&K into a hub for adventure and wellness activities. Another major focus was on developing J&K's hydropower potential. This is not just about producing electricity; it's a vital step towards self-reliance, attracting industry, and generating revenue for the region. This goal of big development is balanced with good financial management, as seen in the state's access to central funds. The wide range of topics reviewed—from roads and boosting the dairy sector to ensuring welfare schemes reach everyone—shows an understanding that true peace is built on fair development and good governance. It recognises that people's security is about more than just safety from violence; it's also about having opportunities and a good quality of life. This high-level meeting between the Home Minister, the Lieutenant Governor, the Chief Minister, and central officials demonstrates the teamwork needed for J&K's progress. Shah's meetings honoured the sacrifices of security forces while his development agenda focuses on building the prosperous future that those sacrifices were meant to achieve. The overall message is unmistakable: the central government's partnership with J&K is solid, and its vision is to build prosperity by harnessing the region's own natural beauty and the potential of its people. This is the steadfast commitment needed to realise the vision of a Viksit J&K in a Viksit Bharat.

Seven Chakras Of The India–AI Impact Summit 2026

Driving Global Collaboration Across Seven Themes Of AI Impact

Press Information Bureau

India is at a pivotal stage in its development journey, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerging as a key enabler. For India, AI functions as a strategic national tool to drive the democratisation of technology, ensuring access, inclusion, and equity at scale. This technological revolution has opened vast opportunities for advancements across every domain of human endeavour. India's role in global technology and governance forums continues to expand, reflecting its growing engagement in shaping international policy discourse on emerging technologies.

As part of this growing global engagement, the India–AI Impact Summit 2026 is slated to take place in New Delhi from 16–20 February. It will be the first-ever global AI summit to be hosted in the Global South.

The Summit will serve as an impact-focused global platform, shaping AI into measurable outcomes across economies, aligning with the national vision of Welfare for All, Happiness of All and global principle of AI for Humanity. It will bring together global leaders, policymakers, innovators, and experts to showcase applications and define AI pathways across governance, innovation, and sustainable development.

Core Principles: The Three Sutras Articulating the AI Impact

The India–AI Impact Summit 2026 is guided by three foundational pillars, referred to as Sutras, which articulate the core principles guiding global cooperation on AI.

People: Promoting human-centric AI that safeguards rights, enhances access to services, builds trust, and ensures equitable benefits across societies.

Planet: Advancing environmentally sustainable AI by encouraging energy-efficient systems, responsible resource use, and applications that support climate action and environmental resilience.

Progress: Enabling inclusive economic and technological advancement through innovation, capacity building, and the use of AI to drive productivity, growth, and development outcomes.

Thematic Areas: The Seven Chakras of the India–AI Impact Summit 2026

The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 has attracted significant high-level engagement, with 15–20 Heads of Government, over 50 international ministers, and more than 40 global and Indian CEOs expected to participate.

The Summit's deliberations are organised through Chakras or Working Groups structured around seven interconnected thematic areas. Each Chakra focuses on a core area of AI impact and translates the Sutras into concrete areas of action across policy and real-world applications. Over 100 countries worldwide have engaged through these Working Groups to shape a future of responsible and inclusive AI.

Each Chakra fosters multilateral collaboration on AI's societal impacts, from building skills to ensuring ethical deployment:

Chakra and Focus Areas

Human Capital

Advancing equitable skilling and inclusive workforce transitions for an AI-enabled future of work.

Inclusion for Social Empowerment

Advancing AI systems that are inclusive by design, empowering diverse communities and ensuring equitable representation.

Safe and Trusted AI

Building globally trusted AI systems anchored in transparency, accountability, and shared safeguards for innovation.

Science

Harnessing AI to accelerate frontier science, foster scientific collaboration, and translate breakthroughs into shared global progress.

Resilience, Innovation, and Efficiency

Driving sustainable, resource-efficient AI systems that strengthen climate resilience and sustainability.

Democratizing AI Resources

Promoting equitable access to foundational AI resources for inclusive innovation and sustainable development worldwide.

AI for Economic Development & Social Good

Leveraging AI to enhance productivity, innovation, and inclusive development across economies and societies.

Through these Chakras, India aims to shape global AI norms while addressing local challenges. The outcomes of the Summit will guide policy makers, investors, and industry leaders in the years ahead.

Human Capital: India's Talent Pool Anchoring Global AI Cooperation

India's rapid adoption of AI is opening new pathways for innovation and inclusive growth across sectors. As technology evolves, India is advancing workforce readiness for an AI-driven economy while ensuring broad participation across regions and socio-economic groups. The Human Capital thematic working group focuses on strengthening these efforts by shaping an equitable AI skilling ecosystem that enables smooth workforce transitions and equips citizens with capabilities for emerging roles.

Key National Indicators of India's Talent-Force

AI Skills and Talent Growth: India ranks among the top countries globally in AI skill penetration and has grown more than threefold since 2016 in terms of AI talent concentration.

Global Leadership in AI Capability: As per the Stanford AI Index Report 2025, India leads global AI talent acquisition with about 33% annual hiring growth and ranks among the top three in the Global AI Vibrancy Tool.

Empowering AI Workforce: Under the IndiaAI FutureSkills, the government is supporting 500 PhD scholars, 5,000 postgraduates, and 8,000 undergraduates in AI research and training.

Global Outreach: IndiaAI Mission under MeitY selected 10 Indian AI startups for the IndiaAI Startups Global Initiative, a global acceleration programme with Station F, Paris, the world's largest startup campus, and HEC Paris, a top-ranked European business school, positioning India's AI innovation on the world stage.

Employment Impact: AI is set to transform India's tech services sector by redefining the workforce, with the potential to create millions of jobs over the next few years.

Government-led investments in skilling, research, and global exposure are strengthening domestic capabilities while aligning them with international requirements. These efforts position India as a dependable and inclusive partner in advancing global cooperation on AI.

Inclusion for Social Empowerment: India's Approach to Inclusive AI

AI offers India a powerful pathway to expand social inclusion by improving access to services and participation for communities across languages, regions, and abilities. India's digital public infrastructure positions it well to translate AI innovations into tangible social outcomes. The Inclusion for Social Empowerment thematic working group focuses on advancing inclusive-by-design AI solutions that reflect India's diversity, strengthen institutional readiness, and ensure AI systems remain safe, relevant, and usable, with clear benefits for underserved and vulnerable communities.

Flagship Initiatives Enabling Social Empowerment through AI

Global HealthAI Engagement: India is engaging with HealthAI, the global platform for safe and ethical use of AI in healthcare, strengthening responsible innovation and adoption of global best practices.

BHASHINI: The BHASHINI platform enables inclusive and a voice-first digital governance, supporting over 36 text languages, 22 voice languages, and 350+ AI language models, expanding social inclusion across regions.

AI-Enabled Farmer Service Delivery: 'Kisan e-Mitra' is a voice-based AI chatbot that enables farmers to access PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi services in 11 regional languages. It handles over 20,000 queries daily and has responded to more than 95 lakh queries so far, supporting accessible AI-driven service delivery.

Bharat-VISTAAR: AI-Driven Digital Agriculture Platform

Bharat-VISTAAR, a multilingual AI platform to integrate AgriStack portals and the ICAR package of agricultural practices with AI systems is proposed in the Union Budget 2026-2027. The platform will support digital agricultural extension, enable location-specific advisories, and expand farmer access to scientific and data-driven decision support.

AI for Informal Workforce Inclusion: NITI Aayog's report AI for Inclusive Societal Development (October 2025) underscores AI's potential to empower India's 490 million informal workers by widening access to various services.

By integrating inclusive design into digital public infrastructure, AI systems are improving access to services across languages and regions, reinforcing trust and social empowerment as core outcomes of India's AI governance journey.

Safe and Trusted AI: Enabling Responsible AI Aligned with National Priorities

As AI systems grow in scale and impact, ensuring reliability, transparency, and accountability becomes central to sustaining public confidence and responsible innovation. India's regulatory frameworks position it to contribute meaningfully to the global AI safety efforts. The Safe and Trusted AI thematic working group focuses on strengthening governance capacity and enabling shared learning across countries.

India's Efforts for Developing Safe and Accountable AI

Responsible AI Project Portfolio: Under the Safe and Trusted AI pillar, 13 projects have been selected through Expressions of Interest to develop responsible AI tools focused on safety, bias mitigation, transparency, and accountability.

Mission Digital ShramSetu: NITI Aayog proposed Mission Digital ShramSetu to create an ecosystem that will make AI accessible and affordable for all, harnessing AI and emerging technologies to empower informal workers.

IndiaAI Safety Institute: India is establishing the IndiaAI Safety Institute under the Safe and Trusted Pillar of the IndiaAI Mission to address AI risks & Safety Challenges.

AI Governance Guidelines

India's AI Governance Guidelines align AI adoption with national development goals ahead of the India AI Impact Summit 2026. To apply these principles into practice, the guidelines propose a structured governance framework.

Establish an AI Governance Group (AIGG) to coordinate overall policy development and align AI governance with national priorities.

Constitute a Technology and Policy Expert Committee (TPEC) to provide expert inputs on national and international AI governance issues.

Provide adequate resources to the IndiaAI Safety Institute (AISI) to undertake research, draft standards, develop testing methods and benchmarks, collaborate with international and national standard bodies, and provide technical guidance to regulators and industry.

India is building a balanced AI ecosystem where innovation moves with responsibility. The Safe and Trusted AI Chakra reinforces national priorities of inclusion, growth and digital sovereignty.

Resilience, Innovation and Efficiency: Strengthening Resilience through Indigenous AI Innovation

India's approach to AI places strong emphasis on efficiency and sustainability, aligning technological progress with environmental responsibility and inclusive access. The Resilience, Innovation and Efficiency thematic working group builds on India's strengths to promote efficiency as a core design principle, enabling adaptable and climate-conscious AI systems that expand access, narrow global disparities, and support a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable AI ecosystem.

Measurable Outcomes in Efficient AI Development:

Rising Data Infrastructure: India's data infrastructure demand is rising with AI growth, with capacity projected to scale from about 960 MW to 9.2 GW by 2030.

GitHub Participation: As per global GitHub AI project data (2024), India emerged as the second-largest contributor worldwide public generative AI projects on GitHub.

Global AI Hubs: Global tech giants are investing in India to accelerate AI and digital infrastructure, marking a major boost for the nation's technological landscape. Key commitments include Microsoft's 1.5 lakh crore for data centres and AI training, Amazon's 2.9 lakh crore for cloud infrastructure and AI-driven digitization by 2030, and Google's 1.25 lakh crore for a 1 GW AI hub in Vizag.

These efforts widen access to advanced technologies, support climate-conscious innovation, and enhance self-reliance.

Science: AI-Enabled Scientific Research in India

As research becomes more data-intensive and collaborative, there is a strong opportunity to broaden participation and improve the translation of scientific research into real-world solutions in areas such as health, agriculture, and climate. With its growing research base, digital infrastructure, and commitment to open science, India is well positioned to contribute to a more equitable global research ecosystem. The Science thematic working group focuses on advancing open and transparent AI-enabled research and collaborative frameworks that widen participation across regions and institutions.

Progress in India's Collaborative AI Science

Innovation Footprint: India is the 6th largest patent filer globally, and its Global Innovation Index rank has improved from 81 to 38, reflecting stronger scientific research translation.

Boost in R&D Investment: National expenditure on research and development increased from 60,196 crore in 2010–11 to 1.27 lakh crore in 2020–21, reflecting sustained expansion of India's scientific research ecosystem.

ANRF AI-Enabled Research: The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) targets 50,000 crore in research funding during 2023–2028 to strengthen national research capacity.

IMD Hybrid AI Forecasting: India Meteorological Department is using hybrid AI models for rainfall, lightning, fog, and fire prediction, along with MausamGPT as a climate advisor for farmers, accelerating AI-enabled scientific forecasting advancements.

STELLAR Tool: Central Electricity Authority's STELLAR tool is an indigenously developed resource adequacy model launched in April 2025. It aids DISCOMs in generation-transmission-storage planning with demand response, advancing AI-enabled scientific research for energy security.

These initiatives strengthen India's role in collaborative, open AI science, fostering global equitable progress.

Democratising AI Resources: Developing Shared AI Resources

Development of AI systems depends on access to compute, data, and infrastructure, resources that remain unevenly distributed across countries and institutions. Open and interoperable infrastructure, combined with multilateral cooperation, can support contextualised AI development aligned with national priorities. The Democratising AI Resources thematic working group focuses on advancing equitable access and strengthening global representativeness.

Key Milestones in Shared AI Infrastructure

Sovereign AI Compute: Under the IndiaAI Mission, a secure GPU cluster is being constructed to house 3,000 next-generation GPUs for sovereign and strategic applications.

IndiaAI Kosh (AIKosh): The platform has over 7,400 datasets and 273 AI models across 20 sectors, enabling researchers and startups to access high-quality, India-centric data for AI innovation.

AI Data Labs Network: India is launching AI Data Labs to build grassroots AI skills in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities through training in data annotation and curation, forming a nationwide network of 570 labs.

National Supercomputing Mission (NSM): The flagship mission has deployed over 40 petaflops machines across IITs, IISERs, and research labs, forming a distributed high-performance computing base for academia.

AIRAWAT: India's premier AI supercomputer, launched by MeitY in 2023 and integrated with PARAM Siddhi-AI, delivering shared compute for advanced AI research.

Compute Access: The IndiaAI Compute Portal democratizes access to over 38,000 GPUs and 1,050 TPUs, empowering large-scale AI model development to address economic challenges and societal needs.

Inclusive Pricing Edge: Access to compute is available at subsidised rates of under Rs. 100/ hour, compared to the global rates of more than Rs. 200/ hour.

These efforts anchor India's vision for open, accessible AI infrastructure, driving equitable innovation and global collaboration.

AI for Economic Growth and Social Good: Scaling Impact through AI

While AI holds immense potential to accelerate economic growth and social progress, realizing this promise at scale remains a challenge. The AI for Economic Growth and Social Good Working Group focuses on scaling AI solutions that deliver measurable economic and social outcomes.

Empowering AI-Driven Economic and Social Impact

Agriculture: In agriculture, AI-powered advisory tools are improving sowing decisions, crop yields, and input efficiency, with select state-level deployments such as Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, reporting productivity gains of up to 30–50%.

Healthcare: In healthcare, AI applications are enabling early detection of tuberculosis, cancer, neurological disorders, and other conditions, strengthening preventive and diagnostic care.

Education: In education, National Education Policy 2020 integrates AI learning through CBSE curricula, DIKSHA platforms, and initiatives such as YUVAi, equipping students with practical AI skills.

Justice delivery: E-Courts Phase III deploys AI and ML for translation, case management, and citizen-facing services, improving efficiency and transparency through vernacular access.

Sector Revenue Surge: India's AI-powered technology sector is projected to generate revenues of around US$ 280 billion in 2025, fuelling robust economic expansion amid surging digital demand.

Startup Ecosystem: India hosts about 1.8 lakh startups and nearly 89% of the new startups launched in 2024 used AI in their products or services, showcasing widespread ecosystem adoption that spurs innovation and job creation for social upliftment.

Together, the Seven Chakras create pathways for India`s responsible innovation, wider participation, and measurable impact. By aligning policy, technology, governance, and capacity-building, they provide a structured framework to translate shared principles into actionable outcomes across countries and sectors.

Conclusion

The India–AI Impact Summit 2026 strengthens India's role as a key platform for shaping the global AI agenda. Anchored in the Seven Chakras and the Three Sutras of People, Planet, and Progress, the Summit advances a development-oriented framework for artificial intelligence.

By linking policy with implementation and innovation with public purpose, the Summit establishes a structured approach to responsible AI deployment. It aligns technological advancement with inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The Summit positions India as a convenor and partner in global AI cooperation, supporting shared standards, collaborative frameworks, and scalable solutions for public good. It marks a transition from dialogue to delivery, reinforcing India's commitment to responsible, inclusive, and development-focused AI pathways.

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

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Kashmir Thunder

BUDGET SESSION 2026

Upgradation of existing healthcare infrastructure Govt's priority: Health Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Monday informed the Legislative Assembly that upgradation of the existing healthcare infrastructure is top priority of the government, with special focus on rural and peripheral areas.

The Minister stated this while replying to a question raised by Legislator Mir Mohammad Fayaz regarding SDH Kupwara in the House Monday.

The Health Minister, as per an official statement, informed that as per Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norms, each district across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is mandated to have one District Hospital. In case of Kupwara, the District Hospital has already been upgraded to the level of an Associated Hospital of Government Medical College (GMC) Handwara, thereby catering tertiary healthcare services to the population of the region. She added that upgradation of a District Hospital to the level of a Super-Speciality Hospital does not fall within the ambit of IPHS norms.

The Minister also informed that a 50-bedded Critical Care Block (CCB) is presently under construction at Sub-District Hospital Kupwara at an estimated cost of Rs. 23.75 crore under ECRP-II. Besides, a District Integrated Public Health Laboratory (DIPHL) and Block Public Health Units (BPHUs) are being established at various health facilities in the district under the PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM), she added.

The Minister further said that Sub-District Hospitals (SDHs) have been strengthened in terms of human resources, machinery and equipment thereby enabling them to provide services at par with District Hospitals across the UT. She added that to address critical gaps, the department is committed towards strengthening the existing healthcare facilities strictly in line with the IPHS 2022 norms like extending support to the general public through rationalization of services and development of robust e-Sanjeevani/tele-medicine facilities under a well-designed hub-and-spoke model. Mobile Medical Units are also being conceptualized to ensure healthcare delivery in hard-to-reach and geographically challenging areas, she said.

The Health Minister added that to augment medical and para-medical staff that commensurate with the patient inflow, the department is undertaking rationalization of existing resources. She said that a comprehensive plan is being implemented to optimally redistribute available staff across health facilities in the district, with particular focus on Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Kupwara.

She said that rationalization and periodic transfer of long posted staff is being undertaken to systematically bridge the gap between patient inflow and staff strength, ensuring equitable and efficient healthcare delivery across the district.

The Health Minister apprised the House that the several measures have been undertaken to improve the service delivery and quality of care at Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Kupwara. These included enforcement of duty rosters, attendance and service norms across all staff categories, regular supervisory visits and monitoring by district and divisional health authorities, strengthening of emergency services, diagnostics, pharmacy and referral systems, implementation of National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) for systematic enhancement of patient care and others.

Legislator Mir Saifullah raised the supplementary.

Govt considering de-freezing of teacher posts to address staff shortage: Education Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: Education Minister Sakeena Itoo informed the Legislative Assembly that the de-freezing of Teacher posts is under active consideration of the government to overcome shortage of teachers in schools across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said this while replying to a question of Legislator Pawan Kumar Gupta, regarding shortage of teaching staff, in the House Monday.

The Education Minister said that recruitment of teacher posts were freezed by State Administrative Council decision taken in year 2018 and the government is actively working to de-freeze these posts so that fresh recruitment is expedited in the department.

She informed the House that 594 posts of Lecturers in 27 disciplines have been referred to JKPSC, besides 727 non-teaching and 43 posts of MTS have been referred to Finance Department for revival/concurrence.

Regarding filling up of vacant posts of Teachers, she apprised that all these posts have been frozen for transition of RRETs, Teacher Grade II/III to clear the salary issue of Teachers who were engaged under SSA.

The Education Minister also said that in 2025-2026, a total of 258 Senior Lecturers have been elevated as in-charge Principals besides 56 PG Masters/ Teachers have been elevated as in-charge Lecturers. She added that 551 PG Masters/ Teachers were placed as in-charge Headmasters and a proposal for placement of more than 500 additional Masters as Headmasters is currently under process in the department.

The Minister said that 80 Headmasters were elevated as in-charge Zonal Education Officers. In non-gazetted cadre, she said that 1170 Teachers have been elevated as Masters in 2025-26.

Regarding Udhampur district, the Education Minister said that 42 positions of Principals out of 43, 8 posts of ZEOs out of 11 and 243 posts of lecturers out of 538 have been filled in the district. She added that engagement of CRCs as well as rationalisation of staff is under process to overcome shortage of staff in schools across J&K.

The Minister further said that the Pupil Teacher Ratio in respect of Schools of Udhampur West constituency is 1:16, which shows sufficient staff is available as per enrolment. She added that for academic quality enhancement subject specific teachers, CRCs, online classes are being arranged.

The Minister attributed the improved performance of Jammu Division in the 10th and 12th board exams to the government's initiatives, saying these efforts have led to a notable academic upswing, with results surpassing those of previous years.

Legislator Ranbir Singh Pathania raised supplementary question.

Cluster Universities of Jammu, Srinagar allotted land for establishment: Education Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: Minister for Education Sakeena Itoo apprised the House that both the Cluster Universities of Srinagar and Jammu have been allotted land for construction of their establishments in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said this while replying to a question raised by Legislator Tanvir Sadiq in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister said that the Cluster University of Srinagar and Jammu were established under the "Srinagar and Jammu Cluster Universities Act, 2016" under Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) Scheme by clustering the human and infrastructural resources of five existing City Colleges for each university at Srinagar and Jammu in accordance with the guidelines of RUSA 1.0.

She said that historic and high-performing colleges such as SP College, Women's College, M.A. Road; Amar Singh College, MAM College, GGM Science College and SPMR College of Commerce were placed under Cluster Universities.

The Minister said that both the universities have developed their independent PG schools with their own faculty. She said that at present, there is no proposal under consideration of the government to affiliate, merge or transfer administrative and asset control of aforesaid colleges of Srinagar and Jammu to Cluster Universities.

The Minister also said that at present, the administrative control of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff of the constituent colleges is with the Higher Education Department.

Legislator Saif-ud-din Bhat raised supplementary question.

Augmentation of Batote town water supply scheme under AMRUT 2.0 underway: Govt

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: The augmentation of Water Supply Scheme (WSS) Batote Town under AMRUT 2.0 is currently underway in Ramban Constituency.

This was stated by Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo in the Legislative Assembly Monday while replying to a question raised by Legislator Arjun Singh Raju on behalf of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

She informed that the augmentation work is being executed at an allotted cost of Rs. 2.387 crore and an expenditure of Rs. 1.85 crore has been incurred till date.

Giving details of physical status of scheme till date, the Minister, as per an official statement, informed that Distribution System has been laid besides Installation of Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) is in progress. Legislator Sajjad Shaheen raised supplementary question.

Achabal area adequately served by existing water supply schemes: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: The government Monday clarified that there is no proposal for establishment of a new PHE Division at Achabal as the area is effectively being catered by the PHE Sub-Division Anantnag and PHE Sub-Division Kokernag.

Replying to a question raised by Legislator Abdul Majeed bhat in the House, Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana as per an official statement, informed that Acahbal area falls under the jurisdiction of Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Bijbehara. He said that Achabal area is being effectively catered by the PHE Sub-Division Anantnag and PHE Sub-Division Kokernag, which together manage 157 Water Supply Schemes (WSSs) covering 31,448 households.

Javed Rana said that since a large number of operational WSSs are functioning efficiently with a balanced workload, there is presently no functional or administrative justification for creation of a separate PHE Division at Achabal.

The Minister informed that out of the total, 70 Water Supply Schemes feeding the area have been taken up under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), UT Capex and NABARD at an estimated cost of Rs. 17,182.02 lakh. Of which, 52 schemes have already been operational. He said that the remaining are at various stages of execution.

He further informed that the division has a substantial number of operational schemes and the existing Sub-Division-wise workload remains within manageable limits.

Legislators Altaf Ahmad wani and Hasnain Masoodi raised supplementary questions.

Govt adopts 2-pronged strategy to enhance flood resilience in Anantnag: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: The government has adopted a two-pronged strategy, involving short-term and long-term measures, to mitigate the flood risks in Anantnag district and enhance overall flood resilience.

This was informed by Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, in response to a question raised by Legislator Nizam-ud-din Bhat on behalf of Legislator Peerzada Mohammad Syed.

Javed Rana, as per an official statement, said that the recent interventions have significantly strengthened the flood management infrastructure and improved the district's flood resilience. He informed the House that Anantnag district has 195 flood-prone villages and continuous efforts are underway to safeguard life, property and agricultural assets through sustained preventive and protective measures.

Providing details, the Minister said that permanent flood protection works have been undertaken under PMDP Phase-II for strengthening of flood management infrastructure in vulnerable areas of Anantnag district.

He informed that bank protection works have been executed at critical locations at a cost of Rs 10.07 crore, covering a length of 873 metres. He added that embankments in flood-prone stretches have been raised at a cost of Rs 18.97 crore, covering a length of 9,168 metre.

Javed Rana said that short-term measures are being focused on immediate preparedness and mitigation in vulnerable areas. He said that these measures include restoration of weak spots identified during safety audits of river embankments through temporary protection works, such as laying filled EC bags on bunds.

He further informed that with the onset of the flood season, advance preparedness is being ensured by pre-positioning EC bags at vulnerable locations and keeping men and machinery in a state of readiness.

Regarding the irrigation projects in Anantnag district, the Minister stated that the district has a total of 64 irrigation schemes, comprising 47 gravity schemes, 15 Lift Irrigation Schemes (LIS) and 2 Tube Well Irrigation Schemes (TWIS). He informed that these schemes cover a Cultivable Command Area (CCA) of 22,742 hectare, against which an irrigation potential of 18,667 hectare has been created with 18,481 hectare presently under utilization.

He further informed that 19 irrigation schemes were earlier taken up under the AIBP–PMKSY, of which, seven have been completed while the remaining are at various stages of completion.

Furthermore, seven irrigation schemes have been undertaken under UT Capex, of which, two stand completed while the remaining are currently in progress, he added.

Legislator Altaf Ahmad wani raised supplementary questions.

Technical reappraisal of Chakoora lift irrigation scheme underway: Govt

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: The government informed the House that a technical reappraisal for the balance components of Lift Irrigation Scheme Chakoora Pulwama is underway and necessary action will be initiated based on its outcome.

Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, stated that necessary action will be initiated based on the outcome, in response to a question raised by Legislator Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Mir.

The Minister, as per an official statement, informed the House that the scheme being funded under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) 1.0, a technical reappraisal is currently underway to assess the revised Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR), the cost involved and the actual command area to be covered under the project.

He added that the scheme is incomplete due to meager funding under Irrigation sector particularly from Central Assistance.

CSIR-IIIM Srinagar organises 3-day hands-on training on qRT-PCR

KT News Desk

Srinagar, February 9: The CSIR–Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Srinagar Branch, has commenced a three-day hands-on training programme on quantitative real-time PCR (qRT-PCR), aimed at enhancing practical competencies in advanced molecular biology techniques among students, research scholars and laboratory professionals. The programme is designed to provide participants with comprehensive, bench-level proficiency in gene expression analysis, covering the entire workflow from sample preparation to data interpretation.

In his virtual address, Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, Director, CSIR-IIIM, as per a PIB statement, highlighted the critical importance of qRT-PCR in contemporary molecular biology. He emphasised its indispensable role in precise transcript quantification, validation of high-throughput genomic data, and its applications in translational research and molecular diagnostics.

The intensive curriculum spans the complete experimental pipeline, beginning with high-quality RNA isolation and contamination control, followed by optimised reverse transcription strategies, primer design considerations, and selection of appropriate chemistries including SYBR Green and probe-based assays. Participants receive structured training in instrument setup, run execution, and robust data analysis methodologies. The programme places strong emphasis on practical skill development through extended wet lab sessions on RNA isolation, cDNA synthesis, and qRT-PCR, complemented by troubleshooting modules addressing common challenges such as low yields, non-specific amplification, efficiency variations, and inter-run inconsistencies. Good laboratory practices and quality control measures form an integral part of the training.

The programme is being organised at CSIR-IIIM Srinagar Branch by Dr. Nasheeman Ashraf, Senior Principal Scientist, and co-organised by Dr. Syed Reyazul Hassan, Senior Principal Scientist, and Dr. Phalesteen Sultan, Principal Technical Officer, under the patronage of Er. Abdul Rahim, Chief Scientist and Head, IIIM Srinagar Branch. Conducted under the CSIR-Integrated Skill Initiatives, the training is scheduled from February 9 to 11, 2026, and has attracted around 20 participants from various parts of the country.

JKRLM's Saras Aajeevika Mela 2026 concludes in Jammu

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 09: The Saras AAJEEVIKA Mela 2026, organized by the Jammu Kashmir Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM), concluded on Monday, marking another successful chapter in the celebration of craft, culture, cuisine, and entrepreneurship.

The Mela, as per an official statement, which began here at Kalakendra Jammu on January 31 concluded, offering the visitors a myriad collection of hand made products and cuisines from across the country.

One of the central features of the mela was "Umeed Ka Zaika", the Union Territory's first Food Service Enterprise (FSE) brand. Conceptualised by the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM), the initiative is designed as an intervention to upgrade food-based livelihoods into structured, market-ready enterprises, improving presentation, quality standards and commercial viability.

Under a strategic partnership with Swiggy, "Umeed Ka Zaika" was introduced at the SARAS food court to strengthen sales and widen market access for participating groups. The platform brought together culinary practitioners to present traditional dishes, offering visitors insight into regional food practices and heritage.

Addressing the closing ceremony, Mission Director, JKRLM Kashmir Dr Shubhra Sharma emphasized the significance of the event. She remarked, "The Saras Aajeevika Mela is not just a fair; it's a crucial platform that empowers women artisans, promotes their craftsmanship and offers them opportunities to thrive in a competitive marketplace. This Mela plays a vital role in boosting the confidence and economic independence of rural women, contributing to the holistic development of the region,she added

Referring to "Umeed Ka Zaika", Dr Shubhra Sharma said the initiative was a labor of love that highlighted not just the food we cherish, but the stories behind every dish. It encapsulated the spirit of our community,"

Events like the SARAS Aajeevika Mela provide a physical space for this community spirit to flourish, fostering unity through cultural exchange and shared entrepreneurship. She said the mela contributed to strengthening confidence and economic independence among rural women, while also supporting broader regional development.

The event concluded in the presence of Additional Mission Director, JKRLM, Manpreet Kaur, along with State Project Managers, District and Block Programme Managers and officials from various line departments.

Kashmir Thunder

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Comm Secy ST&IC, Dir CSIR-IIIM hold joint review of Biotech Parks

Strategise future collaborations

KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 09: Commissioner Secretary, Science and Technology Department, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary on Monday convened a review meeting of Industrial Biotech Park, Ghatti, Kathua, held at CSIR-IIIM, Jammu. Director, CSIR–Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Jammu, Dr Zabeer Ahmed, was present in the meeting among other senior officials. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the future roadmap for operationalisation of Industrial Biotech Parks.

Dr Zabeer Ahmed presented an overview of the Biotech Parks, infrastructure and ongoing activities. He highlighted that IBTP houses specialised facilities including fermentation units, phytopharma extraction systems, plant tissue culture laboratories, quality testing and analytical labs besides pilot-scale processing units. These facilities are enabling startups and researchers to carry out product development, validation and scale-up under scientific guidance.

He noted that the IIIM-Technology Business Incubator (BioNEST) at the park is actively mentoring startups and providing them with laboratory access, workspace and technical handholding. Several startups, including women-led enterprises and agri-biotech ventures, are currently registered and utilising the facilities for developing biotech-based products.

Commissioner Secretary stressed the importance of building strong public-private partnerships to ensure higher investment and better market linkages. He called for a structured operational framework with defined timelines, monitoring mechanisms and convergence with government schemes to maximise the park's impact. He also emphasised outreach to youth, farmers and entrepreneurs from across districts so that the benefits of biotechnology reach grassroots levels. Skill development and entrepreneurship were identified as key pillars for making the biotech park economically relevant.

Dr Shahid Iqbal underscored the active participation from CSIR-IIIM and JK ST & IC team to make these facilities fully functional.

Earlier, Dr Saurabh Saran, Senior Principal Scientist, Fermentation and Microbial Biotechnology Division and Principal Investigator, IIIM-Technology Business Incubator (BioNEST), gave a detailed presentation on incubation and soft initiatives taken by CSIR-IIIM at Industrial Biotech Park, Ghatti, Kathua.

Dr Saran also explained that the incubator provides end-to-end support to start-ups right from idea incubation to product development. He noted that more than 10 startups from J&K, Punjab and neighbouring regions have shown interest in incubation, with several women-led and agri-biotech ventures already utilising the facilities. Office space, laboratory access and technical mentoring are being extended to incubated startups.

The review brought together senior scientists, technical experts, JKSTIC officials and incubation managers to assess infrastructure readiness, startup engagement, skill development programmes and long-term sustainability of the biotech ecosystem being built in the region. The discussion focused on optimising the use of existing facilities, strengthening startup support systems and accelerating industry partnerships.

During the meeting, discussions on financial planning, equipment utilisation, industry collaborations and phased expansion of facilities.

LG Sinha briefed on sports, youth programs

KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 09: Martand Singh, Director, Amar Singh Sports & Youth Initiative today called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and briefed him on wide range of programs aimed at promoting sports and youth empowerment under the initiative.

He also informed the Lieutenant Governor about the renovation and upgradation works being undertaken at the Museum in Amar Mahal under the aegis of the Hari Tara Charitable Trust.

What to know about Takaichi's conservative policies after big election win

AP

Tokyo, Feb 09: Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's big election win paves the way for her ruling party to dominate the crucial lower house of parliament. It also gives her the political power to make a strong rightward shift in Japan's security, immigration and social policies.

Here's what to know about that divisive conservative agenda, which she calls necessary to make Japan "strong and prosperous."

Larger military capability, spending and arms sales

Takaichi has pledged to revise security and defence policies by December to bolster Japan's military capabilities, lifting a ban on weapons exports and moving further away from postwar pacifist principles.

Takaichi wants to build up intelligence-gathering to work more closely with ally Washington and defence partners such as Australia and Britain. She plans to establish a national intelligence agency to meet those goals. She is also pushing to enact a highly controversial anti-espionage law that experts say could undermine civil rights.

Takaichi has followed through on a pledge to US President Donald Trump to push Japan's annual defence budget to double 2022 levels to 2 per cent of its gross domestic product by March.

Trump, China and WWII history

Takaichi is set to visit Washington to meet with Trump at the White House on March 19. The US president announced on social media the trip as he endorsed the prime minister ahead of Sunday's election.

The talks are expected to focus on defence spending, investment commitments under a USD 550 billion package for Washington that Japan pledged in October, as well as China. Trump will make a trip in April to Beijing to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Takaichi's remarks in November, suggesting possible Japanese involvement if China takes military action against Taiwan, a self-governing island that Beijing claims as its own, led to diplomatic and economic reprisals from China.

Takaichi, who has gained firmer political clout after the election, could pursue a more hawkish stance with China. This was hinted at when she mentioned her wish to visit Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, where the remains of war criminals are kept.

Takaichi, who used to be a regular visitor to Yasukuni, has stayed away from praying at the shrine since taking office. But on Sunday, during an interview with Fuji Television, Takaichi said she wants to create an environment to allow a Yasukuni visit that can be understood by neighbouring countries, which regularly protest when it occurs.

Tougher measures on immigration, foreign labour

She has also been pushing for tougher policies on immigration and foreigners.

This resonates with a growing far-right population that has supported the rise of anti-globalist party Sanseito, which says the LDP's promotion of foreign labour as a solution for Japan's declining population is making Japanese communities unsafe and causing cultural clashes.

Her government, in January, approved tougher rules on permanent residency and naturalisation, as well as measures to prevent unpaid tax and social insurance.

Preserving traditional family values

Takaichi supports the imperial family's male-only succession and opposes same-sex marriage.

She is also against a revision to the 19th-century civil law that would allow separate surnames for married couples so that women don't get pressured into abandoning theirs.

In a step that rights activists call an attempt to block a dual surname system, Takaichi is calling for a law to allow the greater use of maiden names as aliases instead.

Big government spending, consumption tax cut

Her top economic priority is to address rising prices and sluggish wages. And she needs to pass a budget bill for fiscal 2026 to fund those measures.

Takaichi advocates boosting government spending despite concerns that such moves will delay progress on trimming Japan's national debt, which is about triple the size of its economy.

Takaichi last year introduced a "crisis-management investment" plan in 17 strategic areas such as food, energy, defence, and supply chains.

She also proposed a temporary sales tax cut.

She said in her campaign pledge that the government will speed up consideration of suspending an 8 per cent food consumption tax for two years to ease the burden of household living costs.

But her ambiguity over the plan, including how to fund the tax cut, caused unease in financial markets. Japan has the highest national debt among advanced economies.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Hit terrorism hard

He stressed that the entire society must stand united against drug addiction.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon every section of the society to rise up against drug abuse. "We reaffirm our vow for a drug-free J&K and J&K Police Martyrs Memorial Hockey Tournament declares that commitment," he said.

He also reiterated the commitment of J&K Police and the UT administration to hold youth's hands, create brighter opportunities for them, and build a society where talent gets platforms, young energy finds direction, and dreams gain resources.

"Let us take a pledge to protect youth from the twin threats of terrorism and drugs," he said, adding that collective responsibility and social participation are key to ensuring lasting peace and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir.

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Nalin Prabhat, DGP J&K; S.J.M Gillani, Special DG (Coordination); Abdul Ghani Mir, Commandant General, Home Guards, Civil Defence & SDRF J&K; Anand Jain, ADGP Armed Police; senior officials of J&K Police and Civil administration; members of Hockey associations, and eminent sports personalities attended the inaugural ceremony. (KNO)

SEC making arrangements

conduct of all elections under the Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, the Jammu & Kashmir Municipal Act, 2000, and the Jammu & Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, 2000 is vested in the State Election Commission," the Minister said.

The Minister, however, added that the position of the State Election Commissioner is currently vacant.

"The report submitted by the Dedicated Backward Classes Commission is under examination by the Competent Authority, and further steps for the conduct of Panchayat and ULB elections will be taken accordingly," the Minister said, as per KNO.

He further stated that the delimitation of 77 Urban Local Bodies - Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, and Municipal Committees - has been undertaken in pursuance of instructions issued by the Housing & Urban Development Department vide D.O. letter No. PS/HUDD/2023/53 dated 16-12-2023.

"Delimitation has been completed for 72 ULBs and is underway for the remaining 5," the Minister added.

He also said that Panchayat Halqas were delimited prior to the conduct of the General Panchayat Elections in 2018 by the Election Authority. (KNO)

Every J&K household

the LT network at regular intervals," he said.

He stated that these un-electrified households under the jurisdiction of JPDCL Electric Division Kathua were proposed for electrification under the DA-JGUA scheme. Electrification of most of the un-electrified households has been approved under the scheme and is being executed through JPDCL Project Division, Jammu.

However, some habitations like Thingnen, Kanodi and Hanok were dropped from the final sanctioned DPR of the DA-JGUA scheme due to cost escalation of the work.

Responding to another part of the question, the Chief Minister said that all villages in Jammu Division of J&K are electrified, either through On-grid or Off-grid mode. "No village as a whole remains un-electrified. However, some habitations/morhas/households that have recently come up are still without electricity. Efforts are underway to electrify these un-electrified or partially electrified habitations under centrally sponsored scheme DA-JGUA and UT Capex," he said.

The Chief Minister added that DPRs for habitations like Thingnen, Kanodi and Hanok of Panchayat Madoon/Dehota are currently being prepared.

Power generation

Uri-I Stage-II and 260 MWs Dulhasti-II as well as 20.50 MW (IPP JAKEDA) projects will be commissioned.

For the financial year 2030-31, the authorities said that 93 MWs New Ganderbal and 48 MWs Lower Kalnai projects will be commissioned. (KNO)

Light rain, snow

"There is no indication of any major weather system for the remainder of the month as per current forecasts," Kashmir Weather, a private forecasting agency, said in a statement.

Forecasters cautioned that the prolonged dry spell could result in a significant rainfall and snowfall deficit for February, which is otherwise a crucial month for winter precipitation in the region.

They added that such conditions may have implications for water availability and could also trigger early blooming of trees, particularly in the Kashmir Valley. (KNO)

Over 95% of visitors

the immediate priority remains strengthening existing links and communication channels with these markets to make outreach more effective and vibrant.

The Director, however, said that Kashmir tourism has historically been driven by domestic visitors, including locals and has never relied heavily on foreign tourism. He said over 95 per cent of tourist arrivals are domestic, while foreign tourists account for less than five per cent.

"The Valley is currently witnessing consistency in tourist arrivals, while the department's main focus is to attract more domestic tourists to various destinations by improving infrastructure and visitor facilities," Sajad added.

He said efforts are underway to impress tourists through upgraded infrastructure and continuous improvements across destinations.

On adventure tourism, Sajad said the addition of ski drag lifts at Kongdori, and the Gulmarg bowl has strengthened winter tourism infrastructure and will give a major boost to skiing, snowboarding and other snow-related activities.

He further said that infrastructure developed at offbeat destinations under the Prime Minister's Development Package Scheme will be outsourced in the coming months to ensure employment opportunities for local youth.

The Director said the tourism department is fully prepared to host sports activities across the Valley. He assured that there is no shortage of infrastructure for conducting such events smoothly.

Referring to participation in OTM Mumbai 2026, held at the Jio World Convention Centre in Bandra Kurla Complex, Sajad said the event provided a positive platform for tourism promotion and business engagement.

He said the department showcased Kashmir's diverse tourism offerings, including adventure, religious and heritage destinations such as Mata Vaishno Devi, Hazratbal shrine and Hariparbat.

The Director expressed confidence that tourist arrivals in the Valley will remain consistent in the coming period. (KNO)

Noisy scenes in

and Ghulam Mohiuddin standing up to counter him.

Amid the verbal duel between NC and PDP members, BJP legislators rose in protest against the Chair for not being given time to speak. Shouting slogans against both NC and PDP, BJP members staged a walkout from the House.

Presiding over the session, NC leader Mubarak Gul assured the BJP members that they would be given time, but his intervention failed to prevent their walkout.

As the verbal duel continued between NC and PDP legislators, MLA Langate Sheikh Khursheed accused NC's Altaf Wani of preventing others from speaking in the House, which led to an exchange of heated arguments between them.

Altaf rushed towards him but was restrained by the Assembly's watch and ward staff.

Amid the chaos, the Speaker adjourned the House at 1:12 PM until 2:30 PM. (KNO)

Health, roads, tourism

in industries set up in Jammu and Kashmir. He also raised the issues of daily wagers and persons with disabilities, seeking concrete measures to safeguard their rights and welfare.

MLA Shopian, Shabir Ahmad Kullay, said that the overall development and livelihoods of people in the region have been severely affected due to recent incidents. He appealed all Members of the House to maintain the decorum of the Assembly to ensure smooth and uninterrupted proceedings. He also demanded macadamization of roads, upgradation of tourism spots, filling of the vacant post of relief under KCC loans, establishment of Controlled Atmosphere (CA) stores and resolution of No Objection Certificate (NoC) issues by the Forest Department for road macadamization and upgradation in his constituency.

Participating in the debate, Legislator Ghulam Ahmad Mir welcomed the enhancement of Marriage Assistance Schemes, Old Age Pension and support for specially-abled persons in the last budget.

Mir demanded the regularisation of daily wagers and need-based employees, whose attendance data is available through biometric systems. He also sought construction of the Anantnag–Doda road, establishment of an ITI institute, completion of the Receiving Station at Dhudwajan, compensation for crops under KCC and early conduct of Panchayati elections to strengthen democracy at the grassroots level.

In his address, Legislator MLA Waheed ur Rehman Para expressed concern over rising unemployment among youth and urged the government to generate adequate employment opportunities for them. He proposed establishment of deemed universities in every district of Jammu and Kashmir to enable students to pursue higher education within their home districts. He also demanded establishment of a Cancer Hospital in J&K.

Joining the debate, Legislator Arvind Gupta demanded the subjects like brain drain should have been touched and addressed in the budget 2026-27. He also raised issues including water, tourism, employment and other issues in the house.

Speaking during the debate, MLA Daleep Singh said that the government should have announced packages of upgradation of power, tourism and agriculture sectors. He said that unconnected habitations and tourist spots should be connected through robust road network and also asked for upgradation of education facilities in his Constituency.

Speaking during the debate, MLA Javaid Ahmad Mirchal appreciated the Chief Minister for coming up with the pro-people budget terming it as a vision document for underprivileged and relief to all. He appreciated the army for active role and rescue during natural disasters and providing employment sources to the people in frontier areas of Karnah.

He asserted on tourism promotion and setting up required facilities, including cable care service in Karnah. He also demanded relief packages for the affected families, hit during unfavourable situation, better healthcare, including trauma hospital, education facilities, filing of vacancies and other facilities.

Speaking in favour of the Budget, Legislator Peerzada Feroze Ahmad said that it touches every sector and every section of the society. He highlighted that health, road network and other sectors have witnessed enormous boost and free bus service and restoration of Darbar Move are among the various promises which have been kept by this government.

Joining the debate, MLA Vijay Kumar demanded staff strengthening in sub district hospital and other healthcare facilities in Hiranagar Constituency. He also raised the issues related to education and power sectors.

Speaking in support of the Budget, MLA Iftikar Ahmad congratulated the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for people-friendly budget. He expressed gratitude for the Carh Lab facility at GMC Rajouri. Citing recent road accident in Rajouri, where in a youth lost his life, the Legislator said that there is a dire need of an air-ambulance service facility for the border areas.

He also said that tangible steps be taken for fast track filling up of vacant posts in different departments in Rajouri district.

Joining the debate, Legislator Dr Rameshwar Singh supported the Budget as people-centric. He said that it is historic that a first-of-its-kind event was held for tourism promotion in Bani.

He said that free education, six gas cylinders for the poor and other announcements are welcome and will help the end beneficiaries on the ground.

He appreciated the government for restoration of Darbar Move and urged that steps be taken for development of infrastructure for tourism promotion in Bani areas.

Speaking in support of the Budget, MLA Zafar Ali Khatana said that this government has provided road connectivity and water supply to various habitations which were unconnected for last 79 years.

He demanded that Warwan and Margan-Pass areas be brought on the tourist map for their promotion as tourist destinations. He also demanded upgradation of the 50-bedded hospital and establishment of trauma hospital for hassle-free health services to the patients in his Constituency. He also underlined the need to train the teachers for different subjects to cater to the demand in far flung areas.

Legislator Mohan Lal Bhagat said that Budget had no mention of issues related to employment and the regularisation of daily wagers. He added that the issues of Asha workers, chowkidars and others have also been left out.

He further said that tourism is the backbone of J&K's economy and special focus should be given on this sector, particularly in Chenab and Pir Panjal areas of Jammu region.

Speaking in support of the Budget, Legislator, Ali Mohammad Dar appreciated the government for announcing various measures, including free education, adding that the facility of free gas cylinders is a revolutionary step of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's administration.

He appreciated the government for various developmental initiatives undertaken in his Chadoora Constituency.

He demanded a complete ban on mining activities in Shaliganga Nallah in Chadoora and demanded upgradation of health facilities, work on irrigation project in his Constituency.

Joining the debate, MLA Shagun Parihar raised various issues related to her Constituency. She demanded improvement in power supply, health and upgradation of tourism infrastructure in Kishtwar.

Kashmir's natural

again so we came back" he posted on social media while sharing his moments spent here.

On way to Pahalgam, he took photographs with his fans and locals at different places.

Local residents and tourism stakeholders welcomed the visit saying that such a high profile cricketer visiting Kashmir sends a positive message to the world and helps boost tourism in the region.

"Perera's visit will definitely send a positive message and we hope it will help to take the tourist rush to peak again," said Zakir Ahmad a hotelier. (KNO)

Opposition likely to move resolution to remove LS Speaker Birla from office

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 09: The opposition is considering moving a resolution to remove Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla from office for disallowing Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders from speaking in the House on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, as well as for the suspension of eight MPs.

At the same time, Gandhi, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, and some others met Birla on Monday afternoon to work out a solution to end the stalemate, as the House has not been functioning properly ever since the former Congress chief was not allowed to speak on the India-China issue last week.

Sources said a notice for the resolution is likely to be given under Article 94-C of the Constitution, and over 100 opposition MPs have already signed it. However, the TMC is keen on taking up the SIR issue more vigorously, while the Samajwadi Party wants to highlight the alleged insult of Malwa queen Ahilyabai Holkar.

The notice is being given to move a resolution for the removal of the Speaker for disallowing the leader of the opposition from speaking in the House on the motion of thanks, for not initiating action against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his unsubstantiated charges against women MPs of the Congress, and suspension of eight opposition MPs, the sources said.

They said a resolution in this matter would be moved in the Lok Sabha soon, and signatures of MPs are being procured. As many as 103 MPs had already signed the resolution, the sources said, adding that a final decision on when to give the notice against the Speaker would be taken on Tuesday.

Rahul Gandhi alongwith TMC's Abhishek Banerjee, Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav and DMK's T R Baalu, met Birla soon after the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day on Monday, to work out a solution and end the stalemate.

During the talks, the leaders are learnt to have raised various points on why the opposition was protesting in the House. Gandhi also told the Speaker that they were ready for a discussion, provided he was allowed to speak.

The Congress and other opposition leaders are now awaiting the final decision of Speaker Om Birla, after he is learnt to have told the opposition leaders during the meeting that he would get back to them after speaking to the government side, the sources said.

During the meeting, which lasted a few minutes, Gandhi and other leaders apprised the Speaker about the issues they wanted to raise in the House. Sources said Gandhi told the Speaker that he wanted to raise the issue of suspension of eight Congress MPs and other matters relating to Parliament, including the charges made against the women MPs. They urged the Speaker to revoke the suspension of eight MPs to end the stalemate.

The Lok Sabha has not been functioning properly ever since Gandhi was not allowed to speak on February 2. The Rajya Sabha started the discussion on the Union Budget for 2026-27 on Monday.

After the meeting with the Lok Sabha speaker, Gandhi claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not come to the lower House of Parliament to reply to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address as he was "scared" of former army chief MM Naravane's unpublished memoir.

The Leader of Opposition also dared those claiming there was a threat to the prime minister from MPs last Thursday to "file an FIR" against the person threatening Modi. Gandhi said the opposition is quite keen that the discussion happens. He claimed the government was scared of having a discussion on the Budget because of the India-US deal, the way it was done, and its impact on farmers.

"We are very disturbed about this idea that has been floated that members were going to threaten the PM. There is no question of that. The fact is very clear, the prime minister was scared to come to the House, not because of the members but because of what I was saying, and he is still scared because he cannot face the truth," he said.

"He (Modi) should have the courage to come. I also mentioned that 'look, if somebody has said that he is going to attack the PM, please file an FIR, arrest that person'. Why are you not doing that?" Gandhi posed. "The agreement is that we will be allowed to say these points, and then the discussion should happen."

"But let us see what the government says. My personal view is that the government is scared of having a debate. The PM did not come to the House. He was scared of what we say, he was scared of being handed Naravane's book as a first step," he added.

Separately, women Congress MPs have written to Birla over the "unsubstantiated allegations" made by him against them. In the letter by several women MPs, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, they objected to charges made by the speaker. The decision to move the resolution to remove Birla from the office of Lok Sabha speaker was taken at a meeting of opposition leaders held in the chamber of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge this morning. The TMC, the Left, DMK, SP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) and RSP were among the parties that attended the meeting.

If moved, this will be the fourth such notice against a sitting speaker of the Lok Sabha.

The first such resolution was moved against the first Speaker, G V Mavalankar, which was defeated. Again, a resolution was moved against Speaker Hukum Singh, which could not be taken up due to a lack of numbers in the House. The third resolution was moved against Speaker Balram Jakhar, which was also defeated.

Bharat Ratna for Savarkar would enhance award's prestige, says RSS chief

IANS

New Delhi, Feb 09: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said that conferring the Bharat Ratna on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, popularly known as Veer Savarkar, would be an "honour for the award itself", asserting that the Hindutva ideologue has already garnered widespread public admiration.

Bhagwat made the remarks while addressing an event titled '100 Year of Sangh Journey – New Horizons' in Mumbai.

Speaking on the "delay" on the conferment of the award, he said, "I am not part of that committee, but if I meet someone, I will ask why it is being delayed. If Savarkar is given the Bharat Ratna, it will be an honour to the award itself, and its prestige will increase. Even without receiving any honour, he already rules the hearts of the people."

The demand for awarding Bharat Ratna to Savarkar has been a recurring political issue.

While several leaders and groups have advocated for the country's highest civilian honour to be bestowed upon Savarkar, the Congress party has strongly opposed such proposals, describing him as a "traitor" over his mercy petitions submitted to British authorities during his imprisonment in the freedom struggle.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena have repeatedly voiced support for granting Bharat Ratna to Savarkar, citing his contributions as a freedom fighter, writer and social reformer.

During his address at the event, Bhagwat also spoke about the organisational approach and philosophy of the RSS, emphasising that the Sangh focuses on instilling "sanskar" or values rather than engaging in aggressive publicity or campaigning. "Excessive campaigning leads to publicity, which can breed arrogance. One must protect oneself from it. Publicity should be like rainfall: appropriate in timing and quantity," Bhagwat said, while adding that the RSS has been expanding its outreach initiatives in recent times. Bhagwat also commented on language use within the RSS, stating that English would not be adopted as the medium of communication for the organisation's functioning, as it is not an indigenous language.

SC terms siphoning of over Rs 54,000 cr by digital fraud 'dacoity', asks Centre to frame SoP

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 09: The Supreme Court on Monday described the siphoning of over Rs 54,000 crore by digital frauds as absolute "robbery or dacoity" and asked the Centre to draft a standard operating procedure in consultation with stakeholders like the RBI, banks and the Department of Telecommunications to deal with such cases.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria observed that the amount siphoned off by digital fraud is more than the budgets of many small states.

Noting that such offences may be due to either collusion by or the negligence of bank officials, the top court stressed the need for timely actions from the RBI and the banks.

Issuing a slew of fresh directions, it asked the Ministry of Home Affairs to consider the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) of the Reserve Bank of India and similar SoP or decisions of the Department of Telecom (DoT) and come up with a draft MoU in four weeks to effectively deal with such offences.

The bench has also noted that the RBI has crafted an SOP prescribing action by the banks to temporarily hold debit cards to prevent cyber-enabled fraud.

It directed the CBI to identify digital arrest cases and asked the Gujarat and Delhi governments to accord sanction to the federal probe agency to proceed with the investigations in the identified digital arrest cases.

The Supreme Court also asked the RBI, the DoT and others to jointly hold a meeting to come up with a framework for providing compensation in digital arrest cases. It said a pragmatic and liberal approach is needed to deal with the award of compensation to digital arrest victims and posted the plea for a further hearing after four weeks.

It asked the authorities to file fresh status reports before the next date of hearing.

On December 16, the bench asked the Centre to look into the suggestions put forward by the amicus curiae in ensuring compensation to victims of digital arrests, while voicing its concern over the enormous amounts taken out from the country by cyber criminals.

Digital arrest is a growing form of cybercrime in which fraudsters pose as law-enforcement officers, court officials or personnel from government agencies to intimidate victims through audio and video calls. They hold the victims hostage and put pressure on them to pay money.

On December 1, the top court asked the CBI to carry out a unified pan-India probe into digital arrest cases, and asked the RBI why it is not using artificial intelligence to trace and freeze bank accounts used by cyber criminals.

Silver surges 6 pc to Rs 2.72 lakh/kg on firm global trends

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 09: Silver prices climbed more than 6 per cent to Rs 2.72 lakh per kilogram in the national capital on Monday, while gold rose nearly 1 per cent to Rs 1.58 lakh per 10 grams, driven by firm global trends and a weaker US dollar.

According to local marketmen, the white metal climbed Rs 17,000, or 6.66 per cent to Rs 2,72,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes), from Friday's closing level of Rs 2,55,000 per kg.

In addition, gold of 99.9 per cent purity increased Rs 1,300, or 0.83 per cent to Rs 1,58,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had closed at Rs 1,57,200 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Will not allow anyone to create impediment: SC on SIR exercise in WB

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 09: Amid West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's apprehension of "mass exclusion" of voters in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state, the Supreme Court on Monday said it would not allow anyone to create an impediment in the exercise.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria said it would issue whatever orders or clarifications are required in the matter.

"We will not allow anyone to create any impediment in the SIR exercise. It must be clear to the states," the CJI said while hearing a batch of petitions, including the one filed by Banerjee, related to the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

The bench took note of the affidavit filed by the Election Commission (EC) which alleged burning of its notices by some miscreants.

It directed the West Bengal director general of police (DGP) to file an affidavit in this regard.

The poll panel said that so far, no FIR has been registered against the miscreants.

"A message must go that the Constitution of India applies to all states," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said.

The top court took note of the West Bengal government providing a list of 8,505 Group B officers to the poll panel, and said they may be trained and employed in the SIR process.

The bench clarified that final decisions on revision of the electoral rolls will always be taken by the electoral roll officers.

The bench said the manner of employment and work profile of these 8,505 officers will be decided by the poll panel.

During the hearing, senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Banerjee, raised apprehensions about the appointment of micro-observers and mass exclusion of eligible voters in the SIR exercise.

"We don't want any mass exclusion," Divan told the bench.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION AWANTIPORA

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

TWO COVER SYSTEM

E-NIT No: 167/EEA/R&B/of 2025-26/9782-92 DATED: 07/02 /2026

Executive Engineer PW(R&B) Division Awantipora on behalf of Lt. Governor of J&K, invites percentage rate bids (EPC Mode) in electronic tendering system for the following work including its maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractors registered with J&K UT Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State Governments.

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. cost	Cost of document (Rs in Lacs)	Earne st Mone y (Bid Securi ty) (Rs in lacs.)	Time of completion For Constru ction work	Tender Call	Time and Date of opening of tenders online (Technical Bid)	Class of contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Foot Bridge connecting Aghanjipora to National Highway. Design & Construction of Foot Bridge connecting Aghanjipora to National Highway on EPC mode (Engineering Procurement and construction mode) The job among other things includes designing part to be Vetted by IIT/DIQC/NIT including Construction of Sub- structure,- Superstructure, Construction/Upgradation of approach road of approved Length on either side etc as per Directions of Engineer in Charge Complete in all respects.	397.16 Lacs including cost of GST	0.055	2% of adv cost	02 Years	1st	02/03/2026 At 11:00 A.M	AAY Class Only

Major Head of Accounts: = (UT Capex Road Sector,(New Works) of 2025-26). Position of AA=Accorded vide No. CE(R&B) SK/AA/26 OF 2025-26 Dated 07-02-2026 Position of funds: committed.
Project Authority: = PW(R&B) Department
The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	09/02/2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	10/02/2026
3	Date, Time and Place of Pre Bid meeting	12 /02/2026 at 11.00 A.M in the Superintending Engineer PWD(R&B) Circle Pulwama-Shopian HQ: Pulwama.
4	Bid submission Start Date	10/02/2026 from 11.00 AM.
5	Bid Submission End Date	28/02/2026 upto 4.00 PM.
6	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	02/03/2026 at 11.00 A.M in the Superintending Engineer PWD(R&B) Circle Pulwama-Shopian HQ: Pulwama.
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation iscompleted

1. Every participating contractor to mandatorily disclose the bank account number which is linked with their GSTIN at the time of bid submission. No payments shall be released by the Government Department/Agency to any other bank account except the one linked with the GST registered number of the successful bidder. (As percircular No. 01(ADM) FD of 2025 Dated 08-07-2025 of J&K Finance Department) (The participating contractor may disclose his Bank Account as per the format, devised as Annexure- A of the NIT and submit/upload the same accordingly at the time of submission of the bid).
2. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan (Under MH- 0059 PWD) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Awantipora [Tender Inviting Authority] (NIT No. and Item No/Name of Work to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt)(The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and EMD (2% of advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Shopian-Pulwama H.Q Pulwama. (Tender receiving Authority).The Date of EMD{CDR/FDR/BG} should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date and validity of EMD at the time of opening of Bids shall be a period of 45 Days beyond Bid Validity of 120 Days. The same EMD should not be used in more than one Tender /Bid.

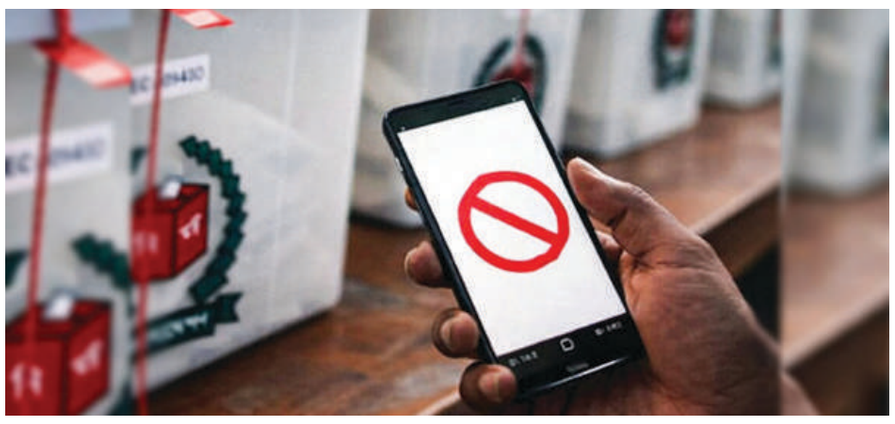
No:167/EEA/R&B/2025-2026/9782-92 Dated: 07-02-2026

Sd/- Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Awantipora.

DIPK-10738/25 DATED: 09-02-2026

Bangladesh's EC bans use of mobiles within 400 yards of polling centres on election day

PTI



Dhaka, Feb 09: Bangladesh's Election Commission has issued a directive, prohibiting mobile phones within 400 yards of polling centres on the election day, sparking protests from right-wing political parties who threatened to lay siege to its office if the decision is not withdrawn.

Bangladesh will hold parliamentary elections on February 12 - the first since the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina following massive protests led by students in August 2024.

"No individual will be allowed to enter a polling centre or remain within a 400-yard radius of it with a mobile phone. The restriction will apply to voters, polling agents, and all others present on election duty, with limited exceptions," said the directive issued on Sunday.

It said only the presiding officers, officers-in-charge of the police assigned to centres, and two authorised para-police Ansar members on election duty would remain beyond the purview of the order.

Jamaat-e-Islami and its right-wing allies, which emerged as the main challenger to its once crucial ally, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), in the absence of the now disbanded Awami League, sharply protested the decision, threatening to besiege EC's office unless the order was retracted. "If this rule is not withdrawn by this (Monday) evening, a stern movement will be built," Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman said.

Jamaat's assistant secretary general Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair made the announcement in a press release.

The student-led National Citizen Party (NCP), which emerged last year with interim government chief Muhammad Yunus' blessings and joined the Jamaat-led 11-party right-wing election alliance, also criticised the EC's decision.

"If the decision is not withdrawn by this evening, the EC will be besieged tomorrow (Tuesday)," NCP convenor Nahid Islam said.

The NCP leaders spearheaded the 2024 street protests called the July Uprising that toppled Hasina's Awami League regime.

The BNP has not commented on the EC order so far.

Meanwhile, the election campaign entered its final day, with the national capital witnessing rallies by senior leaders of major political parties.

BNP Chairperson Tarique Rahman attended rallies at Kamal Ataturk Avenue playground in his Dhaka-17 constituency and at the Kalabagan Krirachakro Club playground.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Maulana Mamunul Haque, nominee of the 11-party electoral alliance in Dhaka-13, joined a rally at Mohammadpur Eidgah Ground. Jamaat Ameer Rahman and NCP's Nahid Islam also attended the event.

US VP Vance heads to Armenia, Azerbaijan to push peace, trade

AFP

Tbilisi, Feb 09: US Vice President JD Vance will visit Armenia and Azerbaijan this week to push a Washington-brokered peace agreement that could transform energy and trade routes in the strategic South Caucasus region.

His two-day trip to Armenia, which begins later on Monday, comes just six months after the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders signed an agreement at the White House seen as the first step toward peace after nearly 40 years of war.

Vance, the first US vice president to visit Armenia, is seeking to advance the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), a proposed 43-kilometer (27-mile) corridor that would run across southern Armenia and give Azerbaijan a direct route to its exclave of Nakhchivan and in turn to Turkiye, Baku's close ally.

"Vance's visit should serve to reaffirm the US's commitment to seeing the Trump Route through," said Joshua Kucera, a senior South Caucasus analyst at Crisis Group.

"In a region like the Caucasus, even a small amount of attention from the US can make a significant impact."

The Armenian government said on Monday that Vance would hold talks with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and that both men would then make statements, without elaborating.

Vance will then visit Azerbaijan on Wednesday and Thursday, the White House has said.

Under the agreement signed last year, a private US firm, the TRIPP Development Company, has been granted exclusive rights to develop the proposed corridor, with Yerevan retaining full sovereignty over its borders, customs, taxation and security. The route would better connect Asia to Europe while — crucially for Washington — bypassing Russia and Iran at a time when Western countries are keen on diversifying energy and trade routes away from Russia due to its war in Ukraine. Russia has traditionally viewed the South Caucasus as part of its sphere of influence but has seen its clout there diminish as it is distracted by the war in Ukraine. Securing US access to supplies of critical minerals is also likely to be a key focus of Vance's visit. TRIPP could prove a key transit corridor for the vast mineral wealth of Central Asia — including uranium, copper, gold and rare earths — to Western markets.

Naqvi set to seek Sharif's nod for India match after BCB asks Pak to end boycott: PCB source

PTI

Karachi, Feb 09: Pakistan Cricket Board chief Mohsin Naqvi is set to request his Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to withdraw the boycott of their T20 World Cup match against India after being requested to do so by his Bangladesh counterpart, a PCB source has revealed.

Naqvi is set to brief Sharif on the latest developments on the issue later on Monday. The game against India is scheduled to be held in Colombo on February 15.

"Naqvi will brief the PM on the communications he has had with the Bangladesh, Sri Lankan and Emirates cricket boards and with the ICC on the crisis," the source said.

Bangladesh Cricket Board President, Amin ul Islam was in Lahore for the talks Naqvi had with Imran Khawaja, vice chairman and independent director of the ICC, on Sunday.

Sri Lanka and Emirates board have both urged the country to review its decision and the PCB source confirmed that Islam, while appreciating the support Pakistan has shown for Bangladesh cricket, also requested Naqvi to end the boycott.

He said that Naqvi is likely to ask the PM to permit the team to play India in the World Cup in view of the discussion and appeals from Sri Lanka, Emirates and Bangladesh boards.

However, the final decision rests with Sharif and the PCB would abide by it.

Takaichi's landslide win reflects deep structural, ideological shift in Japan: China

PTI

Beijing, Feb 09: China on Monday said that Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's massive victory in the midterm polls, a result widely seen as fuelled by public resentment over Beijing's strong opposition to her, reflects some deep-seated structural problems and shifting ideological currents.

Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party won more than two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives in Sunday's election.

The election results in Japan reflected some deep-seated structural problems as well as evolving trends of ideological currents, which deserve profound reflection by visionary individuals from all walks of life in Japan and the international community at large, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told reporters.

He was replying to a question at a media briefing here whether Beijing's tough stance toward Takaichi's remarks on Taiwan, persisting with diplomatic tension, influenced the outcome of elections in her favour.

China never interferes in the internal affairs of other countries, firmly opposes any erroneous words and actions that interfere in its internal affairs, infringe upon its core interests, Lin said, defending Beijing's tough stance towards Japan in the last few months objecting to Takaichi's remarks.

China mounted a massive diplomatic offensive against Japan over Takaichi's remarks in November last year that a Taiwan contingency could be a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan that may lead to action from the country's defence forces in support of the United States.

'Gary Kirsten is mentor who brings in human side to team'

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 09: Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus believes the presence of Gary Kirsten as mentor has added a bit more than mere tactical sharpness, pointing at former World Cup winning coach's ability to connect with players on a personal level while still offering a competitive edge shaped by vast experience.

Reflecting on what Kirsten brings to the table, Erasmus underlined the value of his pedigree and familiarity with conditions ahead of Namibia's opening game against Netherlands on Tuesday.

"Yes, he (Kirsten) obviously has lots of experience not only in the IPL but as you say with the 2011 India squad. So definitely he brings a winning edge to it (our campaign). And also brings lots of knowledge of the different grounds."

Erasmus went on to explain that, beyond credentials and trophies, it is the management style that truly resonates with the squad. "But I think looking past that, I think it's very nice in terms of management that you have so many mentor type coaches who really like to bring the human side first and they really like to connect with the players."

He stressed that this player-first approach is what earns the respect of the group.

"I think that's what we respect most about Gary and all the other coaches on our staff. But cricket is very much conditions based and it's awesome to have him around."

Elaborating on Kirsten's influence, Erasmus highlighted his deep understanding of venues and opposition players.

"He knows all the grounds around here and also opposition players he knows because he has been with so many different players. And as you say, immense experience."

Not thought about India game on Feb 12

Turning attention to Namibia's upcoming fixture against the Netherlands, Erasmus made it clear that thoughts of the high-profile clash against India on February 12 at this very venue isn't a priority right now.

He emphasised that the team's immediate focus is entirely on the next challenge.

"No, all our energy is on the Netherlands game now. It's such a different game that we're going to face as opposed to the India game. Yeah, we haven't even thought about the 12th."