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DIPK-10829/25 Dated: 11.02.2026

‘Agriculture First’ policy will ensure developed India, Atma-Nirbhar J&K: LG Sinha

◆ Dispels misinformation around India-US trade deal ◆ Says Centre committed to safeguarding farmers’ interests

Yogesh
Jammu, Feb 11: Asserting that “Agriculture First” policy will ensure a developed India and Atma-Nirbhar Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Wednesday reiterated the Centre is committed to safeguard the interests of farmers.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Agriculture Summit and Kisan Mela at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Jammu, here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), while dispelling the misinformation being spread around the recent trade deal and trade agreement, said, “The Government of India is resolved to safeguard farmers’ interests. The



Centre is implementing robust safeguards to ensure farmers and their production remains unharmed.”

He said, “Despite relentless tests from climate change to economic uncertainty, one truth remains unscathed—agriculture and allied sectors will keep the nation stable and its citizens prosperous.”

“Technology and Agriculture Development must go hand in hand. Technological progress births new startups, industries and unicorns and fields birth life itself. Technology creates opportunities; agriculture and allied sectors create survival. Strong agriculture means a strong nation. Strong agriculture sector is the foundation of national resilience, advanced economy and human prosperity,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

He extended his heartfelt gratitude to the agricultural scientists and the farming community, attributing the India’s emergence as global top performer in agriculture and allied sectors to their relentless hard work and innovation.

“PM Modi has envisioned a future where | [More on P6](#)

Pandemonium in Assembly over CM’s remarks against BJP lawmakers

MLAs stage walkout, storm in well of House

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 11: Uproarious scenes were witnessed in the Legislative Assembly for the second consecutive day on Wednesday over remarks made by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah against BJP lawmakers.

As the House assembled in the morning, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), BJP MLA Sham Lal Sharma said the words used by the CM were unparliamentary and that they would leave it to his conscience whether he would withdraw his remarks.

“What happened in the House yesterday has no precedent. The language used by the Hon’ble CM is not parliamentary. The treasury benches are hostile to us. I want to ask the Leader of the House whether he will withdraw his remarks. We leave it to his conscience to decide,” Sharma said.

As BJP legislators stood up, Minister for Health & Medical Education Sakina Itoo accused the opposition of using indecent language against the treasury benches.

“The opposition has been using unparliamentary language.



The Deputy CM was told, ‘Aap apni shakal dekho.’ We have directions not to disrupt the opposition,” she said.

“You don’t want to listen—this is your biggest problem. You should also check what comments were made by the opposition,” Sakina told the lawmakers.

Amid a heated exchange of arguments between the two sides, Sham Lal Sharma was interrupted by the Deputy CM, who said, “Don’t teach us.” In a fit of rage, Sham asked him to take his hands out of his pockets.

BJP’s Balwant Singh Mankotia accused the CM of making remarks collectively against BJP lawmakers.

“He has made these remarks collectively against us. Is it not inappropriate?” he asked.

NC’s Aijaz Jan hit back, saying the BJP had used defamatory and derogatory language against the 20 lakh people of Pir Panchal.

As BJP continued with its demand, Sakina Itoo accused them of attempting to ruin the careers of students enrolled in Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Sciences (SMVDIMS).

“You tried to ruin the careers of 50 | [More on P6](#)

Tourist hut at Naranag to be completed after Forest Dept verification: CM

KT News Desk
Jammu, Feb 11: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who is also the Minister Incharge of the Tourism Department, on Wednesday informed the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly that the construction work of the Tourist Hut at Naranag, initiated in 2010, remains incomplete due to land-related disputes and site complications.

Replying to question raised by MLA Mian Mehar Ali during the Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session, the Chief Minister stated that around 70 percent of the construction work had been completed before the project | [More on P6](#)

RESERVATION ROW

10 lakh quota certificates issued in Jammu, 1.65 lakh in Kashmir

Waris Fayaz
Srinagar, Feb 11: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Wednesday revealed that 10.16 lakh certificates across different reserved categories have been issued in Jammu and 1.65 lakh in Kashmir.

In a response to cut motion of Peoples Conference MLA Sajad Gani Lone, Minister-in-charge Social Welfare, Sakina Itoo, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), informed that 1016309 certificates have been issued in Jammu and 165021 in Kashmir Valley.

The data presented by the Government reveals huge disparity in between two regions

vis-a-vis issuances of quota certificates.

Across all seven categories of reserved population, Jammu region was ahead in availing certificates to get benefits of reservation.

According to the data, Jammu region holds over 92.5 percent share in Scheduled Tribe category certificates, while Kashmir accounts for just 7.4 percent.

Of the total 749970 Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificates issued, 693781 were granted in Jammu and only 56189 in Kashmir.

The disparity is sharper in the Scheduled Caste (SC) segment, as more than 98 percent of such certificates were issued in Jammu division, while only 1.24 percent | [More on P6](#)

MAJOR HEALTHCARE EXPANSION PLAN

J&K to add 3,200 hospital beds, 900 critical care beds: Health Min

Announces new cath labs, PET scans at GMC Sgr, chemotherapy units in 86 SDHs, cancer control strategy

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Feb 11: Jammu and Kashmir’s Health and Medical Education Minister, Sakeena Itoo, on Wednesday said a massive expansion and modernisation of the Union Territory’s healthcare infrastructure is coming up to improve patient care, increase hospital capacity and bring advanced medical services closer to the people.

Speaking during the grants discussion for the health sector in the Legislative Assembly,



the minister, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the government has launched a comprehensive plan to strengthen hospitals across

J&K, with a particular focus on critical care, emergency services, cancer treatment and modern diagnostics.

Itoo informed the House that a new 160-bedded block at B&J Hospital, Srinagar, has already become operational, significantly boosting healthcare capacity. She said 243 new beds have been added at SMGS Hospital, Srinagar, easing the long-standing pressure on surgical services.

The minister announced that the government plans to add nearly | [More on P6](#)

Expunge remarks if found unparliamentary: CM tells Speaker

KNO Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 11: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday asked the Speaker to expunge any remarks he made during his reply on budget discussions, if they were found unparliamentary.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, the CM, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said he regretted the remarks made in the House the previous day.

“What I said hurt them. I regret that. But my remarks were directed against them, not against their family members,” he said, adding that Sharma had dragged his grandfather and parents into the issue.

Taking a dig | [More on P6](#)

J&K Assembly approves over Rs 28,00 crore Budget for education, health, social welfare initiatives

Reflects strong commitment to human dev, inclusive growth: Sakeena Itoo

- School Education: Rs 12,98,872.13 lakh
- Health and Medical Education: Rs 8,65,476.57 lakh
- Social Welfare: Rs 4,45,671.59 lakh
- Higher Education: Rs 2,15,016.37 lakh



KT News Desk
Jammu, Feb 11: The Legislative

Assembly today passed the grants amounting to Rs 12,98,872.13 Lakh for School Education department, Rs 8,65,476.57 Lakh for Health and Medical Education department, Rs 4,45,671.59 Lakh for Social Welfare department and Rs 2,15,016.37 Lakh for Higher Education department through voice vote.

The grants were passed after day long discussion by Members in the house.

Winding up the discussion on the Demands for Grants, Minister | [More on P6](#)

Reservation report sent to Union Home Ministry: Minister Itoo

‘Will be made public after decision’

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 11: Jammu, Feb 11: Minister for Social Welfare Sakeena Itoo said on Wednesday that the cabinet sub-committee’s report on reservation has been sent to the Union Home Ministry and will be made public once a final decision is taken.

Winding up the discussion on grants of the departments under her charge, Sakina Itoo, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), stated that the report will be placed in the public domain after the decision is finalized.

“Whatever decision is taken, once the | [More on P6](#)

Reservation framework will wreak havoc in long run: Sajad Lone

Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone on Wednesday said that reservation will wreak havoc in the long run. Participating in a discussion in the | [More on P6](#)

CM assures digitisation of only accurate land records

KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 11: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the government is committed to ensure complete accuracy in land records and will digitise only the correct and verified records.

The Chief Minister intervened while supplementary queries were raised by several MLAs during the Question Hour in the House.

He acknowledged the department’s admission that the process is not error free, with complaints received from people claiming ownership of land that is | [More on P6](#)

Budgam tightens vigil on illegal mining activities

DC chairs MDDLTFC meeting, says zero-tolerance policy against violators

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 11: A meeting of the Multi-Departmental District Level Task Force Cell (MDDLTFC) was Wednesday convened under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-din Bhat, to review, assess and further strengthen the regulatory and monitoring mechanisms for mineral extraction and transportation in the district.

During the meeting, a comprehensive review of the prevailing enforcement framework was undertaken and the functioning of various departments involved in mineral regulation was critically assessed.

The DC, as per an official statement, emphasised the need for enhanced inter-departmental coordination, real-time monitoring, and strict adherence to statutory provisions to ensure transparency, accountability and effective control over mineral-related activities.

He stressed that illegal mining and unauthorized transportation of minerals shall not be tolerated, and that a zero-tolerance policy shall be adopted against violators.

The DC underscored that robust technological interventions, coupled with field-level enforcement, shall be ensured to strengthen oversight and prevent revenue leakage.

In the meeting, District Mineral Officer (DMO), Budgam, was directed to ensure strict enforcement of installation of AIS-140 compliant GPS/RFD devices on all machinery used for mineral extraction and on all tippers, dumpers and other vehicles engaged in mineral transportation. This process shall be carried out in close coordination with the ARTO Budgam and District Police. It was directed that



strict legal action shall be initiated against all defaulters and violators to ensure full compliance.

The DC further directed DMO to establish a dedicated Control Room in his office for real-time monitoring of GPS and RFID-enabled vehicles. He further said that the Control Room shall serve as a centralized monitoring hub to track movement of mineral-loaded vehicles and detect any deviations or irregularities.

DySP Hq Budgam was directed to identify additional hotspot locations, apart from the eight locations already submitted by the DMO Budgam, for installation of Automatic Plate Number Recognition (APNR) cameras. These cameras shall be installed at strategic locations to enhance surveillance and enable automatic detection of unauthorized and illegal mineral transportation.

ARTO Budgam was directed

to initiate strict action against unregistered tippers, machinery and other vehicles found to be involved in mineral extraction and transportation.

The DC stressed that only duly registered and compliant vehicles shall be allowed to operate, and that enforcement drives shall be intensified to curb illegal operations.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned departments to ensure time-bound implementation of the decisions taken and to submit regular progress reports. It was further emphasized that coordinated enforcement drives shall be conducted and accountability shall be fixed in case of lapses.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), DySP HQ, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Executive Engineer, I&FC, District Mineral Officer (DMO) and other concerned officials.

DC Bandipora reviews Ramadan arrangements

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 11: In view of the ensuing holy month of Ramadan, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, Wednesday chaired a meeting of concerned officers to review and finalise necessary arrangements across the district.

On the occasion, the DC emphasised coordinated efforts among all departments to ensure uninterrupted essential services, availability of quality food items, and effective market regulation during the holy month.

The Assistant Director, FCS&CA, informed the meeting that sufficient stocks of essential commodities are available across the district. The DC directed the Power Development Department (PDD) to maintain a transparent power schedule and prepare a detailed 30-day roster indicating day-wise, hour-wise and feeder-wise supply, besides furnishing details of the existing supply and any additional requirements.

Highlighting the importance of public health and hygiene, the DC, as per an official statement, directed the Food Safety Department to constitute dedicated teams for regular market inspections to prevent the sale of substandard food items and check price escalation. The Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department informed that all water supply schemes are functional. Fire and Emergency Services were directed to remain on alert during the holy month. The Sheep Husbandry Department also reported adequate availability of livestock.

During the meeting, the DC directed the Municipal Committee to intensify sanitation drives, ensure proper waste management, and conduct a survey to identify areas requiring additional street lighting. The DC also reviewed arrangements for essential supplies in Gurez, and was informed that adequate stocks are available.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed strict monitoring of markets to prevent overpricing, hoarding and sale of substandard material, and urged all departments to work in close coordination to facilitate smooth observance of Ramadan for the people of Bandipora.

Mega Vay Vandana registration camp held in Srinagar

DC urges Senior Citizens to avail scheme benefits, calls for wider outreach to ensure 100% coverage



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR FEBRUARY 11: In a significant outreach initiative to ensure maximum coverage of eligible senior citizens aged 70 years and above under Ayushman Vay Vandana scheme providing additional health support, the District Administration Srinagar organized a mega Mega Awareness-cum-Spot Registration Camp at Kashmir Haat.

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, as per an official statement, presided over the awareness programme, which witnessed overwhelming participation from senior citizens across the district.

During the camp, several dedicated counters were set up by the Health Department and Common Service Centre (CSC) teams to facilitate on-the-spot registration and provide detailed information about the schemes ensuring hassle-free enrolment of all eligible beneficiaries. Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the benefits of the Ayushman Vay Vandana card and urged senior citizens to avail maximum benefits under the scheme. He said the scheme provides comprehensive healthcare security to citizens aged 70 years and above, ensuring financial protection against medical expenses.

The DC stated that the objective of such public awareness camps is to ensure that the benefits of the scheme reach every eligible beneficiary so that they

can avail assistance in times of medical need.

While lauding the District Health machinery, District Treasuries, CSC teams and field functionaries for successfully organizing the camp, the DC emphasized the need for wider outreach. He directed that similar Awareness-cum-Spot Registration Camps be organized in all Medical Zones and Blocks of the district to expand the ambit and coverage of the scheme.

He also urged participants to spread awareness about the benefits of the Vay Vandana Scheme so that every eligible individual is enrolled and can utilize the Vay Vandana card during emergencies. During the camp, the DC also handed over Ayushman Vay Vandana cards to the senior citizens of the district.

The eligible residents of District Srinagar who wish to register under the Ayushman Vay Vandana Scheme may contact 8825048995, 9596900893 or 7006283138 to complete their registration and avail the benefits of the scheme.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz; Joint Commissioner SMC, Nuzhat Khurshid; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; Chief Medical Officer, Dr Tahir Sajad; Block Medical Officer, Hazratbal, Dr Abdul Majeed; Zonal Medical Officer, Batamaloo, and other senior Health functionaries and officers of District Administration were present in the camp.

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NOTICE

I want to correct my name in my Driving Licence bearing no. JK0120250016971 From Adil Hussain to Adil Hussain Changa and DOB from 18/03/1997 to 20/10/1995 as per my Matriculation Certificate and other documents Now i want to correct the same. In this regard if anybody have any objection he/she may contact RTO Kashmir within 7 days after that no claim shall be entertained

Adil Hussain Changa
S/o Mohammad Abbas Changa
R/o Gowmarg Hazratbal Srinagar

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER FLOOD CONTROL DIVISION ANANTNAG

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS
E-NIT NO. 39 of 2025-26

For and on behalf of Hon'ble Lt. Governor of J&K U.T., e-tenders (in Single Cover System) are invited on "Percentage basis" (Single Click) from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K U.T Govt./ CPWD/Railways/Other Governments/ Union Territories for the following works:-

S. No	Name of work	Advt. Cost (Rs in Lacs)	Earnest Money Deposit (Amt in Rs)	Time for completion	Class of Contract	Cost of Tender Document (Rs)	Major Head of Account	Tender Opening Authority
1	Construction of FR work lining wall on L/S of Chaka Nadi at Azadpora Anchidora Anantnag near Rehmat Alam Hospital from the land of Abdul Majeed to Abdul Hameed Baba (Phase-1st)	2.00	6000/=	05 Days	DEE	200/=	CDF 44 Anantnag (District Capex)	Executive Engineer
2	Construction of FR work lining wall on L/S of Chaka Nadi at Azadpora Anchidora Anantnag near Rehmat Alam Hospital from the land of Abdul Majeed to Abdul Hameed Baba (Phase-2nd)	3.00	9000/=	06 Days	DEE	200/=	CDF 44 Anantnag (District Capex)	Executive Engineer
3	CO of Flood protection Work on Brengi Nallah at Gohihard Adigam near the land of Ab Gani Wani and others	9.95	29850/=	10 Days	DEE/CEE	300/=	CDF 42-Kokernag-ST (District Capex)	Executive Engineer
4	CO Flood Protection work on Gawran Nallah at near the Land of Ab Rasheed and others at Larnoo	2.00	6000/=	05 Days	DEE	200/=	CDF 42-Kokernag-ST (District Capex)	Executive Engineer
5	CO of Flood protection work on Daksum Nallah at Chakroo Dessu NLO Abdullah Kohli and Others	3.95	11850/=	07 Days	DEE	300/=	CDF 42-Kokernag-ST (District Capex)	Executive Engineer

Position of Funds: Budgetary allocation 2025-26.
Position of Administrative Approval:- Accorded
Position of Technical Sanction:- Accorded

The Bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, set of terms and conditions, and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per the schedule of dates given below:

1	Date of issue of Tender Notice	11-02-2026 at 14.00 PM
2	Date of start of downloading	11-02-2026 at 14.00 PM
3	Bid submission start date Technical/ Financial	11-02-2026 at 14.00 PM
4	Bid submission end date	11-02-2026 at 06.00 PM
5	Date & Time of opening of Bids (online).	18-02-2026 at 10.00 AM

All other terms & conditions shall be the same as laid down in the PWD Form 25 (Double Agreement Form).
No.FCD/Ang/2026/7712-34
Dated :-11-02-2026

DIPK-10784/25
Dated: 11-02-2026

Executive Engineer,
Flood Control Division Anantnag

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL DIVISION SRINAGAR

(Erstwhile Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division Srinagar)
Contact No: 0194-2496089, Email Id: exen-mechospgr@jk.gov.in

GIST of e-tender (SHORT TERM)
e-NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2025-26/141/e-tendering,
Dated: 11-02-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K U.T e-tenders are invited in two cover system on percentage basis from registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work: --

Name of Work	Est. Cost (In rupees)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Time of completion	AA Accorded Vide No:	TS No	Earnest Money	Position of Funds
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Repair/Replacement of damaged /Defunct/ lost oxygen/suction/ Nitrous oxide points and flow meters at various sections/ Wards of Govt. SMHS hospital Srinagar.	7,91,450/-	200	10 days	116-MCS of 2026 Dated:-09.02.2026	MHD/K/TS/168 Dated:-11.02.2026	2 % of the estimated cost	Available with intending Department

The bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Govt. website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule given below:-

S.no	Publish date	11-02-2026 (17:00 hrs)
1	Period of downloading of bidding document	11-02-2026 (17:00 hrs)
2	Bid submission start date	11-02-2026 (18:00 hrs)
3	Bid submission end date	14-02-2026 (13:00 hrs)
4	Date and time of opening of bids	14-02-2026 (15:00 hrs)

No:M&HDS/TS/8646-50 Dated: 11.02.2026
DIPK-10827/25 Dated: 11-02-2026

Executive Engineer,
M&H, Srinagar

CS emphasizes outreach, training for labour code implementation

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Feb 11: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting of the Labour & Employment Department to review the implementation status of the four new Labour Codes—one of the most significant labour reforms undertaken in the country to simplify compliance mechanisms and strengthen worker welfare.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, Labour & Employment, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan; Labour Commissioner; and other senior officers of the department.

Reviewing the progress made so far, the Chief Secretary underscored the importance of launching a sustained and structured awareness campaign to ensure comprehensive understanding of the new Labour Codes among all stakeholders, including employers, employees, trade unions and industrial establishments.

He emphasized that widespread awareness is essential for ensuring smooth compliance and effective implementation of these landmark reforms.

He further called for focused capacity-building initiatives for all concerned stakeholders to facilitate seamless transition to the new legal framework. He observed



that the true objective of these reforms lies not merely in their notification, but in their effective on-ground implementation, leading to tangible improvements in ease of doing business, enhanced compliance, and strengthened social security and welfare mechanisms

for workers across establishments covered under these laws.

Highlighting the department's efforts, Secretary, Labour & Employment, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan informed the meeting that the department has so far conducted 194 awareness generation camps across

J&K, reaching out to 1,046 establishments and sensitizing 14,205 participants.

He stated that the department is further intensifying its outreach strategy through outdoor publicity campaigns, social media platforms and FM Radio broadcasts to maximize public engagement and dissemination of information regarding the provisions of the new Labour Codes.

The Secretary also apprised the meeting that a comprehensive capacity-building programme is being formulated in collaboration with judicial bodies, the J&K Institute of Management, Public Administration & Rural Development (IMPARD), and other reputed national-level institutions. These initiatives aim to equip enforcement officers, employers, and other stakeholders with the requisite knowledge and skills for smooth and uniform implementation of the Codes across the Union Territory.

It is to be noted that the four Labour Codes have subsumed 44 existing Central labour laws into a consolidated and modern regulatory framework, thereby rationalizing the legal structure, reducing multiplicity of compliances, and promoting transparency, accountability, and worker welfare.

High Level Committee to finalize stone quarrying modalities: Dy CM

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Feb 11: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary on Wednesday said that a High Level Multi Departmental Committee has been constituted to examine and finalize the modalities for revival of customary mining activities of stone quarrying at Panthachowk Srinagar, Saderkoot Bala Bandipora and other related locations.

The Deputy Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by Legislator Hasnain Masoodi in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that the committee has already conducted a series of meetings with the stakeholder departments regarding the matter. He added that the committee will submit its recommendations in the shortest possible time.

He informed the house that once the Committee drafts its report, the same shall be shared with the concerned members of Legislative Assembly before submitting its final report/recommendation to the government. Regarding rehabilitation of the erstwhile quarry holders, the Deputy CM said that the department had to club the Individual Quarries, falling in areas ancestrally occupied as



per the legacy data of the department and certified by the Revenue Department, and declare them as Cluster of Quarries to be considered for Quarry Licence. Subsequently, the department declared 10 Quarry Belts in Lethpora, Mandakpal, Khrew and Wuyan, the department has issued disposal permits of the Loose Material available in the quarry sites from time to time, he added.

Deputy Chief Minister said erstwhile quarry holders in Kashmir Division can lift/transport loose quarry material for government works and to secure livelihood. This includes Booh Awantipora Quarry cluster holders, Pulwama who were allowed to lift 34,650 metric tonnes of quarry stone.

Operate and NOCS of Stakeholder departments issued by the competent authorities, for formal grant of Quarry License in their favour.

Further, in order to provide the livelihood of the erstwhile quarry holders in Lethpora, Ladhu, Mandakpal, Khrew and Wuyan, the department has issued disposal permits of the Loose Material available in the quarry sites from time to time, he added.

Legislator Hilal Akbar Lone raised supplementary question.

JKLA Question Hour

Govt installs over 12 lakh smart meters in J&K



RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 11: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday informed that over 12.36 lakh smart meters have been installed across the Union Territory under various power sector schemes.

Replying to a question by MLA Waheed-Ur-Rehman Para, the government said that a total of 12,36,507 smart meters have so far been installed by the Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDC) and Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL).

According to official data, JPDC has installed 6,27,492 meters across the ten districts of Jammu division; Jammu

(3,04,468), Samba (58,707), Udhampur (57,320), Doda (22,591), Kathua (39,237), Kishtwar (8,742), Poonch (24,902), Ramban (24,870), Reasi (25,674) and Rajouri (60,981).

Similarly, KPDCL has installed 6,09,015 meters across Kashmir division, including Srinagar (2,39,147), Budgam (37,009), Ganderbal (15,427), Bandipora (33,728), Baramulla (87,732), Kupwara (24,839), Pulwama (50,322), Shopian (18,272), Anantnag (77,943) and Kulgam (24,596). The government also said that 1,600 smart feeder meters have been installed on 11 KV feeders across ten districts of Jammu division.

For implementation, REPCDCL has been nominated as the Project

Implementation Agency by the Ministry of Power for smart metering works under the PMDP and RDSS schemes for both JPDC and KPDCL.

The installation contracts have been awarded to multiple firms. In Jammu division, the work has gone to Techno Electric Ltd, Anvil Cables, and Genus Power Solutions Ltd. In Kashmir division, Techno Electric and Engineering Company Ltd and Anvil Cables Pvt Ltd, among others, are executing the project.

The government also listed the manufacturers supplying the smart meters, including Landis & Gyr, Schneider Electric India Pvt Ltd, Genus, Kimble and Sinhal Udyog, with different models deployed under various phases.

Responding to another query, the government clarified that the smart meters being installed in J&K are not exclusive to the UT and adhere to standard technical specifications prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), which are uniformly followed nationwide—(KNO)

No timber shortage in Kangan sale depots: Govt

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 11: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday said that there is no shortage of timber in any of the sale depots in Kangan constituency.

Replying to an unstarred question (A.Q. No. 1276) raised by MLA Mian Mehar Ali in the Legislative Assembly, the Minister In-charge, Forest, Ecology & Environment Department said, "No Sir," when asked whether there is a shortage of timber at most of the sale depots in Kangan constituency.

The government informed the House that depot-wise quantity of timber dumped and sold in Kangan constituency

through cluster depots during the last three years is as under:

At CTS Depot Manigam, 481 cfts timber was dumped and 368 cfts sold in 2023-24; 1291 cfts dumped and 1176 cfts sold in 2024-25; while 1327 cfts was dumped and 788 cfts sold in 2025-26.

Similarly, at Margund depot, 1285 cfts timber was dumped and 869 cfts sold in 2023-24; and 632 cfts dumped and 330 cfts sold in 2025-26.

At Chiner depot, 501 cfts timber was dumped and 414 cfts sold in 2023-24; 387 cfts dumped and 304 cfts sold in 2024-25; while 353 cfts was dumped and 273 cfts sold in 2025-26.

Govt rules out 5-Marla land allotment for border residents

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Feb 11: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday ruled out any plan to provide five marlas of land to residents living in border areas.

The clarification came in response to a query by MLA Dr Rajeev Kumar Bhagat, who asked whether the government intended to allot land at safer locations for border residents.

The Minister Incharge Revenue stated that no such proposal is currently under consideration—(KNO)

MLA Kangan raises development, health issues

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 11: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Kangan, Mian Mehar Ali on Tuesday raised multiple development, health and education-related issues in his constituency. Appreciating the work done under his supervision across departments, the MLA, speaking during the Assembly proceedings, said several urgent matters remain unresolved. He informed the House that the people of Gund had submitted a representation to the Chief Minister for the establishment of a degree college. "Land has already been identified and forwarded to the concerned directorate," Ali said.

MLA Ali further said that the hospital building in Kangan was completed over a year ago but is yet to be inaugurated, thereby affecting healthcare delivery. He stressed the need for setting up more Anganwadi centres and alleged that the CDPK Kangan Post has remained vacant for the past year. Raising education concerns, he said that two schools at Akhal and Wusan require immediate funding. The MLA further sought deployment of additional doctors, including two for night duty at Trauma Hospital Kangan and two at Hariganiwan Hospital. Mehar Ali demanded upgradation of health centres into PHCs and provision of additional ambulances in Wusan, Ganiwan, Wangat, and Sonamarg areas—(KNO)

Vande Mataram sung from heart, not by order: Choudhary

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Feb 11: Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Wednesday said that Vande Mataram has always been sung by Indians from the heart, not because of any order.

"Tell me, who doesn't sing Vande Mataram in India? People don't need any direction for it. They sing it from the heart," Choudhary told reporters in Jammu while responding to recent guidelines on the singing of the national song.

The Deputy CM said the song holds deep emotional

and historical significance, having been sung by people of all faiths during India's freedom struggle. "Before 1947, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians sang Vande Mataram with emotion and unity. It symbolised the spirit of independence, not compulsion," he said, adding that anything sung from the heart carries passion and passion always leads to sacrifice.

Hitting out at the BJP, Choudhary said, "I want to remind those in the BJP who often raise slogans in Jammu and Kashmir that they once promised to bring ten

heads in exchange for one. We are still waiting for that day. Let us hope their promises are not as hollow as the ones about Rs 15 lakh in every account or two crore jobs."

He further added that the country's real need is employment for the youth, not religious polarisation. "India has enough temples, mosques and gurudwaras. What we need are jobs for the educated and unemployed youth. The government's priority should be livelihood, not where a temple or mosque is being built," the Deputy CM said—(KNO)

From The Parliament

No CSIR regional centre for Ladakh: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

Leh, Feb 11: The Government of India on Wednesday informed Parliament that there is no proposal under consideration to establish a regional centre of the CSIR-Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI) in Ladakh.

Replying to an unstarred question by MP Mohammad Haneefa in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology Dr Jitendra Singh said, "There is currently no plan or timeline for setting up a CLRI branch in the Union Territory."

The Minister, however, said that CLRI, Chennai, is actively working in Ladakh to strengthen the local leather sector and promote livelihood

opportunities under the broader CSIR-Ladakh initiative.

According to the reply, CLRI has conducted 30-day specialised training programmes for artisans in Leh and Kargil, aimed at transforming traditional leather use into a more organised and sustainable industry.

"The institute is also supporting value addition to local products by developing leather-based combination items with traditional attire such as Goncha and Kamarbandh, besides promoting the use of natural dyes and improved design techniques," the reply stated.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

19 Consumer Commission posts vacant in J&K: Centre

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 11: The Government of India on Wednesday informed the Lok Sabha that 19 posts are lying vacant in Consumer Commissions in Jammu and Kashmir as of December 31, 2025.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs B.L. Verma said that the vacancies include one President and one Member post in the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, besides six President and eleven Member posts in District Consumer Commissions.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

OFC network reaches 44,479 route kilometres in J&K: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 11: The Government of India on Wednesday informed the Lok Sabha that 10,809 route kilometres of Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) have been laid in Jammu and Kashmir during the last three financial years (2022-25).

In a written reply, Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya M Scindia said that the total OFC network in J&K has reached 44,479 route kilometres as of December 31, 2025.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Naranag tourist hut incomplete due to land disputes: Tourism Deptt

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Feb 11: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday informed the House that construction of the Tourist Hut at Naranag in Ganderbal district, taken up in 2010, remains incomplete due to land-related disputes, although nearly 70 percent of the work had been completed.

Replying to a starred question tabled by MLA Mian Mehar Ali, the Tourism Department said that the construction of the tourist facility was initiated in 2010 and a substantial portion of the work was executed before it was halted.

The government said the work was stopped following objections raised by a local resident, late Sain Bujran, and his son, who demanded compensation or employment in lieu of the land, leading to stoppage of construction.

It said the matter was subsequently taken up with the Revenue authorities.

The Tehsildar Kangan, in his report, clarified that the tourist hut is located on forest land beyond the boundary of the Wangat estate.

The issue has now been taken up with the Divisional Forest Officer, Sindh Forest Division, Ganderbal, for verification of land records pertaining to the site at Doshardi Morh, Naranag.

The matter is being pursued," the government said. Regarding funds, the government said the work was executed by the Tourism Department, but exact details of the funds sanctioned for the project could not be retrieved as several old records were damaged or lost during the September 2014 floods.

It said that in view of the pending dispute and unresolved site-related issues, no additional funds have been projected under any scheme so far.

The government added that exact financial details will be retrieved and shared once the records are compiled—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

J&K Cricket Team's Historic Triumph Has Inspired Generations

Sixty-seven years. For six decades and seven years, the cricketers of Jammu and Kashmir carried the weight of unfulfilled promise. On Monday, February 9, 2026, at Indore's Holkar Stadium, they shed that weight forever. By defeating former champions Madhya Pradesh by 56 runs, the J&K cricket team etched its name into the annals of Indian cricket, reaching the Ranji Trophy semi-finals for the first time in their history. This is a powerful, defining statement from a region whose youth refuse to be defined by stereotypes.

led by the indomitable Auqib Nabi, whose astonishing match haul of 12 wickets for 110 runs, including a career-best 7/40, dismantled a formidable batting line-up, the team showcased the very qualities that build champions: resilience, discipline, and unyielding self-belief. His 46 wickets this season, second only in the tournament, and his recent IPL contract worth 8.40 crore, signal that talent from J&K is not just participating but conquering on the biggest stages. This historic moment did not emerge in a vacuum. It is

the harvest of a sustained, sincere, and strategic investment in sports by both the Central and UT governments - a partnership that has transformed the sporting landscape of J&K. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Union Territory has witnessed unprecedented focus on creating modern sports infrastructure, cultivating a player-centric ecosystem, and ensuring that talent from even the most remote villages receives a fair platform. The establishment of Khelo India Centres across all 20 districts, the

allocation of Rs 150 crores for sports infrastructure, and the upcoming state-of-the-art cricket academies in Jammu and Srinagar with dedicated budgetary support of Rs 8 crore are tangible evidence of this commitment. The BCCI, under president Mithun Manhas, has assured full cooperation to develop cricket at all levels, recognising J&K as a fertile ground for nurturing national talent. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's personal congratulations and the government's resolve to host international events, including the

Commonwealth Kho-Kho and water sports championships, further reflect a governance model where sports is a national priority, not an afterthought. To Auqib Nabi, Captain Paras Dogra, and every member of this squad: you have inspired a generation. You have told every child in the mountains and valleys that the path to glory is open to those who dare, work, and dream. This historic journey is proof that when political will meets sporting passion, even a 67-year-old wait can end in triumph.

Democratising AI In India

Expanding access to AI resources, skills, and technology nationwide

Press Information Bureau

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a central pillar of India's development journey. It is strengthening governance, improving public service delivery, and enabling solutions that can reach citizens at scale. Human advancement has always been shaped by technology. Electricity transformed daily life and work. Computers changed how information was processed. The internet connected people and systems across borders, and mobile phones placed technology directly in the hands of citizens. AI builds on these foundations and now works alongside humans to transform sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education, manufacturing, climate action and governance. For India, the democratisation of AI is essential to ensure that these benefits are widely shared and aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Democratisation of AI depends on equitable access to computing power, data repositories and model ecosystems, which increasingly determine who can innovate, compete and govern effectively in the digital economy. India's development-focused approach places democratisation at the core of its AI strategy, enabling participation by startups, researchers, public institutions and innovators across regions.

Building on this vision, the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 will be held from 16 to 20 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. As the first global AI summit to be hosted in the Global South, it will bring together global leaders, policymakers, technology companies, innovators and experts to showcase and deliberate on the transformative potential of AI for inclusive growth, governance and sustainable development.

What is Democratisation of AI? Democratisation of AI refers to making artificial intelligence accessible, affordable and usable for a wide and diverse set of users. It goes beyond access to finished applications. It includes access to the core building blocks of AI such as computing power, datasets and model ecosystems. As these resources become available at scale, individuals and institutions are expanding what they can achieve with AI.

Democratisation is also about widening economic opportunity. This momentum is reflected in India's workforce, with over 6 million people employed across the technology and AI ecosystem. NITI Aayog's report AI for Inclusive Societal Development released in October 2025 underscores AI's potential to empower India's 490 million informal workers by widening access to services, markets and financial systems. The approach builds on India's established digital philosophy. UPI made digital payments open and inclusive. Aadhaar enabled digital identity at population scale. Indigenous 4G and 5G stacks strengthened technological self-reliance. AI is now following the same path, with openness, affordability and accessibility guiding innovation so that progress uplifts society as a whole.

Democratising AI Applications for Public Impact

AI creates value only when it reaches people at scale. India's approach focuses on practical deployment across sectors so that AI improves everyday life and public services. Just as the internet and mobile phones transformed society through widespread use, AI is now following the same path. By prioritising applications that are easy to use and widely accessible, India is ensuring that AI delivers inclusive and measurable public impact.

Across key sectors, AI applications are already making a difference. In agriculture, AI supports farmers by predicting weather, identifying pest risks, and guiding irrigation and sowing decisions. Platforms such as Kisan e Mitra simplify access to government schemes, while the National Pest Surveillance System and Crop Health Monitoring use satellite and weather data to protect crops and improve income security. In healthcare, AI enables early disease detection, assists in analysing medical images, and strengthens telemedicine services, connecting rural patients with specialists and improving the quality

and reach of care.

Bhashini: Enabling Language Access through AI

Bhashini is an AI-powered platform that enables translation and speech services across multiple Indian languages. It helps citizens access digital services even when they are not comfortable reading or writing. Since its launch in July 2022, Bhashini has crossed 1.2 million downloads and now supports 36+ languages. The platform integrates over 350 AI models and 450+ active customers.

AI is also strengthening disaster preparedness. The India Meteorological Department uses AI to forecast rainfall, fog and extreme weather, while tools like the Advanced Dvorak Technique support cyclone intensity assessment and MausamGPT is being developed to offer real-time advisories. This widespread application is reflected in India's innovation landscape. As of January 2026, India ranks among the top three startup ecosystems globally, with over two lakh startups. Nearly 90 percent of these startups are estimated to be AI-powered in some form, highlighting how deeply AI has been integrated into innovation and problem-solving across the country.

Democratising Access to AI Infrastructure

Democratising AI requires ensuring that the foundational infrastructure powering artificial intelligence is open, affordable and widely accessible. India's approach is guided by its full AI stack, which spans applications, models, compute, infrastructure and energy, and treats these layers as interconnected national capabilities. Approved in March 2024 with a financial outlay of 10,371.92 crore over five years, the IndiaAI Mission is laying the groundwork for this approach by expanding access, strengthening data availability and enabling responsible use of AI for public good.

Access to Datasets and Models

Access to high-quality datasets and reusable models is a key driver of AI democratisation. National platforms are enabling developers to work with ready-to-use data and model resources rather than building from scratch. Supporting this effort is AIKosh, a national platform for AI datasets and models. It brings together datasets from government and non-government sources and makes them available across sectors. This shared access allows innovation to move faster and reach a wider community of users.

AIKosh: India's Shared AI Resource Platform
As of February 2026, AIKosh brings together 7,541 datasets and 273 AI models spanning 20 sectors on a single national platform. By December 2025, it had recorded over 3.85 lakh visits, 11,000 registered users and 26,000 downloads.

Alongside data access, India is developing its own large multimodal AI models trained on Indian data and languages. This approach strengthens technological self-reliance while ensuring relevance to local needs at scale. Under the IndiaAI Mission, more than 500 proposals were received, and 12 startups were selected across the first two phases. These include Sarvam AI, Soket AI, Gnani AI, Gan AI, Awaatar AI, BharatGen led by IIT Bombay, Zenteiq, Gen Loop, Intellihealth, Shodh AI, Fractal Analytics and Tech Mahindra Maker's Lab.

Access to Compute

Limited access to computing power has historically restricted AI development to a few large institutions. This barrier is being addressed through subsidised and shared compute resources. Under the IndiaAI Mission, more than 38,000 high-end GPUs have been onboarded and are available at 65 per hour, which is nearly one third of the global average cost. In addition, 1,050 TPUs have also been onboarded to further expand access to advanced AI processing capabilities.

What are GPUs and TPUs?

A GPU or Graphics Processing Unit is a powerful computer chip that helps machines think faster, process images, run AI programs, and handle complex tasks more efficiently than a regular processor.

A TPU, or Tensor Processing Unit, is a specialised computer chip designed specifically for artificial intelligence tasks. TPU is built to process large amounts of data quickly for tasks such as training and running AI models. High-performance computing is also

being made accessible through the National Supercomputing Mission. Over 40 petaflops of capacity has been deployed across IITs, IISERs and research institutions. Systems such as PARAM Siddhi-AI and AIRAWAT support shared use for applications including language processing, weather prediction and drug discovery.

Access to Chips and Semiconductor Capabilities

Long-term democratisation of compute depends on domestic chip capabilities. India is strengthening its semiconductor ecosystem to support AI workloads and reduce dependence on external supply chains. The India Semiconductor Mission, with an outlay of 76,000 crore, supports manufacturing, design and talent development. As of December 2025, 10 projects had been approved with cumulative investments of around 1.60 lakh crore across 6 states. India's chip market is projected to reach \$100 to \$110 billion by 2030, reflecting rapid growth in this critical sector.

The Union Budget 2026-27 marked a further step in this direction with the announcement of India Semiconductor Mission 2.0. A provision of 1,000 crore has been made for FY 2026-27, with a strong focus on industry-led research and training centres. This phase aims to deepen technology development and build a future-ready skilled workforce, strengthening the long-term foundations for accessible and resilient AI compute in India.

Access to Data Centres and Connectivity

Scalable data centres and reliable connectivity are essential for widespread AI deployment. Fifth generation (5G) mobile services are now available in 99.9 percent of districts, covering 85 percent of the population. As of October 2025, 5.08 lakh 5G base transceiver stations had been installed nationwide.

India's data centre ecosystem is expanding rapidly due to rising digitalisation, cloud adoption, and AI usage across government and industry. Current cloud data centre capacity stands at approximately 1,280 MW and supports critical sectors such as banking, power and public infrastructure. This capacity is expected to grow by 4 to 5 times by 2030.

The rising mobile coverage and expansion of the data centre ecosystem will open up the possibility of the common man even in remote areas to make use of systems and applications supported by these data centres and also contribute to creating the same.

Text Box: Global Investments Strengthening India's AI Infrastructure
India's AI ecosystem is attracting large-scale global investments. Google is setting up a \$15 billion AI hub in Visakhapatnam, while Amazon Web Services is investing \$8.3 billion in a data centre in Maharashtra.

India hosts nearly 20 per cent of the world's data, while its data centre capacity stands at three per cent of the global total. Mumbai and Navi Mumbai form the largest hub, holding over 25 per cent of live capacity, supported by a dense subsea cable network and favourable policies. Bengaluru and Hyderabad each account for about 22 per cent of the country's capacity. Chennai contributes around 13 per cent, followed by the Delhi NCR region at 14 per cent. Pune and Kolkata add six per cent and three per cent respectively. The data centre landscape in India is expanding steadily across regions.

Access to Reliable and Sustainable Energy

Reliable energy supply underpins all AI infrastructure. AI data centres are energy intensive, making sustainability and stability essential. India's clean energy transition supports this requirement. In June 2025, India achieved 50 percent of its cumulative installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources, five years ahead of its 2030 target under the Paris Agreement. By November 2025, renewable energy capacity reached 253.96 GW, marking an increase of over 23 percent compared to November 2024. India added a record 44.5 GW of renewable capacity in 2025 alone.

Nuclear energy also plays an important role by providing stable and continuous power. The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act 2025 aims to modernise the nuclear sector, promote public private partnerships, and enable foreign investment.

India's current nuclear capacity stands at 8.78 GW and is projected to rise to 22.38 GW by 2031-32 with the development of indigenous 700 MW and 1000 MW reactors through international cooperation.

By expanding access to data, compute, chips, connectivity and energy, India is ensuring that AI capabilities are available to innovators and institutions across the country.

Regulatory and Policy Environment for AI Democratization

A supportive regulatory and policy framework is critical for democratising AI infrastructure. India has focused on building trusted digital foundations that enable access to AI while ensuring security, affordability and public accountability.

Government Cloud and Digital Infrastructure: The GI Cloud, known as MeghRaj, was established under the Digital India initiative to meet the cloud needs of the Government of India. Supported by MeitY, it provides secure, scalable and elastic cloud services for e-Governance delivery. Features such as pay per use access, rapid deployment and on demand provisioning reduce costs and technical barriers for adopting AI. The National Informatics Centre offers these services across government, and as of December 2025, 2,170 Ministries and Departments have already hosted applications on MeghRaj, enabling wider use of AI in public services.

Data Governance and Legal Enablers: India's data governance framework balances openness with protection. The Government Open Data License India, introduced in 2017 under the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy 2012, enables the reuse of non-sensitive public data. This framework supports innovation by allowing developers and researchers to build AI solutions using government datasets published on data.gov.in. At the same time, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 strengthens safeguards around personal data. It sets clear compliance requirements for all entities handling such data, building trust and accountability.

Together, these measures expand access to data while protecting citizen rights, creating a stable environment for AI infrastructure to grow.

Education, Skill and AI Literacy

Democratisation of AI depends as much on people as it does on technology. Building a skilled and informed workforce is essential to ensure that AI is understood, used responsibly and applied to solve real problems. India's approach focuses on creating pathways for learning at every stage, from school education to advanced research, while ensuring that opportunities extend beyond major urban centres.

Centres of Excellence: To promote research-led innovation, the government has established Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in priority sectors such as healthcare, agriculture and sustainable cities. A fourth Centre of Excellence for education was announced in the Union Budget 2025. These centres function as collaborative platforms where academia, industry and government institutions work together to develop scalable and deployable AI solutions. In addition, five National Centres of Excellence for Skilling have been set up to equip young people with industry-relevant AI skills and support the creation of a future-ready workforce.

Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR): In July 2025, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launched Skilling for AI Readiness, a national initiative aimed at school students from Class 6 to Class 12 and educators. The programme prepares learners for an increasingly digital world. It includes three targeted 15-hour modules for students and a 45-hour module for educators, with a focus on ethical AI use and foundational concepts such as machine learning.

Vocational and Technical Training: Under the Craftsmen Training Scheme, training is being provided in 31 new age courses, including artificial intelligence, industrial robotics and climate-friendly technologies. These programmes are delivered through a nationwide network of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and National Skill Training Institutes, supporting both skilling and upskilling of youth across the country.

Youth Engagement through YUVAi: The National e-Governance Division under MeitY, in collaboration with its partners, is implementing YUVAi, a national programme launched in November 2022 to equip students from Classes 8 to 12 with AI and social skills in an inclusive manner. The programme enables learners to apply AI across eight thematic areas, including agriculture, health, education, environment, transport, rural development, smart cities, and law and justice.

AI Competency Framework for Government Officials: To strengthen AI capacity within government, an AI Competency Framework has been introduced for public officials. The framework provides structured training to help officials acquire essential AI skills and apply them in policymaking and governance.

Higher Education & Research Support under IndiaAI Mission

The IndiaAI Mission is supporting advanced education and research through fellowships and infrastructure. Support is being provided to 500 PhD scholars, 5000 post-graduate students and 8000 undergraduate students. By July 2025, over two hundred students had received fellowships, with 73 institutes onboarding PhD candidates. Data and AI laboratories are being established in Tier two and Tier three cities. 31 labs have already been launched in collaboration with NIELIT and industry partners, while states and Union Territories have nominated 174 ITIs and polytechnics for setting up additional labs.

Together, these initiatives are strengthening AI literacy, expanding skill development and building a talent pipeline that supports inclusive and sustainable growth in the AI ecosystem.

Global Cooperation for Democratising AI Resources

For many countries, particularly in the Global South, democratising AI depends on fair and affordable access to foundational resources such as data, compute and digital infrastructure. Addressing this challenge requires coordinated global cooperation. The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 provides a platform for collective engagement, bringing together 15 to 20 Heads of Government, over 50 international ministers, and more than 100 global and Indian CXOs. Its deliberations are organised through Chakras, or Working Groups, structured around seven interconnected thematic areas. Among these, the Democratizing AI Resources Working Group stands out as a key initiative. Co-chaired by India, Egypt and Kenya, it brings together countries and stakeholders to advance a more inclusive and balanced global AI ecosystem through shared access, collaboration and capacity building.

The Working Group seeks to ensure that essential AI resources are accessible and affordable, so that all nations can participate meaningfully in the development, deployment and use of AI in line with their national priorities.

Objectives of the Working Group:
Promote accessibility and affordability of AI resources as global public goods.

Facilitate international cooperation to build distributed AI infrastructure and foster open innovation.

Support capacity-building and knowledge exchange to strengthen local AI ecosystems.

By promoting equitable access, cooperation and capacity building, the Democratizing AI Resources Working Group supports a future where all countries can harness AI in ways that advance inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Conclusion

India's approach to the democratisation of AI shows that scale, inclusion and innovation can progress together. The focus on affordability, openness and trust ensures that benefits of AI reach farmers, students, researchers, startups and public institutions alike. As India hosts the India-AI Impact Summit 2026, it also places this experience within a global context, offering a model shaped by the priorities of the Global South. The path ahead is clear. Democratising AI is not a one-time effort but a continuing commitment to ensure that technological progress strengthens societies, reduces inequalities and supports sustainable development for all.

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

Infrastructure for 200 e-buses underway in Jammu & Srinagar

CS Reviews Implementation of PM eBus Sewa

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday chaired a meeting of the UT-Level Steering Committee to review the implementation of the PM eBus Sewa Scheme in Jammu & Kashmir, under which 200 electric buses are being procured to strengthen and modernize urban public transport across the Union Territory.

The meeting, as per an official statement was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department; Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD); Secretary, Transport; Director General, Codes; Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC); Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC); Chief Engineers of JPDCL and KPDCI; and other senior officers concerned.

While reviewing the progress achieved so far, the Chief Secretary emphasized the need for expeditious development of



supporting infrastructure to ensure seamless operationalization of the e-buses.

He directed the Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) of Jammu Smart City Limited (JSL) and Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) to prioritize the establishment of Behind-the-Meter (BTM) power infrastructure, civil depot infrastructure, and other requisite facilities essential for efficient functioning of the fleet.

Stressing adherence to timelines, the Chief Secretary asked the concerned agencies to complete the tendering processes after carefully examining prevailing national trends and best practices. He further directed

that all necessary arrangements be put in place so that the buses are pressed into service immediately upon their receipt, ensuring timely benefits to the public.

Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur, briefed the Committee about the scheme's implementation framework in the UT. She informed that 100 e-buses each will be procured by Srinagar Smart City Limited and Jammu Smart City Limited under the PM eBus Sewa Scheme.

Providing details of the fleet composition, she stated that JSL will procure 25 buses of 12-metre length and 75 buses of 7-metre length, while

SSCL will procure 20 buses of 12-metre length and 80 buses of 9-metre length, catering to the operational requirements of both cities.

Commissioner, JMC, Devansh Yadav, further elaborated on the progress made under the scheme. He informed that the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for Civil Depot Infrastructure (CDI) and Behind-the-Meter (BTM) Power Infrastructure for both Jammu and Srinagar have been approved in accordance with the guidelines of the PM eBus Sewa Scheme. Tenders for these works have already been issued by JSL and SSCL respectively.

It was further informed that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has issued the Mother Sanction amounting to 14.28 crore for the Behind-the-Meter power infrastructure and the first tranche of 14.05 crore for Civil Infrastructure through SNA-SPARSH, facilitating timely execution of the project components.

The meeting was apprised that the PM eBus Sewa Scheme, instituted by MoHUA, is a flagship national programme aimed at large-scale electrification of urban public transport systems across the country. Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL) has been appointed by MoHUA as the Implementation Support Agency for aggregated procurement and contracting under the scheme, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and cost optimization.

The Chief Secretary called this a sustainable urban mobility initiative and underscored that the introduction of electric buses will significantly reduce carbon emissions, improve urban air quality, and provide safe, reliable, and eco-friendly public transport to the citizens of J&K.

DLFTC approves 31 applications under JKREGP in Budgam

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 11: A meeting of the District Level Task Force Committee (DLFTC) under the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JKREGP) was Wednesday convened at Budgam under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner(DC) Budgam Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.

The meeting, as per an official statement was attended by the General Manager, DIC Budgam; Lead District Manager Budgam, Executive Officer J&K KVIB Budgam; Principal IIT Budgam, and representatives from State Bank of India and J&K State Co-operative Bank Budgam.

During the meeting, the committee held threadbare discussions and examined loan applications sponsored through the J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) for the establishment of micro and small enterprises in the district.

Out of a total of 46 applications placed before the committee, 31 projects were recommended and approved for bank financing. The approved projects cover a variety of sectors, including manufacturing, services, and agro-based industries. Once established, these ventures are expected to create direct employment opportunities for youth in rural and semi-urban areas of Budgam.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC emphasized that the JKREGP scheme is crucial in providing vital financial assistance to aspiring entrepreneurs, enabling them to establish their own business units.

He said, "By approving these projects, we are promoting self-reliance, rural industrialization, and sustainable employment generation in Budgam. Youth



should take maximum advantage of such schemes to become job providers rather than job seekers."

The DC issued directions to all concerned officers and bankers present to ensure time-bound processing of the approved cases, hassle-free loan sanctioning, and prompt subsidy disbursement to the beneficiaries. He also directed the KVIB to handhold entrepreneurs at every stage from project formulation to execution so that approved units are established on ground without delay.

The representatives of banks were directed to ensure full cooperation in early sanction and disbursement of loan assistance to the beneficiaries. The DC directed the banks to adopt a pro-active approach in financing rural entrepreneurs so that the employment generation potential of the schemes is fully realized.

The DC further said that District administration Budgam is committed towards making the district a hub of rural entrepreneurship and self-employment by harnessing the potential of youth and supporting them under flagship livelihood generation schemes.

Meanwhile, applicants whose projects have been approved are advised to approach their respective financing banks immediately for completion

World Unani Day observed in Kulgam



KT News Desk

KULGAM, FEBRUARY 11: A daylong seminar-cum-awareness programme was Wednesday organized by the AYUSH Department Kulgam at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, to mark World Unani Day.

The programme was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan.

On the occasion, the DC, as per an official statement, appreciated the efforts of the AYUSH Department Kulgam in promoting traditional systems of healthcare and urged the department to further strengthen its services across the district.

He also complimented the department for achieving NABH accreditation for several

Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.

During the programme, speakers and experts from the AYUSH Department highlighted the objectives and historical significance of World Unani Day and said that the day is observed on the birth anniversary of renowned scholar Hakim Ajmal Khan, who made significant contributions to the development and promotion of the Unani system of medicine.

District Nodal Officer AYUSH also presented the achievements and ongoing initiatives of the AYUSH Department in Kulgam.

Later, doctors, paramedics, and former staff members were felicitated for their dedicated service and valuable contributions to the AYUSH sector in the district.

Speaker J&K Assembly inaugurates 46th Annual Literary Conference in Jammu

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, Wednesday inaugurated the three day 46th Annual Literary Conference, organised as the Festival of Mother Language, at K L Saigal Hall Writers' Club, Jammu.

The conference is being organised by Adbi Markaz Kamraz, Jammu and Kashmir, in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) sponsored by J&K Bank, with participation of poets, writers and literary personalities from various linguistic backgrounds.

Speaking on the occasion, the Speaker, as per an official statement, described the conference as a historic initiative aimed at strengthening the linguistic diversity and cultural awareness in Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the conference seeks to provide a platform for the dialogue on preservation, recognition and celebration of regional literary traditions while encouraging younger generations to connect with their cultural roots.

The Speaker emphasized that youth engagement remains central to the conference's objectives as the sessions are designed to raise awareness among the young participants about the



significance of cultural identity, heritage and linguistic belonging in an increasingly globalized world.

Underscoring the importance of linguistic plurality and promoting mutual respect among different literary communities, the Speaker felicitated the representatives of various regional languages of J&K recognizing their contribution in preserving and advancing regional linguistic traditions.

The General Secretary of the organisation presented the annual report, outlining the literary, cultural and academic activities undertaken by the organisation during the past year. He also threw light on the future roadmap aimed at strengthening the linguistic diversity and literary engagement.

During the event, the poets representing various languages presented their poetry, reflecting the richness of diverse

linguistic traditions and cultural expressions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier in the inaugural session, the President of Adbi Markaz Kamraz formally highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting mother languages as an integral part of cultural identity and heritage.

Additional Secretary, JKAACL Lal Chand, Patron of Adbi Markaz Kamraz, Dr. Rafiq Masoodi, along with poets, dramatists, novelists and writers from different languages were present on the occasion.

They appreciated the efforts aimed at promoting the multi-lingual literary culture and fostering inter-linguistic harmony in the region. The conference will continue over the next two days with literary sessions, poetry recitations and cultural interactions involving prominent literary figures from across the Union Territory.

Mission YUVA training conducted in Anantnag



KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, FEBRUARY 11: To accelerate on-ground implementation and strengthen district-level monitoring under Mission YUVA, a day-long training programme for YUVA DOOTs was held by the District Employment & Counselling Centre (DE&CC), Anantnag Wednesday at Khanabal. With special focus on operational components of Mission YUVA, the program, as per an official statement, was organised under the supervision of Career Counselling Officer, Shazlia Qureshi and Employment Officer, Rayees Iqbal.

The first session highlighted the need for mobilisation of applications, encouraging women entrepreneurs and SHG-based

enterprises, along with targeted outreach in low-performing blocks and urban wards.

Credit linkage and pendency management through systematic follow-up of pending cases, coordination with banking institutions, and proper tracking mechanisms for timely disposal featured in the second session.

Under the "Beyond Sanctions" campaign, the importance of sustainability and support of beneficiaries through capacity building, output monitoring, and effective grievance redressal were discussed. Seller onboarding in urban centres, facilitating beneficiary registration on ONDC and other e-commerce platforms to enhance market access and sales potential were elaborated in detail.

Free Eye Medical Camp organised for advocates, litigants at district court Srinagar

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 11: Upon the directions of the Principal District & Sessions Judge Srinagar, Haq Nawaz Zargar, the District Legal Services Authority, Srinagar, in collaboration with Kashmir Eye Hospitals, successfully organised a Free Eye Medical Camp for advocates and litigants Wednesday at the Conference Hall, District Court Complex, Srinagar.

In continuation of the Free Eye Medical Camp and awareness programme organised earlier, for Judicial Officers, Court Staff, and staff members of DLSA Srinagar, a similar medical camp was organised Wednesday for Advocates and litigants, with the objective of extending quality eye care services to all stakeholders of the justice delivery system.

During the medical camp, as per an official statement, a team of experienced ophthalmologists and paramedical staff from Kashmir Eye Hospitals provided free eye



check-ups, professional consultation, vision screening, and preliminary diagnosis to a large number of participants. The initiative received an encouraging response from the legal fraternity and litigants, who appreciated the availability of specialised eye care services within the court premises.

District Legal Services Authority, Srinagar reaffirmed its commitment to the welfare of all stakeholders by undertaking such health-oriented initiatives aimed at promoting preventive healthcare and overall well-being.

The programme was conducted smoothly and successfully through effective coordination between DLSA Srinagar and Kashmir Eye Hospitals.

CSIR-IIIM concludes qRT-PCR skill development programme

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 11: The CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Srinagar Branch, successfully concluded its three-day Skill Development Training Programme on quantitative real-time PCR (qRT-PCR). The programme brought together around 20 participants from across India, including students, research scholars, and laboratory professionals, intending to strengthen practical competencies in advanced molecular biology techniques.

The training, as per PIB statement, was meticulously designed to provide participants with comprehensive, bench-level proficiency in gene expression analysis—from sample preparation to result interpretation. Over three intensive days, participants were guided through the complete experimental workflow. The programme commenced with detailed sessions on RNA isolation, focusing on high-quality extraction, contamination control, and yield

optimisation. Participants were also trained in Good Laboratory Practices, with special emphasis on reproducibility, contamination prevention, and quality assurance protocols.

The programme featured extensive wet-lab training in RNA isolation, cDNA synthesis, and qRT-PCR, along with interactive troubleshooting clinics and data interpretation workshops, underscoring CSIR-IIIM's commitment to capacity building in cutting-edge molecular techniques.

Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, Director, CSIR-IIIM, who attended the valedictory session as Chief Guest, highlighted qRT-PCR as a transformative technology shaping advancements in agriculture, healthcare, and applied life sciences. He noted its growing relevance in diagnostics, translational research, climate resilience, and public health. Encouraging participants to apply their newly acquired skills, he stated that mastering such technologies contributes to India's broader vision of technological empowerment under "Viksit Bharat @ 2047."

Dr. Nasheeman Ashraf, Senior Principal Scientist and Programme Organiser, delivered the concluding remarks and urged participants to integrate advanced molecular tools into their professional work to strengthen national research capacity. The programme was co-organised by Dr. Syed Riyaz Ul Hassan, Senior Principal Scientist, and Dr. Phalsteen Sultan, Principal Technical Officer, who led the hands-on laboratory sessions.

The valedictory function was attended by Dr. Fayaz Malik, Chief Scientist; Dr. Qazi Parvaiz, Senior Principal Scientist; along with other senior scientists, technical and administrative staff of CSIR-IIIM Srinagar Branch. The programme was conducted under the overall patronage of Er. Abdul Rahim, Chief Scientist and Head, CSIR-IIIM Srinagar Branch, and coordinated by Dr. Nasir Ul Rasheed, Principal Scientist and Nodal Officer for Skill Development. The session was moderated by Dr. Ishfaq Majid Hurrar, Project Associate-I.

'Agriculture First' policy

every plate in the world features at least one Indian dish. The day this milestone is achieved, the agricultural sector will emerge as the largest contributor to a Viksit Bharat," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while chairing a high-level review meeting, during his recent visit to the UT also reiterated the Government of India's commitment to boosting the J&K's dairy sector by prioritizing the 2 lakh liters per day milk processing capacity through the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)."

The Lieutenant Governor directed officials, SKUAST and experts to deploy IoT sensors and satellite imagery to create digital farm twins which will enable precision irrigation that slashes water use by 50-60%.

He called for building farmer-centric AI tools that boost yields 15-30%, cut input costs by 50%, and deliver real-time soil, crop health, and nutrient data to small and marginal farmers.

"AI-technology will revolutionize agriculture and allied sectors. We need viable, affordable, high-impact solutions designed for small and marginal farmers in J&K UT," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also directed the officials and SKUAST to establish village-level seed banks stocked with climate-resilient local varieties.

"Scientists and officers must realise that civilization's fate hangs on every seed sowed in the soil. Agriculture is one of the key sectors that locks in both national advancement and human welfare. It will continue to guarantee progress regardless of global turbulence," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor laid special emphasis on creating circular farming models where crop waste becomes high-protein animal feed and manure returns as organic fertilizer-boosting soil health on-site, eliminating external inputs.

"Continued focus should be on building processing facilities in all 20 districts and we must connect FPOs directly to consumers for value-added products to capturing margins for farmers which is often lost to middlemen," he said.

Highlighting the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, the Lieutenant Governor said AI technology is set to revolutionize agriculture and allied sectors. He stressed the need for viable, affordable and high-impact technological solutions tailored for small and marginal farmers in the Union Territory.

He directed officials, SKUAST scientists and experts to deploy Internet of Things (IoT) sensors and satellite imagery to create "digital farm twins" that would enable precision irrigation and slash water usage by 50 to 60 percent. He also called for the development of farmer-centric AI tools capable of boosting yields by 15 to 30 percent, cutting input costs by 50 percent, and delivering real-time soil, crop health and nutrient data directly to farmers.

"Make technology affordable and accessible so that small and marginal farmers can predict output using weather, soil and crop data and plan their crops strategically," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Emphasizing sustainability, he directed SKUAST and concerned departments to establish village-level seed banks stocked with climate-resilient local varieties. He also advocated the creation of circular farming models where crop waste is converted into high-protein animal feed and manure is returned as organic fertilizer to boost soil health and reduce dependency on external inputs.

"Civilization's fate hangs on every seed sown in the soil. Agriculture is one of the key sectors that locks in both national advancement and human welfare. It will continue to guarantee progress regardless of global turbulence," he observed.

He called for the establishment of processing facilities across all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir and urged that Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) be directly connected to consumers for value-added products to help farmers capture margins often lost to middlemen.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor launched the Crop Cultivation Scheme by Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India.

He also inaugurated several facilities including Bayer Learning Centre for Advanced Agricultural Learning & Innovation, Branding Centre and Pesticide Quality Control Laboratory.

The event also featured the felicitation of winners of Startup first awards under SKUAST-Jammu AgriThon 2.0 and release of various publications on agriculture and allied sectors.

Javid Ahmad Dar, Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Departments; Atal Dullo, Chief Secretary; Shaileendra Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department; Prof. B. N. Tripathi, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-Jammu; Padma Sri Dr. Ashok Kumar Singh, Professor Emeritus and Former Director IARI, New Delhi; Dr. Amrith Vaid, Director Extension, SKUAST-Jammu; Heads of Departments, agri-scientists, experts, faculty members, progressive farmers, various stakeholders and senior officials attended the inaugural ceremony. (KNO)

Pandemonium in

students who were enrolled at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Sciences. You should apologise to them. You should also apologise to the people of the Pir Panchal region," she said.

As BJP legislators continued with protests, NC's Nazir Gurezi told them that the CM wanted to put forth his views on the comments but wasn't allowed to do so.

The Speaker repeatedly requested the opposition to allow the House to function.

"The Chief Minister is not present, and I cannot speak on his behalf. When he comes, if he wishes to speak, he will do so. Please allow the Question Hour to proceed. I have the authority and can use it, but I request you to let the proceedings continue," he said.

Leader of the Opposition, Sunil Sharma, said the Speaker should assure them that the Chief Minister would clarify whether the language used by him was appropriate.

"We want the House to function. Running the House is the responsibility of the ruling party and the Speaker. In the history of the Assembly, the words used here yesterday have never been used before. Was the language used by the Chief Minister appropriate? The Speaker should assure us whether the Chief Minister will respond. The public has been embarrassed. This is a question concerning the whole of Jammu and Kashmir," Sharma said.

Addressing the Speaker, the Deputy Chief Minister said, "If you feel that some words used were inappropriate, you can remove them from the record. We have no objection."

Sharma responded, saying those words would be excluded automatically. "At least acknowledge those words were insulting," Sharma said.

At 10:30 a.m., the BJP MLAs staged a walkout from the House.

They returned at 11:00 a.m. However, as soon as they came back, the Chief Minister walked out, triggering heated arguments between the two sides. They then stormed into the well of the House and continued raising slogans against the government. (KNO)

Tourist hut at Naranag

was halted.

He explained that the work was stopped following objections raised by a local resident, who demanded compensation or employment in lieu of the land, resulting in obstruction and suspension of further construction.

The Chief Minister further informed the House that the matter was subsequently taken up with the Revenue authorities. A report furnished by the Tehsildar Kangan clarified that the hut is located on forest land beyond the boundary line of the estate of Wangath.

He added that the issue has now been taken up with the Divisional Forest Officer, Sindh Forest Division, Ganderbal, to obtain the relevant land records of the site situated at Doshardi Morh, Naranag, and that the matter continues to be pursued.

He further noted that in view of the unresolved dispute and pending site-related issues, no additional funds have been projected under any scheme so far. The Chief Minister assured the House that the exact details would be retrieved and shared once available.

10 lakh quota certificates

were issued in Kashmir. Out of 141419 SC certificates, 139664 were issued in Jammu and 1755 in Kashmir.

The share of Jammu is 50.5 percent in the Reserved Backward Area (RBA) category, while that of Kashmir is 49.4 percent. Out of 100848 certificates issued in this category, 50982 were granted in Jammu and 49866 in Kashmir.

In the Actual Line of Control (ALC) category, 93.6 percent of certificates were issued in Jammu and 6.3 percent in Kashmir. Out of 7192 certificates issued under this category, 6732 were issued in Jammu and 460 in Kashmir.

All 6732 International Border (IB) certificates were issued in the Jammu division.

In the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, Jammu holds a 59.8 percent share, while Kashmir accounts for 40.2 percent.

According to the data, 78324 certificates have been issued in Jammu under this category and 52652 in Kashmir. (KNO)

J&K to add 3,200

3,200 hospital beds across Jammu and Kashmir within the next two years, marking one of the largest capacity expansions in the region's healthcare history. To strengthen life-saving care, she said 900 additional critical care beds will be established in hospitals across all districts, ensuring improved emergency response and treatment for serious patients.

Highlighting ongoing construction projects, Itoo said major works are progressing at: SKIMS Bemina, aimed at enhancing tertiary healthcare services, New Theatre Block at SMHS Hospital, Srinagar, to expand surgical capacity, ENT Block at GMC Srinagar with 30 beds, improving specialised care, District Hospital Budgam, which is being upgraded to strengthen local healthcare delivery.

"These projects are designed to modernise hospitals and reduce the need for patients to travel long distances for specialised treatment," she said.

In a major step to improve trauma and emergency care, the Health Minister announced that dedicated Emergency Medicine Departments will be established in all new Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) across J&K. "This will ensure timely, specialised treatment for accident victims, cardiac emergencies and critical patients," she added.

Itoo further said that two Cath Labs have already been set up, including one at GMC Anantnag, enabling advanced cardiac procedures closer to home. The new Cath Labs will also be established at GMC Baramulla and GMC Rajouri, and another Cath Lab at GMC Doda is in the pipeline, she added.

To improve diagnostic services, the government is also rolling out CT scan facilities in several hospitals across J&K, new MRI machines for all newly established GMCs, SKIMS Soura and GMC Jammu. "These modern diagnostic tools will drastically reduce referral burdens and waiting times for patients," Itoo said.

Addressing cancer treatment facilities, the minister informed the House that PET Scan services are being made available at GMC Srinagar, a major leap in cancer diagnosis and monitoring. She added that in the coming phase, PET Scan facilities will also be introduced at GMC Anantnag and GMC Kathua.

Itoo further announced an ambitious plan to strengthen cancer treatment infrastructure across J&K, saying that chemotherapy facilities will be established in 86 Sub-District Hospitals (SDHs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs) within the next 15 months, expansion of hemodialysis units, along with new X-ray machines and the addition of 44 new ambulances to improve emergency response.

She revealed that the government is formulating a dedicated Cancer Control Strategy for Jammu and Kashmir, with reputed national institutions, including Tata group healthcare institutions, being roped in for technical support and expertise.

As part of preventive healthcare, Itoo announced a free cervical cancer screening drive for girls aged 9 to 15 years, aimed at early detection and long-term cancer prevention. "This is a major step toward reducing cancer-related mortality and promoting preventive healthcare among young girls," she said.

Acknowledging manpower gaps in the health sector, the minister said the government is actively working to fill vacancies through regular recruitment processes and academic arrangements to ensure uninterrupted services.

She further informed the House that MBBS and post-graduate medical seats have already been increased, with more expansions expected in the coming period to build a stronger healthcare workforce for J&K.

The focus, Itoo said, is on building a robust, accessible and modern healthcare system. "Our aim is to ensure that people of Jammu and Kashmir receive quality medical care within their own districts, without the burden of referrals to outside states. From infrastructure and technology to human resources and preventive care, every gap is being systematically addressed," the Health Minister told the Assembly. (KNO)

Expunge remarks

at Sharma over his absence from the House, the CM remarked: "We should commend the Army, which is still holding the front despite its general leaving the battleground. I will not leave you in the lurch like your general."

The CM requested the Speaker to expunge any unparliamentary remark made by him during his speech.

"If I have made any unparliamentary remark, you can expunge it from the records. I have no objection to it," he told the chair.

He added that he was concerned for the opposition, just as he was concerned for the treasury benches. (KNO)

CM assures digitisation

either wrongly recorded or unregistered in official records. "The Chief Minister asserted that there should be no haste. "We are not in a race to claim that the entire process must be completed within six months. What we need is accuracy," the Chief Minister said.

He added that if achieving accuracy requires more time, the government will take that time. "I assure you that we will not allow any wrong record to be digitized. We will sit down with the department and consider the suggestions made by the honourable Members," he said.

Reiterating the government's seriousness on the issue,

the Chief Minister assured the House that the department is fully aware of the concerns and corrective measures will be ensured.

Earlier, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, replying on behalf of the Chief Minister to a question raised by MLA Devsar Peerzada Feroz Ahmed, informed the House that 15,516 non-quasi-judicial errors have been identified and rectified on the spot by the field agencies in Tehsils Devsar, Frisal and Qaimoh.

He further stated that 185 quasi-judicial errors have been detected in digitised Jamabandis during public verification. The same have been forwarded to the competent authorities through proper channels for further action, he added.

"The process of error rectification is underway. After completing that, Jamabandis will be read in public," the Minister said. He added that all 185 quasi-judicial errors identified in Tehsil Qaimoh have been referred to the Competent Authority.

The Minister said no proprietary land has been washed away during the recent floods in District Kulgam. He also informed the House that in Tehsil Qaimoh, one landless beneficiary has been allotted five marla of land under the PMAY-G scheme.

Reservation report

file returns to the government or the Social Welfare Department, it is mandatory for us to put everything in the public domain," the minister said.

"I want to assure the House as well as the people that once the report comes back, we will make it public," she added.

She clarified that the report is a confidential document and cannot be made public at this stage. "We cannot discuss it because it is a secret document," she said.

Itoo further said that the report had been sent by the Lieutenant Governor to the Union Home Ministry.

"The Chief Minister had said in the House that the report was forwarded by the LG to the Union Home Ministry," she said, adding that the report was first sent to the LG after cabinet approval.

Itoo said that the cabinet sub-committee, comprising three members, interacted with all sections of society.

"We submitted a report after holding consultations with people from Rajouri, Srinagar, Baramulla, Jammu, and Kathua," she said, adding that the Department of Law raised some queries over the report.

She said a revised report was later submitted and discussed by the cabinet.

The Minister asked the members to refrain from politicising the issue.

"Sajad Sahab belongs to a political family. Our discussions should focus on public concerns, not politics," she said. (KNO)

Reservation framework

Legislative Assembly, Lone, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), stated that the government needs to address the issue region-wise to ensure fairness.

"If our share of the population is around 60%, we should get at least 50% of the jobs. At present, we are hovering with a share of 25 to 30% in jobs," he said.

Lone suggested that the government should form an all-party committee or a committee of experts to tackle the issue.

He pointed out that the government, in response to his question, revealed a huge disparity between the two regions regarding the issuance of quota certificates.

"Out of 11.81 lakh certificates issued in J&K, 10.16 lakh were in Jammu and only 1.65 lakh in Kashmir. This means 86% in Jammu and 14% in Kashmir," he said.

Sajad questioned the disparity in the issuance of EWS certificates, saying that poverty levels are almost equal in both regions.

"The per capita income in both regions is almost the same. If poverty levels are equal in both places, how is it possible that 91.3% of certificates have been issued in Jammu and only 8.6% in Kashmir?" he asked.

He further said that Kashmir was receiving only a meager share of jobs due to the existing reservation framework. "If our share in population is around 60%, we should get at least 50% of the jobs. Instead, we are left with only 25 to 30% through STI, ST2, RBA, and other categories," he said. (KNO)

J&K Assembly approves

for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo expressed gratitude to Legislators for their valuable suggestions and ideas regarding functioning of Departments under her charge.

She added that the way MLAs highlighted the overall challenges in these sectors and their Constituency wise issues related to these sectors, will definitely guide Government in addressing any future challenges.

Minister Sakeena assured the Legislators that the departments will examine the valuable suggestions put forth by Legislators and maximize their efforts to address their genuine issues raised during the discussion on demand for grants.

"Education, Health and Social Welfare are the most important sectors upon which the foundation of a nation depends. Under the visionary leadership of late Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, these sectors were given prime importance."

The Minister expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah that despite all financial limitations as Finance Minister, he has kept extraordinary budget provisions for Education, Health and Social Welfare sectors. "This budgetary support will help in improving the quality of Education as well as Health services and welfare of deserving persons. No Budget is perfect ever, but it is Honest in intent, grounded in reality and guided by compassion", she said.

She remarked that the budget presented by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on 6th February is a historical one as it includes various initiatives which shows inclusive growth of all sectors, particularly education, health and social welfare.

"The budget reflects a strong commitment towards human development, improved service delivery and inclusive growth", she said.

Speaking on School Education sector, the Minister said that before this government took over, Education Policy in J&K suffered from frequent experimentation without consultation, teachers were overburdened and students paid the price.

The Minister also said that the Council of Ministers in its maiden meeting took a significant decision of restoring the Academic Session from March to November, which was a genuine and constant demand of parents as well as students. "The outcome of these reforms reflected in the recent results of 10th, 11th and 12th classes of winter zones, particularly in Government schools, which stands at all time high (85% in 10th Class, 84% 12th Class and 83% in 11th Class). I hope the results of summer zone in all these three classes will be far better", she said.

She added that our Government remains committed to Teacher Empowerment and Training, restoring respect to the profession and upgrading government schools, so that poverty does not determine quality.

Reflecting on achievements of School Education sector, Minister Sakeena said that as many as 2894 CPWs (1050

in Jammu and 1844 in Kashmir) have been regularised in a landmark decision, adding that remaining eligible CPWs shall also be regularised as per rules/eligibility and vacancy of posts under promotion quota. She added that to cope up the shortage of subject oriented staff, the department hired Cluster Resource Coordinators (CRCs) under Samagra Shiksha on a monthly remuneration of Rs 25,000.

Regarding Human Resource Management in schools, high schools and higher secondary schools, the Minister said that 594 vacancies of Lecturers of different subjects have been referred to JKPS and their selection lists are in final stage.

She also said that 770 posts of Non-Teaching staff of different categories lying vacant under direct recruitment quota are being referred to JKSSB.

The Minister also said that promotions and placements have been held in the department under both gazetted and non-gazetted categories to improve academic activities in educational institutions. She added that other proposals of granting promotions of different levels are in progress in the department which will be cleared in due course of time and significantly improve learning outcomes in educational institutions.

She also said that for inclusive education 53 Girls Hostels and 28 KGBVs are being completed and upgraded.

Regarding infrastructure development, the Minister said that during current financial year, 2356 projects of various nature have been approved under Capex, including 288 Additional Classrooms. She added that under Samagra Shiksha 762 Additional Classrooms, 619 Boys Toilets, 710 Girls Toilets, and 604 Boundary Walls will be constructed.

For next fiscal year, the Minister said that we have proposed to add 329 Additional Classrooms under Capex in High Schools/Higher Secondary Schools and 400 Additional Classrooms under Samagra Shiksha.

The Minister also said that 172 Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) have been established in Schools till date and proposal for establishment of 500 more ATLs has been approved under Atal Innovation Mission. She added that 2733 Smart Classrooms in the first phase are proposed for the Financial Year 2026-27 to cover Middle, High and Higher Secondary schools, besides 289 Virtual Reality Labs are to be established during 2026-27, with phased coverage of all 2530 High Schools and Higher Secondary schools to promote scientific temper among students.

The Minister also said that 188 Astro-Physics Labs (01 each in Education Zone) are being set up during 2026-27 to encourage hands-on learning in space science among students and 100 Additional Science Centres will be established in 2026-27 to encourage creativity among students.

She also highlighted that to conserve local culture of different communities and popularise mother tongue, text books have been printed in regional languages like Dogri, Kashmiri, Pahari, Gojri and Sheena etc, adding that Free Text Books are being provided to students from Class 1st to 8th under Samagra Shiksha.

"The Government has recently launched a dedicated educational DTH Channel 'J'K e-Patshala' available free of cost to all students from class 1st to 12th and the department is going to increase DTH channel from 1 to 12 channels (one for each class) with a concept of 'One Class-One Channel'," she said.

The Minister also said that under Beti Anmol scheme , 19870 girls have been covered wherein an amount Rs 3.68 Cr. has been utilised during 2025-26 and an amount of Rs 8.69 Cr. is being proposed during next fiscal year (2026-27).

Speaking regarding Health Sector, the Minister said that before our Government took over in October 2024, hospitals had become symbols of neglect rather than healing. "Healthcare will no longer be a privilege of geography or income it will be a right delivered at the doorstep", she said.

The Minister further said that this Budget reflects our belief that healthcare is not an expense, but an investment, an investment in human capital, social harmony and inclusive growth.

Reflecting on various achievements, the Minister said, "160 bedded State-of-the-Art additional Block at Bone & Joint Hospital, Srinagar, constructed at an estimated cost of Rs140 crores has been made functional from July, 2025. This facility has substantially enhanced the ortho and trauma care services in the entire region".

"243 bedded extensions of Labour Block at SMGS hospital Jammu has been dedicated to the people by Hon'ble Chief Minister of J&K Jenab Omar Abdullah last week".

The Minister also said that around 3200 Bed capacity will be added in next two years at various hospitals across Jammu and Kashmir. She added that State of Art surgical theatre block at SMHS Hospital Srinagar at a cost of Rs 50.24 Cr and establishment of Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) facility and Bio-Safety Level-III (BSL-III) Laboratory at GMC Jammu has been approved.

She also said that Emergency Medicine Departments will be established in all Government Medical Colleges in coming years.

"02 new Cath Labs, one each at GMC Anantnag and GMC Jammu have been dedicated for public. 02 more Cath Labs at GMCs of Rajouri and Baramulla will be established during 2026-2027, 01 more Cath Lab at GMC Doda is in pipeline", she said.

To improve diagnostic services, the Minister said that CT Scan Machine 128 slice has been installed at District Hospital Ganderbal besides installation of CT Scan Machines in other major hospitals like SMGS Jammu, CD Hospital Jammu, DH Poonch, DH Budgam, Super Speciality Hospital Srinagar (SSH) and SMHS Srinagar are in progress. She added that CT SCAN for Super Speciality Hospital (SSH) Jammu has also been proposed.

"The process for strengthening the Diagnostics with 1.5 Tesla MRIs for new GMCs of J&K and 3 Tesla MRIs for GMC Jammu, GMC Srinagar and SKIMS to reduce waiting time of patients has been initiated", she said.

"The process of establishing PET-Scan facilities in GMC Srinagar has already been started and initiative will be extended to two more GMCs in the coming years (01 in GMC Anantnag and 01 in GMC Kathua)".

The Minister also said that Dialysis Services are being extended to 80 SDH/CHCs in next 15 months, besides 50 AI enabled X-Ray Machines will be deployed in District and Sub-District Hospitals in J&K.

She also said that 44 Advance Life Support Ambulances (22 each for Jammu & Kashmir division) have been added to existing fleet 102-108 Ambulance Services, taking tally to 533 ambulances. She added that Bullet Proof Ambulances for Border areas will also be procured.

Regarding Cancer Management, the Minister said that the government will roll out a Cancer Control Strategy for J&K in collaboration with NITI Ayog and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). She added that the focus will be on implementing various interventions and strategies for management of cancer in J&K and will include collaborations for infrastructure development, training and capacity building with reputed National Level Organizations like Tata Memorial Centre.

The Minister also said that Jammu and Kashmir has received the Award for exemplary performance in 'TB Mukta Panchayat' category in recognition of its efforts under the National TB Elimination Programme, celebrating World

TB Day and 2060 Panchayats have been declared TB free.

She also said that for Human Resource enhancement, 582 posts of Para Medical staff have been referred to JKSSB, besides 468 appointments as Medical Officers have been made through JKPS during last 1.5 years.

She further added that 268 Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors and others have been engaged on Academic Arrangement basis in all GMCs of J&K.

The Health Minister said that 340 MBBS seats have been added in all GMCs, including ASCOMS Jammu, 128 PG seats have also been added in all GMCs including SKIMS and 34 PG Ayurveda Seats have also been sanctioned. She added that Government Homeopathic Medical College at Kathua started 2nd batch of Bachelor of Homeopathic Medical Science classes.

The Minister also said that various initiatives have been launched for improving healthcare facilities in SKIMS. She added that SKIMS has installed the LINAC system recently which is fully functional and is providing radiotherapy services to Cancer patients.

She also said that major equipments like Ventilators (High End, Mid End , Low End), Nero Navigation Suite, Modular Operation Theatre, Neuro Endroscope, Radiology Information System, Digital Angiography System, Eco-Cardiography System, 32/64 CT-Scan, Cobolt 60 Plant, and others will be procured for SKIMS during next financial year.

The Minister further highlighted that the Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) declined to 9.8 and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to 14.0, achieving SDG global targets well ahead of timelines. She added that Institutional deliveries increased to 98.9-99.7%, while home deliveries declined sharply from 2118 (2024-25) to 351 (2025-26) indicating significant improvement.

Regarding Drug De-addiction, the Health Minister said, "J&K has highest number of functional Addiction Treatment Facilities (ATFs) in country in public health sector (21) and every district is covered". She added that these ATFs across J&K have provided around 1.5 lac patient consultations.

"Community Rehabilitation Program called Circle of Care launched to have a de-addiction counsellor in every village of J&K. So far 600 such counsellors trained from Health, Education and NRLM departments", she said.

She added that a survey in 10 districts of J&K will be launched to look in-depth of problem and this survey will be part of national survey in substance use disorder.

While speaking about Social Welfare sector, the Minister said that 28186 Anganwadi Centres are functional in J&K and 8.41 Lakh beneficiaries are covered under Supplementary Nutrition Programme.

She added that 99 percent Anganwadi Centres are housed in functional buildings and 338 Anganwadi Centres housed in Government buildings have been upgraded as Saksham Anganwadi Centres in 2025-26 with facilities like LED Screens, water purifiers, learning walls, CCTVs, Bio Metric Attendance system, POSHAN Vitakas and Rain water harvesting.

"Under UT Capex, 653 AWCs have been upgraded as Bal Vidyalas. J&K Government proposes to upgrade 1,000 AWCs, operating from rented buildings, into Bal Vidyalas to strengthen infrastructure and introduce technology-enabled facilities", she said.

"Capital allocation is proposed to be increased from Rs 67 Cr. To Rs170 Cr and 127 new AWCs will be constructed (1 each in CDPO block)".

The Minister also said that the Government has enhanced the pension of 10.19 lakh pensioners across categories of old age, widow and disabled persons to Rs 1250, Rs 1500 and Rs 2000 respectively, adding that 100% pension to 8.83 lakh beneficiaries under ISSS is fully funded by the J&K government.

"The Government has enhanced marriage assistance from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000 for AAY families to ensure dignified wedding of their daughters," she said.

She added that during the current year 27611 beneficiaries were registered and Rs 234 Crs were disbursed up to December 2025.

UP presents Rs 9.13 lakh crore Budget for 2026-27, outlay up 12.2 pc

PTI

Lucknow, Feb 11: Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna on Wednesday presented a Rs 9.13 lakh crore Budget for the financial year 2026-27 in the state Assembly, with a focus on education and agriculture sector to drive economic growth.

Tabling the Budget before the House, Khanna said the total outlay for 2026-27 is Rs 9,12,696.35 crore, marking an increase of about 12.2 per cent over the previous year's outlay.

Stressing that the state government is always fully committed to fiscal management and debt control, Khanna said the capital expenditure in this Budget is 19.5 per cent.

In accordance with the recommendations of the 16th Central Finance Commission, which have been accepted by the Centre, the fiscal deficit limit for the financial year 2026-27 has been set at three per cent. This will remain in effect until 2030-31.

Referring to the allocations made for major items, Khanna said, "The allocations for education and health are 12.4 and six per cent of the total budget, respectively. Furthermore, the amount allocated for agriculture and allied services is nine per cent of the



total budget." Emphasising that capital investment and infrastructure development play a vital role in strengthening the economy, the minister said providing employment opportunities to the state's youth and equipping them with the necessary skills is equally important.

He noted that individuals possessing technical skills or proficiency in any trade are unlikely to remain unemployed.

To this end, large-scale employment-oriented training and skill enhancement programmes will be run in

mission mode on a priority basis. Alongside formal education, arrangements will be made to strengthen the skill base of youth.

The capacity of existing skill development training centres will be enhanced, and new centres will be set up across the state.

Private sector participation will also be ensured in this campaign. Skill development and job placement centres will be established in various districts under the public-private partnership (PPP) mode. Separate centres will be set up for women to increase their participation

in the workforce, the minister added.

Khanna said an agri-export hub will be established under the World Bank-assisted UP-AGREES project to boost agricultural exports and enhance farmers' income. As part of the next phase of the Ease of Doing Business reforms, industries will be promoted based on the "Jan Vishwas" principle, with registration, licensing, and other procedures to be made more simplified and business-friendly, the minister said.

The state will also work on implementing a Digital

Entrepreneurship Scheme to encourage innovation and technology-driven enterprises.

He said CM Yogi Adityanath's resolve for development is reflected in the line: "Yahi junoon, yahi khwab mera hai, diya jalakar roshni kar doon jahan andhera hai" (This is my passion, this is my dream - to light a lamp and illuminate wherever there is darkness).

The minister expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for including two high-speed rail corridors - Delhi-Varanasi and Varanasi-Siliguri - connecting Uttar Pradesh in the Union Budget for 2026-27.

He also welcomed the proposal for the development of two sites of archaeological and cultural significance in Uttar Pradesh - Sarnath and Hastinapur - in the Union Budget.

The minister said that proposals such as establishing emergency and trauma centres in every district hospital, setting up hostels for girl students in each district, and skill enhancement of 10,000 tourist guides will benefit the people of Uttar Pradesh, along with other states.

He further lauded the Centre's announcement to reduce the prices of medicines for diabetes and cancer, terming it a highly commendable step.

SC refers plea against Talaq-e-Hasan to mediation

Appoints Justice Kurian Joseph as mediator

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 11: The Supreme Court on Wednesday referred to mediation a plea of a Muslim woman challenging the validity of Talaq-e-Hasan given by her husband.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi appointed former apex court judge Justice Kurian Joseph as the mediator on the plea filed by journalist Benazeer Heena.

Talaq-e-Hasan is a form of divorce among Muslims where man can dissolve a marriage by pronouncing the word 'talaq' once every month over a three-month period. The apex court had earlier raised concerns over the practice of husbands' lawyers sending talaq notices to wives, as this has later led to conflicts around the validity of the divorce and accusations of polyandry when the wives remarry.

During the hearing on Wednesday, advocate Syed Rizwan Ahmed, appearing for Heena, submitted that immunity of personal law cannot go unchecked and thus such practices cannot be found in the Holy Quran.

Senior advocate M R Shamsad, appearing for Heena's husband, stated the three talaqs were delivered on the verified address as mentioned in the wife's affidavit.

"If the wife is evading Talaq, you can approach us for deemed service on her. Even a newspaper ad can be put for it. That would also be notice," said the CJ.

"Question is of a person, not religion. Mutual respect is to be maintained by both sides when they seek to part amicably," said the court.

Ahmed said Heena



wanted to reconcile and is willing to initiate mediation in the matter.

The court noted there is "an urgent and dire necessity" to refer both parties to mediation to find an amicable solution to the matrimonial dispute for its valid dissolution or for the parties to find any other alternative.

The court referred both parties to the mediation centre and appointed Justice Joseph as the sole mediator, owing to his vast experience in resolving complex matrimonial disputes.

The counsels for both parties were directed to contact Justice Joseph by Thursday and fix a date for mediation. The court ordered Justice Joseph to make an endeavour to resolve the dispute within four weeks.

"We further direct that in view of mediation having been initiated, the earlier talaqs alleged to have been given by the respondent shall remain in abeyance," the court said.

In a similar matter, the bench stayed the operation of a Talaq-e-Hasan divorce given by a Muslim husband to his illiterate wife.

"We direct that parties shall be deemed to

be a validly married couple unless husband comes forward and shows that valid talaq has been given. Concerned SHO to find out whereabouts of husband and ensure his presence before this court," the bench said.

The apex court noted that there were allegations of the husband obtaining his wife's signatures on a blank paper and he did not appear to defend them.

The top court had earlier sought the views of National Commission for Women, National Human Rights Commission and National Commission for Protection of Child Rights on the issues.

Under Talaq-e-Hasan, a divorce gets formalised after the third utterance of the word talaq in the third month if cohabitation has not resumed during this period. However, if cohabitation resumes after the first or second utterance of talaq, the parties are assumed to have reconciled.

In 2017, the top court declared Triple Talaq, also a form of divorce prevalent among Muslim community, as unconstitutional after finding it to be arbitrary and violative of fundamental rights of Muslim women.

Silver climbs Rs 4,000 to Rs 2.68 lakh/kg; gold rises to Rs 1.61 lakh/10g



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 11: Silver prices climbed Rs 4,000 to Rs 2.68 lakh per kilogram in the national capital on Wednesday, while gold edged up to Rs 1.61 lakh per 10 grams tracking strong global trends.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal jumped by Rs 4,000, or 1.5 per cent, to Rs 2,68,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from Tuesday's closing level of Rs 2,64,500 per kg.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also witnessed buying by traders, with prices rising Rs 600, or 0.4 per cent, to Rs 1,61,300 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 1,60,700 per 10 grams in

the previous session.

"Gold and silver advanced on Wednesday supported by growing expectations of a more aggressive rate cut by the Federal Reserve," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that the move followed softer US economic data, as December retail sales fell short of forecasts, signalling a slowdown in consumer spending and reinforcing concerns about moderating growth.

"Post-data markets have now raised the probability of three Fed rate cuts this year, up from two just a week ago, a lower interest rate scenario favours non-yielding metals like gold," Gandhi said.

In the global markets, spot silver gained USD 4.71, or nearly 6 per cent, to USD 85.51 per ounce, while gold was trading 1.06 per cent higher at USD 5,078.72 per ounce.

Spot gold was trading higher on a weaker US dollar on Wednesday as investors await the crucial US nonfarm payroll data (January) due to release later in the day, Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

The outcome of data numbers is likely to trigger heightened volatility in precious metals in the overseas market.

On the geopolitical front, Gandhi said renewed tensions also underpinned safe-haven demand for precious metals.

'If you heeded my advice, you would not be in opposition': Pal, Rahul banter in LS



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 11: In light-hearted banter, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said he would not be very aggressive in his address in the Lok Sabha as former party colleague Jagdambika Pal was in the presiding officer's chair, with Pal saying that had the Congress leader heeded his advice in the past, he would not be sitting on opposition benches.

Participating in a debate on the Union Budget, Gandhi raised certain issues and took some names to which Pal, who was in the chair, objected. "If any subject is not related to the budget, you cannot raise that. You were on the right track. Why are you getting derailed?" Pal asked the leader of opposition.

Responding to Pal, Gandhi said, "We have fondness for you, you are an ex-member of our party, so I will not go very

aggressive today." "I know your heart is not there (in the BJP), sir," Gandhi said to Pal.

Continuing with the banter, Pal said, "I am here as a presiding officer. But if you would have heeded my advice, then you would not have been seated there (on the opposition benches). You are sitting there only because you had not taken my advice."

"Here, I am advising you, you should move on the correct track. Still you have time, you can move on the correct track," Pal said.

Gandhi said in the spirit of their conversation, he would not take the names Pal did not want him to mention.

Pal, who was elected as a Congress MP in the 15th Lok Sabha in 2009, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014 and re-entered the Lower House from Uttar Pradesh's Domariyaganj. He was subsequently re-elected on a BJP ticket in 2019 and 2024.

What is wrong in inviting Salman Khan to RSS chief's event, asks Dy CM Shinde

PTI

Mumbai, Feb 11: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has defended the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for inviting actor Salman Khan to an event addressed by its chief Mohan Bhagwat, and sought to know what was wrong in having the Bollywood actor at the function.

Khan was among some of the Bollywood celebrities who took part in the event held over the weekend, where Bhagwat delivered a speech. The programme at Mumbai's Nehru Centre was organised as part of the RSS' centenary celebrations.

Shinde said Khan is an Indian national and believes in the country's tradition and culture.

"What is wrong in inviting Salman Khan for the RSS event," Shinde, who heads the ruling Shiv Sena, asked on Tuesday.

RSS is a patriotic organisation, the deputy CM said, adding that patriotism is imbibed in every cell of the RSS activists.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut took a dig at the RSS after Salman Khan was seen interacting with Bhagwat at the event.



"Was it a welcome for Bollywood star Salman Khan or (a message that) Muslims are also welcome in the Sangh and its shakhas?" the Rajya Sabha member had asked.

However, state BJP minister Nitesh Rane on Tuesday slammed Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, claiming that Salman Khan was "more Hindu" than him, and praised the actor for showing the courage to attend the RSS chief's programme.

Study suggests people with obesity 70 pc more likely to be hospitalised die from infectious disease

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 11: People with obesity could be 70 per cent more likely to be hospitalised or die from an infectious disease, including flu, COVID-19 and pneumonia, according to a study published in The Lancet journal.

In 2023, obesity was linked to one in ten infection-related global deaths, researchers said, even as they said estimates of obesity's global impact should be interpreted with caution.

Researchers from the UK and Finland said that people with obesity were seen to have a higher risk of being hospitalised or dying due to SARS-CoV-2 infection during the COVID-19 pandemic. However,

there was a lack of evidence of whether the link exists for infectious diseases in general, they said. The team analysed data from the UK Biobank and Finnish cohorts, amounting to over 540,000 people. Body mass indices (BMI) of the participants were noted at the time of enrollment, who were then followed up for an average of 13-14 years.

"(The) study of over 540,000 people suggests people with obesity are 70 per cent more likely to be hospitalised or die from an infectious disease; people with the most severe obesity face three times the risk," the researchers said.

Extrapolating the findings globally, the team said that obesity may have

been a driving factor in 0.6 million out of 5.4 million deaths (10.8 per cent) from infectious diseases in 2023.

"Our findings suggest that people living with obesity are significantly more likely to become severely ill or to die from a wide range of infectious diseases. As obesity rates are expected to rise globally, so will the number of deaths and hospitalisations from infectious diseases linked to obesity," author Solja Nyberg, from the University of Helsinki in Finland, said.

There is an urgent need for policies that help people stay healthy and support weight-loss, such as access to affordable healthy food and opportunities for physical activity, Nyberg said.



EU parliament approves 90-bn-euro loan for Ukraine amid US cuts

Brussels, Feb 11: The EU parliament on Wednesday approved a 90-billion-euro loan for Ukraine, providing a financial lifeline to cash-strapped Kyiv four years into Russia's invasion.

Lawmakers voted by 458 to 140 in favor of the loan, intended to cover two-thirds of Ukraine's financial needs for 2026 and 2027 and backed by the EU's common budget — after plans to tap frozen Russian central bank assets fell by the wayside.

Military aid to Ukraine hits its lowest level in 2025 as the US pulled funding, leaving Europe almost alone in footing the bill and averting a complete collapse, the Kiel Institute said Wednesday.

Kyiv's allies allocated 36 billion euros (\$42.9 billion) in military aid in 2025, down 14 percent from 41.1 billion euros the previous year, according to Kiel, which tracks military, financial and humanitarian assistance pledged and delivered to Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion.

Military aid in 2025 was



even lower than in 2022, despite the invasion not taking place until February 24 that year. US aid came to a complete halt with President Donald Trump's return to the White House in early 2025.

Washington provided roughly half of all military assistance between 2022 and 2024. European countries have thus made a significant effort to plug the gap, increasing their collective allocation by 67 percent in 2025 compared with the 2022-2024 average.

Without that effort, the US cuts could have been even more damaging, the institute

argued. However, the think tank points to "growing disparities" among European contributors, with Northern and Western European countries accounting for around 95 percent of military aid.

The institute calculated that Northern European countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden) provided 33 percent of European military aid in 2025, despite accounting for only eight percent of the combined GDP of European donor countries.

Southern Europe, which accounts for 19 percent of the

combined GDP of European donors, contributed just three percent.

To help fill the gap left by the United States, NATO launched the PURL programme, under which European donors purchased US weapons for Ukraine, worth 3.7 billion euros in 2025.

Kiel called the initiative a "notable development", which had enabled the acquisition of Patriot air-defense batteries and HIMARS multiple-launch rocket systems.

European allies are also increasingly placing orders with Ukraine's own defence industry, following a trend started by Denmark in 2024.

War-torn Ukraine's defence production capacity has "grown by a factor of 35" since 2022, according to Kiel, but Kyiv lacks the funds to procure enough weapons to keep its factories working at full capacity. Orders from 11 European donor countries helped bridge that gap last year.

In the second half of 2025, 22 percent of weapons purchases for Ukraine were procured domestically, a record high.

Israel's Netanyahu expected to press Trump over Iran diplomacy

REUTERS

Washington/Jerusalem, Feb 11: President Donald Trump will host Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Wednesday where the Israeli prime minister is expected to press him to widen US talks with Iran to include curbs on Tehran's missile arsenal and other security threats that go beyond its nuclear program.

In his seventh meeting with Trump since the president returned to office nearly 13 months ago, Netanyahu will be looking to influence the next round of US discussions with Iran following nuclear negotiations held in Oman last Friday amid heightened Middle East tensions.

Trump has threatened to carry out strikes on Iran if an agreement is not reached, and Tehran has responded with vows to retaliate, fueling fears of a wider regional war. He has repeatedly voiced support for a secure Israel, long a close US ally in the Middle East and an archfoe of Iran.

The president repeated his warning in a series of media interviews on Tuesday, saying while he believes Iran wants to make a deal, he would do "something very tough" if they refused.

Trump says no to Iranian nuclear weapons, missiles

Trump told Fox Business that



a good deal with Iran would mean "no nuclear weapons, no missiles," but did not elaborate, and he said in an interview with Axios he was considering sending a second aircraft carrier strike group as part of a massive buildup of US forces near Iran.

Israel is concerned that the US might pursue a narrow nuclear deal that does not include limitations on Iran's ballistic missile program or an end to Iranian support for armed proxy groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, according to people familiar with the matter.

"I will present to the president our perceptions of the principles in the negotiations," Netanyahu told reporters before departing for the US. The two men could also discuss potential military action in the event that US-Iran

diplomacy fails, according to one of the sources.

After arriving in Washington on Tuesday night, Netanyahu met US special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who led the US team at the Iran talks, according to a post on X by Israel's ambassador to Washington, Michael Leiter.

Gaza also on the agenda
Also on the agenda will be Gaza, with Trump looking to push ahead with a ceasefire agreement he helped to broker. Progress on his 20-point plan to end the war and rebuild the shattered Palestinian enclave has stalled with wide gaps remaining over complex steps it envisions, including Hamas disarming as Israeli troops withdraw in phases.

China's Xi makes rare public reference to recent military purges

REUTERS

Beijing, Feb 11: China's military has grown stronger in the past year in its fight against corruption, President Xi Jinping told the Chinese armed forces on Wednesday, making a rare public reference to the graft probes linked to the country's top generals.

China's two highest-ranked generals have been ensnared in disciplinary probes, with He Weidong expelled in October last year and Zhang Youxia placed under investigation in January, marking one of the most high-profile purges of the Chinese military in decades.

"The past year has been unusual and extraordinary," Xi told the military in a virtual address. "The People's Army has deepened its political education, effectively addressed various risks and challenges, and undergone revolutionary forging in the fight against corruption." Military

leadership body shrinks to two people
The downfall of Zhang and He, the two vice chairmen of the Central Military Commission, has cut China's seven-man supreme military leadership body to just a committee of two people — Xi himself as the chair of CMC and a newly promoted vice chairman Zhang Shengmin.

The seats of CMC's three remaining members are currently empty. Li Shangfu was expelled in 2024 and Miao Hua in 2025, while Liu Zhenli was placed under investigation for corruption last month. An unknown number of commanders, including the leaders of China's nuclear deterrence forces, have also been purged.

Zhang Youxia — one of the few remaining combat veterans in the People's Liberation Army — would have been one of the chief decision-makers over whether China would launch an attack on Taiwan, the democratically ruled island claimed by Beijing.

Australia start T20 WC campaign with thumping win over Ireland

PTI

Colombo, Feb 11: Australia began their T20 World Cup campaign with a thumping 67-run victory over Ireland here on Wednesday. Riding on Marcus Stoinis' 45 and 37 each by Matthew Renshaw and Josh Inglis, Australia posted 182 for six after deciding to bat first.

Pacer Nathan Ellis (4/12) and spinner Adam Zampa (4/23) then shared eight wickets between them to bowl out Ireland in 16.5 overs.

Brief scores:
Australia: 182 for 6 in 20 overs (Marcus Stoinis 45, Matt Renshaw 37, Josh Inglis 37; Mark Adair 2/44).

Ireland: 115 for 9 in 16.5 overs (George Dockrell 41; Nathan Ellis 4/12, Adam Zampa 4/23).

Suryakumar bhai & I can perform role of anchor if needed: Tilak Varma

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 11: Known for his attacking batting, the returning Tilak Varma on Wednesday said he can drop anchor if needed along with India skipper Suryakumar Yadav in the ongoing T20 World Cup.

Tilak Varma has successfully returned to action for India ahead of the mega event after recovering from injury. India lost six wickets quickly in their tournament opener against the USA on February 7 before rallying to emerge comfortable winners.

"Head coach (Gautam Gambhir) has asked us to play cautiously if wickets fall in a cluster like it did against USA. Suryakumar bhai and I can perform the role of anchor if needed," Tilak said on the eve of their match against Namibia.

He also said that star pacer Jasprit Bumrah is fit for Thursday's match after missing the opening game. "Jasprit Bumrah is fit and available for tomorrow's game against Namibia."

On the much-awaited February 15 match against traditional rivals Pakistan in Colombo, he said, "We



are taking one match at a time. We are prepared for the game and conditions in Sri Lanka."

Tilak made a strong comeback in warm-up matches, scoring 38 off 24 against the USA and 48 off 19 against South Africa, displaying his readiness and form.

"Happy that I am back in the World Cup side. The only aim is to help team win the cup. Even when I was not playing, I was visualising winning games for India," he said.

UK gov criticized for dropping 'His Majesty' from communications

AFP

London, Feb 11: Britain's government came under fire from right-wing politicians after it confirmed it had switched to using a logo bearing "UK Government" branding instead of "His Majesty's Government" in official communications.

The British government is formally referred to as His Majesty's (HM) government, a reference to the monarch King Charles III.

Websites and other communications have previously carried a logo with "HM Government."

But earlier this week, a Labour government minister confirmed that "a strategic decision has been made to adopt 'UK Government' as the primary branding for all public-facing communications."

The move was on Tuesday slammed by some opposition Conservative politicians who called it "disrespectful toward Britain's history, culture, and constitutional settlement."

"How typical that Labour should be trying to quietly obliterate tradition," said Tory politician Alex Burghart.

Under guidance by the previous Tory government, in power until 2024, the primary logo was the Royal Coat of Arms alongside "HM Government" and was meant to be used "wherever possible."

A government spokesperson said the step was taken to provide greater "clarity."

"It's the right move and reflects their true purpose — serving the people not the powerful," anti-monarchy activist Graham Smith, who heads the pressure group Republic, told The Daily Telegraph newspaper.

Anish wins bronze in rapid-fire pistol, Kazakhstan claim four gold



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 11: World Championship silver medalist Anish Bhanwala clinched bronze in the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol competition, even as Kazakhstan dominated day eight of the Asian Shooting Championship with four gold medals here on Wednesday.

This was Anish's third Asian Championship medal. Adriyan Karmakar in the 50m rifle prone junior men's event and the junior men's 25m RFP team also won gold on the day, taking India's table-topping medal tally to 41 gold, 19 silver and 15 bronze, with two more days of competitions left.

Anish and Adarsh Singh

took the seventh and eighth qualifying spots with scores of 574 and 573 respectively, ensuring two Indians in the RFP final. Former champion Nikita Chiryukin of Kazakhstan topped the qualifiers with a 582 and led a trio of his mates into the decider.

Japanese Dai Yoshioka, a two-time Olympian and a world cup gold medalist and Ha Minh Thanh, a double Asian Games medallist also went through along with Ha's teammate Vu Tien Nam.

In the final consisting of eight series of five rapid-fire shots, Yoshioka, Anish and Chiryukin were fastest off the blocks as Vu and Kazakh Artemiy Kabakov became the first two to be eliminated after the third series.

INOX CINEMA
SHIVPORA SRINAGAR

Movies Watchlist
Thursday, 12th February

BORDER 2 (U/A 13+)
HINDI - 10:45 AM, 03:00 PM, 06:30 PM

MARDAANI 3 (U/A 16+)
HINDI - 11:30 AM, 06:00 PM

DEVDAS RE-RELEASE
HINDI - 02:10 PM

DHURANDHAR (A)
HINDI - 11:00 AM, 02:30 PM

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