



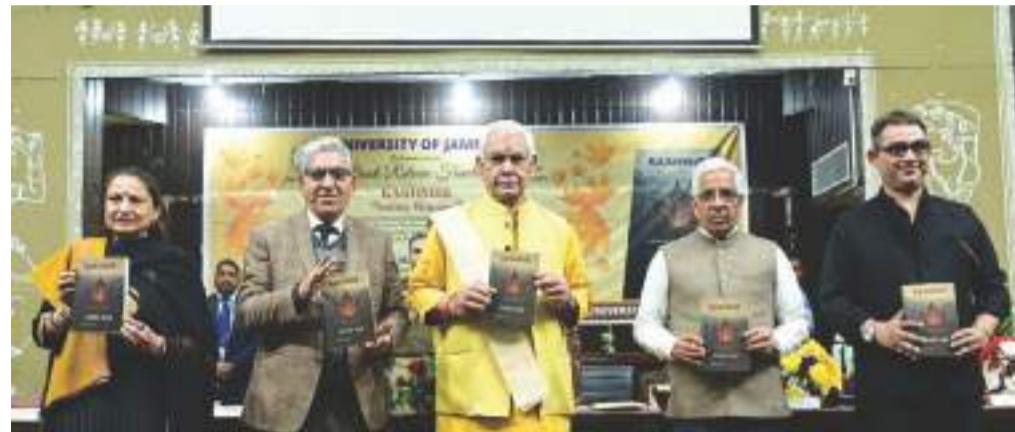
J&K will be terrorism-free soon, Modi Govt committed to return of KPs: LG Sinha

Says younger generation must never forget Pak-backed terrorists spilled blood of innocent Kashmiri Muslims too; salutes indomitable spirit of Kashmiri Pandits

KNO Desk

Jammu, Feb 19: Asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi led government is committed to ensure return of Kashmiri Pandits with full dignity and security, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said that Jammu and Kashmir will soon be completely free from the scourge of terrorism.

Addressing a function after releasing the book "Kashmir-Nativity Regained" authored by Professor Ashok Kaul here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Sustained efforts of the government and the security forces over the past few years have dismantled the sinister designs of adversaries



to derail peace and progress in the Union Territory."

Referring to the Prof Kaul's book, LG Sinha said that it explores the Kashmiri Pandit

exodus and captures the terror of those dark days and the lasting devastation of being wrenched from ancestral roots. The Lieutenant Governor

said that "Kashmir-Nativity Regained" is not just a literary endeavour but laudable effort to shatter the silence that has shrouded | More on P6

PM Modi, HM Shah saved lives of J&K youth, Omar-led govt taking away their jobs: LoP Sharma

'Govt promised 1 lakh jobs, created only 653 in 1.5 years'

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 19: Slamming Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for failing to provide employment to youth, Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma on Thursday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi saved the lives of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir, but the Omar Abdullah-led government is taking away their jobs.

Speaking during the grants of departments under the CM's charge, the LoP, as per news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the Omar Abdullah-led government is



snatching jobs from the youth whose safety was ensured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

"I want to say here that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah ensured the safety of lives in Jammu & Kashmir, especially in Kashmir. They ensured their safety and protection. At | More on P6

Govt making necessary arrangements to hold ULB elections in J&K

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Feb 19: The Government on Thursday said that necessary arrangements are being made for holding Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) elections in Jammu & Kashmir at the earliest.

Replying to an unstarred Assembly question tabled by MLA Mir Mohammad Fayaz, the Election Department, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) informed that the superintendent, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of elections under the J&K Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 and J&K Municipal Act, 2000 vest in the State Election Commission.

Regarding Municipal bodies, the term of Srinagar Municipal Corporation



expired on November 5, 2023, while Jammu Municipal Corporation's term ended on November 14, 2023. The terms of other Municipal Councils and Committees expired between October and November 2023.

On delimitation, the government said that the exercise for 77 ULBs was taken up in pursuance to directions issued by the Housing & Urban Development Department. Delimitation has been completed for 72 ULBs and is under process for the remaining five.

On reservation, the reply stated that in Panchayats, reservation/rotation of Sarpanch and Panch wards will be done by the Director, Rural Development Department, Jammu/Kashmir, and can be initiated only after the OBC | More on P6

Infiltration bid foiled along LoC in Rajouri

KNO Correspondent

Jammu, Feb 19: Army on Thursday said that it foiled an infiltration attempt along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Sunderban sector of Rajouri district.

In a post on X, the Army's White Knight Corps, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Suspicious movement of terrorists was detected in the general area of Nathua Tibba in Sunderban following specific intelligence inputs and sustained surveillance. Alert troops responded with calibrated fire, thwarting the infiltration attempt."

"Troops have | More on P6

J&K records 56% rain deficit, temperature rises

Srinagar records 20.1 C, 9.7 degrees above normal

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Feb 19: Amid a significant precipitation deficit in Jammu and Kashmir, maximum temperatures on Thursday rose sharply above normal across the Union Territory, further intensifying weather concerns.

The Meteorological Centre Srinagar, according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) informed that Kashmir division has recorded a 56% rainfall deficit so far, while the Jammu division is facing a 35 per cent shortfall.

The Met said that the weather is expected to remain mainly dry from February 19 to 26. On February 27 and 28, light rain

or snowfall is likely at a few places. During the first week of March, the weather will remain generally cloudy on March 1, followed by light rain or snow at isolated places on March 2 and 3. From March 4 to 7, conditions are expected to remain partly cloudy.

Meanwhile, several stations recorded temperatures well above normal, with some touching record-breaking levels.

Srinagar records 20.1 DEGREES CELSIUS

In the Kashmir region, Srinagar recorded a maximum of 20.1 degrees Celsius, which is 9.7 degrees above normal. Qazigund | More on P6

GOVT INFORMS HOUSE

50,000 heroin users among 70,000 addicts in Valley

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Feb 19: The Government on Thursday informed the Legislative Assembly that around 70,000 persons, mostly youth, are involved in substance use in Kashmir, out of which nearly 50,000 are heroin users, said Jammu & Kashmir, like many other regions of the country, is confronted with the



menace of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, posing serious social and public health concerns.

The government said, it has adopted | More on P6

1.35 lakh Willows felled at Wular, 19 lakh plants raised

Waris Fayaz

The government on Thursday informed the House that around 1.35 lakh willow trees have been felled in and around Wular Lake under a phased restoration plan, while over 19 lakh plants have been raised in the catchment area to mitigate the ecological impact. In response to MLA Irshad Rasool Kar's | More on P6

J&K Assembly passes ₹61,575 crore grants; CM Omar Abdullah outlines roadmap for regularisation, power, tourism, fiscal reforms

KT News Desk

Jammu, Feb 19: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Thursday passed grants amounting to ₹61,575.88 lakh for the General Administration Department (GAD), ₹47,648.38 lakh for Planning, ₹12,408.31 lakh for Information, ₹12,54,383.63 lakh for the Power Development Department (PDD), ₹52,37,955.90 lakh for Finance, ₹7,742.54 lakh for Parliamentary Affairs, ₹75,028.93 lakh for the Law Department (excluding

the Election Department), ₹78,461.35 lakh for Revenue, ₹4,22,783.97 lakh for Housing & Urban Development (H&UDD), ₹66,622.88 lakh for Tourism, ₹40,749.54 lakh for Hospitality, Protocol & Estates, ₹17,622.31 lakh for Culture, and ₹1,46,098.46 lakh for Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction (DMRR).

The grants were passed following extensive two-day discussions in the House. The Assembly also passed 19 supplementary grants



amounting to ₹3,52,341.28 lakh.

Replying to the discussion on Demands for Grants, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who is also Leader of the House, expressed gratitude to the legislators for their active participation, noting that 43 members took part in the debate.

"I would like to thank all the honourable MLAs for taking part in the discussion. By listening to them, we get an opportunity to learn, to understand, and to correct some mistakes," the Chief Minister said.

He also appreciated the efforts

of the administrative machinery, including secretaries, heads of departments, officers and staff, particularly in view of the record number of cut motions.

"As you said, there were more than 500 cut motions. Each and every query was answered. The pile of papers on my table is the result of their hard work," he remarked.

Focus on GAD, daily wagers regularisation starting this financial year.

Speaking department-wise, the Chief Minister said the core purpose of the GAD was

to ensure smooth functioning of administration without difficulties.

He noted that almost every MLA had raised concerns regarding Daily Rated Workers, Temporary Workers, Seasonal, Ad Hoc and other categories who have been working for decades.

"These workers have been there continuously for the last 20-30-40 years, but the reality is that no government could solve their problems," he said.

The Chief Minister stated that his government would not make hollow | More on P6

Ministry of Defence.

"The Jammu and Kashmir Government owns a property known as "Kashmir House" spanning 114 Kanals and 11.2 Marlas at Rajaji Marg. Of this, 96 Kanals are currently occupied by the Military Engineering Wing under the Ministry of Defence (Engineer-in-chief) and have persistently been taken up with Estates department as well as Ministry of Defence," the Minister's reply states, as per news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

The Minister said that one Kanal and 11.2 Marlas of land were successfully retrieved on June 5, 2023.

"Out of the remaining land, 01 Kanal and 11.2 Marlas was under | More on P6

Four new rail lines proposed for Valley, surveys underway

Raja Syed Rather

The Government on Thursday informed the legislative assembly that the Northern Railway is undertaking final location surveys for four new railway lines in Kashmir Valley, while assuring that landowners will be duly compensated as per law once the projects are sanctioned. Replying to an Assembly question | More on P6

DPR preparations for Razdan Pass Tunnel to commence shortly: Deputy Chief Minister

KT NEWS DESK

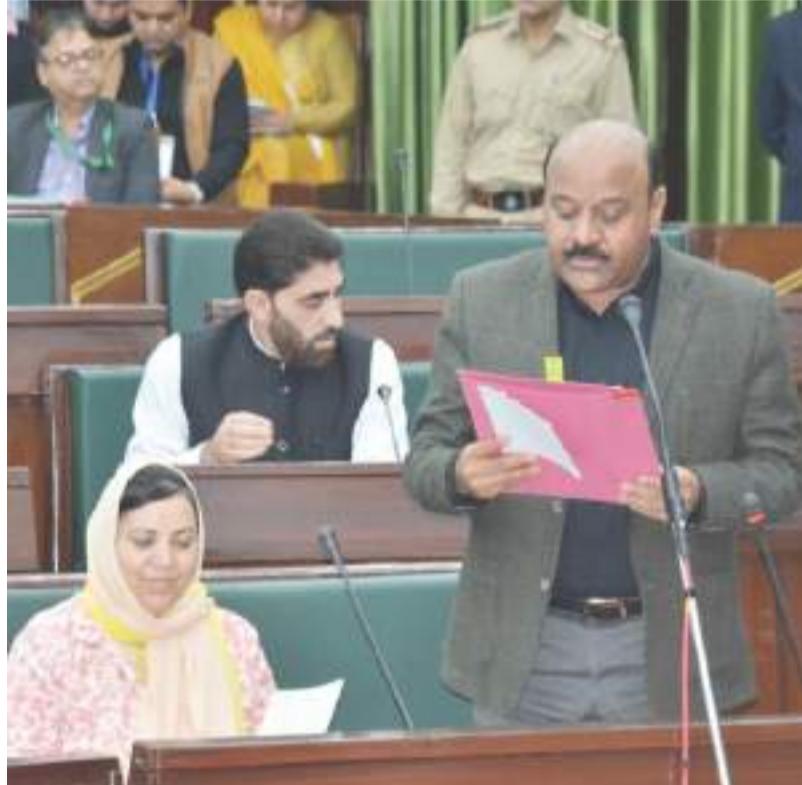
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, stated in the House that preparations for the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the 8-km Razdan Pass Tunnel in Bandipora district will commence shortly.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a question raised by Legislator, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi), in the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the project Tunnel at Razdan Pass shall facilitate all weather connectivity to the strategically important border constituency, Gurez.

He said that construction of Tunnel at Razdan Pass has been endorsed by MoD (Ministry of Defense) to provide all weather connectivity.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the regular snow clearance is being done by BEACON for providing connectivity to Gurez sector. He added that the road is kept closed for nearly one month and partially closed during winters due to snowfall and for safety of road users.



CIPMC organizes 2-day HRD programme on Integrated Pest Management

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, February 19: A two-day Human Resource Development (HRD) Programme on Integrated Pest Management was inaugurated Thursday at the Centre of Excellence, Zawoora, Srinagar.

The programme, as per an official statement, was organized by the Central Integrated Pest Management Centre (CIPMC), Srinagar, in collaboration with the State Horticulture Department, Kashmir.

Abdul Hamid Bhat, Joint Director, Horticulture Kashmir, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by Iqbal Ahmed Wafai, Farm Manager, ACHD Rajbagh.

In his inaugural address, the Joint Director emphasized the importance of capacity building of field functionaries and farmers in promoting sustainable horticultural practices. He highlighted the need to adopt eco-friendly pest management strategies to ensure safe food production and environmental protection.

Dr. Mithilesh Kumar Arya, Deputy Director (PP), delivered a detailed presentation on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and the safe and judicious use of pesticides. He elaborated on the principles of IPM, focusing on need-based pesticide application, biological control measures, and resistance management to minimize environmental and health hazards.

Dr. Haroon Rashid Hakla, Assistant Plant Protection Officer (PP), provided insights into the National Pest Surveillance System. He explained its role in real-time pest monitoring, early warning systems, and informed decision-making to mitigate crop losses.

DC Shopian chairs District-Level Telecom Committee meeting

Stresses upon all telecom service providers to enhance network speed



KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 19: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Thursday chaired a meeting of the District Level-Telecom Committee to review the status of telecom services and ensure seamless network connectivity across the district.

During the meeting, as per an official statement, a detailed presentation was delivered on telecommunication services in the district. The presentation highlighted the role and functioning of the Licence Service Area (LSA), including measures being taken to strengthen connectivity, improve network coverage and address public grievances.

Key insights regarding telecom infrastructure development and future expansion plans aimed at enhancing digital connectivity across the district was shared with the committee.

During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on strengthening mobile and internet services, particularly in far-flung and mountainous areas witnessing increased public footfall.

The DC stressed upon all telecom service providers to enhance network speed and improve overall service quality to facilitate smooth communication and uninterrupted activities.

The representatives of BSNL, Airtel, Jio and other service providers were directed to ensure saturation of network coverage in uncovered or weak signal areas.

The DC instructed the concerned officers to immediately take up issues related to call drops, slow internet speed and poor connectivity, if any and resolve them in a time-bound manner.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT SUMBAL

Phone No: 91-954230722 Email id: cdpo-icdsumbal@jk.gov.in

Subject: - Cancellation of Dasti Quotation.

This is to inform all concerned that the Notice issued earlier by This Office Vide No: CDPO/SBL/Estt/2025-26/658-59 dated 20-01-2026 and later continued vide this office No. CDPO/SBL/Estt/2025-26/687-88 dated 05-02-2026, regarding the invitation of Dasti Quotations from Super bazaars, co-operative stores, fixed-price shops, and registered local shopkeepers, pursuant to the Decentralized Policy for Procurement of Supplementary Nutrition under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Schemes issued vide Govt. Order No. 44-SW of 2019 dated 29-01-2019, is hereby Cancelled with immediate effect. All vendors who submitted quotations are requested to treat the same as cancelled and their CDRs will be released within three days.

Accordingly, the said notice may be treated as cancelled, and no action is required in this regard.

This withdrawal is issued due to administrative reasons.

No: CDPO/SBL/Estt/2025-26/710-11
Dated: 19-02-2026

CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER, POSHAN PROJECT SUMBAL
DIPK-11135/25
DATED: 19-02-2026

Div Com Kashmir reviews progress on Jhelum Water Transport Project

Outlines timelines for resolving issues affecting project

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, February 19: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, along with the Secretary Transport Department, chaired a meeting to review the progress on preparation of cost estimates for utility interventions along River Jhelum aimed at facilitating water transport.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Deputy Commissioners of Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag, Pulwama, Ganderbal, and Bandipora, the Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Kashmir, Assistant Director IWAI Baramulla, Chief Engineers of KPDCL and KPTCL, Superintending Engineers of R&B and PHE departments, among other officials.

During the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner outlined clear timelines for resolving issues affecting the project. He instructed engineers to submit cost estimates within weeks for key interventions, including removal of cofferdams and ensuring adequate height clearance of 33KV and 11KV power lines along the river stretch.

While reviewing the Action Taken



Report on land possession at eight identified locations along River Jhelum, officials informed the chair that possession has been secured at

seven sites. The remaining location requires further engagement with the local community to resolve pending concerns.

DC Budgam reviews progress on demarcation of Hokarsar Wetland

Ensure demarcation exercise is completed in transparent, time-bound manner

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 19: Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, Thursday chaired a meeting to review the progress of demarcation of the Hokarsar Wetland, a designated Ramsar Site, being carried out by Revenue and allied departments.

The meeting was attended by the ACR Budgam, Afroza Bano; SDM (West) Srinagar, Irfan Bahadur; SDPO Magam, DFO Photo Interpretation Division J&K, DFO Settlement & Demarcation Srinagar, Range Officer Hokarsar, Naib Tehsildar Regional Director Survey & Land Records Srinagar, and Settlement Assistant, Regional Director S&LR Srinagar.

During the meeting, the DC, as per an official statement, reviewed in detail the current status of field verification, boundary assessment, geo-referenced mapping, and availability of relevant records with each department. He stressed the importance of accurate, scientific, and dispute-free demarcation to ensure long-term conservation and legal protection of the wetland.

The DC emphasised strict adherence to the directions, calling for enhanced coordination between Revenue, Forest, Police, and Survey & Land Records teams. He directed officers to remove any bottlenecks in the ongoing process and maintain close inter-departmental communication for seamless progress.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION CHADOORA NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

ENIT NO. 84 OF R&B /CHADOORA/ 6305-14 of 2025-26 DATED: 18/02/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In double cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/ Central Governments for the following works:-

SN	Nome of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rupees)	Time of completion (days)	M.H OF Account	Class Of Contactor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Repair/ Restoration/ Renovation of transit camp facility at Nowgam railway station for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra 2025 (Balance Portion)	25.40	1100	50800	60	5452-Capex Budget	A/B

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	18/02/2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	18/02/2026
3	Bid submission Start Date	18/02/2026
4	Bid Submission End Date	26/02/2026 upto 05.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids	27/02/2026 at 10.30 AM in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan (deposited in MH: 0059) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora (tender inviting authority) and Earnest money / Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora (tender receiving authority).

Note:- The Date of Treasury Challan and Earnest Money / Bid security must be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date. Any deviation shall render the bidder as Non-responsive.

1.1 The 1st lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora within 07 (Seven) days after the date of receipt of letter of acceptance and shall be released after successful completion of DLP. The Bank Guarantee should be valid till DLP period.

1. At the time of tendering, all bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e., Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora. Besides that, the successful bidder will have to provide Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG @ 5% at the time of contract award, strictly in accordance with the Government's circular instructions from time to time. The earnest money/bid security of 2% will be released to the successful bidder only after the submission of a Performance Security of 5% of the total cost, which will be released after successful completion of the DLP/Maintenance Period. In case of failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non responsive and case for debarring of the Contractor for a period of 01 Year be forwarded to Higher Authorities.

2. Unbalanced Bid:-

As per the Circular instructions of Finance Deptt. Issued Vide No. FD-Code/441/2021-02-158 Dated:08.08.2025 & endorsed by Chief Engineer (R&B) Central Kashmir vide endorsement No. CE/R&B/CK/ WS/6375-96 dated 12/08/2025, which is reproduced as:-

i) Where the bid price is below 10% but not below 20% of the Project Cost put to bid, the additional Performance Guarantee/Security Percentage shall be incremented by 0.1% for every percentage of bid price below 10% of the project cost put to bid starting at 11% with the additional bid performance guarantee being 0.1% and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.

ii) Where the bid price is 20% or more below of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee percentage shall be incremented by 0.2% for every percentage of bid price below 20% of the project cost put to bid in addition to 1% of the bid price and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.

3. The date and time of opening of Financial Bids of a responsive bidder 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.

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

5. The bidders are advised to use legal registration card for e-tendering. If any bidder was found to have fake registration card for his bid, penalty under rules shall be imposed on the bidder for hurling the tendering process and the fake registration card will be forwarded to concerned authorities for strict action.

6. The earnest money/ performance Security shall be forfeited If:-

- a) Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.
- b) Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.
- c) Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

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

No. 6305-14
Dated: 18/02/2026
DIPK-11098/25
DATED: 19-02-2026

Executive Engineer
R&B Division Chadoora

HC flags transport safety gap for women, seeks action plan

REHAN QAYOON MIR

Srinagar, Feb 19: The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh has taken notice of systemic lapses in ensuring women's safety and reserved seating in public transport across the Union Territory.

The notice was taken by Chief Justice Arun Palli and Justice Rajnesh Oswal.

The matter arose from a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Advocate Monisa Manzoor Mir.

The PIL highlights the non-implementation of the Transport Department's circular dated January 7, 2025, which mandated reservation of seats for women, seats 1-12



in large buses and 1-9 in mini-buses.

According to the petitioner, information obtained under the Right to Information (RTI) from the Transport Commissioner and RTO Kashmir revealed no inspections, penalties or functional public helpline for enforcement.

"While Flying Squads were reportedly constituted by the RTO, no evidence of their ground-level action was produced," the PIL states.

The petition further says an internal survey conducted among 298 women from local educational institutions showed that 85.6% had faced harassment or discomfort, with most unaware of any complaint

mechanism.

Advocate Monisa Manzoor Mir also highlighted successful initiatives in other states, such as Delhi's "Pink Tickets", Karnataka's "Tejaswini Buses" and Maharashtra-Tamil Nadu's "Shakti Schemes", stressing that legislative changes are not necessary to implement effective safety measures.

During proceedings, Government Advocate Illyas Nazir Laway accepted notice on behalf of the respondents and requested time to obtain instructions and submit a formal response.

The Court listed the matter for March 4, with directions to the government to file its reply—(KNO)

Sajad Lone expresses concern over verification process for youth



KNO

Jammu, Feb 19: Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone on Thursday said the police verification process has become a sword hanging over the necks of Kashmiri youth.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly during the Grants of Departments headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Lone termed the verification process "collective punishment."

"If a single person in your family has made a mistake, then 100, 200, 300, or even 400

young people belonging to that family are denied police verification," he said.

Lone urged the Chief Minister to convey to New Delhi that Kashmiri youth are suffering because of this process. "At least please go and tell them that our children are suffering. They are suffering. They are our children. If we don't speak for them in this Assembly, who will?" he asked. Pointing towards BJP legislators, Lone appealed to them to use their influence to intervene in the matter. "In many cases, children are punished for the

actions of a person even before they were born. Are they not Indians?" he questioned.

He added that the ongoing demolitions were taking place in a "toxic environment" after the abrogation of Article 370 and the downgrading of J&K into a Union Territory. "This is not a normal time. Whatever the government does today can be used against us tomorrow," he cautioned.

Lone said serving eviction notices is a dangerous trend. "This is a dangerous trend and will be used for dispossession," he warned.

He further argued that ownership is being made ambiguous, and people who bought plots at market rates are being treated as encroachers. "This government cares more about leaseholders than about poor people who have invested their hard-earned money," he added.

The PC president slammed the CM for using what he termed harsh language against the daily-wagers.

"I would say use kind words. If you cannot regularise them, at least use kind words," he said—(KNO)

Congress MLAs demand rollback of Kishtwar donation order



Calling the directive "absolutely unconstitutional, ultra vires, bad in law, and provocative," Bhat urged the Chief Minister to examine the matter and withdraw the order immediately.

KNO

Jammu, Feb 19: Two Congress legislators on Thursday demanded the withdrawal of the order issued by the Deputy Commissioner, Kishtwar, regulating the collection of donations in the mountainous district during the holy month of Ramadhan.

The issue was raised in the House by MLA Bandipora, Nizamuddin Bhat, during the discussion on grants of departments headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Bhat said the order—which calls for regulation, monitoring, and vigilance over

the collection of donations during Ramadhan—is "unconstitutional."

"This is intruding into privacy. Is Sadqah and Zakat to be subjected to administrative scrutiny? Our Shariah says the left hand should not know what the right hand donates," he said.

According to DC's order, individuals/groups should collect donations after clearance from executive officer Wakf Board, Kishtwar, Imam Jamia Masjid Kishtwar (President Majlis Shura committee Kishtwar) or concerned tehsildars.

The order states that all fundraising entities must maintain a transparent record of collections and donations—(KNO)

From Legislative Assembly

Govt guarantees 24/7 senior doctors presence

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 19: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the availability of senior doctors across health institutions, including during night hours, stating that robust mechanisms are in place to guarantee uninterrupted patient care.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Shamim Firdous in the Legislative Assembly, Health and Medical Education (H&ME) Minister Sakeena Itoo said the government fully recognises the critical importance of having senior and specialist doctors accessible at all times, particularly during emergencies.

The minister informed the House that senior doctors posted in various health institutions perform their duties strictly in accordance with well-structured day and night duty rosters. These rosters, she said, are prepared after careful

assessment of administrative requirements, patient load, availability of specialists, and the need to ensure uninterrupted healthcare delivery.

"Duty rosters are issued well in advance and communicated to all concerned doctors to ensure strict adherence," she said, adding that district health authorities regularly monitor their implementation through hospital administrations and designated supervisory officers. Itoo further stated that

any deviation from the prescribed schedules is promptly addressed as per established rules and procedures.

She said that while senior and specialist doctors attend routine Out-Patient Department (OPD) duties during notified hours, they are also placed on on-call duty during evenings and nights to ensure immediate availability for emergencies and expert consultations.

At the premier tertiary

care facility, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), the minister said that highly qualified specialists, including those with MD/MS and DM/MCh qualifications, remain available during night hours in emergency services as well as inpatient wards. "Consultants on call provide guidance and physically attend the hospital whenever required, particularly in cases involving emergency procedures or surgeries," she said.

Similarly, in Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) across the Union Territory, senior doctors and consultants are assigned on-call duties as per approved rosters, Itoo said, adding that during night hours, patient care in emergency and inpatient departments is managed by Junior and Senior Residents under the supervision of senior faculty members.

"In all critical and medico-legal cases, senior doctors attend the hospital physically whenever the situation demands," the minister said—(KNO)

Govt to focus on strengthening existing hospitals

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 19: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday said the Health and Medical Education (H&ME) Department is currently prioritising the strengthening and consolidation of existing healthcare infrastructure rather than upgrading facilities to higher levels.

Replying to a question in the Legislative Assembly raised by MLA Pahalgam Altaf Wani, H&ME Minister Sakeena Itoo said the department is working in line with the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS)-2022 norms to improve patient care and service delivery across the Union Territory.

She said that under IPHS-2022 guidelines, districts with a population below five lakh and having a functional District Hospital do not require a Sub-District Hospital (SDH). Districts with populations between five to ten lakh are eligible for one SDH, while an additional SDH can be considered for every 10 lakh population thereafter.

Accordingly, a district with up to 20 lakh population can have one District Hospital and two

Sub-District Hospitals, Itoo said. She, however, added that each district in J&K already has more SDHs than the admissible number under these norms. The department is therefore not considering further upgradation of healthcare institutions at present, the minister said.

Itoo further said that the department had already sanctioned the upgradation of NTPHC Pahalgam to a 50-bedded hospital in September 2021, along with the creation of 26 posts.

She informed the House that construction of the 50-bedded hospital block is progressing steadily, while an additional block is also under construction at an estimated cost of ₹1889.90 lakh. So far, ₹1100 lakh has been spent on the project.

"For the current financial year 2025-26, ₹340 lakh has been released out of the approved ₹400 lakh allocation. Additional funds have also been approved under SASCI to expedite the project," she said, adding that structural work, including truss installation, has been completed, and finishing works are underway.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

J&K pushes generic drug prescriptions in hospitals

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 19: Health Minister Sakina Itoo on Thursday said that the Health and Medical Education Department is actively promoting the prescription of generic medicines across healthcare institutions in line with national regulations.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Javaid Bedar, the Minister stated that the government is ensuring strict adherence to norms laid down under the Indian Medical Council Regulations 2002 and the National Medical Commission Act 2019.

She said that medical professionals are being regularly sensitized through administrative instructions and institutional monitoring mechanisms to prescribe medicines by their generic names.

The Minister further informed that no violations related to non-compliance with generic prescription norms have been reported during the financial year 2024-25. "Prescription audits are being conducted on a quarterly basis to ensure adherence to the guidelines," she added.

Itoo said that the AMRIT scheme (Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment) has been operational in Jammu and Kashmir since 2023 and is functioning in accordance with prescribed regulations.

Continued on
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805 Budgam youths get loans under Mission YUVA

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIE

Jammu, Feb 19: The Government on Thursday informed that 805 youths in Budgam district have received financial assistance under Mission YUVA during 2024-25.

Replying to a question tabled by MLA Chadoora Ali Mohammad Dar, the Labour & Employment Department stated that 5,193 applications were received under Mission YUVA in Budgam for 2025-26 (till February 17, 2026) against a target of 2,223 for the current year. The government said that during 2024-25, banks sanctioned loans for 968 beneficiaries in the district, out of which 805 cases have been disbursed so far.

Block-wise figures show that the highest number of sanctions were recorded in Budgam, Khan Sahib and Khag blocks, among others. The government further informed that no application was outrightly denied by banks. Cases returned were sent back for rectification of deficiencies such as incomplete documentation, CIBIL/credit history issues, requirement of additional financial details, or need to strengthen project viability. These cases are subsequently rectified and re-submitted to banks. It also stated that awareness campaigns, post-sanc-tion support programmes, district-level review meetings and a Control Room at the Directorate level have been established to ensure smooth processing and grievance redressal under the mission—(KNO)

Reconstitution of J&K Sports Council on cards

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIE

Jammu, Feb 19: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Thursday informed the House that the proposal for reconstitution of the J&K Sports Council (JKSC) is currently under consideration.

Replying to a question tabled by MLA Arjun Singh Raju regarding reconstitution of the Sports Council, the government said the department has re-submitted the proposal to the General Administration Department (GAD) after addressing queries raised by it.

The government said the reconstitution of the J&K Sports Council shall be ordered once approval is received.

Regarding finalization of the recruitment/selection process for outstanding sportspersons under exceptional quota, the government said approval of the competent authority has been obtained to finalize the process under S.O. 12 of 2022 read with S.O. 412 of 2023 for Gazetted posts for the year 2022 and Non-Gazetted posts for the calendar years 2014-2022.

It added that the order in this regard shall be issued soon after completion of the pre-requisite formalities—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: Ramadan As A Divine Gift Of Transformation

As the crescent moon ushers in the holy month of Ramadan, over 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide embark on a spiritual journey unlike any other in the Islamic calendar. This is not merely a month of abstinence from dawn to dusk; it is a divinely ordained season of profound transformation—a comprehensive training program for the human soul, designed to elevate consciousness, purify character, and renew one's covenant with the Creator. The Qur'an

establishes Ramadan's unparalleled significance with a single, luminous verse: "The month of Ramadan is that in which was revealed the Qur'an, as guidance for mankind and clear proofs of guidance and criterion" (2:185). This is the month when the divine words first descended, making it the fountainhead of all spiritual illumination. To fast is to honour this revelation, to empty the vessel of the self so that it may be refilled with divine light. The Prophet Muhammad

(Peace Be Upon Him) declared in a sacred hadith that Allah Himself proclaims: "Every deed of the son of Adam is for himself except fasting; it is for Me, and I shall reward it" (Sahih al-Bukhari). This exclusive divine attribution elevates fasting beyond mere ritual. It becomes a private conversation between the servant and the Lord—an act of worship untainted by show, witnessed only by the One who sees all. The month's blessings are layered with mercy. Yet Ramadan's

significance extends beyond personal piety. It is the great equaliser, where hunger becomes a shared human experience, dissolving barriers between rich and poor. Through this embodied empathy, the believer internalises the Qur'anic command to care for the needy. The month cultivates taqwa—God-consciousness—not as a theological concept but as a lived reality, where every hunger pang reminds one of divine presence and every act of charity multiplies like a seed

in fertile soil. Ramadan is the Muslim's annual spiritual intensive care unit—a month to detoxify the soul from heedlessness, to recalibrate priorities, to strengthen will-power, and to emerge purified, closer to the Qur'an, and more deeply connected to humanity. It is not an end but a beginning: a launch pad for a year of transformed living. May this Ramadan be for us all a month of mercy, forgiveness, and emancipation from the fire.

The True Measure Of A Village's Development Is Its Children

Let's transform villages into child-friendly spaces through Community-Led Child Protection Groups (CPGs)

Yamin Yasin

The true measure of a village's development is not its infrastructure, wealth, or physical growth, but the condition of its children. A community is truly prosperous when its children live without fear, grow with dignity, and dream without limitation. When children are protected and respected, the social fabric becomes strong. When they are neglected or harmed, the entire structure of society begins to weaken. Child protection is therefore not merely a welfare activity—it is a humanitarian duty and a shared moral responsibility that every community must consciously uphold.

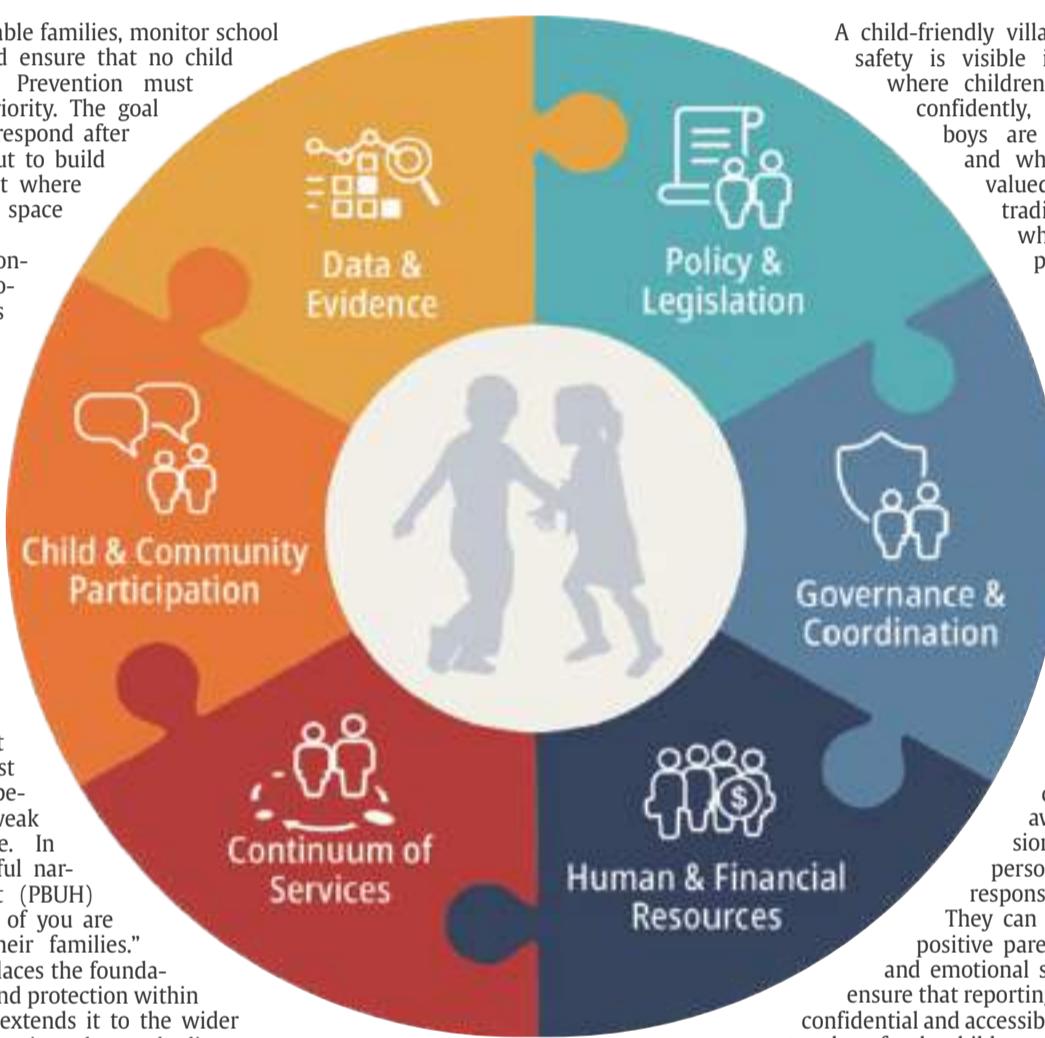
As beautifully expressed by Allama Iqbal: Afraad ke haathon mein hai aqwaam ki taqdeer,

Har fard hai millat ke muqaddar ka sitaara. These powerful words remind us that the future of a nation rests in the hands of its people. Every individual is a guiding star in the collective sky. When people act with integrity, awareness, and compassion, the community shines. When responsibility is ignored, vulnerability spreads. In the context of child protection, this message becomes even more urgent. The safety of children does not depend on one authority alone; it depends on parents, teachers, elders, religious leaders, and young volunteers who choose to care. Communities must therefore move from concern to action. Instead of waiting for external agencies to intervene, villages should establish and actively strengthen Child Protection Groups (CPGs).

A community-led CPG becomes a shield of safety around children. It creates a local system where respected elders, women representatives, teachers, youth leaders, and faith leaders meet regularly to identify risks,

support vulnerable families, monitor school attendance, and ensure that no child is overlooked. Prevention must become the priority. The goal is not only to respond after harm occurs but to build an environment where harm finds no space to grow.

The responsibility to protect children is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. The Prophet, Muhammad (P B U H), said: "Whoever is not merciful to people, Allah will not be merciful to him." This Hadith reminds us that mercy is not selective; it must be extended especially to the weak and vulnerable. In another powerful narration, Prophet (PBUH) said, "The best of you are the best to their families." This teaching places the foundation of justice and protection within the home and extends it to the wider community. A society that embodies mercy within families builds strength beyond them.



A child-friendly village is one where safety is visible in everyday life, where children walk to school confidently, where girls and boys are treated equally, and where education is valued above harmful traditions. It is a place where abuse is reported without fear, where child labour is prevented through community vigilance, and where child marriage is challenged with collective courage. Such transformation requires awareness, unity, and moral clarity. Community-led CPGs can conduct regular awareness sessions on child rights, personal safety, and responsible digital use. They can guide parents on positive parenting approaches and emotional support. They can ensure that reporting mechanisms are confidential and accessible and that important laws for the children are understood and effectively implemented at the grassroots level. When communities understand the laws, they strengthen justice. Economic hardship often increases the vulnerability of children. CPGs can help by connecting families to government schemes, livelihood initiatives, and sponsorship opportunities. By reducing financial pressure, they reduce the risk of child labour and exploitation.

Supporting families is one of the most practical forms of child protection. However, protection alone is not enough. Empowerment must follow. Children should be encouraged to express their views, participate in community discussions, and develop leadership skills. Safe spaces for recreation, dialogue, and learning nurture confidence and resilience. When children feel heard and respected, they develop trust in society and grow into responsible citizens. Transforming villages into child-friendly spaces does not demand extraordinary wealth; it demands extraordinary commitment. It requires communities that believe every child deserves dignity and opportunity. When individuals accept responsibility and CPGs function actively and transparently, a culture of care begins to flourish. Each act of vigilance becomes a light, and together those lights remove darkness from the community.

If every person understands that they are a "star" shaping the destiny of the village, then no child will remain invisible. A united, compassionate, and proactive community can build an environment where children are protected, empowered, and inspired. In protecting our children, we protect our future, strengthen our humanity, and fulfil both our social and spiritual responsibilities.

The author is the District Coordinator, Human Welfare Voluntary Organisation (HWVO), Shopian

How To Conquer The Four Fears That Hold You Back

Fear can rob you of the life you wanted, but it's never too late to conquer it

George S. Everly

Today we find ourselves living in a world where our lives are virtually shaped by fear. It's been said that we live in a virtual culture of fear where social and economic fearmongering combines with cyber bullying to create an often toxic environment. So threatening is our world that psychiatric epidemiologists estimate that over one third of people will suffer diagnosable fear-related problems during their lifetime, making fear-related disorders the most prevalent of all mental disorders. Other than the most prevalent phobias (irrational fears), this article identifies four of the most pervasive and crippling fears and how to move past them using wisdom from the past and the science of cognitive behavioral therapies.

Four Fears That Can Shape Your Life
Fear may be defined as a primitive, survival-oriented emotion triggered by the perception of threat. Fear is associated with the "fight or flight" stress response. Fear is designed to assist you in avoiding things that can harm you. So, in that sense fear can be a good thing. But sometimes rather than support you and keep you safe, fear can take on a life of its own and cripple you, holding you

back from living the life you really want. There are likely four significant fears that not only affect you on a daily basis, but may over time serve to shape your life in a way you come to regret later.

1. **Fear of failure.** How many times in life have you resisted trying something that you really wanted to do solely because you were afraid of failing? By not trying you were able to avoid the pain of disappointment and even a sense of humiliation. Or, a variation on this theme might be trying something half-heartedly so that when failure occurred you could say to yourself you really didn't try—better to fail by your own hands than by someone else's.

2. **Fear of rejection.** Human beings have a natural drive to be accepted. We are social beings. So, interpersonal rejection can be uniquely devastating. In order to avoid the pain of rejection, you choose not to apply to that school, or that job, or ask someone on a date. The fear of rejection is what makes cyber bullying so powerful and often devastating. This fear causes you to risk turning your happiness over to often faceless, nameless people who don't care about you and may not even know you.

3. **Fear of uncertainty.** For some, uncertainty is exciting and motivating, but for many uncertainty is stressful as it makes us feel

out of control. In order to avoid the stress of uncertainty, it is not uncommon to establish predictable if not compulsive routines, and seek the familiar while resisting the drive to seek new experiences, meet new people, and to grow as a person.

4. **Fear of missing out (FOMO).** FOMO is different than the three previous, as those three fears hold you back, inhibiting your happiness and growth. FOMO can lead to doing things you don't want to do or taking risks that are unhealthy, simply as a way of being included in an experience.

Conquering the Four Fears

In 1933 the United States was in crisis. It was in the midst of the Great Depression and the banking system was on the verge of collapse. Franklin D. Roosevelt had just been elected president. In his first inaugural address on March 4, 1933 he famously said, "So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

The Stoic philosophers writing 2000 years ago asserted that fear results not from situations themselves, but from one's interpretation of being helpless and out of control in those

situations. Epictetus was a Greek Stoic philosopher. To Epictetus stoicism was more than a philosophy, it was a practical way of living one's life. He famously wrote: "Men are disturbed, not by things, but the views which they take of them." Stoicism serves as the basis for the subsequent development of cognitive therapies (see Ellis & Harper, 1975; Meichenbaum, 1977).

So, let's return to our four fears. If the Stoics and cognitive behavioral psychologists are correct, what you say to yourself, that internal self-talk dialogue, matters. Here are some things you can say to yourself when facing those fears.

Fear of failure: "Anything worth having is worth failing for." "Failure is not lack of achievement, it's when I choose not to try." "Only when I dare to significantly fail will I ever significantly succeed."

Fear of rejection: "I refuse to surrender happiness to the will or whims of others." "If I don't ask, the answer will always be no."

Fear of uncertainty and the unknown: "If I'm not willing to risk the unknown, I will have to settle for the ordinary." "That which does not destroy me makes me stronger."

Fear of missing out: "Appreciating that I'm unique and imagining who I can uniquely be is better than living my life by comparing

myself to others, wanting what they want, and doing what they do."

Perhaps we can borrow from the great American polymath Benjamin Franklin and conclude that fear, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder! In closing, remember the notion of regret. Research suggests that as we age and look back on our lives, our greatest regrets are the things we wish we had tried, rather than the things we did (Gilovich & Medvec, 1995). Said another way, "In the end, we only regret the chances we didn't take, the relationships we were afraid to have and the decisions we waited too long to take."

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Source: *Psychology Today*

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BUDGET SESSION 2026 QUESTION HOUR

4142 Kanal land transferred for industrial estates in Anantnag: Deputy CM

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: As many as 13 land patches comprising 4142.43 kanal of land have been transferred to the Industries and Commerce department for establishment of Industrial Estates in Anantnag district.

This was informed by the Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary while replying to a question raised by Legislator Abdul Majeed Bhat in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that the land patches are located at various locations like Pahalgam, Bijbehara, with law.

36 Health Sub Centres, PHCs functioning in Reasi Constituency: Health Minister



KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Minister for Health & Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo Thursday informed the Legislative Assembly that 36 Health Sub-Centres and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) are functioning in Reasi constituency, with 175 personnel currently in position at these institutes.

The Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a query raised by Legislator Kuldeep Raj Dubey, regarding the status of health facilities in the constituency.

She stated that out of the sanctioned strength of 163 regular staff, including MLPs, FMPHWS, sanitation workers and other categories, 101 are presently in position.

NTPHC Haripora functioning in Govt building, land being identified for Sumbal centre: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Minister for Health & Medical Education Sakeena Itoo Thursday informed the Legislative Assembly that NTPHC Haripora is already functioning in a three room government building of Health Department.

She was replying to a question raised by MLA Kangan Mian Mehar Ali during the Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session.

The Minister informed the House that augmentation, if any, may be considered in the

Dooru, Shangus, Mattan and other spots in Anantnag district.

However, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement said as of now no Industrial Estate exists in Anantnag West Constituency and no such proposal is under consideration in the department.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the government is committed to bolster Industrial sector to accommodate unemployed youth and address unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that the land patches are located at various locations like Pahalgam, Bijbehara,

Budgam Ring road drainage system functioning well: Deputy Chief Minister

Says no water-logging at box culverts on the newly constructed Ring Road

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary Thursday said that the drainage system was functioning satisfactorily to facilitate proper disposal of surface and sub-surface water near Ring Road in Budgam.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a question raised by MLA, Ali Mohammad Dar in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that that a detailed technical assessment for drainage and cross-drainage structures was carried out at the Detailed Project Report (DPR) stage, pursuant to which



adequate provisions were incorporated in the design.

He said that as many as 148 Box Culverts, 107 Hume Pipe

Culverts (HPCs) and 24 Minor Nallah Bridges (MNBs) were incorporated to facilitate proper disposal of the water.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that presently there is no persistent issue of water-logging at the box culverts on the newly constructed Ring Road including Khanda, Kuzwaria, Bugam, Wathora and other locations.

However, he said that temporary accumulation noticed during the construction phase of the Greenfield project was addressed after completion of the structures and the drainage system is functioning satisfactorily.

He further said though there are no reports of water logging issues, however, if required the same shall be addressed through measures including additional constructions.

BRO to take up blacktopping of Sua-Pargwal road: Deputy Chief Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary Thursday informed the House that the blacktopping of the road project from Sua number 1 to Pargwal in Akhnoor shall be taken up by the Border Roads Organization (BRO).

This was informed by the Deputy Chief Minister while replying to a question raised by Legislator Mohan Lal in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that the road from Sua number 1 to Pargwal is proposed to be handed over to BRO for upgradation and blacktopping. Besides, the formal transfer from PW(R&B) Department to BRO is under process.

Focusing on strengthening of existing healthcare facilities as per IPHS-2022 norms: Health Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Thursday informed the House that the department is presently focusing on consolidation and strengthening of the existing healthcare facilities broadly as per IPHS-2022 norms to improve the healthcare services across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Health Minister, as per an official statement, stated this in reply to a question raised by Legislator Altaf Ahmad Wani (Kaloo) in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said that as per IPHS norms 2022 districts with less than 5 lakh population with a functional District Hospital (DH) do not need a Sub District Hospital (SDH), districts with populations between 5-10 lakh can have one SDH and thereafter, one SDH for every 10-lakh population can be considered for the provision of comprehensive secondary care health services.

She added that, as per this criteria, district having a population upto 20 lakh can have one DH and two SDHs, whereas each district of J&K has more SDHs than the admissibility as per IPHS-2022.

The Health Minister further said that the department has accorded sanction for up-gradation of NTPHC Pahalgam to the level of 50 bedded Hospital

along with creation of 26 posts of different categories. She added that against the sanctioned strength of 38 posts, 17 posts of doctors and para-medics have been filled up, which included 03 Consultants, 01 Medical Officer and 01 Dental Surgeon.

The Minister also said that efforts are afoot for filling up of vacancies through recruiting agency besides ensuring promotions. She added that during the annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra, availability of doctors, paramedics and other support staff is significantly enhanced as per actual requirement.

She further said that the construction of 50-bedded block at Pahalgam Hospital is steadily progressing. She added that an additional block for the hospital is under construction at a cost of Rs 1889.90 lakh against which Rs 1100.00 lakh expenditure has been incurred.

She said that during the current financial year 2025-26, an amount of Rs 340.00 lakh has been released to the executing agency out of approved allocation of Rs 400.00 lakh. Besides, additional funding is also approved under SASCI to speed up the pace of work.

"Truss work is complete and finishing works are in progress. The equipment shall also be made available in a phased manner in line with requirements of the hospital within budgetary resources".

she said.

Giving further details, the Minister said that the department is not considering establishment of Trauma Hospital between Qazigund and Pahalgam, as these institutions require specialised manpower and other allied support staff besides high end equipment and modular operation theatres. She added that two Trauma Care facilities, Trauma Hospital Qazigund and Trauma

Centre at Government Medical College Anantnag, are available en-route Qazigund and Pahalgam to meet the trauma related and other healthcare requirements. She said that Trauma Hospital Bijbehara, 4 km away from Khanabal-Pahalgam-Qazigund road, is also available.

During the annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra, the Health Minister said that health camps are being established to provide medical facilities to the pilgrims. These included augmenting hospital men, machinery and ambulance services in the existing health institutions like PHC Mattan (additional block under construction), SDH Seer Hamdan, PHC Aishmuqam and 50-bedded Hospital Pahalgam.

She apprised the House that PHC Aishmuqam has already been made operational on 24x7 basis to cater to the medical needs of devotees visiting Ziyarat of Sakhie Zain-Ul-Din Wali (RA) Aishmuqam.

28,186 AWCS operational in J&K: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Minister for Social Welfare Sakeena Itoo Thursday informed the House that 28,186 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) are currently operational in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stated this in reply to a question raised by Legislator Arjun Singh Raju regarding Anganwadi Centres in the Legislative Assembly.

16 Water Supply Schemes approved for Khawas block under JJM: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: The villages of Khawas Block, including Kanhol and Marutha in Budhal Constituency, are being covered under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to ensure provision of safe and adequate drinking water.

Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, as per an official statement, informed this while replying to a question raised by Legislator Javid Iqbal in the Legislative Assembly Thursday. He stated that 16 Water Supply Schemes (WSS) have been approved under JJM for the area.

He said that four schemes have been completed, while the remaining are at various stages of execution.

The Minister informed that despite ongoing works, the region has experienced prolonged drought-like conditions

in recent years, coupled with scanty rainfall, leading to depletion of certain water sources during peak summer months. He informed that the borewell source of WSS Budhal has also been adversely affected, impacting sustainability and resulting in acute shortages in some habitations during the lean summer period.

To address the long-term source sustainability, three Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) namely WSS Badhal-B, WSS Kotcharawal, and WSS Kotranka have been prepared and are under consideration. These projects will augment the existing schemes and extend coverage to left-out and higher-altitude habitations, stated the Minister.

in the Union Territory. However, he said that the government is in correspondence with the Animal Husbandry Department to provide compensatory support to the farmers in case of loss of animals.

He said that the Forest Department is in talks with the Agriculture Department and other concerned authorities regarding the inclusion of additional crops under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY) in case of damage by the wild animals.

Govt ensures ex-gratia assistance for human casualties in wildlife conflict: Forest Minister

Says no approved policy or budgetary provision earmarked for compensation of livestock losses due to wildlife attacks

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Adequate compensation or ex-gratia relief is provided in cases of human injury or loss of life under the prevailing policy framework on human-wildlife conflict in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

This was stated by Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, while replying to a question raised by Legislator Sajad Shaheen.

Legislators, Choudhary Mohammad Akram, Balwant



Singh Mankotia, Qaiser Jamsheed Lone and Nazir Ahmad Khan Gurezi raised supplementary questions on the subject. They urged the government to provide adequate relief measures and ensure inclusion of the agriculture sector and livestock under the relevant schemes to safeguard farmers' interests.

Responding to their concerns, the Minister, as per an official statement, said that currently there is no approved policy or budgetary provision specifically earmarked for compensation of livestock losses due to wildlife attacks

including at Bishnah Branch, due to acute liquidity constraints, leaving several depositors awaiting disbursement. He informed the House that the repayment of depositors forms part of the overall liquidation and depositor-protection framework approved by the Government. He also said that a comprehensive Know Your Customer (KYC) verification exercise covering all branches, including Bishnah, has been completed to authenticate depositor claims.

The Minister said that upon issuance of winding-up order and appointment of Liquidator(s), duly verified claims will be settled in a phased manner strictly

as per statutory provisions and the prescribed order of priority.

He further stated that the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) mechanism has not been invoked as it applies only to banking institutions registered under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, adding that J&K SCARD Bank is not covered under the Act.

Raffirming the Government's commitment to safeguarding depositor interests, the Minister said that a detailed projection of depositor liabilities has been compiled and submitted to the Government for consideration, including provisioning through the budgetary process in accordance.

Govt initiates liquidation of J&KSCARD Bank, assures protection of depositors' interests: Javed Dar

KT News Desk

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 19: Minister for Cooperatives, Javed Ahmad Dar, Thursday informed the House that the J&K State Cooperative Agriculture & Rural Development Bank Ltd. (J&K SCARD Bank), established in 1962 under the Jammu and Kashmir Co-operative Societies Act, 1960, is not registered under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and therefore does not fall under the purview of the Reserve Bank of India.

The Minister stated this while replying to a clubbed question raised by Legislators Dr. Rajeev Kumar Bhagat, Vikram Randhawa, Surjeet Singh Slathia

and Vijay Kumar.

He said that the Bank is presently under the control of the UT Government through the Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS) and the Administrative Department of Cooperatives.

The Minister further said the Bank has not been declared bankrupt and the Government has initiated the process of liquidation in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Co-operative Societies Act, 1989 due to prolonged financial and operational distress.

The Minister, as per an official statement, explained that the Bank's financial stress



developed gradually due to accumulated losses, weak governance and internal control systems, poor loan recovery and liquidity pressures. He added the situation worsened due to inadequate refinance support from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and limited financial assistance from the UT Government, as the Bank was largely dependent on refinance and government support and as a result, liabilities exceeded assets, severely affecting the Bank's ability to meet depositor obligations.

The Minister said that the Bank has stopped payments of matured fixed deposits,

J&K will be terrorism

our collective consciousness for decades. "I salute the indomitable spirit of Kashmiri Pandit Community. Every displaced family carried within them a living ember of Kashmir. In the crucible of struggle and adversity, they preserved philosophy, spirituality, culture, language, and traditions. Even in agony, they unearthed possibilities and scaled new pinnacles of success," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that in 2021, Kashmiri Migrant web portal was launched to recover house and lands of Kashmiri Pandit community, which were encroached upon by others.

"I firmly believe that among the world's gravest sorrows is the agony of becoming a stranger on one's own soil. This is precisely what had transpired in Jammu & Kashmir.

The anguish of the 1989-90 massacre of Kashmiri Pandits by terrorists runs so profoundly deep that even the balm of time has failed to soothe it. The torment of abandoning homes overnight, of being uprooted from one's roots, lingers like thorns in the veins of displaced families even today," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said that terror ecosystem in J&K tried to bury the truth but we can never forget and never forgive those terrorists and their support networks who sowed terror and struck at the souls of generations.

"The younger generation must never forget that Pakistan-backed terrorists have also spilled the blood of thousands of innocent Kashmiri Muslims. Many cases are so heart-rending that words falter in their retelling. Justice has begun flowing to those families since last year, with efforts underway to fulfil their employment needs alongside other essentials," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that in August 2019 when PM Modi abolished Article 370 and fully integrated J&K, that day instilled the faith that the young generation of Kashmiri Pandit Community could reclaim those roots without fear.

"Prof Kaul's book serves as a poignant reminder of Kashmiri Pandit Community's resilience. This is an era of reconstruction. Through his words, Prof Kaul proclaims to the world that the Kashmiri Pandit community is at the very heart of J&K's narrative," the Lieutenant Governor further said.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Rajiv Jha, Publisher, Readers Press; Prof. Neelu Rohmetra; Dean Research Studies; Dr Neeraj Sharma, Registrar, Jammu University; eminent literary personalities, people from different walks of life and students attended the book release ceremony.

Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu; Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu and other senior officials were also present on the occasion. (KNO)

Will fill 30,000

the government to address the issue of daily-wagers could not complete its work within a year.

"I told the House (last year) that we would set up a committee under the Chief Secretary. We gave them six months, but they could not complete their work in that time. They asked for more time, and we agreed," he said.

He said the reality is that no government has been able to resolve their issues.

He added that the PDP-BJP government did nothing for daily-wagers during its three-and-a-half-year tenure.

"They did almost nothing. Had they done something substantial, the problem would not have become so enormous," he said.

The CM also said that all tourist destinations closed after the Baisaran Pahalgam terror incident would be reopened by May this year.

"Many of our destinations have already been reopened. I know some are still closed. I cannot say much here, but I can assure you that these matters have been discussed with the central government. You can assume that by May, all these destinations will be reopened," he said.

The CM said they have no plans to privatise power distribution companies, known as DISCOMs.

"I want to assure the House that we have no intention to privatise power distribution companies. We need to improve their accounting and budgeting and provide more grant-in-aid to strengthen their financial health," the CM said.

He said J&K has an 18,000 MW power potential, of which only 3000-3500 MW has been developed.

"Our intention is that in the next 2-3 years, we will add another 3000-3500 MW," he said, with a long-term goal of developing the remaining 11000 MW over the next 10-15 years.

On the issue of encroachments, the CM said that whenever action is taken against encroachers, it should begin with big land grabbers. "No one would say that there should be no action against encroachers. Sham Lal Sharma rightly said that when you have to use the bulldozer, you should start with the influential. I want to assure the House that whenever we have to use the bulldozer, we will begin with the big land grabbers who take refuge in political parties or hide behind them," the CM said.

Regarding solid waste management, he said legacy waste is a serious issue across cities and addressing it would bring major benefits.

He announced that 2-3 major vertical housing projects would be launched in Jammu and Srinagar this year, with special focus on Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).

He also assured that issues related to leases and Ghair Mumkin Khads would be resolved

during this financial year.

On issues raised regarding CDF and related matters, the Chief Minister assured MLAs that savings under the scheme belong entirely to them.

"This money is yours. These savings will not go back to the Treasury," he said, adding that a special order would be issued for clarity.

On the Information Department, Omar Abdullah said there would be further rationalisation in advertisements, ensuring transparency based on circulation, readership, and reach. (KNO)

From Delhi to Haryana:

the unauthorized occupation and successfully retrieved on 05.06.2023. Resultantly, 18 Kanals of land is under possession of the Jammu & Kashmir Government at present and has staff quarters over it," the minister said.

The Minister also disclosed that eight Kanals and five Marlas of land are under illegal occupation at Damai Ganj, Amritsar.

"The Government owns land measuring approximately 32 Kanals and 9 Marlas at Daimganj, Tapai Road, Amritsar, which has been subject to unauthorized occupation. Through sustained legal action and orders passed by the Hon'ble District Court, Amritsar, the Government has successfully retrieved approximately 14 Kanals and 11 Marlas from Raminder Singh Bularia and 9 Kanals and 13 Marlas from Balbir Sharma, thereby recovering substantial portions of the land," the Minister said.

The Minister said the remaining land measuring two Kanals and 15 Marlas under occupation of Kuldip and approximately five Kanals and 10 Marlas under occupation of Raminder Pal Singh.

These two cases are presently under litigation before competent civil courts. "Execution proceedings are ongoing, and the remaining land measuring approximately 8 Kanals and 5 Marlas is expected to be retrieved upon final adjudication, with assistance from the Revenue Department and local authorities," the Minister's reply reads.

The Minister said the J&K Government has initiated legal proceedings to recover 1251 Kanals of land leased out in 1960 at Haryana. "The Government of Jammu & Kashmir owns land measuring approximately 1251 Kanals and 4 Marlas at Mangla area, District Sirsa, Haryana, which was leased out in the late 1960s to Bajwa Brothers. Due to violation of lease conditions, particularly non-payment of lease rent, the Government initiated legal proceedings before the Hon'ble Punjab and Haryana High Court to enforce its ownership rights and secure recovery of possession. The matter is at the final argument stage," reads the reply. (KNO)

Govt making necessary

Commission's report is approved and notified. For Municipal Wards, reservation/rotation will be carried out by the State Election Commission after approval of the OBC report.

The government further informed that electoral rolls for Panchayats have been revised/updated with January 1, 2025 as the qualifying date. For Municipal bodies, revision of rolls will be undertaken after completion of delimitation and on receipt of directions from the government under the J&K Municipal Corporation (Elections) Rules, 2003.

It said that the tender for purchase of election material has been completed and the process for DDC elections is underway. Around 30,000 ballot boxes have been purchased and provided to districts. An MoU has also been signed with the State Election Commission, Madhya Pradesh for providing 7,000 Multipost EVMs for conduct of ULB elections in J&K.

Replying to another part of the question, the government said that the Union Government released 159.13 crore to J&K under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) during 2022-23 and 2023-24 for capacity building and training of PRIs, out of which 109.11 crore was utilised, reflecting an expenditure of 68.56 per cent.

It added that 97.42 crore was approved for 2024-25 and 2025-26; however, due to non-functioning of elected Panchayati Raj Institutions during this period, only about 15 per cent of the approved amount has been utilised so far.

The government also provided details of funds released under District Capex for DDB/BDC and PRI sectors, stating that over 1.27 lakh crore was released in 2023-24, 1.28 lakh crore in 2024-25 and 85,265.80 lakh in 2025-26 (as on date).

The government said that necessary preparatory steps are being taken and further action regarding conduct of elections will be taken as per legal provisions and completion of required formalities. (KNO)

PM Modi, HM Shah

least you should have provided them employment. But you snatching their jobs. You should give jobs to the youth whose safety was ensured by Narendra Modi," he said.

The LoP castigated the government over outsourcing of government jobs.

"Where have the one lakh jobs gone? Instead, you sold 24000 jobs through outsourcing. Today, educated youth are waiting for job advertisements and waiting to sit in examinations, but these jobs are being filled through the backdoor," he said, adding that there is no recruitment mechanism for filling these jobs.

Sharma came down heavily on the government for failing to fulfil its electoral promises regarding employment for youth.

"I want to remind the CM about his promise. The CM had made a big promise about addressing unemployment. He had

promised one lakh jobs. It is ironic that this government created only 653 jobs in the past one-and-a-half years. Going by this speed, it means you will not create more than 2,000 jobs in five years," he said.

Sharma, who represents the Pader-Nagseni segment, also slammed the CM over his recent statement on daily-wagers, saying it reeks of sheer arrogance.

"I have never seen such arrogance in any person. The CM is threatening daily-wagers, telling them that if they protest, he will ruin their future. What is their future? These persons are 55, 58 years old. Their future is their children. Do you want to ruin their future?" he asked. He said the issue of encroachment should not be viewed through the prism of region and religion.

"There was a hue and cry over the past few months in Jammu over demolitions but the figures collected by me reveal that 1425 structures were demolished in J&K, and out of them 1014 took place in Kashmir," he said. (KNO)

50,000 heroin

a multi-pronged strategy to tackle the issue, including awareness campaigns, preventive interventions, strengthening enforcement mechanisms and expansion of treatment and rehabilitation facilities.

It said that, as per a joint survey conducted in 2022 by the Health Department and Social Welfare Department in 10 districts of Kashmir, around 70,000 persons were found to be involved in substance use.

The reply further said, a network of de-addiction and rehabilitation centres has been established across the Union Territory, including facilities in District Hospitals, Government Medical Colleges, and police-run centres. So far, around 69,000 patients have been provided treatment and rehabilitation services in various addiction treatment facilities across J&K.

The government also informed the house that, free services, including OPD/IPD care, emergency services and Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST), are available at Medical Colleges and District Hospitals through Addiction Treatment Facilities (ATFs).

"At present, 1,864 clients are registered, with 358 active beneficiaries receiving treatment."

They added that Mental Health and Addiction Medicine Clinics have been operationalised to provide specialised care, while awareness and IEC campaigns are being conducted under NHM, NMHP, NAPDDR and Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan in schools, colleges, and community settings.

"The Drug Control Organization is enforcing the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940, and has conducted 518 awareness programmes during 2025-26 (till December). Helpline 104 has also been publicised for immediate assistance and counselling," the government said.

The government further added, that it is committed to strengthening de-addiction counselling and rehabilitation infrastructure, particularly in rural and vulnerable areas. IMHANS Kashmir and Government Medical Colleges are expanding services, while inpatient facilities are being established to provide specialised care.

"Addiction Treatment Facilities at GMC Anantnag, Handwara and Srinagar are fully functional, offering counselling, OST programmes, outreach and referral mechanisms. GMC Baramulla has been sanctioned Rs 5 crore for a dedicated de-addiction building, while Drug Treatment Centres are operational to provide structured treatment and follow-up care."

The government said, institutional mechanisms for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation are in place and efforts are being strengthened in a systematic manner to address drug abuse among youth in J&K. (KNO)

1.35 lakh Willows

query, the Minister-in-Charge, as per news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that 1.91 lakh willow trees were identified for removal in the first phase under the Comprehensive Management Action Plan for Wular Lake. Of these, nearly 1.35 lakh trees have already been removed.

The government said, the exercise is not deforestation but a habitat management measure aimed at restoring the lake's natural wetland character.

It also said the plan does not provide for blanket removal and instead prescribes selective and need-based cutting aligned with ecological goals.

The Minister further informed the House that, total estimated number of willow trees in and around the lake stands between 19 and 21 lakh. "The removal, the government said, is being carried out in a phased and strategic manner based on management requirements."

The government also disclosed that the tree removal has generated approximately Rs 31.95 crore in revenue so far. The entire amount has been deposited under government receipts in accordance with financial rules.

"On compensatory measures, the government said, more than 19 lakh plants have been raised in the Wular catchment since the establishment of the Wular Conservation and Management Authority in 2012."

They said, in the Bandipora catchment alone, over 2,900 hectares have been treated through afforestation, plantation and soil conservation works. These measures, they said, aim to stabilise slopes, control erosion and reduce sediment flow into the lake as part of the larger restoration effort. (KNO)

Four new rail lines

tabled by MLA Javid Hassan Baig regarding railway expansion, the Transport Department, as per the news agency-Kashmir News

Observer (KNO), said the proposed new lines include Baramulla-Uri, Sopore-Kupwara, Anantnag-Bijbehara-Pahalgam and Kakapora-Shopian.

The government said, the alignment of the proposed lines has been finalised in consultation with the concerned district administrations. "The land requirement for these projects has been assessed and, if sanctioned, compensation will be provided to landowners as per applicable laws for the acquisition of land, trees and structures."

"On concerns about diversion of fertile agricultural land and rehabilitation of affected farmers, the government reiterated that compensation will be paid in accordance with legal provisions during the project execution stage," the reply said.

Regarding environmental safeguards, the reply stated that once the projects are sanctioned by the Government of India, all mitigation measures will be taken as per environmental policy and the latest guidelines to address issues such as deforestation, soil erosion, water resource disruption and ecological imbalance.

The government further said, coordination with the Government of India and Indian Railways will be maintained during project execution to ensure necessary mitigation measures are implemented to minimise social and environmental impact.

It added that district administrations will remain involved during the execution stage to address local concerns and ensure adherence to prescribed norms for environmental and social safeguards. (KNO)

J&K records 56%

registered 20.4 degrees Celsius, 10.9 degrees above normal, while Pahalgam settled at 16.0 degrees Celsius, 9 degrees above normal.

Kupwara recorded 19.4 degrees Celsius, Kokernag 17.8 degrees Celsius and Gulmarg 11.4 degrees Celsius, all significantly above seasonal averages.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded 27.0 degrees Celsius, 5.1 degrees above normal. Banihal registered 19.8 degrees Celsius, Batote 19.5 degrees Celsius, Katra 24.6 degrees Celsius and Bhaderwah 18.9 degrees Celsius, each reporting temperatures several degrees above normal. (KNO)

Infiltration bid

been suitably repositioned and reoriented to maintain domination of the area through integrated ground and aerial surveillance. A high state of operational alert is being maintained across the sector," the Army said. (KNO)

J&K Assembly passes

promises or announce policies that could later get stuck in courts or financial hurdles.

"We don't want to announce a policy from here so that it gets stuck in court and their work stops there," he said.

He informed the House that a committee under the supervision of the Chief Secretary had been constituted to work out a legally and financially viable framework for regularisation.

While the committee could not complete its work within the initial six months and sought more time, the Chief Minister reiterated the government's commitment.

"God willing, we will start the regularisation process in a phased manner," he said, adding that regularisation of daily rated workers would be initiated in a transparent manner once the report is submitted.

Recruitment and filling vacancies

On the issue of vacancies and employment, Omar Abdullah clarified the distinction between creation of posts and appointments.

"We have filled around 6,000-6,500 posts," he said, reiterating that the government would work to fill around 30,000 vacant posts this year through transparent and time-bound recruitment processes in coordination with the Service Selection Board and Public Service Commission.

He also referred to outsourcing engagements, describing them as additional opportunities, though not counted as formal jobs.

"At least they are earning a living," he added.

Financial condition and Budget management

Highlighting Jammu and Kashmir's financial constraints, the Chief Minister noted that tax and non-tax revenue covers only about 25% of expenditure, while 75% comes through central share and assistance.

"This is not a situation created today, it has been inherited," he said, adding that efforts are underway to improve financial self-reliance.

India has built vibrant digital public infrastructure, sharing it with world: PM Modi at AI summit

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India has built a vibrant digital public infrastructure and is sharing it with the world because technology is not a medium of power for the country but of service, not to dominate but to empower.

Addressing the Leaders' Plenary session at the India AI Impact Summit, Modi also said while technology in the past created divisions, artificial intelligence (AI) must now be accessible and within everyone's reach.

He stressed that the aspirations and priorities of the Global South must be placed at the centre of AI governance as the future of AI is discussed.

Welcoming the participants once again to the AI Impact Summit in India, the prime minister expressed confidence that the summit will play a crucial role in building a human-centric and sensitive global AI ecosystem.

He said history shows humanity has always turned disruptions into opportunities, and today presents another such moment to transform disruption into humanity's greatest opportunity.

"In recent years, India has built a vibrant digital public infrastructure and is sharing it with the world, because for India, technology is not a medium of power but of service, not to dominate but to empower. The AI too must follow this direction to ensure the welfare of humanity," he said in the presence of world leaders at the Bharat Mandapam here. The



prime minister emphasised that the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) ensured seamless online transactions even in difficult circumstances and played a major role in bridging the digital divide.

He said India is providing its startups with world-class computing power at highly affordable rates.

India has also created AIKosh (National Dataset Platform), through which more than 7,500 datasets and 270 AI models have been shared as national resources, he said.

Modi emphasised that India's direction and vision for AI are clear -- AI is a shared resource for the welfare of humanity.

He recalled Lord Buddha's teaching that "Right Action comes from Right Understanding", stressing the importance of creating a roadmap that ensures AI's positive impact through timely, well-intentioned and correct decisions.

He said the "aspirational India" has a major role in the global journey of artificial intelligence and, recognising this

responsibility, India is taking significant steps.

The prime minister highlighted that ethics has always been central to human progress but with AI, the scope of unethical behaviour is unlimited.

Ethical norms for AI must also be unlimited and the AI companies carry a major responsibility to focus not only on profit but also on purpose, and underscore the need for strong ethical commitments, he said.

Modi offered three suggestions for ethical AI use: AI training must respect data sovereignty and be based on a trusted global data framework.

He highlighted the principle of "garbage in, garbage out", stressing that output cannot be trustworthy if data is not secure, balanced and reliable.

The AI platforms must keep their safety rules clear and transparent, a "glass box" approach instead of a "black box", where safety rules are visible and verifiable, he said, adding this would ensure accountability and

strengthen ethical behaviour in business.

Modi said the AI must be guided by clear human values and cited the "paper clip problem" as an example, where a machine given a single goal could exhaust all global resources to achieve it.

He underlined that while technology is powerful, direction must always be determined by humans. At a personal level, AI is already influencing human learning, intelligence and emotions, he said.

Modi said during the COVID-19 global pandemic, the world witnessed that even the impossible becomes possible when nations stand together.

Cooperation provided solutions, from vaccine development to supply chains, from data sharing to saving lives, he said, adding that India saw how technology can serve humanity, citing the digital vaccination platform that helped vaccinate millions on time.

He said while technology is powerful, direction must always be determined by humans and highlighted that under India's AI Mission, 38,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) are already available and 24,000 more will be added in the next six months.

The prime minister underlined the need to build an AI future that advances innovation, strengthens inclusion and integrates human values.

When technology and human trust move together, the true impact of AI will be visible across the world, he said.

'Gross abuse of power' by Mamata Banerjee by barging into I-PAC raids: ED tells SC

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Enforcement Directorate has alleged "gross abuse of power" by the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the state machinery by "illegally barging" into raids at the I-PAC Office and the premises of its director in connection with an alleged coal pilferage scam.

The agency rejected the West Bengal government's submission that Banerjee and the police had intervened to prevent "armed persons

impersonating officials of Central agencies" from conducting an unauthorised search.

The ED said its officials had duly displayed their ID cards during the January 8 raid and search authorisation to the police officers.

"The bare perusal of the facts would reveal gross abuse of power by the State machinery of the State of West Bengal. Senior officials of the State Police have colluded and obstructed the discharge of functions by officials of the ED under the PMLA, in the private interests of Mamata Banerjee the Chief Minister of the

State of West Bengal," the ED submitted in its rejoinder (reply) in the top court.

Rejecting the state government's claim that the case relates to federal relations and cannot be entertained, the ED said it is seeking an FIR against the "blatant abuse of power" by state functionaries and commission of offences by them.

The agency claimed that the police escorted Banerjee into the premises where an active search was going on and forcibly retrieved incriminating material.

Silver jumps Rs 18,000 to Rs 2.6 lakh/kg; gold scales Rs 1.58 lakh/10g level



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 19: Precious metal prices jumped over 7 per cent in the national capital on Thursday, with silver rising to Rs 2.6 lakh per kilogram, while gold advancing to Rs 1.58 lakh per 10 grams, tracking firm global trends and a surge in safe-haven assets amid escalating tensions between the US and Iran.

According to the local marketmen, the white metal surged by Rs 18,000, or 7.32 per cent, to Rs 2,64,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Wednesday's closing level of Rs 2,46,000 per kg.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also advanced by Rs 1,950, or 1.24 per cent, to Rs 1,58,650 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 1,56,700 per 10 grams in the previous session.

In the international market, spot silver was trading 1.03 per cent higher at USD 77.97 per ounce, while gold was quoted marginally higher at USD 4,991.24 per ounce. "Gold prices rose to around USD

5,000 per ounce on Thursday, supported by a renewed wave of safe-haven demand amid rising speculation over potential US military action against Iran, which has elevated geopolitical risk," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that the collapse of renewed Russia-Ukraine negotiations has also revived global uncertainty, prompting investors to increase allocations toward safe-haven assets.

"With geopolitical flashpoints intensifying, capital is rotating out of risk-sensitive assets and into traditional safe-haven assets, providing sustained support to gold prices," Gandhi said.

Renisha Chainani, Head - Research at Augmont, said investors are awaiting key macroeconomic data, including US GDP and Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation data, which could shape interest rate expectations by the Federal Reserve in the coming months.

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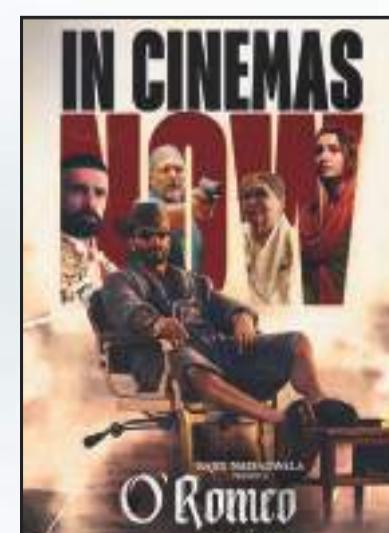
ASSI (A)
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Movies Schedule

Friday, 20th February

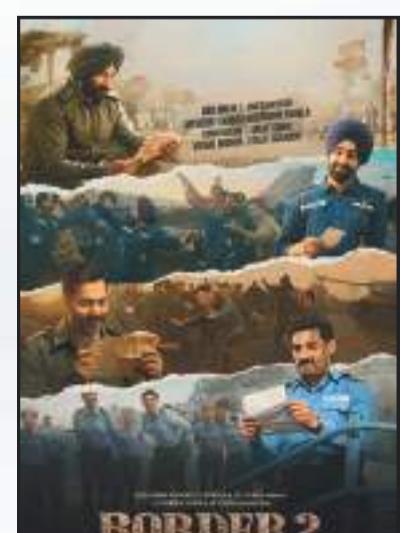
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SC terms twin infants' separation from mother 'cruelty of highest order'

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Supreme Court on Thursday termed the separation of twin children at the age of six months from their mother by the estranged husband in a matrimonial dispute as a case of "cruelty of highest order."

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria pulled up the husband for the separation of the children, who are now one and a half years old, from the mother and asked both the estranged spouses to appear before the judges on the next date of hearing in chambers with their children.

"The husband has committed extreme cruelty by separating children of just



six months from their mother. Welfare of the children is paramount. This is a travesty of justice. Children as small as six months cannot be deprived of their mother. This is cruelty of the highest order," the bench observed.

The top court was hearing a plea of the estranged

husband seeking the transfer of matrimonial cases initiated by the wife from Lucknow to Punjab.

The counsel for the husband said that the court should not disturb the status quo with respect to the twin children, as it would be detrimental for them.

Delhi among 17 states, UTs without e-waste recycling facility: CPCB to NGT



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Central Pollution Control Board has informed the National Green Tribunal that 17 states and Union Territories, including Delhi, do not have electronic or e-waste recycling facilities.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member A Senthil Vel was hearing the matter regarding e-waste management across states and UTs. The national capital also does not maintain records on the interstate transportation of e-waste.

However, the CPCB noted that the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCB) is among the seven state pollution bodies that have completed e-waste

inventorisation covering all 106 categories of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) under the E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022.

Maintaining an inventory of the EEE waste categories is critical for estimating the waste generated by each state/UT.

According to the report, Delhi primarily disposes of its e-waste through Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) or agreements between bulk waste generators and registered recyclers located outside the city, with most of such recyclers located in the national capital region (NCR).

The tribunal said that according to the report, 21 states/UTs, including Delhi, did not maintain records on the interstate transportation of e-waste. "Seven state pollution control boards (SPCBs)/Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) have completed e-waste

inventorisation covering all 106 categories of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE) under the E-Waste (Management) Rules of 2022, and submitted it thereof to CPCB.

These are Assam, Delhi, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura," it said.

Maintaining an inventory of

the EEE waste categories is critical for estimating the waste generated by each state/UT.

Iran, US lean into gunboat diplomacy as nuclear talks hang in balance

AP

Dubai, Feb 19: Iran and the United States leaned into gunboat diplomacy on Thursday as nuclear talks between the nations hung in the balance, with Tehran holding drills with Russia and the Americans bringing another aircraft carrier closer to the Mideast.

The Iranian drill and the arrival of the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier near the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea underscore the tensions between the nations.

Iran earlier this week also launched a drill that involved live-fire in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow opening of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passes.

The movements of additional American warships and airplanes don't guarantee a US strike on Iran — but it does give President Donald Trump the ability to carry out one should he choose to do so.

He's so far held off on striking Iran after setting red lines over the killing of peaceful protesters and Tehran holding mass executions, while reengaging Tehran in nuclear talks earlier disrupted by the Iran-Israel war in June.

"Should Iran decide not to make a deal, it may be necessary for the United States to use Diego Garcia, and the Airfield located in Fairford, in order to eradicate a potential attack by a highly unstable and dangerous regime," Trump wrote on his Truth Social website, seeking to pressure the United Kingdom over its plans to



settle the future of the Chagos Islands with Mauritius.

Meanwhile, Iran struggles with unrest at home following its crackdown on protests, with mourners now holding ceremonies honoring their dead 40 days after their killing by security forces. Some of the gatherings have included anti-government cries, despite threats from authorities.

Iran holds drill with Russia

The drill Thursday saw Iranian forces and Russian sailors conduct operations in the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported. The drill will be aimed at "upgrading operational coordination as well as exchange of military experiences," IRNA

added.

China had joined the "Security Belt" drill in previous years, but there was no acknowledgement it participated in this round.

In recent days, a vessel that appeared to be a Steregushchiy-class Russian corvette had been seen at a military port in the Iranian city of Bandar Abbas.

Iran also issued a rocket-fire warning to pilots in the region, suggesting they planned to launch anti-ship missiles in the exercise.

Meanwhile, tracking data showed the Ford off the coast of Morocco in the Atlantic Ocean midday Wednesday, meaning the carrier could transit through Gibraltar and potentially station in the eastern Mediterranean

with its supporting guided-missile destroyers.

Having the carrier there could allow American forces to have extra aircraft and anti-missile power to potentially protect Israel and Jordan should a conflict break out with Iran.

The US similarly placed warships there during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip to protect against Iranian fire.

Anti-govt chants made at mourning ceremonies

Mourning ceremonies for those killed by security forces in the protests last month also have increased.

Iranians traditionally mark the death of a loved one 40 days after the loss. Both witnesses and social media videos showed memorials taking place at Tehran's massive Behesht-e Zahra cemetery.

Some memorials included people chanting against Iran's theocracy while singing nationalistic songs.

The demonstrations began December 28 at Tehran's historic Grand Bazaar, initially over the collapse of Iran's currency, the rial, then spread across the country. Tensions exploded on January 8, with demonstrations called for by Iran's exiled crown prince, Reza Pahlavi.

Iran's government has offered only one death toll for the violence, with 3,117 people killed.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in previous rounds of unrest in Iran, puts the death toll at over 7,000 killed, with many more feared dead.

Switzerland to host next edition of AI summit: Swiss President Parmelin



PTI

New Delhi, Feb 19: Swiss President Guy Parmelin on Thursday announced that his country is looking forward to hosting the next edition of AI summit in Geneva in 2027.

Parmelin is among around 20 global leaders attending the ongoing AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

"Switzerland is looking forward to hosting the 2027 AI Summit in Geneva -- and to working with the subsequent incoming host of the 2028 AI Summit, the United Arab Emirates, as partner for the Geneva summit," he said.

He said hosting the summit will strengthen Switzerland's position in digital policy and reaffirm its commitment to a rules-based international order.

job creation. We also discussed issues of international significance," he said.

In March last year, India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) sealed an ambitious trade deal to bolster their economic ties.

Under the trade pact, the EFTA states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are looking at making an investment of USD 100 billion in India over the next 15 years. The pact came into force on October 1.

On the ongoing AI Impact Summit, Parmelin said the issues discussed at the gathering will "shape the future".

"What makes the technology of artificial intelligence revolutionary is not just its speed or application potential. What makes it extraordinary is its direct impact on our daily lives -- for example in education, healthcare, and how we work and communicate," he said.

"When we govern AI wisely, it can drive innovation, reduce inequality, and create prosperity that reaches beyond privileged circles. But this outcome is not automatic," he added.

Parmelin said Switzerland and India share important values and both the countries recognized the delicate balance between innovation and responsibility.

"With AI, we have an opportunity to answer that question more equitably than in past technological revolutions, but only if we build the right framework conditions now," he said.

Intelligence report says 1,000 Kenyans were recruited to fight for Russia in Ukraine



AP

Nairobi, Feb 19: A new Kenyan intelligence report says that 1,000 Kenyans were recruited to fight for Russia in Ukraine after being misled with false promises of jobs in Russia before being sent to the front lines.

The report was presented to parliament on Wednesday by parliamentary leader Kimani Ichung'wah, who accused Russian embassy officials of colluding with work recruitment agencies to dupe Kenyans into believing they would be given skilled jobs in Russia. He said the Russian embassy

officials issued them tourist visas.

The Russian Embassy in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, denied the allegations, saying in a statement Thursday that it never issued visas to anyone intending to travel to Russia to fight in Ukraine. It added: "the Russian Federation does not preclude citizens of foreign countries from voluntarily enlisting in the armed forces."

Kenyan recruits who have returned to the country have given accounts of being promised skilled jobs such as electricians and plumbers. They say they signed contracts written in Russian and were sent to battle with little or no military training.

Kenya's foreign ministry had previously acknowledged the problem, and urged citizens to be careful. Two recruiters were arrested last year and released on bail as they await trial.

Ranji Trophy final at Hubballi because of safety works at Chinnaswamy: KSCA

PTI

Bengaluru, Feb 19: The Karnataka State Cricket Association on Thursday confirmed that the upcoming Ranji Trophy final between Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir will be played at Hubballi, a decision the officials took to further speed up the ongoing safety enhancement works at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

The Ranji Trophy final will start from February 24 and PTI had reported on Wednesday that the prestigious match will be moved to the KSCA Stadium in Hubballi.

"KSCA had the option of hosting this prestigious final either at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, or at the KSCA Hubballi grounds. After careful evaluation and detailed consultations, the Association, in coordination with the BCCI, has taken a considered and strategic decision to stage the final at Hubballi," said Vinay Mruthyunjaya, the KSCA official spokesperson.

Extensive infrastructure and safety enhancement works have been underway at Chinnaswamy in line with the recommendations of the state-appointed Expert



Committee and other statutory authorities.

"Several spectator gates and access points are currently being dismantled and widened, along with other critical improvement works. In view of these ongoing developments, it would not have been feasible to ensure the high-quality match-viewing experience and spectator convenience that a marquee fixture such as the Ranji Trophy Final deserves," said Mruthyunjaya.

However, Mruthyunjaya said, it came as a blessing in disguise because a marquee match can be staged at a mofussil centre in the state, aligning with the vision of the newly-elected KSCA Managing Committee under the leadership of former India cricketer and KSCA President Venkatesh Prasad.



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

وَيَصُومُ غَدِّ نَوْيَتْ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ

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

DUA FOR SEHRI

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَصْمَأْتُ وَبِكَ امْتَثَّ [وَعَلَيْكَ تَوْكِّتُ] وَعَلَى رَزْقِكَ أَفْتَرُ

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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