



Transform aspirations into achievements: LG Sinha to youth

'Don't just participate in future, be ready to define it'

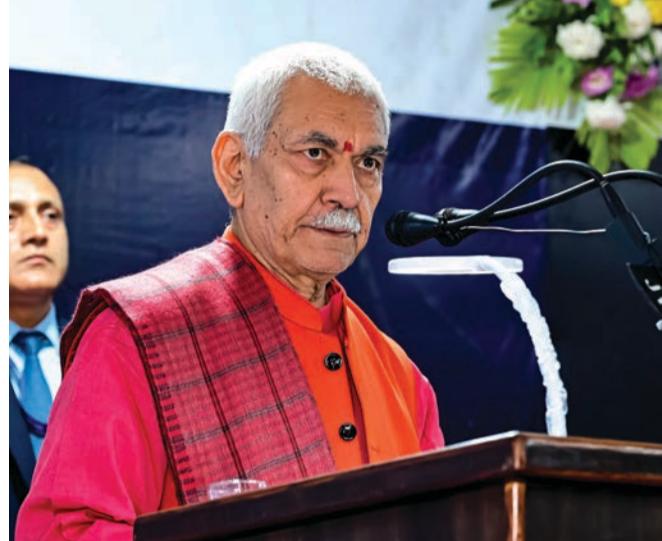
KNO Desk

Jammu, Feb 17: Calling upon the youth to transform knowledge into creation, silos into synergy, and aspirations into achievements, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Tuesday said that educational campuses will lead the way to realise the vision of Developed India@2047.

Speaking at the valedictory function of a 48-hour national-level Hackathon under "Innovation 1.0" here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), urged the youth to transform knowledge into creation and aspirations into achievements. "Don't just participate in the future but be ready to define it," he added.

He highlighted the need for creating technological ecosystems that continuously reinvent themselves, that refuse to become static or complacent and embrace change as opportunity.

"India's ambition in the technology revolution must extend beyond participation. We



must become leaders. Today, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are reshaping the trajectory of human civilization. The nations that master these technologies will write the rules for the coming century," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor

stated that the youth of India today are not watching the future unfold from the sidelines but they are the architects, the builders, the designers of what comes next. He said the path-breaking innovation and fresh ideas, cutting-edge research possesses the power to alter our nation's destiny.

"Young generation must pursue transformative innovations because Developed India@2047 is not merely a slogan but represents a commitment—a promise made to ourselves and to future generations," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that our campuses have evolved beyond mere degree-granting institutions and they have transformed into factories of ideas, workshops of innovation where possibility takes tangible form.

He lauded the University of Jammu for its unique endeavour to bridge the gap between classroom theory and authentic learning, between abstract concepts and practical application through Innovation 1.0. He said five thematic pillars of Innovation 1.0—AI, Cyber-Physical Systems, Sustainability, Health-Tech, and Responsible Tourism represent the actual challenges and opportunities for India on its journey toward becoming a developed nation.

The Lieutenant Governor entrusted upon | [More on P6](#)

Uproarious scenes in Assembly over BJP MLA's remarks against Kashmiris

Congress MLAs, AIP's Khursheed protest; Randhawa offers to retract remarks



KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 17: Uproarious scenes were witnessed in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Tuesday over remarks made by BJP MLA Vikram Randhawa, who alleged on February 13 that Kashmiris were encroaching land in Jammu.

As soon as the House assembled, Khursheed stood up and drew the attention of the Chair to Randhawa's remarks. The Speaker asked him to take his seat and allow the obituary references for two deceased lawmakers.

After the obituary references were read, Khursheed again stood up and waved a placard that read "Khasra No. 211" in an attempt to highlight alleged land encroachment by Randhawa himself. Randhawa had received a show-cause notice from the Jammu Development Authority for allegedly encroaching on land in Khasra No. 211 at Chak Ganesh village in Mandal tehsil of Jammu.

The Speaker told the legislator

not to disrupt Question Hour and to allow the House to function.

As soon as Question Hour ended, Congress MLAs Irfan Hafiz Lone and Iftikhar Ahmad stood up, demanding that Randhawa apologise for his remarks.

"Chor Machaye Shor, Chor Machaye Shor, Kashmiri Ko Badnam Karna Band Karo," shouted Irfan.

Amid the commotion in the House, Congress MLA Iftikhar Ahmad accused the BJP of maligning Kashmiris. "First they defamed the Pir Panchal region, now they are maligning the people of Kashmir," he said as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Pointing towards Randhawa, Khursheed said that the member who accused Kashmiris of being land grabbers was himself a land grabber.

Soon after, BJP legislator Vikram Randhawa stood up and countered the Congress MLAs and Khursheed. "I have never targeted any particular community," Randhawa said.

NC members | [More on P6](#)

Tele-law key to timely justice, reducing court pendency: CM Omar Abdullah

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Feb 17: Reiterating that "justice delayed is justice denied," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday called for strengthening the Tele-Law service to ensure timely justice, reduce unnecessary litigation and ease mounting pressure on courts.

Addressing the Regional Workshop on Tele-Law at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) here, the Chief Minister, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), stressed that only those cases which genuinely require judicial intervention should reach



courts, while other disputes should be resolved through legal awareness, counselling and mediation facilitated by technology.

The workshop was organised by the Ministry of Law and Justice, | [More on P6](#)

'Over 5,700 unemployed dental surgeons in J&K; govt mulls creation of new posts'

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Feb 17: Health and Medical Education (H&ME) Department Minister Sakeena Itoo on Tuesday said there are approximately 5,753 registered unemployed dental surgeons in Jammu and Kashmir.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), replying to a question in the Legislative Assembly by MLA Hasnain Masoodi, she said the government is fully conscious of the unemployment concerns faced by dental surgeons, as well as

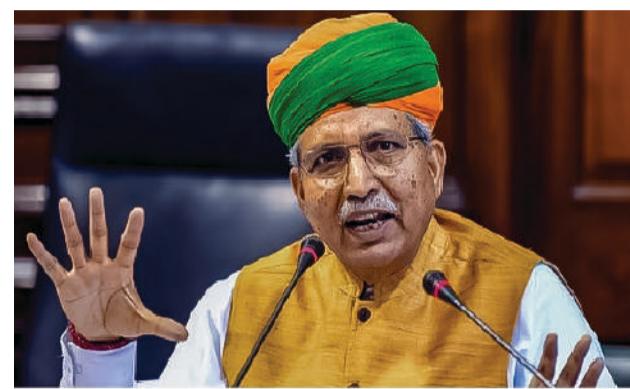
the urgent need to strengthen oral healthcare services across all levels of healthcare institutions.

"A proposal for the creation of new dental surgeon posts, based on actual and assessed requirements, is currently under active consideration in the department," Itoo said.

The minister clarified that the proposal is being worked out strictly in line with General Financial Rules (GFR)-2017 and the Finance Department's circular instructions issued in July 2021. "The matter is | [More on P6](#)

Statehood decision for J&K 'very soon': MoS Meghwal

Calls issue sensitive, cites HM's Lok Sabha assurance



Rehan Qayoom Mir

sensitive" and asserted that the government will honour the commitment made by the Union Home Minister in the Lok Sabha.

"When our Home Minister has said in the Lok Sabha that you will get that right, then you will get it. It is a process. I think you will hear a decision on this very soon," he said.

Pertinently, on August 5, 2019, the Government of India revoked the special status of the erstwhile J&K state and bifurcated it into two Union Territories—Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. | [More on P6](#)

Restoration of J&K's statehood will satisfy people: CM Omar

Thanks HM Shah for reopening tourist spots in J&K

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Emphasising that sustained engagement with the Centre is a continuous process, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said that restoration of J&K's statehood would bring satisfaction to people. Talking to reporters at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) here, CM Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Although the process has taken longer than expected, backchannel and formal discussions with the Central government are | [More on P6](#)

Govt appoints Shantmanu as State Election Commissioner

KNO Desk

Srinagar, Feb 17: The J&K Government on Tuesday appointed retired IAS officer Shantmanu as the State Election Commissioner.

According to an order issued by the General Administration Department, Lieutenant Governor has appointed Shantmanu as State Election Commissioner.

He will serve for five years or until he turns 70, whichever is earlier, reads the order, a copy of which is lying with news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO)

The appointment takes effect from the date he assumes charge. (KNO)

CM reviews Ramadan readiness; orders seamless utilities, strict market checks

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Feb 17: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting to review arrangements for the holy month of Ramadan across Jammu and Kashmir, directing all departments to ensure uninterrupted public services and coordinated action during the fasting month.

Stressing the need for proactive governance, the Chief Minister, as per the details collected by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), asked officials to ensure seamless delivery of essential services, effective grievance redressal and special arrangements at



major mosques, shrines and other congregation points to facilitate a peaceful and comfortable Ramadan for the people.

Stressing intensified sanitation drives, particularly around major places of worship, the CM

directed authorities to increase the frequency of garbage collection and maintain cleanliness throughout the month.

Highlighting the importance of uninterrupted electricity, especially | [More on P6](#)

Over 15,000 human-wildlife conflict cases in 2 years, no major spike: J&K Govt

Jammu tops in incidents, fatalities highest in Kupwara

Waris Fayaz

Jammu, Feb 17: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that there has been no significant increase in human-wildlife conflict incidents across the Union Territory in recent years, even as over 15,600 cases, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries, were reported during the past two years.

Replies to a query of MLA Mubarik Gul, the government, as per the news agency—Kashmir

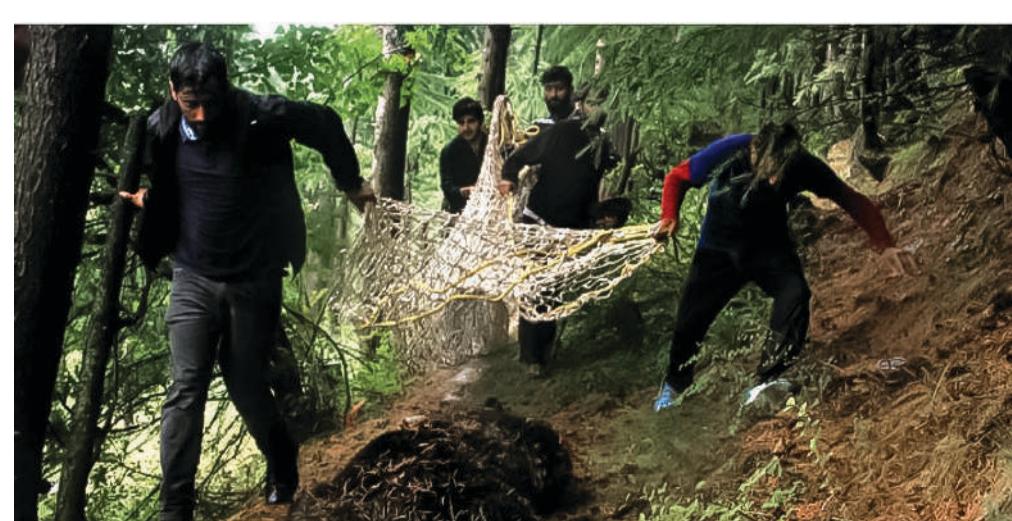
News Observer (KNO) said that the reported figures do not indicate any sharp increase in such incidents.

As per the data, 9,301 cases of human-wildlife conflict were reported in 2023 to 24 across the Union Territory. These incidents left 137 persons injured and claimed 18 lives.

Jammu district reported the highest number of cases at 1,444. However, no injury or death was recorded in the district during the period.

Kupwara recorded 1,173 cases and reported the highest number of deaths at four. The district also saw 23 injuries.

Doda and Anantnag reported three deaths each, while



Baramulla and Bandipora recorded two deaths each. Udhampur, Kishtwar and Poonch reported one death each.

Kishtwar reported 998 cases, Baramulla 950 and Doda 826. Ramban recorded 756 cases and 15 injuries. Anantnag reported 667 cases with 11 injuries. Bandipora recorded 750 cases and nine injuries. Pulwama saw 367 cases and 12 injuries, while Shopian reported 224 cases and 10 injuries.

In the Jammu region, Udhampur reported 230 cases, Kathua 190, Rajouri 110 and Poonch 70. Reasi recorded 15 cases, while Samba reported none.

For the financial year 2024 to 25, the government said 6,360

cases have been reported so far, resulting in 213 injuries and 14 deaths.

Jammu district again reported the highest number of cases at 1,341. Anantnag recorded 637 cases, Ramban 686, Kishtwar 673 and Doda 609.

Kupwara reported three deaths, while Doda reported three and Anantnag two. Pulwama recorded one death along with 30 injuries. Poonch reported one death and 25 injuries.

The government further informed that in the Jammu region, the age of affected persons ranges between 15 and 60 years, while in the Kashmir region it ranges between 4 and 70 years. (KNO)

DC Srinagar reviews Ramzan preparedness, directs uninterrupted essential services

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR FEBRUARY 17: In connection with forthcoming Holy month of Ramzaan ul Mubarak, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Tuesday chaired a comprehensive meeting of District and Sectoral Officers here at the meeting hall of DC Office Complex to review preparedness and finalize arrangements to ensure smooth and hassle-free observance of the auspicious month across the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Superintendent of Police Umar Shah, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B, Shabir Ahmad, Superintending Engineer SMC, Sajad Ahmad Kawaosa, SDM, West, Irfan Bahadur, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Executive Engineers of KPCL, PHE, SMC, R&B, all Tehsildars, Senior Officers from all concerned Departments and representatives from J&K Wakf Board.

At the outset, the DC sought a detailed action plan from the concerned departments regarding arrangements related to electricity, water supply, essential commodities, sanitation, transport, parking and medical facilities during the holy month.

The DC directed the KPDCL engineers to ensure uninterrupted power supply, particularly during Sehri and Iftari hours. The PHE



Department was asked to make proactive arrangements for adequate drinking water supply across all areas of the district.

Similarly, the FCS&CA Department was instructed to ensure sufficient availability of essential commodities, including ration and LPG, and to maintain government-approved rates in

the markets. He stressed the deployment of special teams under the supervision of SDM East and SDM West to conduct market inspections to curb profiteering and hoarding and to maintain quality standards of food items.

The DC also instructed the Assistant Commissioner Food

Safety, AD FCS&CA and Tehsildars to keep strict vigil on the quality of chicken, meat, milk, vegetables, fruits and other daily consumables to prevent adulteration in Srinagar markets.

The SMC authorities were directed to conduct special sanitation and cleanliness drives in all areas and prominent Masjids and Shrines, besides instructions were given that all defunct streetlights be restored on war footing in all areas.

Regarding road repairs and filling of potholes, the DC asked concerned departments to immediately identify and address spots requiring urgent attention, especially roads leading to major venues of religious congregations.

He further directed that adequate public transport arrangements be ensured during evening hours for the convenience of the public. The Health Department was instructed to make necessary medical arrangements as per past practice throughout the district.

During the meeting, the DC was apprised of the arrangements being made by the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board for smooth observance of religious obligations during the holy month, when thousands of devotees are expected to visit shrines.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner extended his warm greetings to the people on the commencement of the holy month of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak.

DC Kupwara reviews Mission YUVA progress, sanctions 478 new cases

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, FEBRUARY 17: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, on Tuesday chaired a meeting to review the progress under Mission YUVA in the district.

478 new cases were sanctioned by DLIC for further credit support through Mission Yuva during the meeting.

The DC, as per an official statement, reviewed the bank branch-wise performance of pending loan applications and stressed the need for expediting the sanctioning and disbursal of eligible cases. He emphasized that timely credit support is vital for youth to establish and sustain entrepreneurial ventures. It was



informed that 1228 cases have been sanctioned by JK Bank so far, and 1028 cases disbursal have been done.

The DC emphasized the importance of proactive handholding and coordinated efforts by all stakeholders to ensure that aspiring entrepreneurs

receive necessary guidance and credit support.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Kupwara, Mufti Fareed u Din, Lead District Manager, Cluster Head of JK Bank, AD Employment, branch managers of various banks, and other concerned officers.

Bandipora hosts awareness programme on POSH Act, SHe-Box, anti-drug campaign

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 17: An awareness programme was successfully organized by SANKALP-HEW Bandipora at Chandaji, a far-flung area of the district, with SHG members focusing on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), the SHe-Box Portal, and the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA).

The programme, as per an official statement, aimed to sensitize participants about workplace safety, grievance redressal mechanisms, and the importance of a drug-free society.

The officials from the SANKALP-HEW emphasized the importance of creating a safe and respectful working environment and encouraged women to come forward without fear or hesitation.

Awareness was generated about the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA).

On the occasion, the harmful effects of drug abuse on individuals, families, and society were discussed in detail. Participants were motivated

to pledge their support for a drug-free society and to act as ambassadors of positive change in their communities.

Pamphlets containing information about SANKALP-HEW were distributed among the participants to reinforce awareness and ensure wider dissemination of information.

The programme concluded with an interactive question-and-answer session, where participants actively engaged with the speakers and clarified their doubts. The event was appreciated by all attendees for its informative and impactful content.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION QAZIGUND

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No.53 OF R&B/QAZIGUND/2025-26 /E-TENDERING/5355-70 DATED:17-02-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory of J&K e-tenders are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (in Rs)	Basic Cost (in Rs)	GST Amount (in Rs)	Cost of T/Doc. (in Rs)	Earnest Money (in Rs)	Time of Completion	Head of Account	Class of Contractor
1.	Repairs/Renovation of Girls Middle School Nipora.	99946.76	84700.65	15246.11	200/=	1999/=	15 Working Days	PM SHRI WORKS PAB 2025-26	DEE Class
2.	Upgradation of Alstop-Bagbal Road by way of GSB & WBM	249148.24	211142.58	38005.66	200/=	4983/=	20 Working Days	District Capex Budget 2025-26 UT Component	DEE Class
3.	Up-gradation of Nassu-Parrypora Road by way of GSB, RCC pipes etc.	529624.33	448834.18	80790.15	300/=	10592/=	30 Working Days	District Capex Budget 2025-26 UT Component	CEE & DEE Class

Position of AAA: Order No. 396CHIRAG of 2026 Dated: 04-02-2026 (Item No.01)

Position of Authorization: Order No. 75 of 2025 Dated: 11-02-2026 and endorsement No. DDCA/Capex/

Re-app/2025-26/10552-67 Dated: 11-02-2026 for (Item No.02 and 03)

Position of TS: Accepted

The NIT 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 departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

S. No.	Particulars	Dated	
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	17.02.2026	
2	Period of Downloading of bidder documents	From 19.02.2026 (11:00 AM)	To 26.02.2026 (04:00 PM)
3	Bid submission Start Date	From 19.02.2026 (11:00 AM)	
4	Bid Submission End Date	To 26.02.2026 (04:00 PM)	
5	Date and time of opening of bid(online)	In the office of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division QAZIGUND.	

Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt (Under MH- 0059 PWD) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division QAZIGUND [Tender Inviting Authority] (Name of Work to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt)(Refer Govt. order No. O.M. No. A/24 (2017)-651 D1 07-06-2018 (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and EMD (2% of advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division QAZIGUND (Tender receiving Authority).

1. All the Bidders have to submit Earnest Money/Bid Security (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG. Non submission of Earnest Money/Bid Security shall render the bidder as No-Responsive.

2. The 1st lowest responsive (Successful) Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division QAZIGUND (Tender receiving authority) within 03 Days before fixation of Contract and shall be released after successful completion of Defect Liability Period(DLP) of the work. Failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non-responsive and case for debarring of the Contractor for a period of 01 Year be forwarded to Higher Authorities.

3. The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG of the successful Bidder shall be released after receiving Performance security @5% of the allotted cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and same shall be released after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work.

The bidders are requested to quote their rates excluding GST. GST @18% shall be added to the contract value by the allotting authority at the time of issuance of allotment.

4. The date and time of opening of Bid shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division QAZIGUND.

5. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of Opening of Technical bids.

6. The Earnest Money/Performance Security shall be forfeited if:

a) Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in the terms and conditions of the bid.

b) Failure of successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within specified time period before issue of letter of intent.

c) Successful Bidder fails to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

d) If at any stage of work, the Bidder back up from the contract, again the Performance security/EMD as well as work done claim will be forfeited.

7. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

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

DIPK-11050/25
DATED: 17-02-2026

No. 5355-70
DATED: 17-02-2026

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR JAMMU AND KASHMIR SERVICES SELECTION BOARD

Muthi, Akhnoor Road, Jammu/ZamZam Complex, Rambagh, Srinagar
(www.jkssb.nic.in)

Subject: Provisional Selection List for the post of Technical Officer, UT Cadre under Item No. 127 advertised vide Advertisement Notification No. 05 of 2020 dated 24.12.2020 of Science and Technology Department.

NOTIFICATION

Whereas, the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board, vide Indent No. ST/Adm/12/2019 Dated 10.12.2020 among other posts, received the requisition for making direct recruitment to the 01 post of Technical Officer, as per the following breakup:

S. No.	Advt No	Item No.	Name of the post	Cadre	OM	SC	ST	O	ALC/IB	RBA	PSP	EWS	Total
1.	05 of 2020	127	Technical Officer	UT	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Whereas, as per the Indent/Advertisement Notification, the prescribed qualification for the post was as follows:
"Degree in Civil / Mechanical / Electrical / Electronic & Communication / Renewable Energy / Computer Engineering Stream." Whereas, the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) advertised the aforesaid post among other posts of Science & Technology Department vide Advertisement Notification No. 05 of 2020 dated 24.12.2020 and the cut-off date, i.e., the last date for applying for the aforementioned posts and for determining the eligibility/academic qualification and validity of category certificates and other such documents of the candidates which may be required as per Indent was 27.02.2021; and Whereas, the Jammu & Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) conducted written examination for the above mentioned post on 22.06.2025; and Whereas, the JKSSB, vide Notification No. JKSSB-COEDEXAM(UT)/23/2025-03 (7699962) dated: 04-08-2025, issued the result/Score Sheet of the candidates who appeared in the OMR Based Written Examination held on 22.06.2025 for the said post. Thereafter, schedule for Documents Verification (D.V.) of the Candidates falling under the consideration zone was notified vide JKSSB-COEDEXAM(UT)/23/2025-03 (7699962) dated: 25-09-2025 and Supplementary Document Verification (D.V.) vide No. JKSSB-COEDEXAM(UT)/23/2025-03 (7699962) dated 07.10.2025; and Whereas, the Selection Committee for preparing the selection to the aforementioned post was constituted vide Order No.01-SSB of 2026 dated 01.01.2026; and Whereas, the provisional selection list for the aforementioned post prepared as per the merit/eligibility of the candidates and having regard to the extant rules/regulations was placed before the Board in its 338th Meeting held on 13.02.2026, which, after deliberations and consideration of the matter, approved its notification. Now, therefore, the Provisional Selection List for the above-mentioned post of Technical Officer, UT Cadre under Item No. 127 advertised vide Advertisement Notification No. 05 of 2020 dated 24.12.2020 of Science & Technology Department is hereby notified as per Annexure-A to this Notification. It is further notified that:
i. This Provisional Selection List shall be subject to outcome of the OAs/Writ Petition(s), if any, pending in any competent court of law.
ii. This shall also be subject to the outcome of any pending inquiry, if any, involving candidate(s), figuring in this Provisional Selection List.
iii. This is a Provisional List and shall be subject to the change(s) as the objections as may be received against it and mere figuring in it shall not confer any right to selection, which shall be finalized after examination of the objections based on merit.
iv. In case any candidate/s is/are aggrieved with this Provisional Selection List or intend(s) to furnish any document/clarification regarding his/her withheld candidature, he/she may represent through the email address usselection-jkssb@jk.gov.in within Ten (10) days from the date of this Notification, beyond which no representations whatsoever shall be entertained. The representations in this regard shall necessarily include complete details of the candidate including Name, Address, Roll Number and an active Contact Number.
By Order.

Sd/-
(Atul Kumar) JKAS
Secretary,
J&K Services Selection Board

No. JKSSB/Scry/2/202

With nearly 15,000 Posts Vacant, How Functional is J&K's Education Dept?

RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Feb 17: Nearly 15,000 teaching posts are lying vacant in Jammu and Kashmir School Education Department—raising a question on functioning of the department and quality of teaching in government-run schools.

The official figures reveal that 14,943 teaching posts including 12,977 teacher and 1946 masters posts were lying vacant in Jammu and Kashmir.

It also said that at least 4992 teacher posts in Kashmir division and 7985 posts in Jammu division were lying.

The minister concerned revealed the



figures in Legislative Assembly.

The house was however informed that "All the available and anticipated vacancies

of teachers are being utilized for the transition of Teacher Grade-II and Grade-III."

The government in the house also

revealed that 1722 Master posts in Kashmir and 224 in Jammu division were lying vacant.

"All the promotional vacancies of masters are being filled through divisional level DPC in accordance with the rules," the government informed Legislative Assembly.

Furthermore, the house was informed that 130 Principal posts, 1931 Lecture posts, 66 Zonal Education Officer (ZEO) post and 556 Headmaster posts were lying vacant in the department.

The education minister on a query whether the government intends to regularize services of Adhoc, or contractual

academic arrangement lecturers who have rendered five years of uninterrupted service in schools said that "The School Education Department in the recent past had engaged Contractual Lecturer and Teachers on academic arrangement basis for the academic sessions."

"But since 2019 no Contractual Lecturers or Teachers have been engaged by the department. However, to cope up the shortage of staff the department hired Cluster Resource Coordinators (CRCs) and Subject Specific Teachers under Samagra Shiksha Scheme, which is a centrally sponsored scheme having funding pattern of 90:10," the government said—(KNO)

Legislators seek apple industry safeguards amid trade talks

WARIS FAYAZ

Jammu, Feb 17: Legislators cutting across party lines on Tuesday voiced concern in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly over the potential impact of proposed free trade agreements on the region's apple industry, urging the government to intervene and safeguard the interests of growers.

Raising concerns in House, Peoples Conference president and MLA Sajad Gani Lone said the government cannot distance itself by calling it outside its domain. "This is the internet era. The government can assess the landed cost of American apples in markets like Dubai and anticipate the impact. They should communicate with the Government of India now instead of waiting for the agreement to be signed," he said.

He urged the Chief Minister to personally take up the matter with New Delhi before any deal is finalised. "If there has to be an economic revival in J&K, it will come through horticulture," he added.

MLA Sajad criticised the government's past response



to crises faced by fruit growers, recalling losses during highway disruptions.

He said the administration had downplayed the situation by claiming only a small percentage of fruit was ready for transport and that the National Highway was not under its control. "The growers suffered losses worth crores and no compensation was paid. Those losses can never be fully recovered," he said.

Similarly, Congress MLA Irfan Hafiz Lone said the horticulture sector has already suffered significant losses in recent years and any deal that puts farmers' future at risk would be unacceptable.

"Our apple industry has suffered a lot. If a deal with America puts our farmers at stake, nothing will be left for them. Such a deal will go against the interests of the people," he said.

PDP MLA Waheed Ur Rehman Para, said apple cultivation has sustained Kashmir through its most difficult phases and any adverse trade arrangement could deepen the ongoing crisis.

"Apple has kept Kashmir alive in challenging circumstances. If the market is opened without safeguards, the crisis will intensify," he said. Para maintained that while the J&K government

may have limited powers over international trade, it must proactively engage with the Government of India and flag the repercussions for local growers.

He called for an all-party meeting to deliberate on the issue. "This concerns everyone, BJP, Congress and the government. A joint strategy must be evolved at the earliest," he said, adding that the region's economy cannot revive unless the apple industry is protected.

MLA Irfah Rassool Kar said the sector is set to face stiff competition from multiple countries and the government must step in with concrete relief measures.

"We are already competing with several nations. Subsidies on fertilisers and transportation support can help farmers remain competitive," he said, adding that he has repeatedly raised these demands. The lawmakers collectively stressed that timely intervention and a unified political approach are essential to shield the apple industry, which forms the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir's rural economy—(KNO)

1.64 lakh trained under skill development schemes: Govt

WARIS FAYAZ

Jammu, Feb 17: The government on Tuesday informed the House that 1.64,665 youths have been trained under various skill development schemes during the last three years.

Replying to a query by MLA Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah, the government said the trainings were conducted through different programmes of the Department of Skill Development.

As per official data, 32,537 youths were trained under the Craft Training Scheme, while 1,710 underwent training under the Apprenticeship Training Scheme. In Government Polytechnics, 9,901 candidates received training.

It states, the highest number, 1,18,677 youths, were trained under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana. In addition, 1,840 candidates were trained in Hotel Management and related courses at FCI Jammu. "The total number of beneficiaries under these schemes stands at 1,64,665. The government further stated that 1,34,677 skilled workers have been upskilled under the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana." It also informed the House that the Employment Department is providing three-month skill development training under the Training to Build Entrepreneurship Capacities for Self Employment scheme.

"The programme is an approved component under the Capex Budget and aims to enhance employability and bridge skill gaps in line with scheme guidelines."—(KNO)

GOC 16 Corps reviews security in Rajouri sector

YOGESH

Jammu, Feb 17: Top Army Commander on Tuesday visited the general areas of Potha and Thanamandi to undertake a comprehensive review of the prevailing security environment in the border district of Rajouri.

According to the details, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the White Knight Corps (16 Corps), Lieutenant General P K Mishra, accompanied by the GOC Counter Insurgency Force (CIF) Romeo, assessed the ground situation and was briefed on the latest operational developments and counter-infiltration measures being undertaken in the region. He interacted with commanders at various levels and reviewed the operational preparedness of units deployed in the area.

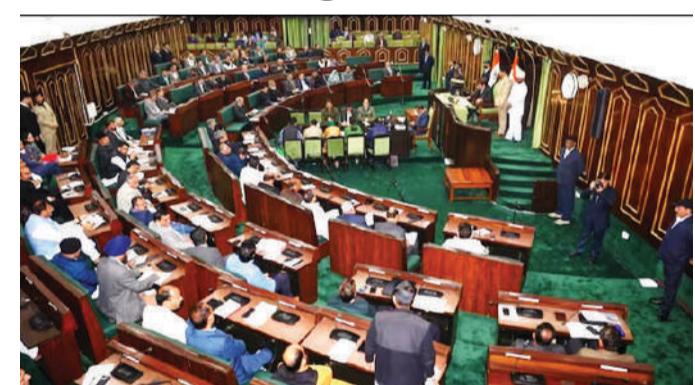
The GOC evaluated the

coordination mechanisms among security forces and examined the effectiveness of area domination patrols and surveillance grids aimed at maintaining peace and stability in the sensitive sector.

Commending the troops for their professionalism and high morale, Lieutenant General Mishra emphasized the need for sustained vigilance and seamless synergy among all stakeholders to counter emerging security challenges. He reiterated the Army's commitment to ensuring a secure environment for the local population.

The GOC CIF Romeo highlighted the formation's operational focus and readiness posture, underlining its guiding ethos of unwavering vigilance and absolute readiness to maintain dominance on the ground and secure lasting peace in the region—(KNO)

GLT posts vacant due to freezing: Govt



NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIE

Jammu, Feb 17: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Tuesday informed the House that posts of General Line Teachers (GLT) have remained vacant due to freezing of posts.

Replying to a question tabled by MLA Budgam Aga Syed Mumtaz Mehdi regarding teaching and non-teaching staff, the government said that vacant posts under promotion quota have been filled up recently.

However, it said that GLT posts under direct recruitment quota cannot be filled in view of the freezing of posts pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 166/22/2018 dated December 7, 2018, for transition/conversion of RRETs/RTs to Teacher Grade-II and Grade-III—(KNO)

"Irresponsible" comments against Kashmiris unacceptable: MLA Lone

Waris Fayaz

Jammu, Feb 17: Congress MLA Irfan Hafiz Lone on Tuesday said his party will fight any attempt to disturb communal harmony in Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that unity and brotherhood will not be allowed to suffer.

MLA Lone said that even though the controversial remarks were later withdrawn, the issue cannot be brushed aside.

He said the people of Jammu and Kashmir are united and will not allow anyone to damage communal harmony. "Unity and

brotherhood are our strength. We will ensure that every step is taken to protect it," he said.

Lone accused the BJP of pursuing politics based on division and polarisation. He said such tactics will be defeated through democratic and political means. "We are ready to sacrifice, but we will not allow divisive forces to succeed," he added.

The Congress leader said his party remains committed to safeguarding constitutional values and keeping what he described as BJP RSS ideology at bay. He said the larger objective is to protect the social fabric of Jammu and Kashmir.

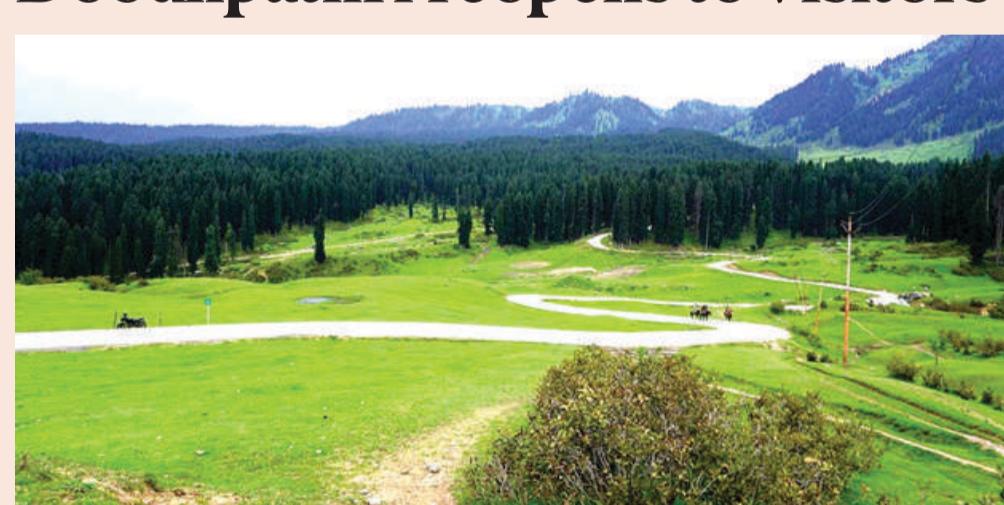
Congress leader and MLA Wagoora-Kreeri said issues like MGNREGA, regularisation of daily wagers, and restoration of statehood remain key priorities for the party.

He expressed concern over a trade deal with the United States, claiming it could adversely impact the region's horticulture sector, especially the apple industry.

"Our growers could face serious losses if such agreements are implemented without safeguards. We will oppose any move that harms local interests," he said.

On the question of statehood, Lone said the Congress continues to pin hope on its restoration and is actively fighting for it at every forum—(KNO)

Doodhpatheri reopens to visitors after 10 months



NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIE

Budgam, Feb 17: The scenic tourist destination of Doodhpatheri in central Kashmir's Budgam district reopened on Tuesday after remaining closed for nearly 10 months, bringing relief and renewed hope to hundreds of families dependent on tourism.

The reopening was announced by the Lieutenant Governor through a post on his official X handle, following which tourists began arriving at the meadow destination.

Locals, including tea stall owners, pony walas, guides, and small traders, welcomed the move and expressed gratitude to the LG-led administration for resuming tourism activities.

Several residents said the prolonged closure had severely affected their earnings, as the majority of families in

the area rely directly or indirectly on tourism. "We are highly thankful to the LG administration for reopening Doodhpatheri. For the past 10 months, we had no source of income. Our livelihood depends entirely on tourists," said a local tea stall owner.

Pony service providers said the decision has brought hope to many families. "We earn only when tourists visit. With the reopening, we expect our income to improve. We assure the administration that we will follow all rules and cooperate fully," a pony wala said.

A couple from Maharashtra, who were among the first visitors to reach Doodhpatheri after the reopening, said they were happy to see the destination accessible again.

"We feel safe and very happy to be here. We thank the Government of India and the

Jammu and Kashmir administration for reopening this beautiful place," the couple told KNO, adding that the atmosphere was peaceful and security arrangements appeared satisfactory.

Local shopkeepers shared similar sentiments, stating that the reopening will revive economic activity in Doodhpatheri.

They said there is no need to politicise the issue and credited the administration for taking the decision in the interest of the public. "We welcome this step wholeheartedly and will ensure that all guidelines are strictly followed to maintain safety and discipline," another local said.

With the reopening of Doodhpatheri, residents hope tourist footfall will increase in the coming days, helping the area's tourism sector regain momentum—(KNO)

Tourism resumes at Wular Lake

SAJID RAINA

Bandipora, Feb 17: Wular Lake in north Kashmir's Bandipora district has reopened to tourists after nearly ten months, bringing relief to locals and raising hopes of economic revival for hundreds of families dependent on tourism-related activities.

The reopening follows an announcement by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha that 14 tourist destinations across Jammu and Kashmir would be reopened in a phased manner. The sites had been closed after last year's attack in Pahalgam, which impacted tourist inflow and local businesses. Residents around Wular Lake said the move has brought relief to hundreds of families reliant on shikara rides, eateries, handicrafts, and guiding services. "For months, there was no work and no income. We survived on savings and loans. Now we are hopeful that tourists will return," said Fayaz Ahmad, a Shikara operator.

Manzoor Ahmad, who runs a tea stall near the lakeshore, said the closure had brought business to a standstill. "The day the lake was shut, our earnings stopped. Reopening means we can restart our lives again," he said. Another boatman, Ghulam Nabi, said the local economy is directly linked to visitor numbers. "If tourists come in good numbers during the summer, it will compensate for the losses we suffered," he added. Shabir Hussain, a handicrafts seller, said many artisans were forced to look for daily-wage work during the shutdown. "Tourism is our primary source of livelihood. We want consistent policies so that such long closures do not happen again," he said. Visitors also expressed optimism. "Wular is one of the most beautiful lakes in Kashmir. It should remain accessible with proper security and facilities," said Rukhsana Bano, a local visitor.

Residents urged authorities to improve road connectivity, sanitation, and visitor amenities around the lake to unlock its full tourism potential.

"We need better infrastructure so that tourists stay longer and spend more time here," said a local hotel owner, adding that steady footfall would help restore economic stability in the region—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

LG's Decision Paves Way For A Season of Hope

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's decision to reopen 14 additional tourist destinations across Jammu & Kashmir is a profoundly welcome and timely step that breathes new life into the region's economy and sends a powerful message of restored normalcy. By ordering the reopening of iconic spots like Yusmarg, Doodhpathri, the Tulip Garden, and Thajwas Glacier in Kashmir, along with sites in Jammu, the administration has demonstrated both sensitivity to ground realities and a firm

commitment to reviving the Union Territory's most vital industry. This move is a lifeline for thousands of families whose livelihoods depend on the tourism ecosystem. From pony owners in Doodhpathri to tea stall vendors in Shopian, from hoteliers in Yusmarg to guides across the Valley, the ripple effect of this decision will be felt in every household connected to the sector. As local residents have expressed with palpable relief, this restoration of access is a restoration of hope. The phased, security-conscious

approach to reopening, beginning just two months after last year's Pahalgam tragedy and continuing through careful assessment, reflects a balanced governance model that prioritises citizen safety without surrendering to fear. By steadily reopening destinations, the administration has sent a clear and consistent signal: terrorism will not dictate the rhythm of normal life, nor will it permanently shutter the beauty that defines this region. Crucially, this decision comes at the perfect moment, just as Kashmir

prepares for the spring tourist season. The timing maximises its economic impact, allowing advance bookings to resume and reassuring travel agents nationwide that the Valley is once again open for business. The overwhelming gratitude expressed by tour operators, hoteliers, and chambers of commerce underscores that this is a substantive economic stimulus. The LG's commitment to reopening snowbound destinations like Gurez and Bangus once cleared further demonstrates meticulous

planning. This phased, destination-specific strategy ensures that safety and accessibility go hand in hand. With the tourist season approaching, this decision renews confidence in J&K as a premier global destination. It tells the world that Kashmir's unparalleled beauty, its warm hospitality, and its resilient people are once again ready to welcome visitors. For the thousands whose livelihoods depend on this industry, it is the best possible news at the best possible time.

India-AI Impact Summit 2026: Welfare For All, Happiness Of All

Over 20 Heads of State, 60 Ministers, and 500 Global AI Leaders Gather in New Delhi for AI Impact Summit 2026

Press Information Bureau

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a key enabler of India's development journey, strengthening governance and transforming public service delivery in alignment with the vision of *Viksit Bharat* @2047. Underscoring India's commitment to responsible and inclusive AI, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 on 16 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

The Summit, the first global AI gathering to be hosted in the Global South, has witnessed unprecedented participation, with over 20 Heads of State, 60 Ministers, and 500 global AI leaders. Bringing together policymakers, technology companies, innovators, academia, and industry leaders, the Summit seeks to translate global AI deliberations into actionable development outcomes under the IndiaAI Mission and the Digital India initiative. On 19 February, On 19 February, the Hon'ble Prime Minister is scheduled to deliver the inaugural address, setting the tone for enhanced global cooperation and advancing India's vision for inclusive, trusted, and development-oriented artificial intelligence.

Significance of AI for India

AI has emerged as a transformative force with the potential to accelerate India's economic growth, strengthen governance and improve the quality of life of citizens, anchored in the principles of People, Planet, and Progress. For People, AI-enabled solutions are empowering citizens by expanding healthcare access through telemedicine and diagnostics, personalizing education through adaptive learning, and securing financial systems through fraud detection. For the Planet, AI is enabling smarter and more sustainable practices in agriculture through crop prediction, precision farming, and drone-based monitoring. For Progress, AI is strengthening governance through language translation of court judgments, improving service delivery, and enhancing everyday efficiency through applications in food delivery, mobility, and personalized digital services, reflecting a shift towards inclusive and accessible technology for both rural and urban India.

AI in Healthcare: AI is improving healthcare access and outcomes, particularly in rural and underserved areas. AI-enabled remote diagnostics and portable tools support disease detection where doctors are scarce, while automated blood and urine testing accelerates diagnosis and treatment. AI-powered telemedicine, including chatbots and symptom checkers, connects rural patients to doctors, reducing travel and wait times. AI-based medical image analysis enables faster diagnosis of TB, cancer, and other conditions in remote areas. Predictive analytics support disease outbreak forecasting, while AI-driven drug discovery and personalized therapies improve affordability and outcomes for chronic conditions.

AI in Agriculture & Rural Economy: AI is enabling smarter, data-driven farming practices to enhance productivity and farmer incomes. AI predicts weather, pest outbreaks, and irrigation needs, guiding farmers through mobile advisories. AI-powered drones monitor crop health and reduce waste, while satellite imagery and weather data support harvest forecasting. Market price prediction models help farmers anticipate demand and supply trends. Tools such as Mossium GPT and initiatives like Kisan E-Mitra provide real-time, localized agricultural information in regional languages.

AI in Education & Learning: AI is making education more personalized, inclusive, and accessible. AI-driven platforms adapt learning content to individual student needs, supporting both slow learners and advanced students. AI-powered language translation removes linguistic barriers by converting content into regional languages. AI-based tutoring systems offer instant feedback and 24/7 learning support. Platforms such as DIKSHA use AI to deliver relevant and accessible educational content across diverse learner groups.

AI in Finance & Commerce: AI is strengthening financial security, inclusion, and service efficiency. AI-powered systems detect fraud and secure digital transactions in real time. AI-based credit scoring expands access to loans for unbanked and underserved populations. Banking chatbots provide 24/7 assistance for routine services such as balance checks and fund transfers, reducing wait times. AI-driven personalization enables tailored financial products and advice.

AI in Governance & Public Services: AI is enhancing the efficiency, accessibility, and

transparency of public services. AI-assisted translation of court judgments into vernacular languages improves access to justice. AI supports smart city management by optimizing traffic, waste, and public safety systems. AI streamlines government service delivery by reducing processing times for schemes and applications. In the judiciary, AI improves case management and legal accessibility.

Recognising the strategic importance of AI, the Government of India has accorded high priority to building a robust and inclusive AI ecosystem. Initiatives such as the IndiaAI Mission, development of AI compute infrastructure, promotion of indigenous AI models, and large-scale capacity-building programmes are laying a strong foundation for responsible and trusted AI adoption in the country.

Further, the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 will focus on strengthening global collaboration, promoting responsible and ethical AI, and accelerating AI adoption across priority sectors of the economy. The Summit is expected to play a catalytic role in positioning India as a global hub for AI innovation and deployment, aligned with the vision of a digitally empowered and technology-driven India.

Foundational Pillars: The Three Sutras and Seven Chakras Driving Global Collaboration of AI Impact

The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 aims to advance an impact-oriented and people-centric approach to Artificial Intelligence, with emphasis on delivering measurable social and economic outcomes. The Summit is anchored on three foundational pillars, known as 'Sutras'—a Sanskrit term meaning guiding principles or essential threads that weave together wisdom and action. These Sutras define how AI can be harnessed through multilateral cooperation for collective benefit.

Building on the three foundational Sutras, the deliberations at the AI Impact Summit is structured around 7 Chakras. These Chakras represent key areas of multilateral cooperation that channel collective efforts towards inclusive and sustainable societal outcomes.

Human Capital: This chakra focuses on building an equitable AI reskilling ecosystem through targeted skilling. For India, this strengthens workforce readiness for the AI economy, aligned with national development priorities.

Inclusion for Social Empowerment: This chakra focuses on enabling inclusive participation through shared AI solutions and scalable models. This supports delivery of citizen-centric AI solutions and strengthens last-mile services in India.

Safe and Trusted AI: This chakra focuses on translating global principles for responsible AI into practical, interoperable safety and governance frameworks. For India, this strengthens domestic AI governance, supports safe deployment of AI across public platforms and builds public trust while enabling innovation.

Resilience, Innovation and Efficiency: This chakra focuses on addressing the growing environmental and resource challenges posed by large scale AI systems, which risk deepening the global AI divide. For India, it supports sustainable AI adoption, ensuring AI growth remains environmentally responsible and socially equitable.

Science: This chakra focuses on harnessing AI to accelerate discovery while correcting deep inequities in access to data, compute, and research capacity. For India, it strengthens research ecosystems, accelerates solutions in health, agriculture, and climate, and positions India as an active contributor to global scientific advancement.

Democratizing AI Resources: This chakra envisions a global AI ecosystem where access to foundational enablers of AI development is equitable and affordable for all. For India, it expands access for startups, researchers, and public institutions while ensuring equitable participation in global AI value chains.

AI for Economic Growth & Social Good: This chakra explores approaches to harness AI's potential for truly inclusive growth, recognizing and supporting high impact use cases that become exemplars of AI for both economic growth and social good.

Together, these Chakras provide a comprehensive framework for countries, international organisations, and stakeholders to align AI strategies, promote shared learning, and deploy AI solutions that maximise collective benefits while addressing common challenges.

AI Impact Events at the Summit

The objectives of the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 are operationalised by the AI

Impact Events. The events provide structured platforms to present Indian AI initiatives, sectoral use cases, and institutional frameworks, while enabling feedback, peer learning, and international benchmarking.

Pre-Summit Events

Pre-Summit Events have been organised as part of the preparatory process for the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 to facilitate early consultations and focused thematic discussions. These engagements, held in India and abroad, bring together governments, academic and research institutions, industry, startups, and civil society.

Regional AI Conferences

Regional AI Conferences are being organised as part of the lead-up to the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 to align national AI priorities with regional needs. Eight conferences held between October 2025 and January 2026 across Meghalaya, Gujarat, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Kerala, and Telangana, partnered with state governments will identify region-specific AI use cases, policy inputs, and capacity gaps. The deliberations will inform the agenda and outcomes of the India-AI Impact Summit 2026.

Main Summit

The Main Summit is being organised across the seven Chakras of the Summit. These sessions are bringing together industry, academia, and international partners to examine use cases, share policy experiences, and identify practical approaches for development-oriented deployment of AI. The strong global response to the Summit is reflected in the receipt of over 700 proposals.

AI Compendium

The AI Compendium is a key knowledge output of the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 and will be released during the Summit on 17 February 2026. It comprises a set of thematic casebooks documenting real-world applications of Artificial Intelligence across priority sectors. It will serve as a reference resource for practitioners, and stakeholders, and support continued collaboration and adoption of responsible and development-oriented AI solutions beyond the Summit.

Flagship Events

A major highlight of the Summit is the three flagship Global Impact Challenges—AI for ALL, AI by HER, and YUVAI—designed to identify scalable, development-oriented AI solutions aligned with national priorities. Together, these challenges have received over 4,650 applications from more than 60 countries, reflecting strong global participation and innovation interest. Following a rigorous multi-stage evaluation by domain experts, policy-makers, and industry leaders, 70 finalists have been selected to showcase their solutions at the Grand Finale and Awards Ceremony.

AI for ALL: Global Impact Challenge is aimed at identifying AI solutions with potential for large-scale impact. Implemented in partnership with Startup India under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Digital India Bhashini Division, the Challenge invites participation from students, working professionals, researchers, and startups. It focuses on widely deployable AI solutions across sectors such as urban infrastructure and mobility. Selected solutions will be showcased at the Summit, with awards up to INR 2.50 crore.

AI by HER: Global Impact Challenge is aimed at promoting women-led innovation in AI. Implemented in partnership with NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform, the Challenge invites women technologists to present AI solutions addressing large-scale and real-world public challenges. Selected solutions will be showcased at the Summit, with awards up to INR 2.50 crore.

YUVAI: Global Youth Challenge is aimed at encouraging young innovators to develop AI solutions for real-world challenges. The Challenge invites participation from youth individuals and teams in the 13-21 age group. It is being implemented in partnership with MyBharat and the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology, to bring their most innovative AI solutions to

Bharat Mandapam / Sushma Swaraj Bhawan / Ambedkar Bhawan, New Delhi

*(Agenda as on 16 Feb, 2026)- The agenda is tentative and subject to revisions.

*The list of notable attendees is tentative and subject to revisions.

Key Institutional Frameworks Involved in the Summit

The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 is supported by core government institutions responsible for policy formulation, programme implementation, ecosystem development, and digital infrastructure. Their involvement provides administrative leadership, technical support, and institutional continuity, ensuring that the Summit is grounded in existing national initiatives and capable of translating discussions into actionable outcomes.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

MeitY provides overall policy direction for AI and digital technologies in India. The Ministry anchors the Summit within national priorities on artificial intelligence, electronics, digital governance, and trusted technology adoption. Its role ensures inter-ministerial coordination, alignment with state governments, and integration of Summit outcomes with ongoing national programmes and regulatory frameworks.

IndiaAI Mission

IndiaAI Mission is a flagship mission supporting AI development in India. The Mission shapes the core themes of the Summit, including AI compute infrastructure, datasets, indigenous AI models, skilling, and startup support. It highlights ongoing government efforts to promote safe, responsible, and inclusive use of artificial intelligence.

Software Technology Parks of India (STPI)

STPI supports the innovation and participation of startups, MSMEs, and innovators in the Summit. It provides incubation facilities, technical infrastructure, and industry linkages. Its network of centres across the country enables wider regional participation and supports growth of AI-driven enterprises. It helps connect AI innovators with industry, global markets, and export opportunities, strengthening India's position in the global digital economy.

Digital India Initiative

Digital India provides the foundational framework for large-scale AI adoption in India. Its emphasis on digital public platforms, inclusion, and citizen-centric governance is reflected in Summit themes. Digital India ensures AI solutions showcased at the Summit align with service delivery, accessibility, transparency, and public trust at national scale.

Expected Outcomes of the Summit

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 is expected to deliver focused, outcome-driven results aligned with national priorities. The Summit is emphasising practical AI deployment, policy alignment, and institutional coordination to support effective implementation across government and industry. It is strengthening governance and regulatory frameworks, assessing regional preparedness for AI-led industrial growth, and promoting skill development and workforce transition. The Summit is also expanding awareness and understanding of AI applications, and fostering sustained partnerships among government, academia, startups, and industry to enable responsible and inclusive growth of the AI ecosystem.

Conclusion

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 is delivering focused, outcome-oriented results aligned with national priorities. The Summit is advancing practical AI deployment, policy coherence, and institutional coordination to ensure effective implementation across government and industry. It is strengthening governance and regulatory frameworks, assessing regional preparedness for AI-led industrial growth, and accelerating skill development and workforce transition. The Summit is also expanding awareness of AI applications and fostering sustained partnerships among government, academia, startups, and industry to promote responsible, inclusive, and innovation-driven growth of the AI ecosystem.

J&K LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

J&K Govt adopts pro-labour, pro-gender policies in contractual, regular engagements

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 17: The government has adopted pro-labour and pro-gender policies in its contractual and regular engagements in Jammu and Kashmir, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Ito, stated on Tuesday in the Legislative Assembly.

Responding on behalf of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, she was replying to a question by Legislator Shagun Parihar on 'Maternity Leave Benefit'.

She added that the service conditions of women employees working under different



government schemes are being governed by the guidelines of these schemes or as per the terms of agreement/conditions of the contract of engagement.

The Minister, as per an official statement, further informed that for the social security and welfare benefits for all contractual employees, the J&K government has prescribed annual 15 days casual leave with wages/honorarium, 30 days leave without honorarium on account of accident and illness and 180 days maternity leave without honorarium.

Legislator R.S. Pathania raised supplementary question.

J&K Assembly pays tributes to former minister Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah, ex-MLC Brij Mohan Sharma

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 17: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Tuesday paid high tributes to former Minister Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah and Former MLC Brij Mohan Sharma on their demise.

While reading out the obituary references for the deceased public leaders, Speaker Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather termed Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah as an able administrator with distinguished public career, both inside and outside of the Assembly.

He said Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad had many stints as Minister with the former governments headed by former Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah.

He stated that Peerzada was

first elected to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly from the Devas Constituency in 1983 and served on several important Committees of the House, including the Public Accounts Committee, Public Undertakings Committee and Committee on Estimates. He was re-elected from the same Constituency in 1987 and again in 1996.

The Speaker said that Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah was a distinguished public figure and a committed Legislator who devoted his life to public service and welfare of the people. He was widely respected for his dedication, integrity and significant contribution towards development of his constituency and the Union Territory as a whole, maintained the Speaker.

During his distinguished public career, Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah held several important positions. He served as Member of the Public Accounts Committee, Member of the State Transport Authority and Member of the Muslim Auqaf Trust.

Paying his tributes to Late Brij Mohan Sharma, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather said the deceased was humble and disciplined human being and always remained grounded.

Being a member of erstwhile Legislative Council from March 17, 2001, to March 16, 2007, the late leader performed this service purely for the sake of public welfare, without expecting any reward from anyone.

Later, the House observed two minute silence as a mark of respect to the departed souls.

Dubjan Winter Carnival 2026 celebrated in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 17: The scenic locale of Dubjan in Shopian on Tuesday came alive with colour, culture and enthusiasm as Winter Carnival-II 2026 was organised and celebrated with great fervour by the Department of Tourism in collaboration with District Administration Shopian.

The event, as per an official statement, was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta in presence of district administration officers and officials from various departments.

The venue was beautifully decorated and all arrangements ensured smooth conduct of the mega event. Marking the formal inauguration, the Deputy Commissioner released pigeons into the air as a symbol of peace, harmony and communal brotherhood, drawing applause from the gathering.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the stalls of various departments showcasing their schemes and initiatives for public awareness and outreach.

On the occasion, a bike rally was also flagged off by the Deputy Commissioner along with senior officers.

Cultural programmes presented by the Tourism department, District Information Centre Shopian, students of

various educational institutions added vibrancy and traditional charm to the carnival.

The Sports Department organized several thrilling activities including tug of war, martial arts demonstrations, races and other competitions, witnessing enthusiastic participation of youth and local residents.

The event witnessed a large turnout of visitors who appreciated the coordinated efforts of the District Administration and Tourism Department in making Winter Carnival-II a grand success at Dabjan.

The successful conduct of Winter carnival-II at Dabjan is district's growing reputation as a winter tourism destination and the collective efforts of district administration and local community in making the event more attractive and memorable.

The Winter carnival-II was widely appreciated as a significant initiative towards promoting Dabjan as emerging winter destination, strengthening tourism outreach and opening new avenues for local economic growth.

Traditional folk songs, music skit and cultural performances enthralled the audience and showcased the rich heritage and talent of the region. Various other recreational and adventure activities including horse riding, skiing, snow boarding, snow tubing, snowmobile rides and paragliding

DC Kathua reviews road safety measures, proposes fixes for highway black spots



KT News Desk

KATHUA, FEBRUARY 17: Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma, Tuesday chaired a meeting to review identified black spots on the National Highway passing through the district and to finalise a comprehensive proposal for submission to higher authorities seeking necessary intervention from stakeholders, including the National Highways Authority of India.

The meeting, as per an official statement was informed that a detailed on-ground inspection and technical assessment of accident-prone locations has been undertaken along the 39-kilometre stretch of the National Highway within the district. The exercise focused on identifying structural gaps, traffic management steps and other vulnerabilities contributing to road mishaps.

The committee members highlighted critical locations

witnessing frequent accidents, particularly at cross sections, junctions, link roads, tunnels, merging points and high-speed corridors. Emphasis was laid on traffic channelisation, installation of crash barriers and ensuring adequate lighting at vulnerable spots.

Deliberations were held on short-term measures such as installation of retro-reflective signages, road markings, speed calming interventions, caution boards and improving visibility at blind curves. Long-term engineering solutions, including geometric corrections, widening of bottlenecks, construction of service lanes, strengthening of shoulders and redesigning of intersections, were also discussed.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to compile field inputs, technical observations and photographic documentation into a detailed, time-bound proposal for submission to

higher authorities to facilitate approval and execution of major corrective works by the National Highways Authority of India.

He further stressed close coordination among PWD, Traffic Police, Transport Department and National Highway representatives to ensure immediate implementation of feasible safety measures, alongside continuous monitoring of identified black spots to assess reduction in accident rates.

Pertinently, a committee headed by the Superintending Engineer, PWD Kathua, with members including the Regional Transport Officer, District Traffic Inspector and representatives of the National Highways Authority of India, has been constituted to examine the black spots and recommend remedial measures to substantially curb road accidents along the National Highway stretch falling within the district.

NIT Srinagar workshop highlights MSME design scheme, promotes entrepreneurship

KT News Desk

Srinagar, FEBRUARY 17: The Department of Mechanical Engineering, National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar, in collaboration with Greenovator Incubation Foundation (GIF)-NIT Srinagar, organized a One-Day Workshop on the MSME Design Scheme at the Common Hall of the institute.

The workshop, as per PIB statement, was sponsored by the Ministry of MSME, Government of India, and witnessed active participation from entrepreneurs, startups, faculty members, and students.

The programme commenced with the inauguration of the MSME Project Stall at Indus Park, marking the beginning of a day-long engagement focused on strengthening the MSME and startup ecosystem in the region.

The event was presided over by Registrar NIT Srinagar, Prof. Atikur Rehman, Assistant Director, MSME-DFO Srinagar, Mr. Saheel Allagband was the Guest of Honor on the occasion.

Dean, Alumni and International Affairs, Prof. MA Shah, Prof. Nazir Ahmed Sheikh, among other faculty members, also attended the event. Dr. Dinesh Kumar Rajendran is the Nodal Officer & Convenor of the event.

In his address, Prof. Binod Kumar Kanaujia, Director, NIT Srinagar, underscored the institute's commitment to promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, and nation-building.

He remarked that empowering MSMEs through structured support mechanisms like the Design Scheme aligns with the broader vision of self-reliance and economic resilience.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Saheel Allagband, Assistant Director,



MSME-DFO Srinagar, elaborated on various flagship schemes of the Ministry of MSME and encouraged entrepreneurs to avail themselves of financial and technical assistance available under the Design Scheme.

He highlighted the importance of formal registration, digital compliance, quality certification, and participation in government procurement platforms to ensure long-term growth and sustainability.

Prof. Rehman emphasized the importance of research, consultancy, and technology transfer in strengthening the MSME ecosystem.

He encouraged entrepreneurs to collaborate with NIT Srinagar for research-driven product development and the commercialization of innovative ideas.

Earlier in his welcome address, Dr. Dinesh Kumar Rajendran, Nodal Officer, MSME Design Scheme at NIT Srinagar, outlined the objectives of the workshop and highlighted the significance of the MSME Design Scheme in enhancing product

competitiveness through expert design intervention and financial assistance.

He emphasized that such initiatives provide a crucial bridge between innovators and government support mechanisms.

Dr. Saad Parvez, Principal Investigator of Greenovator Incubation Foundation, spoke about the growing importance of incubation support in nurturing innovative ideas into viable enterprises.

He stressed that startups must actively leverage institutional mentorship, research facilities, and government-backed schemes to scale sustainably and compete in broader markets. He also underlined the need for stronger industry-academia collaboration to foster innovation-driven entrepreneurship in Jammu and Kashmir.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. H. S. Pali, Coordinator of the MSME Workshop.

The technical sessions that followed covered funding opportunities in MSMEs, facilitation support through MSME PPDC, the MSME/startup ecosystem, application procedures for the MSME Design Scheme, and the GeM purchase process for MSMEs.

The workshop concluded with a valedictory session and certificate distribution ceremony.

Following the inaugural session, a series of focused technical deliberations were held to provide participants with comprehensive insights into the MSME framework.

The first session on Funding Opportunities in MSME was delivered by Mr. Saheel Allagband, Assistant Director, MSME-DFO Srinagar, who elaborated on various financial assistance schemes and support mechanisms available under the Ministry of

MSME.

This was followed by a session on Facilitation in MSME PPDC by Ajaz Hussain, who explained the role of Process and Product Development Centres in offering technical support, testing facilities, and technology upgradation services to MSMEs.

Dr. Saad Parvez, Principal Investigator, Greenovator Incubation Foundation, conducted an engaging session on the MSME/Startup ecosystem, highlighting incubation support, innovation strategies, and the importance of institutional collaboration.

In the post-lunch session, Dr. Dinesh Kumar Rajendran, Nodal Officer, MSME Design Scheme, provided a detailed presentation on the Application Procedure for the MSME Design Scheme, guiding participants through eligibility criteria, documentation requirements, and submission processes.

The technical deliberations also included a session on GeM Purchase for MSMEs by Mr. Tauseef Jeelani and Mr. Mudassir Qadir, who explained the onboarding process and procurement opportunities and benefits through the Government e-Marketplace platform.

Later, selected entrepreneurs and participating MSME representatives were presented with felicitations and appreciation awards in recognition of their innovation, commitment, and contribution to strengthening the local enterprise ecosystem.

The certificates and mementos were distributed during the valedictory session, where organizers lauded the proactive participation of startups and MSMEs and encouraged them to effectively utilize the MSME Design Scheme and other government support mechanisms for sustainable growth and competitiveness.

CRPF organizes free medical camp in remote Ramban village

KT News Desk

RAMBAN, FEBRUARY 17: The 84 Bn CRPF, under the aegis of Jammu Sector CRPF Tuesday organized a free medical camp at the remote Karma village in Ramban district.

The camp, as per an official statement, was inaugurated by Commandant, N. Ranbir Singh in the presence of Second-in-Command Vikram Singh, Second-in-Command Arvind Kumar Dixit and Assistant Commandant Roop Ram Meena. The event was attended by large number of locals.

While addressing the gathering, the Commandant said that CRPF, the largest paramilitary force has played an instrumental role in nation-building and safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country. He highlighted various civic action and social outreach programmes undertaken by CRPF across the nation to strengthen the bond between the Force and the local populace. The free medical camp was organised with the objective of providing healthcare services to needy villagers living in remote areas.

More than 300 people, including elderly persons, women and children from Karma village and adjoining areas benefited from the medical camp.

The services of Dr. Anu Gorke, SMO/DC and Dr. Biranmol Singh, AC/MO of 84 Bn CRPF ensured the successful conduct of the camp. Free treatment, medical tests such as ECG, blood and sugar tests, along with medicines were provided to all beneficiaries.

A free first-aid kit box along with basic medicines was also handed over to a prominent citizen and village health worker. The villagers expressed gratitude to 84 Bn CRPF for organising the first free medical camp in their remote village.

LG Sinha interacts with IDES Probationers



KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 17: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday interacted with the Indian Defence Estates Service (IDES) Probationers at Lok Bhawan.

During the interaction, the

Lieutenant Governor encouraged the young IDES officials to uphold the highest standards of public service and institutional integrity in their future assignments, contributing effectively to Defence land administration and governance.

Sonam Yangdol, Principal Director, Defence Estates, Northern Command; Ramswaroop Haritwal, Defence Estates Officer, Jammu Circle and Dr Nitish Gupta, Chief Executive Officer, Jammu Cantonment Board were also present. (KNO)

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Transform aspirations

the educational institutions to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit, fortify startup ecosystems, and close the chasm between prototypes and products, concepts and companies.

He stated that the skills that guaranteed employability just five years ago now fade into obsolescence.

"Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Blockchain, Quantum Computing, and Synthetic Biology are no longer distant horizons—they define our present and evolving at fast speed.

Classrooms must pivot from passive learning to active creation. Forget asking students, "What do you know?"—the new imperative is, "What can you build?" Spotlights should shift from individual gold-medal brilliance to interdisciplinary teamwork," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that the AI tools should not aim to replace human intelligence. He said that their purpose should be to augment it and amplify human capability.

"As cyber-physical systems and emerging technologies blur the boundaries between digital and physical worlds, we must build robust and secure solutions that genuinely improve ordinary people's lives rather than merely dazzling technical audiences," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor urged youth and entrepreneurs to focus on priorities for tech-powered answers and zero in on pertinent concepts and transmute them into viable commercial tools that uplift society, key sectors, and national progress.

The Hackathon organised by Skill, Incubation, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centre (SIIEDC), University of Jammu was aimed at promoting innovation, encouraging development of technology-driven solutions and strengthening entrepreneurial mindset.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice-Chancellor, University of Jammu; Prof. Alka Sharma, Director SIIEDC; Prof Anil Gupta, Dr Jatinder Manhas, faculty members, and innovators, startup entrepreneurs in large number attended the valedictory ceremony. (KNO)

Statehood decision

He said the objective of launching digital legal aid mechanisms is to ensure that individuals who are unable to physically access legal services can still receive timely assistance.

Explaining the mechanism, Meghwal said a person can visit the nearest Common Service Centre (CSC), present his or her grievance and get connected to a panel lawyer from the same area through a technical platform. "The lawyer will then provide guidance and legal aid," he said.

He stressed that the initiative also aims to encourage pre-litigation settlements so that disputes can be resolved before reaching courts.

"The purpose is that before going to court, the matter should be settled wherever possible," he said.

Responding to queries about increasing pendency in courts, Meghwal acknowledged that despite cases being disposed of regularly in the Supreme Court, High Courts and district courts, the inflow of fresh cases continues to rise. "There is a tendency of increasing pendency, and we are trying to fix it through multiple solutions," he said.

Among the key measures, he said, is the strengthening of Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, including arbitration, mediation and conciliation, to ensure quicker settlement of disputes.

He said the government is also focusing on expediting commercial courts to fast-track commercial litigation. "Some commercial matters would get delayed due to jurisdictional and procedural issues, but dedicated commercial courts have helped accelerate disposal," he said.

Meghwal also spoke about the adoption of "aging analysis" to prioritise long-pending cases. "We are analysing which cases have been pending for 40 years, 50 years and such matters should be heard first," he said, adding that technology will play a crucial role in reducing pendency across the judicial system. (KNO)

Restoration of J&K's statehood

continuing

"We were hopeful about receiving some good news, but we haven't lost hope. Continuous dialogue is underway. It has been around one and a half years, and hopefully we won't have to wait much longer," he said.

Welcoming the reopening of 11 tourist destinations in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Minister termed it a "good and timely decision" and thanked the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah for issuing directions in this regard.

SIA chargesheets 2 for spreading secessionist content to radicalize youth

KNO

Srinagar, Feb 17: The State Investigation Agency (SIA), Kashmir on Tuesday filed a comprehensive charge sheet before the Competent Court against two accused persons—Altar Hussain Wagay, resident of Reban, Gund Behram, Shopian, and Shabir Ahmad Sheikh, resident of Rampura, Qaimoh, Kulgam (presently operating from across the border)—for their involvement in unlawful and anti-national activities

linked to the proscribed terrorist organisation Hizbul Mujahideen-HM.

As per a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), spokesperson said the case pertains to the dissemination and propagation of anti-national, secessionist, and pro-terrorist content through various social media platforms with the intent to radicalize youth and disturb public order in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

'Over 17.27 lakh kanals of state land encroached in J&K, 14.29 lakh recovered'

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Feb 17: The Government on Tuesday informed the House that over 17.27 lakh kanals of state land have been encroached across Jammu and Kashmir, of which over 14.29 lakh kanals have been retrieved so far.

Replies to a question tabled by MLA Sham Lal Sharma regarding the status of encroached and retrieved state land, the Revenue Department told the House, as per the news agency—Kashmir

News Observer (KNO), that in the Kashmir division, 3,27,98.50 kanals of state land have been encroached, of which 2,16,912.98 kanals have been retrieved.

It stated that in the Jammu division, 14,00,049.66 kanals of land have been encroached, while 12,12,287.44 kanals have been retrieved.

In total, 17,27,248.16 kanals of state land were found encroached across J&K, of which 14,29,200.42 kanals have been retrieved. (KNO)

"It is a good thing that these destinations have been reopened. I had met the Home Minister in Delhi and he had also come to meet recently. I requested him to open the closed areas. There is no point in keeping them shut. Even in the worst of circumstances, we have not kept these places closed," CM Omar said.

He said the Home Minister had assured him that necessary instructions would be issued and the order has now been implemented. "I am thankful to the Home Minister for this decision," he added.

Referring to tourist spots like Yousmarg and Dodhpathri, the Chief Minister said locals had suffered heavy losses due to the suspension of tourism activities. "The people living there incurred losses because of the closure. Now that the season is starting, I hope tourists will visit and take advantage of the beauty of these places," he said.

The Chief Minister also launched a sharp attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), alleging a stark difference between its claims and actions.

He referred to a 2021 case related to alleged occupation of government land and said facts would eventually surface. "There is always a difference in what they say and what they do," he said.

CM Omar further alleged that more than 90 per cent of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) of a Member of Parliament representing Jammu & Kashmir was spent in Uttar Pradesh instead of the Union Territory. "He represents Jammu & Kashmir, sits here and has taken land from here, but when it comes to spending CDF, more than 90 per cent has been spent in UP. This clearly shows the gap between words and actions," he said.

On the power situation, the Chief Minister acknowledged reports of a 34 per cent electricity deficit but assured that efforts were being made to minimise inconvenience, especially during the holy month of Ramzan.

"There may be cuts due to the deficit, but this is not a new issue. We have inherited this deficit. It will be addressed over time as new power projects become operational," he said.

Omar said he had convened a meeting to ensure that during city planning and preparations for the holy month, electricity cuts are kept to a minimum. "At least during this holy month, all efforts will be taken to reduce hardships faced by the people," he added.

On the issue of regularisation, the Chief Minister said a time-bound policy would be implemented as announced in the Assembly and urged people to avoid protests.

"When we have already said in the Assembly that a time-bound process of regularisation will be implemented under a proper policy this year, then there is no need to come out on the streets. It is not good for them and not good for their future," he said. (KNO)

Tele-law key to

Government of India, under the Tele-Law initiative of the DISHA (Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice) scheme, implemented by the Department of Justice.

"Justice delayed is justice denied. If it takes more time to get justice, it is equivalent to not getting justice," the Chief Minister said, underlining that pendency remains a major challenge for the judiciary across the country.

He called for a three-fold strategy to tackle backlog: speedy disposal of cases being filed, reduction of existing pendency and most importantly, ensuring that fewer avoidable new cases reach the courts.

"Only those cases should come to court where judicial hearing is necessary. Tele-Law helps by explaining the law, informing people about their rights and promoting mediation. If disputes are resolved before reaching court, the burden on courts will automatically come down," he said.

Highlighting the importance of technology-enabled access to justice, the Chief Minister said Tele-Law connects citizens, particularly in rural and remote areas with qualified lawyers through digital platforms, enabling them to seek legal advice without physically travelling long distances.

He stressed the need to expand pro-bono legal support under the initiative. "We must connect more lawyers on a pro-bono basis so that everyone gets justice at the right time and in the right place. After this workshop, together with the Government of India and the Ministry of Justice, we should see how this scheme can be strengthened and expanded further," he said.

The Chief Minister also pointed out that while urban populations have relatively easier access to legal services, people living in far-flung areas often lack awareness about their rights and available legal remedies.

"For those in remote areas, reaching a lawyer is not easy. Tele-Law bridges this gap and ensures that legal assistance reaches their

doorstep through technology," he said.

Sharing data on the scheme's progress in Jammu & Kashmir, the CM said that Tele-Law, which initially covered only two districts, has now expanded to all 20 districts of the Union Territory. More than 4,000 panchayats are currently being covered and over 7.5 lakh legal advices have been delivered so far.

However, he said numbers alone do not define success. "We must assess whether this outreach is sufficient in proportion to our population and whether we can do more. The purpose of this workshop is to evaluate our performance, compare it with other states and adopt best practices wherever needed," he said.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the role of Common Service Centres (CSCs) in implementing the initiative, noting that Tele-Law has provided them with additional work opportunities and enhanced their sustainability.

"If we can further strengthen Tele-Law through such deliberations, we will be able to reach more people and significantly reduce the pressure on courts," he added, terming the workshop an important step towards inclusive and accessible justice delivery.

Meanwhile, the event was also addressed by Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal, Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh Justice Arun Palli, Secretary Law & Justice, Government of India Niraj Verma, besides senior officials and stakeholders. (KNO)

Justice must not

are playing a transformative role in bridging the gap between citizens and the justice delivery system.

Delivering an address at the Regional Event-cum-Workshop under the Tele-Law Initiative of the DISHA scheme at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC), MoS Meghwal focused on strengthening technology-enabled justice delivery and expanding legal awareness mechanisms across Jammu and Kashmir.

As reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), MoS Meghwal underscored that the Constitution of India is the cornerstone of justice, equality, and dignity. He said that Articles 14, 21, and 39A collectively mandate equal protection of laws, protection of life and liberty, and the provision of free legal aid to ensure that justice is not denied due to economic or other disabilities.

Reiterating the core message that every citizen has the right to justice under the Constitution, the Minister said that initiatives like Tele-Law are practical instruments to translate constitutional promises into ground-level impact.

"Justice must not remain confined to courtrooms but must be accessible in villages, remote mountainous regions, and underserved communities," he said.

Highlighting the transformative role of technology, Meghwal said digital platforms have significantly bridged distances and enabled citizens to seek timely pre-litigation advice without physically travelling long distances.

He also noted that Tele-Law services delivered through Common Service Centres have helped connect beneficiaries with panel lawyers and pro bono advocates, reducing unnecessary litigation and easing the burden on courts.

"Tele-Law, Nyaya Bandhu, and legal literacy programmes are aligned with the vision of Dr B.R. Ambedkar for social and economic justice," MoS Meghwal said. "Strengthening legal awareness is equally important as strengthening legal infrastructure, as informed citizens are better equipped to safeguard their rights."

Calling for the expansion of the pro bono ecosystem, the minister encouraged greater participation of advocates in voluntary legal services.

"Smaller and decentralised workshops should be organised to widen outreach and build a robust grassroots-level network of legal assistance providers," he said.

He further interacted with Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), panel lawyers, and students, appreciating their role in facilitating last-mile justice delivery.

Meghwal also referred to the Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana, 2025, and shared an account to underline the importance of strong legal support systems for families of soldiers and vulnerable sections of society.

He said a responsive legal framework is essential for ensuring dignity and timely relief to such families.

Lauding the contribution of Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh Arun Palli, the minister said that his dedicated service has had a visible and positive impact across the region.

He further expressed confidence that continued cooperation between the judiciary, executive, and grassroots institutions would further strengthen justice delivery mechanisms.

Meghwal also expressed confidence that collective efforts would transform Jammu & Kashmir into a model region for technology-enabled, inclusive access to justice.

The Union MoS said sustained focus on legal literacy, digital integration, and pro bono expansion would ensure that justice reaches every doorstep.

The workshop, he said, was not merely an event but a step towards deepening constitutional values and strengthening citizen-centric justice delivery in the Union Territory. (KNO)

Tele-law benefits

He was speaking at a regional event-cum-workshop on Tele-Law activities organised by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law & Justice, at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) here.

Addressing the gathering Secretary Verma, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said Jammu & Kashmir is not only geographically distinctive but also a profound embodiment of India's pluralistic constitutional spirit, enriched by its shared cultural heritage and strong community values.

He expressed gratitude to the Union Law Minister for his visionary leadership in shaping and advancing the Disha Scheme and thanked the Chief Minister and the Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh for their presence, terming it a reflection of collective commitment towards strengthening legal awareness and access to justice.

"Our Constitution assures every citizen justice, social, economic and political. However, the real challenge lies in translating these constitutional promises into lived realities, particularly for citizens residing in remote and underserved areas," Verma said.

He said ensuring that justice is accessible, affordable and timely for the last person standing in the queue remains the central objective of the Department of Justice. "It is with this vision that Disha, Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice was conceptualised," he added.

Recalling Article 39A of the Constitution, the Secretary Verma said the Department of Justice had earlier implemented a special project for the North-East and Jammu & Kashmir from 2012 to 2017 to enhance legal awareness among the poor and marginalised, including undertrial prisoners.

"Legal aid was extended through law colleges and by establishing village-based legal clinics to ensure grassroots outreach."

Building upon that foundation, he said several impactful programmes are presently underway under the Disha Scheme, including Tele-Law, Nyaya Bandhu, Pro Bono Legal Services and various legal awareness initiatives.

"In Jammu & Kashmir alone, the Tele-Law programme has directly benefited over 7.5 lakh beneficiaries by providing timely pre-litigation legal advice through a robust network of 4,193 Common Service Centres and panel lawyers," he said.

Verma also informed that during the workshop, a comprehensive presentation titled "Disha in Jammu & Kashmir" would be made, highlighting the progress, outreach and impact of Tele-Law and associated initiatives in the Union Territory. "The presentation, he said, would provide valuable insights into the scheme's performance, beneficiary reach and efforts to strengthen grassroots justice delivery mechanisms."

He also extended gratitude to delegates, officers, stakeholders and field functionaries for their active participation in the regional workshop.

"Together, let us continue working towards strengthening access to justice, deepening legal awareness and upholding the constitutional values that form the foundation of our democracy, especially for the citizens of Jammu & Kashmir," he said. (KNO)

Uproarious scenes

also stood up and asked Randhawa to apologise to Kashmiris.

Amid the commotion, Deputy Chief Surinder Choudhary urged Randhawa to apologise, stating that he belonged to a community that could never be communal.

"Land encroachers have no religion," Choudhary remained.

As Congress and NC MLAs persisted with their demand, Randhawa said that he would retract his remarks if he had used any such words.

"I didn't make against any specific community, if I have used such words, I will take them

India intensifying engagement with global partners from position of strength: Jaishankar

PTI

Mumbai, Feb 17: India is engaging with international partners more intensively and from a "position of strength", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Tuesday, citing a string of recent trade agreements as evidence of the country's growing economic clout.

In an address at the Global Economic Cooperation conference, Jaishankar highlighted the successful negotiation of several high-profile deals, including a significant trade pact with the United States.

The Global Economic Cooperation is an event organised by the Future Economic Cooperation Council in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Government of Maharashtra.

Describing the current international landscape as perhaps the most turbulent in living memory, the minister warned that the world is witnessing the "weaponisation" of production and finance, alongside tightening export controls and volatile market shifts.

"The established global order is clearly changing. Replacements are hard to create, and we appear to be headed to a long twilight zone. This will be messy, risky, unpredictable, perhaps even dangerous," he said.

Long-standing assumptions and expectations have now become questionable, the minister pointed out.

Key dimensions are transforming simultaneously, be it strategic, political, economic or technological. Solutions lie in derisking and diversifying across multiple domains. This approach is increasingly visible in the policy of nations, the EAM said.

Jaishankar stressed that the "reform express" will continue to roll on.

"From a position of strength, India is engaging international partners more intensively. This is demonstrated in



the recently concluded trade deals," he said.

Economic security is best served through stronger self-reliance and more trusted partners, the minister added.

Following a phone conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, both sides recently announced a reduction of US tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from 50 per cent.

However, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, has alleged that the government "sold Bharat Mata" through the trade deal with the US, saying it was a "whole-some surrender", with India's energy security handed over to America and farmers' interests compromised.

Last month, India and the European Union (EU) concluded negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA), which will help boost two-way commerce and strengthen economic ties between the two sides. Over the last year, India has also finalised trade deals with the UK, New Zealand and Oman. Jaishankar said that the world

has entered a volatile and uncertain era, possibly the most turbulent in living memory.

He emphasised that India will also be more salient in the global calculus of production, on services, technology, skills and knowledge.

Economics will give way to politics and security when it comes to making choices and technology in the age of AI (Artificial Intelligence), he noted.

The minister further said that the US is determined to reindustrialise at any cost, and this is central to its tech future.

China's manufacturing and export focus continues unabated and may even expand, he added.

Technology competition is intensifying and polarising. Energy trade flows are being significantly redefined. New mindsets are encouraging greater risk-taking, including through military means. Migration and even mobility are getting contentious, he pointed out.

"Each nation and each society will respond as per their interests and calculations," Jaishankar said.

'Absolutely uncalled for': SC expresses concern over growing trend of lawyers using AI to file pleas

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed serious concern over a growing trend of lawyers filing petitions drafted with AI tools that contain non-existent judgements such as 'Mercy vs Mankind'.

"We are alarmed to reflect that some lawyers have started using AI to draft petitions. It is absolutely uncalled for," a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices B V Nagarathna and Joymalya Bagchi said. The bench made

the observations while hearing a PIL filed by academician Roop Rekha Verma seeking guidelines on political speeches.

Justice Nagarathna said she recently came across a non-existent citation, 'Mercy vs Mankind'.

The CJI referred to a similar instance and said that in Justice Dipankar Datta's court, "not one but a series of such judgements were cited".

Justice Nagarathna said that at times, the judgements referred to are correct, but fake quotes are attributed to those verdicts, making it very difficult to verify the contents.

Maintenance to wife not charity, but a right to uphold equity, justice: HC

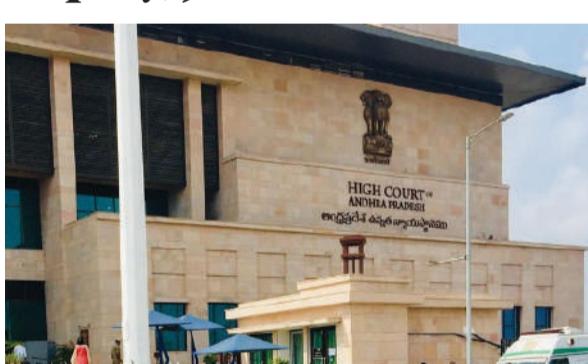
PTI

Amaravati, Feb 17: The Andhra Pradesh High Court has affirmed that awarding maintenance to an estranged wife is not charity but a right, whose enforcement is essential to uphold equity, justice and good conscience.

Upholding a family court's order awarding Rs 7,500 per month maintenance to Chinna nam Kiranmayi Smily and Rs 5,000 per month to her minor son, Justice Y Lakshmana Rao said maintenance jurisprudence in India stands as a testament to the judiciary's resolve to uphold equity, justice and good conscience.

Justice Rao said the resolve is to ensure that no wife, child, or dependent parent is left languishing in penury due to the neglect of those legally bound to sustain them," said the High Court Judge in his order on February 9.

Aggrieved over the family court's order on March 3, 2018, Chinna nam Kishore Kumar moved the High Court, arguing that it suffers from perversity and material irregularity. Kumar's



conscience. Thus, maintenance jurisprudence in India stands as a testament to the judiciary's resolve to ensure that no wife, child, or dependent parent is left to languish in penury due to the neglect of those legally bound to sustain them," said the High Court Judge in his order on February 9.

Aggrieved over the family court's order on March 3, 2018, Chinna nam Kishore Kumar moved the High Court, arguing that it suffers from perversity and material irregularity. Kumar's

criminal revision case asserted that the family court had erred in granting maintenance and accused his estranged wife of initiating multiple proceedings.

Further, he noted that the order mandating the payment of Rs 7,500 per month to his wife and Rs 5,000 per month to his minor son is excessive, arbitrary, and violative of the principles of natural justice.

He urged the High Court to set aside the family court's judgment as being unsustainable in law.

Stock markets rise for second day on gains in bank, IT stocks

PTI

Mumbai, Feb 17: Stock markets closed higher for the second straight session on Tuesday, driven by gains in bank, IT and capital goods shares. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 173.81 points, or 0.21 per cent, to close at 83,450.96. The index moved between a high of 83,598 and a low of 82,987.43 during the day.

The 50-share NSE Nifty advanced 42.65 points, or 0.17 per cent, to settle at 25,725.40.

Among the Sensex constituents, ITC, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, Asian Paints, Titan, Adani Ports, HCL Technologies, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Maruti Suzuki India, IndiGo,

State Bank of India and Tech Mahindra were the major gainers. On the other hand, Eternia, Tata Steel, Trent, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Hindustan Unilever ended with losses. Broader indices also traded firm, with the BSE Smallcap Select Index rising 0.49 per cent, and Midcap Select Index gained 0.26 per cent. Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments, said, "Domestic markets traded in a range-bound manner. The IT sector, following a sharp correction, witnessed selective bottom-fishing, aided by announcements of strategic collaborations with global AI partners."

PM Modi holds talks with French President Macron in Mumbai

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held wide-ranging talks with French President Emmanuel Macron to boost ties in key sectors such as trade, defence, energy and critical technologies.

Macron landed in Mumbai early this morning on a three-day visit to attend the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi and meet PM Modi. After the talks with Modi, Macron will attend a ceremony to launch the India-France Year of Innovation.

His visit comes days after India cleared a long-pending proposal to procure 114 Rafale fighter jets under a government-to-government framework with France.

It has been billed as one of the world's biggest military procurement programmes in recent years. It is learnt



that shoring up defence cooperation and enhancing bilateral engagement in the critical technology sector are priority areas to take forward the ties. "Welcome to India! India looks forward to your visit and to advancing our

bilateral ties to new heights. I am confident that our discussions will further strengthen cooperation across sectors and contribute to global progress," Modi said on social media earlier in the day in response to a post by Macron.

AI regulations enough for innovations to thrive: Union MoS Prasada

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 17: The regulations for artificial intelligence are not meant to over-regulate but to ensure enough regulation for innovations to thrive in the country, Union Minister Jitin Prasada said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the Amazon Web Services (AWS) New Delhi Symposium 2026, the minister emphasised that everyone should be able to reap the benefits of technology transformation.

India is a fast-growing market that offers opportunities for various technological innovations, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions.

"Scale, speed, innovation and inclusion" are the strengths of India, Prasada said.

Prasada is the Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology as well as Commerce & Industry.

Talking about AI, he said, as far as the policy for regulations goes, they are not aimed at over-regulating and that the regulations are



enough for innovations to thrive.

and all, he added.

AWS India & South Asia President Sandeep Dutta said India's success with AI would truly depend on the ability to democratise technology and one of the pillars that would underpin this success would be the scope and expanse of the digital public infrastructure.

Meanwhile, at a session, Indian Oil Corporation Chairman Arvinder Singh Sahney said the world is looking at

energy transition in a very positive manner. The wave of transition that is moving towards more and more sustainable energy and these energy options are God-send opportunities for a country like India and for a company like Indian Oil Corp.

This is because today India imports crude oil worth USD 135 billion every year, and "I have to find solutions which are more amenable to me, that are more palatable to me... it is not an option for me to go for (energy) transition or not, I have to transition," he said.

Sahney also said the company is approaching the AI revolution in a 2.0 form wherein it wants to be more focused on customer centricity and on how to predict customer behaviour.

At the symposium, AWS and industry body Nasscom announced entering into a strategic collaboration to skill 2,50,000 learners in AI & Cloud by 2027.

India is hosting the five-day AI Impact Summit that started on Monday in the national capital.

SHOW TIMINGS

Wednesday, 18th February

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WUTHERING HEIGHTS (A)
 ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
 11:55 AM

CRIME 101 (A)
 ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
 11:00 AM

TU YAA MAIN (U/A 16+)
 HINDI - 02:45 PM, 06:15 PM

O'ROMEO (A)
 HINDI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES - 01:45 PM
 HINDI ATMOS - 11:30 AM, 03:15 PM, 06:45 PM

BORDER 2 (U/A 13+)
 HINDI - 05:30 PM

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

رمضان المبارك

1447 H / 2026 CE

وقت افطار	اختمام سحرى	رمضان المبارك	تاریخ
06:34 PM	05:31 AM	16	06
06:34 PM	05:30 AM	17	07
06:35 PM	05:28 AM	18	08
06:36 PM	05:27 AM	19	09
06:37 PM	05:26 AM	20	10
06:38 PM	05:25 AM	21	11
06:38 PM	05:24 AM	22	12
06:39 PM	05:23 AM	23	13
06:40 PM	05:20 AM	24	14
06:41 PM	05:19 AM	25	15
06:42 PM	05:18 AM	26	16
06:42 PM	05:16 AM	27	17
06:43 PM	05:15 AM	28	18
06:44 PM	05:14 AM	29	19
06:45 PM	05:12 AM	30	20

وقت افطار	اختمام سحرى	رمضان المبارك	تاریخ
06:21 PM	05:49 AM	1	19
06:22 PM	05:48 AM	2	20
06:23 PM	05:47 AM	3	21
06:24 PM	05:46 AM	4	22
06:24PM	05: 45 AM	5	23
06:25 PM	05:44 AM	6	24
06:26 PM	05:42 AM	7	25
06:27 PM	05:41 AM	8	26
06:28 PM	05:40 AM	9	27
06:29 PM	05:39 AM	10	28
06:30 PM	05:38 AM	11	01 MAR
06:31 PM	05:37 AM	12	02
06:32 PM	05:36 AM	13	03
06:33 PM	05:34 AM	14	04
06:33 PM	05:33 AM	15	05

DUA FOR SEHRI

وَبِصَوْمٍ غَدِّ نَوْيْتَ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ

I intend to keep the fast for tomorrow in the month of Ramadan

DUA FOR IFTAAR

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي لَكَ صُفتُ وَبِكَ امْنَثُ [وَعَلَيْكَ تَوْكِّتُ] وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ

O Allah! I fasted for You and I believe in You and I put my trust in You and I break my fast with Your sustenance

Kashmir
Thunder

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Phone: +91-9906797575, +91-9419006285

Info@kashmirnewsobserver.com | www.kashmirnewsobserver.com | www.kashmirthunder.com