



LG Sinha lays foundation stone of Sri Shankaracharya Temple envisioned in 1960

It'll serve as spiritual anchor for millions of devotees

SMVD Shrine Board will spend Rs 31.51 crore to build temple complex

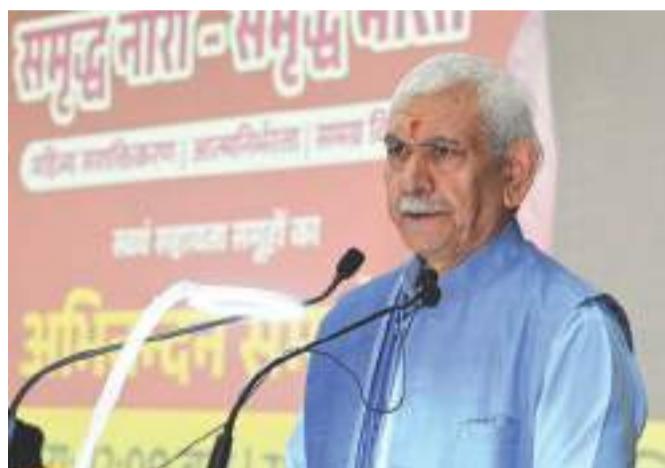
Board committed to developing Katra

Ropeway project won't hit livelihoods

Yogesh

Katra, Feb 18: In a landmark moment for the pilgrim town, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday laid the foundation stone of the much-anticipated Sri Shankaracharya Temple in Katra.

Describing the project as a significant step towards strengthening the spiritual and tourism landscape of the region, the Lieutenant Governor reaffirmed the commitment of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board to the holistic development of Katra. He emphasized that the proposed ropeway project is aimed at enhancing facilities for pilgrims and visitors while ensuring the livelihoods of local residents



remain fully protected. According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer

(KNO) the foundation stone of the revered temple was laid on hillocks beside the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. This project

took roots after decades, realizing a vision first envisioned in the 1960s. Total expenditure for the temple complex, amounting to Rs. 31.51 crore, will be fully borne by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.

While addressing the gathering after laying the foundation stone, LG Sinha, as per KNO said, "In the years ahead, the Sri Shankaracharya Temple will serve as a spiritual anchor for millions of devotees. It will be a living emblem of India's eternal culture, collective faith, resilience, and profound spiritual-cultural consciousness."

He said, "Devotees visiting Shri Mata Vaishno Devi for darshan will also come to Sri Shankaracharya Temple, generating | More on P6

J&K Govt rules out OPS revival, employees to remain under NPS

Yogesh

Jammu, Feb 18: Jammu & Kashmir Government on Wednesday ruled out any proposal to revive the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) for its employees.

In a written reply to a cut motion submitted by Peoples Conference MLA Sajad Gan Lone, the Minister in-charge of Finance informed the Legislative Assembly that there is no proposal to revive OPS, stating that the transition to the New Pension Scheme (NPS) was a conscious decision aimed at balancing fiscal sustainability with social security for government employees.

The introduction of the New Pension Scheme in 2004 by the Government of India, subsequently adopted by States and Union Territories,

was a conscious decision aimed at safeguarding fiscal sustainability while ensuring post-retirement social security to government employees," the reply reads, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

The Minister added that the government has consistently followed a policy of adopting employee welfare measures introduced by the Government of India, with the objective of maintaining parity and uniformity in service benefits for employees.

Defending the shift to NPS, the Minister said that the growing pension bill posed a serious challenge to the State's financial stability.

"The Jammu and Kashmir, being an expenditure-led state with limited avenues for investment, | More on P6

J&K creates history, storms into Ranji Trophy final for first time in 66 years

Auqib Nabi, Abdul Samad shine in semi-final



Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Feb 18: Jammu & Kashmir cricket team etched its name in the record books by qualifying for the final of the prestigious Ranji Trophy for the first time in 66 years.

The historic achievement

came after a spirited and hard-fought semi-final victory, powered by outstanding performances from pace sensation Auqib Nabi and dynamic all-rounder Abdul Samad, who rose to the occasion when it mattered most.

As reported | More on P6

LG Sinha, CM Omar, leaders hail team

J&K Assembly says achievement has inspired aspiring cricketers

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Feb 18: Jammu and Kashmir's sporting fraternity witnessed a landmark moment on Wednesday as the J&K cricket team scripted history by reaching the final of the prestigious Ranji Trophy for the first time.

The achievement drew widespread applause from political leaders, legislators, and sports lovers across the Union Territory.

Lieutenant | More on P6

Assembly adjourned over NLU

BJP MLAs protest, seek varsity in Jammu

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Assembly was adjourned on Wednesday after BJP MLAs protested against police action on students who were protesting to demand the establishment of a National Law University in Jammu.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the House witnessed uproar during the discussion on grants of departments headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, with BJP MLAs protesting the alleged use of force by police against the students.

Carrying placards that read "NLU for Jammu," the BJP MLAs raised slogans, demanding the university in Jammu.



Mubarak Gul, who was in the Chair, directed the BJP MLAs to refrain from displaying placards inside the House.

As BJP MLAs disrupted proceedings, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary accused them of enacting

NC MLA | More on P6

drama to mislead the people of Jammu.

"Where did these banners come from? They are staging drama here. They cannot be sympathisers of the people," he said.

NC MLA | More on P6

219 ventilators non-functional in J&K hospitals: Govt tells House

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Feb 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday informed the House that out of 877 ventilators installed across hospitals in the Union Territory, 219 remain non-functional, highlighting gaps in critical care infrastructure.

Replying to a question of MLA Shamim Firdous, Health and Medical Education Department Minister Sakina Itoo, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that 658 ventilators are functional while 219 are non-functional.

While giving institution-wise details, she said that in GMC Jammu and its

associated hospital there are 320 ventilators, among which 209 are functional and 111 are non-functional.

"In SMHS Srinagar, 80 ventilators are non-functional and in GMC Srinagar associated hospitals excluding SMHS, 44 are non-functional," they said.

They said, in GMC Anantnag, just 10 out of 36 ventilators are functional. GMC Barumalla has 2 non-functional ventilators, GMC Doda 10, GMC Kathua 2 and GMC Rajouri 3 are non-functional," they said adding in GMC Udhampur and GMC Handwara, all 39 and 6 ventilators respectively are functional.

The government further said, in SKIMS and its associated | More on P6

Khelo India Winter Games

IGP Kashmir reviews security preparedness

PTI

Srinagar, Feb 18: Kashmir Police chief V K Birdi, on Wednesday, reviewed the preparedness for the upcoming Khelo India Winter Games to be held at Gulmarg later this month.

A high-level security conference was held at Gulmarg in connection with upcoming events in the resort in north Kashmir, a police spokesperson said.

He said the conference was chaired by Birdi, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir. Senior officers of police, the Army, Central Armed Police Forces, intelligence agencies,

and civil administration participated in the meeting, the spokesperson said.

During the meeting, comprehensive deliberations were held on security arrangements, area domination, deployment plans, access control measures, traffic regulation, emergency response mechanisms, crowd management and inter-agency coordination to ensure smooth and secure conduct of upcoming events, he said.

The spokesperson said the IGP directed all agencies to maintain close synergy and ensure foolproof security arrangements for the events. The officers reiterated their | More on P6

PM Modi welcomes world leaders to AI Impact Summit; holds bilaterals with 7 PMs, presidents, 2 CEOs

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday welcomed world leaders, including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, for the ongoing AI Impact Summit here and held nine bilaterals with heads of state and CEOs.

The world leaders, including Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayaka and Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, were welcomed to an ensemble of traditional musical instruments, including drums, nadaswaram

and tanpura, with the prime minister greeting them with a warm handshake and exchange of pleasantries.

Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Croatia Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, Serbia President Aleksandar Vucic, Seychelles Vice President Sebastian Pillay, Estonia President Alar Karis, and Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo were among those welcomed by Modi at the brightly decorated Bharat Mandapam.

Greece Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Guyana Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo were also among the



leaders welcomed by the prime minister.

Modi held seven bilateral meetings with world leaders



and two with global CEOs and discussed issues of mutual

interest with them.

The leaders with whom

Modi held bilaterals included Bhutan's Tobgay, Spain President Pedro Sanchez, and Croatia's Plenkovic, among others.

The prime minister held two separate meetings with the CEO of Google, Sundar Pichai, and the cofounder of Sun Microsystems and the founder of Khosla Ventures, Vinod Khosla.

Held fruitful discussions with the Prime Minister of Croatia, Mr Andrej Plenkovic. We discussed how to add momentum to our bilateral partnership in areas such as technology, innovation, shipbuilding, blue | More on P6

Decongesting Srinagar Traffic

Key road, corridor development projects undertaken: Deputy CM

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Wednesday said that the government has undertaken various key road projects and corridor developments to decongest traffic flow across downtown and arterial roads in Srinagar district.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement was replying to a question raised by Legislator Tanvir Sadiq in the Legislative Assembly.

He informed the House that projects currently under various stages for execution included Nowshera to Soura (KZP Road), Saida kadal to Ashaibagh (SMS Road), Devi Angan-Hawal road besides Alamgiri Bazar Chowk and Mirza Kamil Sahib (MK Sahib) Chowk corridors.

"The road stretches in downtown Srinagar, being old alignments, are struggling to cope with increased traffic, urbanization, and commercial activity, leading to congestion during peak hours," stated the Deputy CM.

He said that routine maintenance and necessary repairs are being carried out periodically to ensure trafficability and road safety.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that with preliminary assessments for improvement and widening of identified stretches have been undertaken. "Comprehensive widening in most cases entails substantial land acquisition, shifting of utilities and removal of encroachments, requiring inter-departmental coordination," he said.

He added that the land acquisition process has also been affected in certain stretches due to court litigations, thereby impacting the progress.

Sharing details, the Deputy Chief Minister informed that the structures near Nalbal Bridge part of Nowshera to Soura (KZP Road) have been acquired while acquisition of remaining structures would be taken up after settlement/negotiation in



the High Level Committee (HLC) and finalization of pending court cases.

He said survey for widening of Saida Kadal to Ashaibagh (SMS Road) is presently underway for a length of approximately 1.75 km. Besides, the proposal envisages widening of the carriageway from 7.50 meter to 21.00 meter and Detailed Project Report (DPR) is being submitted after completion of survey and feasibility formalities.

He informed that the preliminary project report for widening/upgradation of Devi Angan-Hawal Road has been prepared under CRIF for an estimated cost of Rs. 31.25 crore (including land acquisition and utility shifting cost of Rs. 30.00 crore and development cost of Rs. 1.25 crore) for a length of 1.40 km. "The project shall be taken up upon approval under the scheme and subject to the availability of funds," he added.

He said that the project of Alamgiri Bazar Chowk stands approved under UT Sector 2025-26 for an amount of Rs. 335.00 Lakh which includes acquisition of 05 structures and junction redesigning.

Further, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the project of Mirza Kamil Sahib (MK Sahib) Chowk Junction redesigning has been approved under UT Sector 2025-26 for an amount of Rs. 135.00 lakh.

He said that the government is cognisant of the traffic congestion issues in downtown Srinagar and the necessity of ensuring smooth movement of ambulances, fire services and other emergency vehicles. He said that the road up-gradation and improvement works are being undertaken in a phased manner.

"Improvement works such as resurfacing, strengthening, drainage correction and junction re-modelling are being executed under regular R&B grants and other infrastructure development schemes," he added.

The supplementaries were raised by Legislators Mubarik Gul and Shamim Firdous.

SMC Commissioner inspects EESL Lights Godown to assess quality standards



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 18: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, conducted a comprehensive inspection of the EESL lights godown to assess the quality standards and stock position of LED street lights being installed within the municipal limits under the Street Lighting Management Programme (SLMP).

The Commissioner, as per an official statement, was accompanied by the Executive Engineer (Electric) and other senior officials from the SMC Electrical Wing during the inspection. The team examined the technical specifications, storage conditions, and inventory records of the lighting materials to ensure strict compliance with approved standards.

Emphasizing robust quality control measures, the Commissioner directed the concerned officers to ensure that all LED lights conform to prescribed technical benchmarks to guarantee optimal illumination, enhanced public safety, and long-term durability. He also instructed officials to maintain proper stock registers and implement effective monitoring mechanisms to uphold transparency and accountability in procurement and installation processes.

The inspection underscores SMC's continued commitment to strengthening urban infrastructure, promoting energy efficiency, and delivering improved civic amenities to the residents of Srinagar under the SLMP.

Skill Development programme on Drug Discovery, Biomedical Research concludes



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, February 18: The three-day Skill Development Program on Drug Discovery and Biomedical Research concluded successfully at the CSIR-IIIM Srinagar Branch. The hands-on training, organized by CSIR-IIIM Srinagar Branch, focused on practical laboratory techniques in biological assays and in vivo mice experiments and brought together early-career researchers, laboratory professionals, and students for intensive skill building under the CSIR-Integrated Skill Initiatives.

The Program, as per PIB statement was organized by Dr Fayaz Malik, Chief Scientist and his Research Group who gave participants hands-on Training on Drug Discovery and Biomedical Research. Biological Assays and Mice Experiments provided participants with practical exposure to experimental design, assay execution, data collection, and ethical conduct of small animal studies. Over three days, participants completed a structured sequence of laboratory modules with Day 1 focusing on Assay design and in vitro techniques. Participants learned assay selection and optimization, sample preparation, cell-based assay setup, and quantitative readouts using spectrophotometric and plate-based methods. Emphasis was placed on controls, reproducibility, and data integrity. On Day 2, Participants were given hands on training on biological assays and analytical methods. The second day covered advanced biological assays, dose-response analysis, basic pharmacokinetic sampling, and interpretation of assay results. Hands-on sessions included ELISA, enzymatic activity assays, and troubleshooting common assay artifacts.

The program was coordinated by Dr. Nasir ul Rasheed, Nodal, Skill Development under CSIR-Integrated Skill Initiatives. This training forms part of CSIR's broader effort to bridge academia and industry through targeted, job-oriented skill development.

samples for downstream analysis while following biosafety and animal welfare standards.

Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, Director CSIR-IIIM Jammu and holding additional charge of CSIR-CIMAP Lucknow, sent a virtual message to participants. He congratulated the organizers and trainees and highlighted the importance of integrating rigorous laboratory practice with translational research. He noted that proficiency in assay validation, proper animal model selection, and robust data management is essential for advancing drug discovery pipelines and for producing reproducible, publishable results.

Er. Abdul Rahim, Head IIIM Srinagar Branch and Chief Scientist RMBD & IST, addressed the valedictory session virtually. He commended the practical orientation of the program and underscored the branch's commitment to building local capacity in preclinical research. He emphasized the need for standardized protocols, quality assurance in biological assays, and adherence to regulatory and ethical frameworks in animal studies.

Dr. Fayaz Malik thanked the faculty, technical staff and participants for their enthusiasm and noted that the interactive module was designed to rapidly upskill attendees in techniques directly relevant to drug discovery workflows. Dr. Reyaz Ul Hassan, Sr. Principal Scientist highlighted the role of careful experimental planning and documentation in translating bench results into actionable leads. Dr. Muzamil Ahmad, Pr. Scientist also spoke at the closing, offering practical tips on data analysis and quality control that participants can apply immediately in their laboratories.

The program was coordinated by Dr. Nasir ul Rasheed, Nodal, Skill Development under CSIR-Integrated Skill Initiatives. This training forms part of CSIR's broader effort to bridge academia and industry through targeted, job-oriented skill development.

6th Khelo India Winter Games: Div Com Kashmir reviews arrangements

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 18: Following the announcement of dates for the commencement of 2nd leg of the 6th Edition of the Khelo India Winter Games at Gulmarg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg chaired a comprehensive meeting to review preparations for the smooth and successful conduct of the national sporting event.

The meeting, as per an official statement was attended by Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Commissioner SMC, SSP Traffic Srinagar, SSP Security, SSP Traffic Rural, Secretary, J&K Sports Council, CEO GDA, RTO, and officers from various departments including Information, Health, PHE, KPDC, Transport, Hospitality & Protocol, Tourism, Cable Car Corporation, IMD, ULB, RDD, Rural Sanitation, Doordarshan, and other concerned agencies.

At the outset, Secretary, J&K Sports Council gave a detailed presentation



covering the number of participants, expected VIP attendance, scheduled events, accommodation availability, transportation plans, cultural programmes, and promotional activities.

While chairing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed a wide range of arrangements, including the arrival of participants at Srinagar Airport, transportation logistics to

Gulmarg, accommodation facilities, and essential services such as electricity, drinking water, sanitation, mobile network connectivity, and critical healthcare services. He stressed the mandatory use of anti-skid chains by vehicles operating on Gulmarg-Tangmarg road.

Emphasizing synergy and accountability, he directed the appointment of nodal officers for specific roles and assignments.

He also ordered the activation of a joint control room to facilitate effective communication among stakeholder departments and ensure timely dissemination of information, further strengthening interdepartmental coordination.

The Divisional Commissioner instructed the Chief Medical Officer to ensure the availability of an ECG machine at Gondola, deployment of medical teams, and placement of a critical care ambulance at the venue. He also called for maintaining cleanliness and sanitation at the venues and along the route from Srinagar Airport to Gulmarg.

Highlighting safety measures, he directed an increase in the number of Avalanche Rescue Team members for immediate response to any hazard and emphasized the mandatory use of anti-skid chains by vehicles operating on Gulmarg-Tangmarg road.

Also, he instructed the Director Tourism to leverage the event to promote tourism activities and boost tourist footfall in the region.

Govt. Of Jammu & Kashmir (U.T) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION VAILOO

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No. 114/9726-35 of R&B/Vailoo/2025-2026-e-tendering DATED:17/02/2026

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory J&K e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works.

S. No	Name of Work	Approved Amount (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. inform of Treasury Challan / Receipt (in Rs)	Earnest Money (2% of Adv. Cost) (in Rs.)	Time of completion	Project Intending Department	Class of Contractor	Major Head of account
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Construction of Girls Toilet at Primary school Hallan Mal	01.740	200	3480	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
2	Construction of Girls Toilet at middle school Herpora	01.740	200	3480	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
3	Construction of Girls Toilet at Middle school Kralpora	01.740	200	3480	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
4	Construction of Girls Toilet at middle school Aatinag Shangus	01.744	200	3488	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
5	Construction of Girls Toilet at middle school Bonapora	01.745	200	3490	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
6	Construction of Girls Toilet at middle school Gawan Chittigul	01.683	200	3366	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
7	Construction of Girls Toilet at middle school at Herpora Gojarbasti Narsar	01.680	200	3360	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
8	Construction of Girls Toilet at middle school Khalhar	01.702	200	3404	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
9	Construction of Girls toilet at middle school Mohripora	01.745	200	3490	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
10	Construction of Girls Toilet at middle school Nagbal	01.749	200	3498	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB
11	Construction of Girls Toilet at Primary School Wadipora Magraypora	01.745	200	3490	25 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB

Position of AA: Accorded

Position of TS: Accorded

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	17.02.2026
2.	Period of Downloading of bidder documents.	From 17.02.2026 05.00 pm
3.	Bid submission Start Date	From 17.02.2026 05.00 pm
4.	Bid Submission End Date	To 23.02.2026 04.00 pm

5. Date & time of opening of Bids (Online) 24.02.2026 at 10.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Vailoo

Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt (Under MH- 0059 PWD in favor of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Vailoo (Tender inviting Authority) (NIT No. and Name of Work/Item No. to be mentioned on the 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 pledged to Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Vailoo (Tender receiving Authority). (The Date of EMD(CDR/FDR) should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date and the validity at the time of opening of bids shall be for a period of 45 days beyond bid validity of 120 days)।

1. The 1st Lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of allotted cost as performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR within 07 days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of defective liability period of the work.

2. The EMD of 2% of successful bidders shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance Security.

3. Only those contractors are eligible for taking part in the bidding process whose contractor registration card is enrolled online on the JKPWDOMS portal and the Proof of that needs to be uploaded with this bid mandatorily.

4. The Advertised cost is inclusive of GST@18%. The bidder has to quote the rate exclusive of GST.

5. Security Deposit shall be deposited by the contractor within 10 days of issuance of LOI, failing which the concerned tender

6. The contractor shall initiate the work within 10 days of entering into the agreement, failing which the undersigned shall terminate the contract and issue a fresh tender after imposing penalties viz forfeit security/LD as per T&C of the Bid document and recommend contractor for blacklisting.

7. The work shall be completed by the concerned contractor as per the timeline stipulated in the bid document/agreement, failing which action shall be initiated against contractor by forfeiting EMD and shall be recommended for blacklisting.

8. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an 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 R&B Division Vailoo (tender receiving authority).

9. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form)

Ramadan Kareem Dates take center stage in Srinagar



(Pic: Jahanzeb Shah (KNO))

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Feb 18: With the holy month of Ramadan beginning today, Srinagar's markets are buzzing as shoppers and vendors gear up for the festivities. Stalls are alive with a vibrant variety of dates, a staple for breaking the fast.

Traders said that this

year's selection includes both locally grown dates and premium imports from multiple countries, ranging from sweet Medjool to nutrient-rich Ajwa.

"Compared to a few years back, shoppers now have far more choices. People are looking for both quality and variety, not just locally grown but

imported dates as well," said Rashid Ahmad, a vendor at Maharaji Bazar.

Popular markets such as Maharaji Bazar, Zaina Kadai, and Koker Bazar have seen heavy footfall in recent days.

Families are buying dates alongside dry fruits, beverages, and other essentials to ensure they

have enough for Sehri (pre-dawn meal) and Iftar (breaking the fast).

"We come early to avoid the rush and pick the best dates for the family," said Ayesha Bhat, a local resident. "Dates are not just about tradition; they are also nutritious and a good way to break the fast," added Imran, another shopper—(KNO)

NC leadership greets people

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Feb 18: The Jammu & Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Vice President and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah have extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious onset of the Holy Month of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak.

In their message, the duo conveyed their heartfelt wishes to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the Muslim community across the country and abroad. They emphasized that the holy month of Ramzan is a time of spiritual reflection, compassion, self-discipline, and devotion. It is an occasion that reinforces the values of patience, generosity, humility, and service to humanity.

They expressed hope that this sacred month will usher in peace, prosperity, and harmony in the region and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and mutual respect among all communities. They also prayed for lasting peace, progress, and well-being for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

They urged people to observe the holy month with a spirit of unity, empathy, and collective responsibility, and to remember the underprivileged and those in need during this blessed time. The party's rank and file have also congratulated the people on the blessed occasion of Ramzan ul Mubarak.

Dy CM objects to Assembly banners



WARIS FAYAZ

Jammu, Feb 18: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Wednesday asked how protest banners surfaced inside and outside the Assembly.

Talking to reporters here, Choudhary said, "How did the banner come there? This is being planted," he said, alleging that BJP leaders were orchestrating protests in cases related to National Law University, daily wagers and other issues.

He said that any grievance against police conduct should be taken up with the Chief Minister through proper channels.

He maintained that the present government was elected by the people after decades and understands which issues are genuine and which are politically motivated. "We know which protest is legitimate and which is being done at the behest of a party," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister also hit back at BJP leaders over remarks that some politicians were "growing on Delhi's pieces." Without naming individuals directly, he referred to instances where leaders elected from other states chose different home states, calling it "double politics."

On the issue of unemployment and youth concerns, Dy CM Choudhary said such matters cannot be resolved through street theatrics. He urged opposition leaders to seek appointments with the Chief Minister and present their demands formally.

Referring to the upcoming Khelo India Winter Games in Gulmarg from February 23, he said the event would boost tourism and inspire local youth. He cited sporting icons such as Sachin Tendulkar, Kapil Dev and Virat Kohli as examples of how athletes motivate young people across the country.

"Players from across India and abroad will participate. Tourists will come. This will help our youth move forward in sports," he said.

MINISTER SATISH SHARMA TERMS STATEHOOD DELAY UNJUSTIFIED

Meanwhile, Minister Satish Sharma on Wednesday

termed delay in restoration of statehood as unjustified and defended the budget presented by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Speaking to reporters outside the Assembly, Sharma, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) alleged that BJP has remained silent on the restoration of statehood.

Minister Sharma said the present government is managing with limited resources and still presenting a "people friendly" budget. He praised the Chief Minister for preparing what he called a balanced budget despite financial constraints.

Raising concern over unemployment, Minister said joblessness is at its peak and daily wagers are anxious about their future. Referring to ongoing protests by daily wagers, he said the Chief Minister has assured phased and time bound monthly payments within a year.

He also said Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh must not be divided along religious or regional lines. He called for collective accountability and alleged large scale corruption after 2019. In a sharp remark, he claimed that more resources have been looted in recent years than during the era of Maharaja Hari Singh.

On security, Minister reiterated that Jammu and Kashmir was downgraded from a state to a Union Territory on the pretext of controlling militancy. He questioned whether militancy has actually been curbed and referred to recent border incidents. He accused political opponents of humiliating and provoking youth for political gain.

On statehood, Minister asserted that Jammu and Kashmir must regain its full status as promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said no region should be reduced in stature, comparing the transition from state to Union Territory to reducing a senior officer to a lower rank.

He expressed confidence that the Prime Minister would honour his assurance and said BJP leaders should show courage and support the demand for restoration of statehood—(KNO)

Fruit prices 'sky-rocketing'

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Feb 18: As the holy month of Ramadan commenced, prices of fruit and other essential items witnessed a sharp hike in Srinagar markets.

Shoppers said that prices of several fruits are already touching the sky making it difficult for families to manage daily purchases. "I came to buy oranges and bananas, but the prices are too high even before Ramadhan has started," said Jehangir Ahmad, of Srinagar.

Another local Imran Ahmad, said fruits like guava, apples and mangoes have become expensive. "Every year prices rise before Ramadhan, but this time it has started too early," he said.

Vendors however, blamed the hike on increased rates at the Mandi. "We are purchasing fruits at higher prices from the Mandi. Naturally, we have to sell them accordingly," said Waseem Sofi a fruit seller.

"We are not overcharging, but



the wholesale rates have gone up," he said. Meanwhile, Bashir Ahmad Basheer, Chairman of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers and Dealers Union (KVFGRD), told KNO that the wholesale prices at the Mandi are normal. "We regularly issue

official rate lists of fruits and vegetables. The prices are within the normal range and there is no unusual hike at the Mandi level," he said, adding that retailers should follow the issued list. As per the official wholesale fruit price list

issued on 18th, February and accessed by KNO, the rates were as: Mango Safeda (15 pieces) Rs: 100-102; Mango Totapuri (per piece) Rs: 60; Banana First Class (per dozen) Rs: 72-85; Dragon Fruit (per tray) Rs: 600-750; Guava Pink (per kg) Rs: 76-100; Guava (per kg) Rs: 50-55; Papaya (25 kg) Rs: 1050-1200; Kinnow (per kg) Rs: 72-83; Watermelon (per chest) Rs: 23-33; American Apple (half peti) Rs: 140-264; Red Glow Apple (per dozen) Rs: 125-100; Kiwi (per piece) —; Payne Apple Raja (per number) —; Melon Sun (per kg) —; Melon Bobby (per kg) —; Pomegranates (per kg) —; Green Grapes (per chest) —; Maharaji Apple (per dozen) Rs: 100-125; Orange Dana (per chest) Rs: 191-112; Extraordinary Delicious (per chest) Rs: 212; Orange 141 Dana (per dozen) Rs: 140-161; Orange 171 Dana (per dozen)

Moreover, the association has urged traders to strictly adhere to the official rate list to avoid undue burden on consumers ahead of Ramadhan—(KNO)

Snow carnival held at Doodpathri

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIE

Budgam, Feb 18: A Snow Carnival was organised at the scenic tourist destination of Doodpathri on Wednesday, the second day after its reopening, nearly 10 months after it was closed following the Pulwama attack in April 2025.

The reopening was announced by the Lieutenant Governor through his official X handle, after which the meadow was thrown open for tourists. To mark the reopening and boost tourism, the Department of Tourism organised a Snow Carnival featuring several adventure and cultural activities, including Snowshoe Race, skiing, Snow Cricket, paragliding, cultural programs, and Snow Tug of War.

Hundreds of people participated in and witnessed the events, while thousands of tourists visited Doodpathri in just two days since its reopening.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Doodpathri, Riyaz Ahmad Beigh, said the response has been overwhelming.

"Thousands have visited Doodpathri in just two days. We are confident that Doodpathri will break its previous records of tourist footfall," he said.

Beigh said the destination offers multiple adventure activities,



including skiing and drag lift facilities, making it an attractive alternative for winter tourism. "As more tourists come here, it will also reduce the rush at Gulmarg, as people will divert to Doodpathri. This will provide relief to service providers and locals, helping them earn their livelihood," he said. He further said that the department is planning to introduce ski courses to bring Doodpathri prominently onto

Khelo India Motorcycle rally flagged off from Srinagar

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Feb 18: The roar of engines filled Bakshi Stadium on Wednesday as the Joint Director Tourism, Kashmir, Waseem Raja, flagged off the Khelo India Bike and Motorcycle Rally, a high-profile initiative aimed at promoting adventure sports and winter tourism in Jammu & Kashmir.

"This rally is not just a sports event, but a platform to showcase the beauty of our valley and the spirit of our youth," Raja Waseem told reporters on the sidelines.

He said participants from across India become our brand ambassadors, spreading positivity and the warmth of J&K hospitality.

Bikers were also smiling as they revved up for the ride. "Riding through Kashmir is an experience like no other, and every turn has a view that takes your breath away," said one participant. Another participant

said, "We are thrilled to be part of an event that blends adventure, sports, and tourism. It is unforgettable."

Raja Waseem added that the rally complements the upcoming Khelo India Winter Games, which are set to take place in premier destinations such as Gulmarg. "All departments are working together to ensure the smooth conduct of these events, which not only promote sports but also boost local tourism and the economy," he said, adding that the successful organising of such events sends a strong message of normalcy and vibrancy to the world, further reinforcing J&K as a hub for winter tourism.

"Through initiatives like this, we aim to ensure a healthy footfall of tourists in spring and summer, highlighting the diverse experiences our region offers," he added.

Continued on
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Ration Card bifurcation process on hold since 2016: Govt

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIE

Jammu, Feb 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday informed the House that the process of bifurcation of ration cards has been put on hold.

Replying to question tabled by MLA Zafar Ali Khatana regarding bifurcation of ration cards, the government said the bifurcation was put on hold vide Government Order No. 85-CAPD of 2016 dated May 4, 2016.

It further stated that the Administrative Department, through communication dated November 19, 2020, has advised that bifurcation of ration cards is not permitted till revised ration ceilings are conveyed by the Government of India.

However, the reply said that the J&K administration is currently quantifying the approximate additional allocation required to cover bifurcation cases for taking up the matter with the Government of India—(KNO)

'Civil service exam age limit proposal under review'
Waris Fayaz
Jammu, Feb 18: Jammu & Kashmir Government on Wednesday said that the issue to enhance the upper age limit for candidates appearing in the Jammu & Kashmir Combined Competitive Examination (JKCCE) is under examination.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

Ensure Proper Arrangements For Ramadan

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's detailed review of arrangements for Ramadan across Jammu and Kashmir shows what good governance looks like. By asking all departments to ensure smooth services, strict market checks, and better public facilities, the government has shown it understands that people can worship peacefully only when daily life runs without problems. The instructions given

are clear and practical. Making sure there is no power cut during Sehri and Iftar is a thoughtful step. Darkness at these times disturbs not just comfort but the very spirit of prayer and family time. Similarly, ordering water tankers to be sent before Iftar to areas that face water shortage is a caring decision. It ensures that no one breaks their fast feeling thirsty. Strict market inspections to stop hoarding and overpricing are also

very important. A holy month should never be a time for cheating customers. By asking shops to display rate lists clearly and taking action against adulteration, the government protects the dignity of common people and ensures they can buy essentials at fair prices. The focus on better cleanliness around mosques and shrines also shows respect for the spiritual experience of worshippers. Instructions to keep hospitals fully staffed

during Iftar hours address a long-standing problem where emergency services used to become weak at this time. Better transport arrangements further show that every aspect of public life has been thought about. By holding meetings with district officials through video conferencing and asking different departments to work together, the Chief Minister has ensured these are not just orders on paper, but a well-planned and

accountable action plan. With the beginning of the holy month, the people of Jammu and Kashmir can feel assured that their government is working together to make their worship easier. This is governance as service—a partnership between the state and its citizens in the spirit of peace, faith, and community well-being. May this Ramadan bring blessings, kindness, and smooth service to all.

Confluence Of Govt, Start-Ups And Creators At The India AI Impact Summit 2026

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting showcases Startup-Led AI Innovation in Media, Gaming, and Creative Technologies

Press Information Bureau

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 commenced on 16 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, marking the first international summit on Artificial Intelligence hosted in the Global South. This landmark event positions India as a pivotal player in the global AI dialogue, emphasizing AI-led growth that prioritizes People, Progress, and Planet. With startups at the forefront of innovation and scalable deployment, the summit advances India's vision for responsible, indigenous AI capabilities while fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

A key highlight is the dedicated MIB Pavilion of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which showcases India's thriving AI startup ecosystem at the intersection of media, entertainment, gaming, and creative technologies. Through the WAVES Creators Corner, the pavilion offers a dynamic platform for live demonstrations, panels, masterclasses, fireside chats, and startup showcases, enabling direct interactions among founders, policymakers, investors, creators, and international stakeholders.

The focus prominently features the AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality) and Media Tech sectors, where 51 startups are showcasing market-ready, AI-powered solutions across content creation, immersive experiences, multilingual tools, adaptive gameplay, and digital storytelling. This convergence reflects the Government of India's recognition of the creative economy as a strategic driver of growth, employment, and innovation.

Catalysing Growth in India's Creative Economy: Union Budget 2026-27

The creative economy comprises industries where value is generated from creativity, culture, technology, and intellectual property. It spans media and entertainment, animation and VFX, gaming, live events, and digital content platforms that operate across global markets, contributing to GDP, employment, and exports. Framed within the broader vision of the Orange Economy, culture and creativity are treated as strategic economic assets—linking heritage and talent with innovation, market access, and global partnerships to generate income and international influence.

Platforms such as the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) & AI Impact Summit 2026 operationalise this vision by connecting creators, startups, investors, and policymakers to enable co-productions, IP marketplace linkages, incubation, and cross-border collaborations.

The Union Budget 2026-27 further reinforces this trajectory by recognising the creative (Orange) economy as a driver of growth, employment, and innovation, with specific emphasis on the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics (AVGC) sector aligned with digital and AI-led development. It supports the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IIC), Mumbai, to establish AVGC Content Creator Labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges nationwide, building a skilled talent pipeline. With the AVGC sector projected to require nearly 2 million professionals by 2030, this positions the creative economy as a major employment engine for the digital generation.

MIB Pavilion: Focus Areas and Key Highlights

The MIB has established a dedicated AI for game asset development, real-time commentary systems, adaptive gameplay engines, immersive environments, and interactive sports technologies. These innovations demonstrate the transition from gaming consumption to AI-native game development and immersive platform creation.

Creative and Content Technologies: The broader AVGC-XR ecosystem—comprising animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, and extended reality—represents the most technology-intensive frontier of the creative economy.



shift toward platform-based production and distribution models. The broader ecosystem supports over 10 million livelihoods, directly and indirectly, and generates annual output of approximately 3 lakh crore.

Within this expanding landscape, the Pavilion brings together technology developers, content creators, investors, policymakers, and global stakeholders across three focus areas:

Media and Entertainment: AI-driven solutions for content creation, production, and distribution are central to the Pavilion's showcase. This segment operates within a media industry where:

Digital media revenues stood at 802 billion in 2024, projected to reach 1,104 billion by 2027.

Filmed entertainment generated 187 billion in 2024, with steady projected growth.

Animation and VFX contributed approximately 103 billion in 2024, expected to scale to 147 billion by 2027.

Startups demonstrate AI-assisted filmmaking, virtual production, automated editing, multilingual dubbing, voice synthesis, AI avatars, and digital storytelling tools. These applications improve efficiency across production pipelines while expanding multilingual reach in a country with diverse linguistic markets. As digital revenues outpace traditional formats, AI integration strengthens scalability and cost optimisation across content workflows.

Gaming and Immersive Technologies: Gaming represents one of the fastest-scaling segments of India's creative economy.

Online gaming generated 232 billion in 2024, projected to reach 316 billion by 2027.

The segment is positioned among the most dynamic components of the AVGC-XR ecosystem.

India ranks among the world's largest gaming markets by user base, supported by widespread mobile penetration and a digitally native demographic. Rising monetisation, expanding domestic studios, and integration with global platforms are transforming gaming from mass engagement to structured digital industry growth.

MIB Pavilion showcases include generative AI for game asset development, real-time commentary systems, adaptive gameplay engines, immersive environments, and interactive sports technologies. These innovations demonstrate the transition from gaming consumption to AI-native game development and immersive platform creation.

Creative and Content Technologies: The broader AVGC-XR ecosystem—comprising animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, and extended reality—represents the most technology-intensive frontier of the creative economy.

India's animation and VFX sector operates

as a globally integrated production base, contributing to international films, streaming platforms, advertising campaigns, and immersive experiences. Established creative hubs in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, and Thiruvananthapuram anchor this ecosystem, supported by an expanding mid-level and senior talent base.

The MIB Pavilion features AI applications for podcasts, virtual studios, immersive theatre, experiential media, and creator tools that integrate into these production pipelines. With projections of nearly 2 million direct and indirect jobs over the next decade in the AVGC sector, AI-enabled creative technologies are positioned as both economic and employment multipliers.

Key Highlight of the MIB Pavilion at AI Impact Summit 2026

• WAVES Creators Corner housed within the MIB Pavilion, is serving as a structured space for panels, masterclasses, fireside chats and startup showcases.

• 51 startups from India's AVGC-XR and Media Tech sector showcasing AI-powered innovations at the India AI Impact Expo 2026.

• MIB in partnership with Adobe is showcasing India's AI-enabled creative ecosystem during the India AI. A key highlight is Kathvat, a curated showcase of five Made-in-India AI short films—Language of Birds, Migoi, Uttarayan, The Barber's Secret, and Yappasaurus—screened at the AI Theatre within WAVES Creators Corner. Adobe is also hosting a thematic session titled "The Future of Film: AI, Creativity, and Craft," along with a Content Creation Hub demonstrating AI-led video production workflows for faster, scalable and innovative content creation.

• Renowned film director Shekhar Kapur leads a masterclass on AI-powered storytelling and evolving cinematic practice.

• Key technology demonstrations include Zero-Touch Autonomous Newsroom, Bhasha-Wall with multilingual dubbing and AI sign language avatars, Samvad Setu, The Director's Chair, AI podcast studio, conversational humanoid robots, and voice cloning solutions.

• Bhashasetu and Kalaasetu challenge winners presenting AI tools for cultural preservation and linguistic accessibility.

• AI Immersive Theatre featuring 270-degree projection and spatial design, curated AI films, CinemAI Hackathon finalists from International Film Festival of India.

• Scheduled sessions at the MIB Pavilion will showcase innovations from LTM BlueVerse, AWS, Google with Evergent, Sony Research India, PurpleTalk, Dashverse, Pocket FM, Kuku FM, and Lumikai, promoting knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, and India's leadership in responsible AI creative services.

The MIB Pavilion at the India AI Impact

Summit 2026 stands out as a key highlight of India's expanding creative economy, bringing together 51 AI-driven startups, industry leaders, and global partners under the WAVES Creators Corner. Through showcases such as immersive theatre experiences, and advanced newsroom and gaming technologies, the MIB Pavilion demonstrates the practical integration of AI into content creation and digital platforms. Collectively, these highlights reflect a sector that is scaling in value, capability, and global relevance.

Indian AI & Gaming Startups Take Center Stage at India AI Impact Summit 2026

AI-powered gaming and immersive media emerge as a strategic pillar within India's expanding AVGC ecosystem. The Summit highlights how AI accelerates production pipelines, enhances interactive storytelling, and supports original IP creation.

Under the gaming and interactive technology category, five pioneering Indian startups will showcase cutting-edge AI-powered solutions, highlighting India's growing leadership at the intersection of AI, gaming, immersive media and enterprise transformation.

Generative AI for Creative Production: Yesgnome will present Sketly AI, an advanced art-generation platform designed for game studios and creative teams. By enabling production-ready asset generation, proprietary style training, rapid iteration, and scalable workflows, the platform demonstrates how AI is transforming content pipelines—reducing bottlenecks while preserving artistic coherence and studio identity.

Real-Time Generative AI in Sports Gaming: Metaspots (Hitwicket) will demonstrate its Generative AI-powered live commentary engine integrated within its multiplayer cricket platform. By analyzing gameplay in real time and delivering contextual, voice-enabled narration, the system elevates immersion and personalization, illustrating how AI-driven storytelling enhances interactive sports entertainment.

Console-Grade Mobile Gaming Ecosystem: Koyozo will showcase its integrated hardware-software ecosystem that transforms smartphones into console-grade gaming devices. Through intelligent button mapping, remote play integration, performance analytics, and modular hardware innovation, the platform addresses fragmentation in India's mobile gaming ecosystem while enabling high-performance competitive gameplay.

Human vs AI Interactive Experience: Youth Buzz (Ourcadium) will present "Man vs. GPT," a live, adaptive gameplay format where human participants compete against AI agents that learn and evolve in real time. The showcase simplifies complex AI mechanisms into audience-friendly immersive experiences, highlighting India's push toward original intellectual property in interactive entertainment.

Enterprise Cognitive AI Readiness: Evive will debut its Enterprise Cognitive AI Readiness Tool based on its neuroscience-driven AFERR Model. Operating as a live diagnostic lab at the summit, the tool evaluates leadership and organizational preparedness for AI adoption, moving beyond technical metrics to assess cognitive adaptability and decision-making alignment with intelligent systems.

Investing in India's AI Gaming Future: A special panel discussion titled "The New Gold Rush: Investing in India's AI-Powered Gaming Future," curated in collaboration with the Game Developers Association of India, will convene global investors and industry leaders to discuss India's expanding influence in AI-driven game development and interactive media.

The session will examine evolving investment trends, AI-enabled production models, skilling initiatives and policy frameworks required to accelerate India's rise as a global powerhouse in AI-powered gaming innovation.

Together, these startups demonstrate how AI is moving beyond experimentation to

Key Takeaways

- WAVES Creators Corner serves as the primary platform for showcasing market-ready AI solutions and founder-led innovation across creative sectors.
- Participation of 51 startups from the AVGC-XR and Media Tech sectors reflects the depth and operational maturity of India's AI startup ecosystem.
- The MIB-Adobe collaboration highlights scalable AI-enabled creative workflows, filmmaking innovation, and original intellectual property creation.
- AI-powered gaming and immersive media startups demonstrate applications across creative production, live sports engagement, adaptive gameplay, and enterprise use cases.

become embedded within gaming production, immersive experiences, and enterprise transformation frameworks. Their solutions reflect a maturing ecosystem that combines creative innovation with scalable technology deployment. Collectively, they signal India's emergence as a developer of AI-native gaming platforms rather than solely a consumer market.

Expanding Global Opportunities for Indian Creative Industry

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 has created new avenues for Indian AI startups and creative professionals to connect with global innovation, capital, and policy networks. With over 300 curated pavilions and live demonstrations, the India AI Impact Expo 2026 convenes 600+ startups and 13 country delegations, amplifying international exposure across media and entertainment, AVGC-XR, gaming, immersive technologies, and digital platforms.

Participation from leading technology companies, research bodies, and public institutions representing more than 100 countries provides insight into international production systems and regulatory landscapes. Such exchanges support benchmarking in creative AI, animation, gaming, and IP-led content, while opening doors to co-creation, investment, and new market opportunities.

Innovation challenges and strategic dialogues further position Indian enterprises within influential global forums shaping AI standards and digital trade frameworks. Together, these engagements strengthen India's capacity to expand its creative and AI-driven industries worldwide, while contributing to a responsible, inclusive, and scalable global innovation ecosystem.

Conclusion

The MIB Pavilion at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 demonstrates how India is translating its AI vision into visible, market-ready outcomes led by startups, creators, and innovators. Through a focused showcase of media, gaming, immersive, and creative technologies, the MIB Pavilion highlights the depth of India's AI capabilities and the growing convergence of technology, culture, and enterprise.

Across five days of structured programming, the pavilion will enable sustained engagement among startups, policymakers, investors, creators, and international stakeholders. Founder-led narratives, policy dialogue, and industry collaboration have together positioned Indian AI innovation as both globally competitive and locally grounded.

By combining startup showcases, creative experimentation, governance discussions, and global market exposure, the pavilion will also reinforce India's approach to responsible, inclusive, and scalable AI growth. It directly reflects a broader national ambition to build AI-native platforms, strengthen creative economies, and position India as a leading contributor to the global AI ecosystem from the Global South.

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BUDGET SESSION 2026 QUESTION HOUR

Govt to establish 2 industrial estates in Pattan: Deputy CM

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Wednesday said that two industrial estates are being established in Pattan Constituency of Baramulla district.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement was replying to a question raised by MLA Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah on behalf of Legislator Javid Riyaz (Bedar) in the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Chief Minister informed that the two patches of land, measuring 240 Kanal have been transferred in favor of Industries & Commerce Department, during 2024-25 for establishment of Industrial Estates at Wussan Khoie on 150 kanal of land and at Pattan on 90 kanal of land.

He said that a total of 42 applications for allotment of land in the above two Industrial Estates have been received on the J&K Single Window



Portal up to January 18, 2026. These applications have been appraised by the Divisional Level Appraisal Committee for further placement before the High Level Land Allotment Committee, for accord of

consideration and allotment of land as per the Merit-Cum-Preference, he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that various steps are being taken to ensure robust operations of the Industrial Estates.

No proposal for new Veterinary Centres in Gulabgarh: Javid Dar

Says 1200 posts referred to recruitment agencies

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Minister for Agriculture Production department, Javid Ahmad Dar, Wednesday informed the House that around 1200 gazetted and non-gazetted posts in the department have been referred to Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPC) and Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) for timely filling up of vacancies.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Gulabgarh Khurshid Ahmed, the Minister, as per an official statement stated that 17 Veterinary Centres and 21 Sheep Extension Centres are presently functional in the Gulabgarh Constituency. He added that among these, two centres are being managed through internal arrangements to ensure uninterrupted veterinary services to the livestock breeders. He said that these centres collectively cater to the healthcare needs of the livestock population in the constituency.

The Minister further informed the House that there is presently no proposal to establish new Veterinary or Sheep Extension Centres in Gulabgarh Constituency or elsewhere in the Union Territory. He explained

that establishment of new centres is considered based on several parameters like livestock population, geographical conditions (hilly, plain, or isolated areas), distance from existing centres and techno-feasibility reports submitted. He added that the proposals are processed further only if they meet feasibility criteria and availability of resources.

Highlighting measures to support migratory livestock breeders, the Minister said that the department regularly organizes Summer Camps at highland pastures including Duhwan (Warwan), Kousharnag (Kulgam), Thatbal (Gulabgarh), Chandrani (Ramban) and Nikan (Mangar, Gulabgarh). He added that these camps provide essential veterinary healthcare services to the sheep and goat breeders during the grazing season.

Responding to the supplementary questions regarding vacant posts, establishment of additional centres and deployment of veterinary doctors and staff during migration periods, the Minister assured the House that adequate staff arrangements are made during the migration season and all genuine demands and issues raised by the Member will be addressed in a timely manner.

Delimitation of Panchayat Halqas after Census exercise: Javid Dar

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj departments, Javid Ahmad Dar, Wednesday informed the House that the government of Jammu and Kashmir has frozen the boundaries of all administrative units across the Union Territory until completion of the Census 2021.

Replying to a question raised by Legislator Abdul Majeed Bhat (Larmi) in the House, the Minister stated that the government vide S.O. 53 of 2025 dated 27.02.2025, issued by the Planning and Monitoring Department, has ordered freezing of boundaries of Districts, Tehsils, Municipalities, Towns, Revenue Villages and other administrative units across



the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir with effect from 01.07.2025 till the completion of Census 2021.

The Minister, as per an official statement, further informed that

as per Section 2 (J) of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, delimitation of Panchayat Halqas is based strictly on population figures. Any exercise regarding delimitation or rationalization of Panchayat Halqas can only be undertaken after the completion of Census 2021, he added. He reiterated that the government is committed towards fairness and distribution of resources based on justice and equity.

The Minister said that the government is serious about development of Panchayat Halqas and their rationalization with Community Development (CD) Blocks on the basis of proximity, geographical considerations and access of the public to government institutions and services.

GMC Anantnag receives nod for Super speciality course in Cardiology

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: In a landmark development for the healthcare sector of Jammu and Kashmir, Government Medical College (GMC) Anantnag has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first newly established GMC in J&K to receive approval to start a Super speciality course in Cardiology.

The National Board of Examinations has accredited "Three Dr NB Cardiology seats" to the Department of Cardiology GMC Anantnag.

The approval marks a major step forward in the transformation of GMC Anantnag into a centre of advanced medical education and tertiary care, and reflects the sustained efforts of Omar Abdullah led Government to expand access to specialised healthcare services in the region.

Congratulating the administration, faculty, and staff of GMC Anantnag, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo lauded the dedication and teamwork of GMC Anantnag in achieving this prestigious feat. She said that the sanctioning of a Super speciality Cardiology course is a



testament to the Government's unwavering resolve to upgrade healthcare infrastructure and medical education across Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Government is determined to ensure that people of Jammu and Kashmir have access to high-quality specialised healthcare. The approval of a Super speciality Cardiology course at GMC Anantnag is a

major stride in that direction. It will not only strengthen tertiary care services in South Kashmir but also reduce the need for patients to seek advanced cardiac treatment outside the region," the Minister stated.

She further emphasised that the Government has adopted a comprehensive approach to strengthen medical institutions through infrastructure

development, recruitment of specialist faculty, procurement of advanced equipment, and expansion of academic programmes.

"With the introduction of the Super speciality Cardiology course, GMC Anantnag is poised to emerge as a key hub for advanced cardiac care, research, and training. The development is expected to greatly benefit cardiac patients by providing timely and specialised treatment closer to home, while also creating new opportunities for postgraduate medical aspirants", Minister Sakeena said.

She added that this unique achievement stands as a reflection of the Government's broader vision to build a robust, accessible, and patient-centric healthcare system across Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinently, the accreditation from the National Board of Examinations (NBEMS) for Super speciality course in Cardiology solidifies the stature of GMC Anantnag as a premier hub for both advanced cardiac treatment and specialist medical training and sets a benchmark for the peripheral medical colleges in the rest of the country.

Rs 242.46 Cr WSSs to strengthen water supply in rural Basohli; Javed Rana

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Minister for Jal Shakti Javed Ahmed Rana Wednesday said that the government has undertaken a slew of measures to strengthen the drinking water infrastructure by implementing multiple Water Supply Schemes (WSSs) across both rural and urban areas of the Basohli constituency.

This was stated by the Minister, while replying to a question on water supply schemes raised by MLA Darshan Kumar in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister, as per an official statement said that for the rural population, drinking water supply is being strengthened through 43 water supply schemes, including 42 under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) worth Rs 242.46 crore and one under NABARD.

"Of these, six schemes have been completed while the remaining are at advanced stages of completion," he said.

The Minister informed the House that for urban areas, water supply is being managed through the existing schemes, which are being further augmented under AMRUT 2.0. He said that under AMRUT 2.0, a project titled "Augmentation and Improvement of Water



Supply System in Basohli Town under AMRUT 2.0" has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs 12.60 crore to enhance the overall water supply infrastructure.

To ensure uninterrupted access to potable drinking water during the execution phase of these schemes,

water is being supplied through the existing systems. Besides, water tankers are being deployed wherever required, he added.

Jal Shakti Minister also provided details about the progress of completed, ongoing and commissioned water supply schemes under the Jal Jeevan Mission in the constituency.

He further informed that the government of India has extended the Jal Jeevan Mission timeline up to December 2028. He said that all the pending schemes will be completed within the extended period, adding that strenuous efforts are underway for their completion.

Regarding payments to the contractors, the Minister stated that Call Deposit Receipts (CDRs), Security Deposits and Performance Security amounts are being released strictly in accordance with the terms and conditions of the respective contracts.

Construction of 50 bedded Additional Block at SDH Sunderbani in progress: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Wednesday said that the ongoing works on the vital projects like construction of 50 bedded additional Block and setting up of Dialysis Unit at SDH Sunderbani are being regularly monitored to ensure their completion within prescribed timelines. The Minister, as per an official statement stated this while replying to a question of Legislator Randhir Singh in the House.

The Minister informed the House that an amount of Rs. 424 lakh has been earmarked for utilization against three projects like construction of 50 bedded additional Block at SDH Sunderbani, setting up of Dialysis Unit at SDH Sunderbani and Design, Supply, Installation, Commissioning and Trial-run (DSICT) of Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) of 05 KLD capacity at Government CHC Kalakote Rajouri during the current Financial Year. She added that Rs. 361.90 lakh have been released by the Finance Department, against which an expenditure of 300.00 lakh has been incurred, so far.

The Minister stated that the ongoing projects are being closely monitored, with delays reported to executing agencies for swift action, ensuring timely completion and fund utilization. She also informed that the Tile/Electrical work is in progress on the second floor while Mechanical work at SDH Sunderbani is also being done on war footing. She added that allotment of DSICT of ETP of 05 KLD capacity at Government CHC Kalakote Rajouri is under process.

6,999 Solar Street Lights being procured during 2025-26: Satish Sharma

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Minister for Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, Wednesday said that 6,999 Solar Street Lights (SSLs) are being procured during the year 2025-26 with a minimum of 50 being provided in each constituency of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister, as per an official statement stated this while replying to a question raised by Legislator Ajaz Ahmad Jan in the Legislative Assembly.

He added that few lights are also being installed in migrant camps and some border areas of the Union Territory of J&K.

The Minister informed the House that in Poonch district,



the material has recently been delivered for further

installation, including the Poonch-Haveli Constituency. He said that a proposal for 70 Solar Street Lights (SSLs) to be installed in the Poonch-Haveli Constituency has been received from the office of the MLA. "Against a quantity of proposed 70 SSLs, 50 have already been delivered and the installation shall start shortly with expected completion by February", he added.

He also said that at present no proposal for establishment of solar power plants in border villages has been formulated by JAKEDA, Science and Technology Department.

Nazir Ahmad Gurezi and Mir Saifullah raised the supplementaries to the question.

Govt focuses on faculty, infra augmentation in operational offsite campuses of JU: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo Wednesday said that the government is focusing on augmentation of infrastructure and faculty in operational offsite campuses of Jammu University (JU) at

Baderwah, Kishtwar, Udhampur, Reasi, Ramnagar, Kathua and Poonch. The Minister, as per an official statement, said this while replying

to a question of Legislator Dr. Sunil Bhardwaj in the Legislative Assembly. The Education Minister said that the Higher Education Department is committed to adopt innovative pedagogical practices and strengthening of culture of research and innovation within the universities, while placing emphasis on strict adherence by the University of Jammu to the approved Academic Calendar. She added that measures like periodic monitoring of teaching-learning

process; promotion of faculty de-

velopment and student-centric academic activities; phased adoption of Smart Classrooms and effective use of e-resources; streamlining of office procedures through digitization of records; prudent financial planning in conformity with prescribed financial norms along with time-bound maintenance and up-gradation of classrooms, laboratories, libraries and other facilities are being implemented

for the benefit of students.

The Minister further said that the University of Jammu presently has eleven off-site campuses approved by the University Council, of which, currently seven campuses are operational at Baderwah, Kishtwar, Udhampur, Reasi, Ramnagar, Kathua, and Poonch.

She informed that for the Financial Year 2025-2026, the Higher Education Department has allocated consolidated Grant-in-Aid

amounting Rs. 260 crore to the

University of Jammu for meeting its duly approved expenditure requirements. She added that the Grant-in-Aid is released in lump sum and is not earmarked campus-wise or academic programmes-wise at the level of Higher Education Department.

She said that the internal apportionment and utilization of funds, including allocation towards academic programmes at functional off-site campuses, is undertaken by the University of Jammu.

The Education Minister fur-

ther said that measures are being undertaken in coordination with the University of Jammu to strengthen and consolidate the academic, administrative and infrastructural functioning of the functional off-site campuses including Ramnagar Campus. The objective behind the initiatives is to ensure a balanced academic growth, optimal utilization of resources and equitable expansion of higher education infrastructure

across Jammu & Kashmir.

She said that the proposal concerning creation of the posts of Rector/Director and other Teaching Faculty positions in respect of the functional Off-site Campuses is under examination in Higher Education Department.

Legislators, Daleep Singh Parihar, R.S. Pathania, Balwant Singh Mankotia and Shakti Raj Parihar raised various supplementary questions, which were satisfactorily replied by the Minister.

Trump wants his Board of Peace to solve world conflicts; it still has lot of work to do in Gaza

AP

Jerusalem, Feb 18: US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace is set to meet for the first time on Thursday in Washington, an early test of whether one of his marquee foreign policy initiatives can gain broad support and advance the shaky ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip.

Trump's ballooning ambitions for the board extend from governing and rebuilding Gaza as a futuristic metropolis to challenging the United Nations Security Council's role in solving conflicts.

But they could be tempered by the realities of dealing with Gaza, where there has so far been limited progress in achieving the narrower aims of the ceasefire.

Palestinians, including many civilians, are still being killed in near-daily strikes that Israel says are aimed at militants who threaten or attack its forces. Hamas hasn't disarmed, no international forces have deployed, and a Palestinian committee meant to take over from Hamas is stuck in neighbouring

Egypt.

"If this meeting does not result in fast, tangible improvements on the ground – and particularly on the humanitarian front – its credibility will quickly crumble," said Max Rodenbeck, Israel-Palestine Project Director at the International Crisis Group, a global think tank.

A new international body

More than two dozen nations have signed on as the board's founding members.

The list includes Israel and other regional heavyweights involved in ceasefire negotiations, as well as countries from outside the Middle East whose leaders support Trump or hope to gain his favour. US allies like France, Norway and Sweden have so far declined.

Israelis are suspicious of the involvement of Qatar and Turkiye, which have longstanding relations with Hamas. Palestinians object because their representatives weren't invited to the board, even as it weighs the future of a territory that is home to some 2 million of them.

Trump, the self-appointed

chairman of the board, said earlier this week that member countries had pledged USD 5 billion toward rebuilding Gaza and would commit thousands of personnel to peacekeeping and policing. No financial pledges – or an agenda for this week's meeting – have been made public.

"We want to make it successful. I think it has the chance to be the most consequential board ever assembled of any kind," Trump told reporters on Monday. He reiterated his criticism of the UN's record on resolving international disputes.

Ambitious plans

Trump – along with son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff – has laid out ambitious plans for rebuilding Gaza with international investment.

In Davos last month, Kushner suggested reconstruction could be complete in a matter of three years, even though UN forecasts suggest that clearing rubble and demining alone could take much longer.

Kushner's slides showed a reconstructed Gaza with a coastal tourism strip, industrial zones

and data centres. He conceded that rebuilding would begin only in demilitarized areas and that security would be essential to attract investment.

The latest joint estimate by the UN, European Union and World Bank says reconstruction will cost about USD 70 billion.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said there will be no reconstruction until Hamas disarms, leaving Palestinians in limbo among the widespread devastation.

Halting progress

The ceasefire deal has halted major military operations, freed the last hostages held by Hamas and ramped up aid deliveries to Gaza. But a lasting resolution to the two-year war ignited by Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack into Israel remains elusive.

The deal envisions Hamas handing over its weapons and Israeli forces withdrawing from Gaza as international forces deploy. It left some questions unanswered and set no timeline to secure buy-in and defer confrontation over those issues.

Israel and the US say Hamas' disarmament is key to progress

on the other fronts. Arab and Muslim members of the Board of Peace have accused Israel of undermining the ceasefire with its daily strikes and want the US to rein in its close ally. They have called on Hamas to disarm but say Israel's withdrawal is just as important.

Israel defines demilitarisation as extending from heavy weapons like rocket-propelled grenades all the way down to rifles. Netanyahu said Sunday that Hamas would have to give up roughly 60,000 automatic rifles.

Despite accepting the agreement, Hamas has made only vague or conditional commitments to disarm as part of a process leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Senior Hamas officials have said their security forces need to retain some weapons in order to maintain law and order during the transition.

Some of the ideas under discussion include Hamas "freezing" its arms by placing them in sealed depots under outside supervision or giving up heavy weapons while keeping some

handguns for policing, according to two regional officials involved in the negotiations. One official said disarmament is a complicated process that could take months. The officials requested anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

It's far from certain that Israel or the United States would agree to such ideas.

A stabilization force

The ceasefire deal also calls for a temporary International Stabilization Force made up of soldiers from Arab and Muslim-majority countries to vet, train and support a new Palestinian police force. Its mandate is not spelled out in detail, but would include securing aid deliveries and preventing weapons smuggling.

Countries being asked to contribute to the force insist that any deployment be framed as a peacekeeping mission. They have refused to take part in the disarmament of Hamas, a job that could put them in harm's way. Another concern is the presence of armed groups allied with Israel.

Indonesia has begun training

a contingent of up to 8,000 soldiers for the force, though its foreign minister said last week that they would not take part in disarmament.

Postwar governance

Under the ceasefire agreement, Hamas is to hand over power to a transitional committee of politically independent Palestinian administrators. The US has named a 15-member committee and tapped former UN envoy Nickolay Mladenov to oversee them as the board's envoy to Gaza.

The committee, led by former Palestinian Authority deputy minister Ali Shaath, has not yet been granted Israeli permission to enter Gaza from Egypt. Israel hasn't commented on the matter.

Mladenov said last week that the committee will not be able to work unless Hamas hands over power and ceasefire violations stop.

"We're only embarrassing the committee and ultimately making it ineffective," he said at the Munich Security Conference. "All of this needs to move very fast."

CONT'D. FROM FRONT PAGE

LG Sinha lays

significant economic momentum across the region. This influx will create employment opportunities, strengthen local enterprises, and inject fresh energy into overall regional development."

The Lieutenant Governor announced that the Shrine Board will construct 50 commercial shops within the Temple complex, which will be allotted to the landowners who donated it for sacred cause.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) and the concerned landowners was executed in 2025, wherein the landowners have consented to donate 41 Kanals for sacred cause.

PRESIDES OVER 'SAMRIDH NARI, SAMRIDH BHARAT' PROGRAM

During his visit to the holy town of Katra, the Lieutenant Governor presided over the 'Samridh Nari, Samridh Bharat' program at the Spiritual Growth Centre, where he interacted with the women entrepreneurs of Self-Help Groups of Reasi and adjoining areas.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated the commitment of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board towards keeping spiritual hubs vibrant while prioritizing every devotee's comfort, safety, and dignity.

He said when sacred sites thrive with vitality, they spark renewed faith and unlock paths to progress.

"Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board has consistently prioritized welfare of local communities. It has not only generated large-scale local employment and supported extensive business activity, but has also contributed significantly to shaping a renewed social and cultural identity in the Union Territory," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board in a recent meeting had approved key decisions to transform the Shrine and surrounding area into India's premier vibrant spiritual hub.

He announced that the Shrine Board is enhancing the annual procurement of Puja Samagri and Prasad from SHGs from current procurement value of Rs.5 Crore to Rs. 12 Crore significantly strengthening livelihood generation in the region.

"A standout measure was to prioritize purchases from local self-help groups, women, and young entrepreneurs to boost the regional economy. This initiative will onboard 20 additional self-help groups into the supply chain, providing livelihood support to around 1,500 women from villages in Reasi, Udhampur, and Jammu. Total annual purchases from these groups will be scaled to Rs. 50 crore in coming years," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the soul of J&K UT is deeply rooted in India's rich civilizational heritage, so we have decided to channel Vedic education's vast wisdom to the youth to nurture this legacy. He said, through the Gurukul initiative, SMVDSB will nurture youth who will uphold sacred traditions and perform religious practices with authenticity and understanding.

The Lieutenant Governor also shared his vision for the future of the holy town. "I envision Katra carving a unique global identity in the coming years- drawing investments, superior infrastructure with Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board support, booming business activity, and boundless opportunities for the youth," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor further highlighted that the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board envisions building a world-class cultural and spiritual center—one that provides society with a foundation of lasting stability.

ROPEWAY PROJECT WON'T HIT LIVELIHOODS OF LOCAL PEOPLE

Talking to the reporters after laying the foundation stone of the temple, LG Sinha, per KNO drew comparisons with iconic spiritual and cultural landmarks, saying, "Just like Somnath Mandir and Statue of Unity, here too

a museum will be built along with a narmitti (holy water) site, so devotees from all over the country can visit and experience it."

He also highlighted accessibility challenges for pilgrims visiting Devi Mata Vaishno Devi and Bhagwan Bholenath, noting that many devotees found it difficult to reach these sacred sites. "On the ropeway project and other infrastructure developments, he stressed that the livelihood of local people of Katra will not be affected."

LG Sinha also discussed the collaborative efforts of the Jammu & Kashmir government and the Shrine Board, mandated by an empowered committee of the NGT, to rehabilitate local service providers, particularly people from Pithu, in a phased manner, ensuring their daily income remains secure.

Highlighting the Shrine Board's past and ongoing initiatives, he said the Board took responsibility during floods, providing relief, health camps and essential supplies, reflecting a long-term commitment to community welfare.

"Fifteen schools have been constructed in Katra and nearby areas to support education post-flood. Last year, five new temples were built and five more are planned to provide spiritual access to local villages. An international museum of the goddess is under construction in Katra to enrich the cultural and spiritual experience," he added.

LG Sinha also stressed the development of Katra as a clean, green, and spiritually vibrant city, integrating infrastructure, tourism, and urban planning while ensuring that local livelihoods continue unharmed.

According to the board officials Shri Shankaracharya Ji Temple will nourish the spiritual lives of billions of devotees while simultaneously driving substantial regional economic activity. "The SMVDSB will ensure that this spiritual centre is vibrant and alive, that prioritizes devotee welfare while also contributing to the prosperity of local communities who sustain them. It is a moment that will live permanently in our hearts and in the pages of history," they said.

Dignitaries, who attended the function, included Suresh Kumar Sharma and Gunjan Rana, Members, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Prof. Pragati Kumar, Vice-Chancellor SMVDSB; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Mohammad Ajiaz Asad, Secretary Rural Development & PR; Sarah Rizvi, DIG Udhampur and Reasi Range; Sachin Kumar Vaishya, CEO SMVDSB; Nidhi Malik, Deputy Commissioner Reasi; senior officers of Police and Civil Administration, members of women self-help groups from Reasi and adjoining districts. (KNO)

CM moves 13 demands,

Planning, Monitoring and Development, Information, Power, Finance, Parliamentary Affairs, Law & Justice, Revenue, Housing, Tourism, Hospitality & Protocol, Estates, Culture and Disaster Management and the charge of these departments is held by the Chief Minister.

He added: "I also move that a sum not exceeding the aggregate amount mentioned in Supplementary Demand Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 30, 32, 35 and 36 be granted to Government to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st March, 2026 in respect of Heads indicated in the List of Business against each demand."

The discussion for demands of grants will continue for today, February 18 and 19 while Chief Minister Omar Abdullah will reply to the demands on grants on February 19 afternoon which will be followed by voice vote to pass the demands of grants.

LG, CM extend

of togetherness will further strengthen our society and enhance resilience across Jammu & Kashmir," Omar said.

The Chief Minister prayed that Almighty Allah accept the fasting and prayers of the faithful, grant fulfillment of their supplications,

and bless the region with peace, prosperity and well-being. "May Allah's blessings be upon us all. Ramadan Mubarak," he added.

J&K Govt rules out

modest revenue receipts, and growing pension liabilities, faced a serious challenge. Pension liabilities had expanded disproportionately, with pension expenditure doubling from Rs 731 crore in 2004-05 to Rs 1495 crore. It was observed that continuation of the defined pension scheme (OPS) would be fiscally unsustainable in the long run and could pose significant risks to the State's financial stability, the reply stated.

The New Pension Scheme was approved by the NC-Congress cabinet in 2009 and became applicable to all employees appointed on or after January 1, 2010. (KNO)

J&K creates history,

by the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the first innings, Sudip Kumar Garami's 146 helped Bengal post a total of 328 on the board, and in reply, J&K were bowled out for 302, giving Bengal a lead of 26 runs.

From J&K, Samad scored 82 off 85 balls in the first innings, and in the second innings, Bengal was bowled out for just 99 due to superb seam bowling by Auqib Nabi and Sunil Kumar, who took four wickets each, while Auqib took five wickets in the first innings as well, earning him the man of the match award.

Jammu and Kashmir reached the milestone for the loss of four wickets in the second innings, with Vanshaj Sharma scoring 43 and Samad 27 runs, both remaining unbeaten.

Notably, the road to the final has been nothing short of inspirational for Jammu and Kashmir. Over the years, the team has transformed from underdogs into serious contenders, defeating established domestic giants with disciplined bowling, fearless batting, and exceptional teamwork.

Cricket experts have praised the squad's fitness levels, young talent pool, and improved infrastructure, all contributing to this breakthrough season.

As news of the historic qualification spread, celebrations erupted across Jammu and Kashmir. Cricket fans, former players, and sports lovers flooded social media with congratulatory messages, calling the achievement a turning point for sports in the region.

"This is more than just a cricket win," said a local sports enthusiast in Srinagar. "It's a symbol of hope, hard work, and what our youth can achieve when given opportunities."

With the final now within reach, Jammu and Kashmir will look to carry forward the same momentum and belief. The team management has emphasised staying focused and treating the final as another challenge rather than a pressure-filled occasion.

"We've come this far through discipline and unity," said the coach. "Now we aim to finish what we started."

Many Indian cricketers, including former fast bowler Mohit Sharma, said that Auqib Nabi is set to get his maiden India Test call-up for his spectacular bowling performance in the tournament, particularly in the quarter and semi-finals. (KNO)

LG Sinha, CM Omar,

Governor Manoj Sinha, in a message shared on X, lauded the team's exceptional performance and said the entire region was proud of the players' feat.

"Congratulations to the J&K cricket team on their magnificent victory in the Ranji Trophy semi-final! You have etched a new golden chapter in the sporting history of J&K. The entire UT is proud of your extraordinary performance. May you continue this winning momentum and bring glory to J&K," he said, as reported by the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also praised the team, saying the achievement reflected the collective effort of players and support staff.

"This success belongs to the entire team and their support staff. I congratulate the players and also, on behalf of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, on this historic accomplishment," he said.

He expressed optimism that this milestone would inspire more cricketers from the region to excel at the highest level.

"The day is not far when players from Jammu and Kashmir will represent the country and make significant contributions to Indian cricket," the Chief Minister added.

Former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti also congratulated the team in an emotional message on X, praising their courage and determination.

"Heartfelt congratulations to the J&K Cricket Team on their magnificent victory in the Ranji Trophy semi-final. History created! With grit, courage, and unbreakable belief, you've written a golden chapter in J&K's sporting journey. May Allah Talah bless you with even greater success ahead."

Meanwhile, Sajad Lone, president of the People's Conference, along with spokespersons of the National Conference, extended their congratulations, calling the team a proud moment for the entire region.

In Jammu, the Legislative Assembly also joined in celebrating the achievement. Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, along with several legislators, congratulated the players for creating history in the 2026 season of the tournament.

The Speaker lauded the dedication, discipline, and fighting spirit of the players, coaching staff, and support team, stating that the triumph has filled Jammu and Kashmir with immense pride.

"This historic achievement has inspired aspiring cricketers across the Union Territory to pursue excellence in sports. The team's remarkable performance has already etched their names in the annals of J&K's sporting history," he said.

Expressing confidence ahead of the final, Rather said the House hopes the team will maintain its winning momentum and bring even greater glory to Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

J&K pays pensions

completion of the prescribed term," the reply noted.

The reply states that Section 95 of the Reorganisation Act provides for the continuation of existing laws in the successor Union Territories until amended or repealed. "There is no provision in the Act that restrains or withdraws pensionary benefits already earned. Further, Section 87 provides for distribution of assets and liabilities of the erstwhile State between the two Union Territories, which includes financial obligations such as pensions. The pension for former legislators is not a fresh benefit but a continuation of a lawful entitlement earned prior to reorganisation, subject to final financial adjustment between

PM Modi meets president of Spain, PM of Finland; says India-EU FTA ushers in golden era



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday held separate meetings with President of Spain Pedro Sánchez and Prime Minister of Finland Petteri Orpo, and said the India-EU Free Trade Agreement has ushered in a golden era in India-Europe relations.

Modi said he had a productive meeting with President Pedro Sánchez and discussed ways to boost the India-Spain friendship, especially in areas such as defence, security and technology.

"Our nations are marking 2026 as the India-Spain Year of Culture, Tourism and AI. This will deepen people-to-people linkages. Glad to

see a big delegation of Universities also come to India. This, too, will go a long way in connecting our people."

"The historic FTA with the EU will have a very positive impact on the economic partnership with Spain and provide new opportunities to the people of our nations," Modi said in a post on X.

India and the European Union on January 27 sealed a landmark free trade agreement -- billed as the "mother of all deals" -- to create a market of 2 billion people.

President Sánchez said that alongside Prime Minister Modi, he noted the excellent state of relations between Spain and India, which the two leaders will continue to strengthen. "I have

congratulated him on the organisation of the Summit on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence. We share the need to continue taking steps towards an AI that puts people at the centre," Sánchez said in a post on X in Spanish.

During his "extensive discussions" with Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, Modi thanked him for his personal support to the India-EU FTA, which "ushers in a golden era" in India-Europe relations.

"India and Finland aim to double trade, thus giving a strong boost to economic linkages. We also talked about enhancing cooperation in futuristic technologies like 6G, innovation, clean energy, biofuels, circular economy and more," Modi said in another post on X.

Sánchez and Orpo are here to attend the ongoing India AI Impact Expo 2026, which brings together global technology firms, startups, academia and research institutions, central and state governments and international partners.

PM Modi on Monday inaugurated the expo, which features more than 600 high-potential startups and 13 country pavilions showcasing international collaboration in the AI ecosystem. Over 20 heads of state, 60 ministers and 500 global artificial intelligence (AI) leaders are attending the summit.

Modi meets Google CEO, discusses AI collaborations

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday had a meeting with Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and its parent company Alphabet Inc, and discussed the work India is doing in artificial intelligence and how the technology giant can work with Indian students and professionals in this field.

Pichai is here to attend the ongoing India AI Impact Summit, which is being held at Bharat Mandapam here alongside an expo.

"It was a delight to meet Mr. Sundar Pichai on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit in Delhi. Talked about the work India is doing in AI and how Google can work with our talented students and professionals in this field," Modi wrote on X.

The prime minister on Monday visited the India AI Impact Expo here, featuring more than 600 high-potential startups and 13 country pavilions showcasing international collaboration in the AI ecosystem. Over 20 heads of state, 60 ministers and 500 global AI leaders are attending the summit.

Indian Navy vigilant in safeguarding country's maritime interests: Prez Murmu



PTI

Visakhapatnam, Feb 18: President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said that the Indian Navy is vigilant in safeguarding the country's maritime interests and is contributing to stability across wider maritime commerce.

IFR reflects unity, trust and respect among nations for maritime traditions, she said, adding that ships with different flags and sailors from different countries exhibit the spirit of togetherness.

Presiding over the International Fleet Review (IFR) off Vizag coast aboard an Indian Naval warship in the Bay of Bengal, the President said the Indian Navy is deployed in the region to serve as a credible instrument of deterrence and defence against threats and challenges arising in the sea.

"Indian Navy is vigilant in safeguarding India's maritime interests and is contributing to stability across wider maritime commerce," Murmu said. Further, she noted that the Indian Navy plays a vital role in promoting goodwill, building bridges of trust, confidence and friendship with navies around the globe.

According to the President, Visakhapatnam, which houses the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) of the Indian Navy, has a glorious maritime past. Today's event underlines the enduring Naval significance of Visakhapatnam, she said.

These travels contributed to the spirit and exchange of trade and goods, ideas and values shaping a shared cultural consciousness across the region," she said.

Further, Murmu observed that the fleet review takes forward India's fusion of 'Mahasagar', which stands for mutual and historic advancement of security and growth across regions.

Three cheetah cubs born at MP's Kuno National Park, India now has 38 of them

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 18: Three cheetah cubs have been born at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, taking India's total population of the big cat to 38, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav announced on Wednesday. The cubs were born to Gamini, who was translocated from South Africa as part of the ambitious project to revive the population of the world's fastest land animal in the country.

"Kuno welcomes three new cubs - A roaring new chapter at Kuno on the occasion of the completion of 3 years of arrival of cheetahs from South Africa. Celebrations echo through Kuno National Park as Gamini, the South African cheetah and second-time mother, has brought 3 new cubs into the world," Yadav said.

"A moment of pride for Kuno, and for India - may Gamini and her three little sprinters grow strong and carry the nation's cheetah revival story forward with speed and grace," he added.

India focused on practical applications of AI to solve population-scale challenges: Vaishnav

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 18: IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Wednesday said India is focused on practical applications of AI, including enterprise productivity, and solutions for population-scale challenges such as healthcare, agriculture, and climate change.

Speaking at a research symposium at the AI Impact Summit, the minister also expressed happiness over the strong participation and optimism shown by young people at an AI Expo on Tuesday.

He informed that about 2.5 lakh attendees, mostly under



the age of 30, took part across the exhibition area.

"It was a phenomenal response when I interacted with the young minds. I was so surprised by the optimism that most of the young people expressed towards this opportunity which is coming for them," Vaishnav said.

The minister said he was

feeling hopeful for a totally new future for India and for the world.

"We, in India, are very focused on AI in the edge, AI for use cases, AI for solving real-world problems, AI for improving the productivity in the enterprises, for population-scale problems like healthcare, like agriculture, like climate change. These

are things we are focused on here in India. And the AI submit brings that opportunity," he said.

The minister asked participants of the symposium to come out with solid concrete suggestions on how to make AI safe. AI is a great tool and should be used for the benefit of humans.

The India AI Impact Summit, one of the country's largest global gatherings on artificial intelligence, has brought together policymakers, industry leaders and technology experts, and deliberations are on around AI innovation, governance and real-world applications in New Delhi.

Amit Shah visits ISKCON headquarters in West Bengal

PTI

Kolkata, Feb 18: Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the ISKCON headquarters at Mayapur in West Bengal on Wednesday.

Shah landed at the Kolkata airport and then took a helicopter to Krishnanagar in Nadia district for his journey to Mayapur.

State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya and Leader of the Opposition in the assembly Suvidhu Adhikari received him at the airport.

"We then departed together via helicopter to Krishnanagar in Nadia district for the scheduled events at Mayapur, including a visit to the revered ISKCON



Mayapur," Adhikari said in a post on X.

"It's always inspiring to have such dynamic leadership guiding us in our endeavour towards forming a Nationalist Govt in West

Bengal by throwing out the corrupt and anti national TMC Govt," he added.

Shah, who is on his second trip to the state within a month, is not scheduled to have any political

Chairperson, member posts in DCW can't remain vacant: Delhi HC

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 18: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said the Delhi government cannot have any reason whatsoever to not fill up the vacant posts of chairperson and members in the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) or not provide adequate staff there.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia asked the Delhi government's counsel to seek instructions on steps taken by it to fill the vacancies and ensure that the commission does not close.

The petitioner's lawyer, advocate Satyam Singh, said the DCW was "closed" since January 24 as there were no members or staff.

The Delhi government counsel said he has to verify the claim made in the PIL.

up the vacancies in the office of the chairperson and members and for not providing adequate staff to DCW," the court observed.

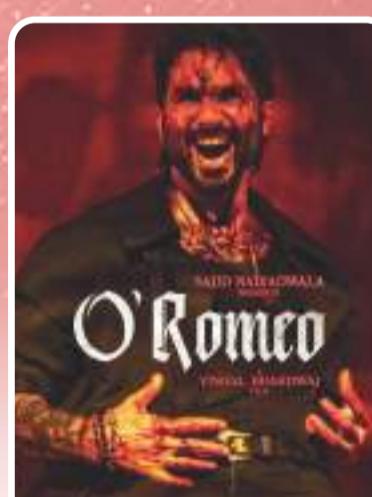
"Let instructions be sought by the Delhi government counsel as to what steps have been taken by the authorities to fill up the vacant posts and ensure that the commission does not close down. List next Wednesday," it ordered.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation by Buxar MP Sudhakar Singh to fill up the vacant post of chairperson and members of the DCW within a time-bound period.

The petitioner's lawyer, advocate Satyam Singh, said the DCW was "closed" since January 24 as there were no members or staff.

The Delhi government counsel said he has to verify the claim made in the PIL.

INOX CINEMA SHIVPORA SRINAGAR



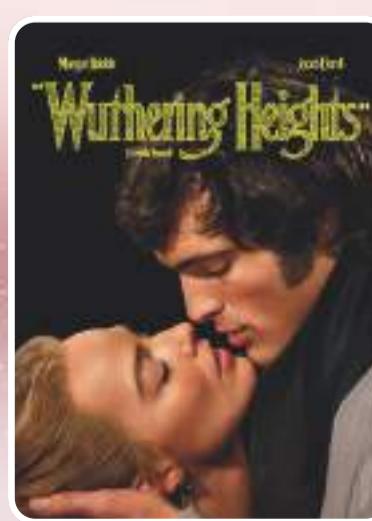
O' ROMEO (A)
HINDI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES - 01:45 PM
HINDI ATMOS - 11:30 AM, 03:15 PM, 06:45 PM



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



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



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



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

Movies Schedule

Thursday, 19th February



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
06:24 PM	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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