



J&K's Budget After 7 Years Omar Bets Big On Rs 1.12 Lakh Cr Outlay

Observer News Service

Jammu: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday presented the first budget of the Union Territory with an outlay of Rs 1.12 lakh crore, and proposed a series of welfare and development initiatives for 2025-26, reflecting people's aspirations.

He said J&K is at the threshold of a new era of peace and prosperity, with a semblance of normalcy returning after over three-and-a-half decades of turmoil.

Presenting the budget in the legislative assembly here, Abdullah, who also holds the finance portfolio, praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitaraman for their support in various sectors.

Abdullah, dressed in a traditional kashmiri suit with a blue blazer and a skull cap, started his over one-and-a-half-hour speech in English with the Persian couplet, "Tan Hama Daag Daag Shud - Punmba Kujia Kujia Neham..." (my entire body is covered with bruises where should I apply the balm), amid thumping of benches by his party legislators.

This is the first budget of the National Conference-led government after it came to power in October last year, ending six years of central rule.

The last budget session took place in 2018 under the then PDP-BJP government in the erstwhile state of J&K, which was accorded the status of Union Territory after Ladakh was carved out as a separate UT following the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019.

He said the improved environment is contributing to economic progress, with J&K's economy expanding from Rs 1,64,103 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 2,45,022 crore in

2023-24.

"The total net budget estimates for fiscal 2025-26 are Rs 1,12,310 crore, excluding provisions for ways and means advances and overdrafts," Abdullah said.

With a focus on a zero-deficit budget, he said: "The expected revenue receipts are Rs 97,982 crore and capital receipts are Rs 14,328 crore. Similarly, revenue expenditure is estimated to be Rs 79,703 crore and capital expenditure Rs 32,607 crore."

Detailing the estimates, he said gross receipts are estimated at Rs 1,40,309.99 crore, including provisions for an overdraft of Rs 28,000 crore.

"Given these receipts, total gross expenditure is estimated to be Rs 1,40,309.99 crore," he added. Abdullah highlighted that the Union Territory's own revenues, both tax and non-tax, are estimated at Rs 31,905 crore.

"Additionally, Rs 41,000 crore is expected as central assistance and Rs 13,522 crore as CSS and PMDP for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

Revealing | More on P6

6 ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, I announce free ridership for women on all government-owned public transport, including e-buses, starting April 1, 2025"

Power, Infrastructure, Jobs & Tourism In Focus

Giving details of budgetary proposals in various sectors, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that in the power sector, J&K shall aim to achieve self-sufficiency in power & energy by 2027-28 with 7,500 MW new hydro projects & smart grid investments to ensure 24/7 power supply. To further improve power efficiency, the | More on P6

Budget Love Letter To People Of J&K: CM

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah presented the Budget 2025-26, outlining key initiatives across multiple sectors, including hydropower, tourism. While defending his government's vision, he also reiterated his strong stance against the Union Territory (UT) model in the Country. Omar Abdullah acknowledged the Opposition's expected | More on P6

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hydropower & Energy:

- 200 units free electricity per month for AAY families
- New hydropower policy to unlock 20,000 MW potential
- Pakal Dul, Kiru, Kwar, Rattle projects to add 3,000 MW by 2027

Food Security

- Free 10 kg ration per person for AAY beneficiaries from April 1, 2025

Social Welfare & Women Empowerment:

- Free public transport for women from April 1, 2025
- Marriage assistance for AAY category girls raised to ₹75,000

- Pension hikes:
- Below 60 years: ₹1,250/month
- 60-80 years: ₹1,500/month
- Above 80 years: ₹2,000/month

Revenue & Property Reforms

- 100% Stamp Duty Exemption On Property Transfers Within Family

Water Safety

- Establish 98 Water Testing Labs Across J&K

Economic & Fiscal Management:

- Own revenue estimated at ₹31,905 crore
- ₹41,000 crore as central assistance, ₹13,522 crore for CSS & PMDP
- J&K Police budget shifted to MHA; UT to receive ₹5,000 crore extra grants

Tourism & Infrastructure:

- **SPREAD Initiative:** Developing new destinations to reduce pressure on existing hotspots
- Eco-tourism policy to promote sustainable tourism
- **Gulmarg Gondola:** 7.68 lakh visitors in 2024
- **Kashmir Marathon:** 1,800 global participants

- Tourism contribution to rise from 7% to 15% of GSDP in next 4-5 years

Industry & Startups:

- ₹50 crore for startups ecosystem
- New MSME policy for price preference to local businesses
- Leather tanning industry: Policy to utilize 5,000-6,000 pelts wasted daily

Education & Skill Development:

- 40 higher secondary schools to be upgraded to K-12 institutions
- Four-year UG programs in all colleges under NEP 2020
- 600 new polytechnic seats
- Encouraging private universities to set up satellite campuses
- J&K Skill & Entrepreneurship University to focus on tech, tourism, crafts

Healthcare

- SEHAT App for teleconsultations, e-prescriptions, emergency support

Sports Development:

- ₹8 crore for cricket academies
- National excellence centers for water sports at Dal Lake & Basohli
- Gymnastics academy at Gindun Rajbagh & Khel Gaon, Nagrota
- 75 lakh youth to be engaged in sports activities

Mining & Environment:

- Satellite-based mining surveillance to curb illegal extraction
- E-challan devices for stricter enforcement

Infrastructure & Government Housing:

- ₹50 crore for new legislative complex in Jammu
- 4,500 govt residential units planned in Jammu & Srinagar
- Twin towers in Jammu: 64 modern 3BHK & 4BHK flats (₹20 crore allocated)

J&K To Get 2 New Universities

Srinagar: In his budget speech, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday announced the setting up of National Law University and Skill & Entrepreneurship in Jammu & Kashmir.

Speaking in the Assembly, Omar said that the government is committed to establishing a National Law University (NLU) in Jammu & Kashmir to drive legal education reforms and research. "With world-class training aligned to contemporary standards, the NLU will empower future legal professionals and enhance justice delivery," he said.

He said Rs 50 crore | More on P6

300 New Housing Units For Employees

Srinagar: Recognizing the vital contribution of employees in governance, the Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday announced plans to expand residential facilities by constructing nearly 300 new housing units.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, informed the Legislative Assembly that the government aims to enhance existing infrastructure, which currently consists of about 4,500 residential units in Jammu and Srinagar.



He said that to meet the increasing demand, 216 new 2BHK and 3BHK units will be built in Srinagar, while the rest will be constructed in Jammu. "To | More on P6

Tourism Sector Gets Rs 390.20 Crore

In his budget speech in the Assembly, Omar highlighted the importance of tourism, a vital sector that is deeply rooted in the region's culture and economy. In 2024 alone, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a record 2.36 crore tourist visits, solidifying its reputation as a premier destination. The Chief Minister also highlighted the | More on P6

Promises Support, Revival Of Press Clubs

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said the government will take concrete steps to revive and support the Press Club in Jammu & Kashmir. | More on P6

'Gimmicks, Exclusions, & Betrayal' Oppn Calls Budget 'Deceptive, Disappointing'

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Opposition parties in Kashmir criticised the budget presented by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday, with the PDP saying it exposed the gap between the ruling National Conference's promises and the reality of their governance, while the BJP terming it a "complete failure."

In a statement, the Peoples' Democratic Party said the people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve honest governance, "not broken promises."

"This clearly exposes the massive gap between the promises made in the National Conference's election manifesto and the reality of their governance. They had assured 200 units of free electricity



for every household, creating hopes among the people of J&K. "However, the budget announcement proves that their promise was nothing more than an election gimmick," the party said, referring to the announcement of 200 free electricity units to families under AAY -- the Centre's Antyodaya Awas Yojana. | More on P6

HC Halts Promotions Over Reservation Denial

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has restrained authorities from making any promotions unless candidates belonging to the SC/ST reserved categories, entitled for consideration for reservation in promotions, are considered in Jammu and Kashmir.

A bench of Justice M A Chowdhary passed the direction after underlining that denying benefits of reservation in promotion in J&K amounts to treating reserved category employees in UT differently than their counterparts in the rest of the Country. The same, the court said, amounts to class legislation, "which is antithetical to the concept of equality laid down in the Constitution of India." | More on P6

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Astronomers Uncover Mysterious 'Ghosts' Of The Radio Universe

Press Trust Of India

Radio astronomers have discovered a series of faint, ghostly circular objects in space using advanced radio telescopes such as the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) and MeerKAT in South Africa. These cutting-edge telescopes, designed to detect radio signals rather than visible light, are unveiling an unseen universe filled with mysterious cosmic structures. The extraordinary sensitivity of these telescopes is revealing a "low surface brightness universe", consisting of extremely faint radio sources that had never been observed before. Many of these discoveries come from the Evolutionary Map of the Universe (EMU) survey, a large-scale sky-mapping project using ASKAP, which is delivering the most detailed radio atlas of the southern hemisphere. Among the recent discoveries is Klykos, a ghostly ring, and WR16, both surrounding rare and massive Wolf-Rayet stars—a late stage in the life cycle of massive stars. As these stars burn through their fuel, they become unstable and eject layers of gas, forming nebulous circular structures. The expelled material expands symmetrically in all directions, creating the distinct circular shapes seen in radio observations. Several newly discovered objects—Stingray 1, Perun, Ancora, and Unicorn—are supernova remnants, the aftermath of massive stellar



explosions. When a star collapses under its own gravity, it releases an immense burst of energy, sending shockwaves outward. These expanding shells of stellar debris appear as striking circular formations. A particularly intriguing supernova remnant, named Teleios (from the Greek "perfect"), stands out for its near-perfect symmetry. Unlike most remnants, which become distorted over time due to interactions with surrounding interstellar material, Teleios has remained untouched, providing rare insights into the physics of supernova explosions. Another spectacular find is Diprotodon, one of the largest objects ever observed in the sky. Measuring nearly six times larger than the Moon, this remnant has only

now been fully detected thanks to ASKAP's sensitivity. The name Diprotodon was inspired by an extinct Australian megafauna species, a giant wombat-like creature, due to its vast size. The internal structure of this remnant reveals complex interactions with its environment, with different sections of the expanding shell colliding with interstellar clouds. Another fascinating object, Lagotis, challenges previous classifications of cosmic structures. Originally identified as VdB-80, a reflection nebula within the Milky Way, new ASKAP data has revealed an additional structure—an HII region (a cloud of ionized hydrogen) surrounding the same stellar center. This discovery suggests that the nebula is actively interacting with

a molecular cloud, much like a burrowing motion. This behavior inspired the name Lagotis, after the Australian greater bilby (Macrotis lagotis), an animal known for its digging nature. ASKAP and MeerKAT are also shedding light on objects beyond our galaxy, including a class of mysterious radio ring galaxies. While these galaxies appear as normal disks in visible light, their radio signals reveal enormous rings, potentially caused by powerful supernova-driven shockwaves that have cleared the central regions of gas. However, the exact mechanism behind these structures remains uncertain, prompting further research. One of the most puzzling discoveries is LMC-ORC, an Odd Radio Circle (ORC)—a newly identified class of objects with unknown origins. Only detectable in radio wavelengths, ORCs are among the most enigmatic findings in modern astronomy. Their formation mechanisms are still unclear, but ongoing studies are expected to shed light on their nature. MeerKAT and ASKAP are merely the precursors to an even more powerful project—the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), an international collaborative effort that will revolutionize radio astronomy. The SKA will significantly enhance our ability to detect low surface brightness objects and uncover even more previously unknown cosmic structures.

Brain Activity During Sleep Could Predict Recovery Of Patients With Brain Injury

Press Trust Of India

Sleep spindles or brain activity occurring during the non-dreaming stage of sleep could help predict recovery of consciousness and independent functioning in those who suffered a brain injury, a new study has suggested. Researchers from Columbia University and the NewYork-Presbyterian healthcare system, US, said the studies have shown that unresponsive patients with a recent brain injury can possess a degree of consciousness hidden from families and doctors. For the study, published in the journal Nature Medicine, the researchers looked through electroencephalograms or EEG recordings of brain activity in 226 comatose patients taken over a night. "The electrical activity during sleep looks relatively chaotic and then occasionally in some patients, these

(bursts of) very organised, fast frequencies appear," said lead researcher Jan Claassen, an associate professor of neurology at Columbia University. These bursts of brain activity, called sleep spindles, often preceded the detection of cognitive motor dissociation—in which a patient appears unresponsive but shows evidence of brain activity—the return of consciousness and long-term recovery, the researchers said. The patients with sleep spindles and cognitive motor dissociation were more likely to recover consciousness and functional independence, the team said. "Spindles happen normally during sleep and (the patients are) showing some level of organisation in the brain, suggesting circuits between the thalamus and cortex -- (brain regions) needed for consciousness are intact," Claassen said. In the study, sleep spindles

were seen in "approximately every third behaviorally unresponsive patient after acute brain injury, frequently precede detection of CMD and are a promising complementary predictor for recovery of consciousness and functional independence". The researchers said that 76 per cent of the patients with sleep spindles and cognitive motor dissociation showed evidence of consciousness by the time they were discharged from the hospital. A year later, 41 per cent of these patients had recovered neurological function, with either minor deficits or a moderate disability, and were able to care for themselves during the day, the team said. They acknowledged the findings do not prove that inducing sleep spindles would translate to better outcomes, but raise the possibility that improving a patient's sleep may promote recovery.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the General public that my Son's name and DOB in her Aadhar Card bearing Aadhar No-9727 4694 8377, has been wrongly mentioned as Zubair Shabir Lone. Date of Birth (DOB), 17.08.2009 instead of Zubair Ahmad Lone. DOB, 11.03.2012. Now I am applying for its Correction as per School and Date of Birth (DOB) Certificate Record. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may contact the same in the office of the General Manager Ranbir Govt Press Jammu within a period of seven days from the publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained after expiry of stipulated period.

Shabir Ahmad Lone
F/O. Zubair Ahmad Lone

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Manzoor Ahmad Dar S/O Ghulam Hyder Dar R/O mirgund tehsil singhpora distt baramulla declare as under that I was born on 12/02/1980 at mirgund and now I want to obtain DOB in favour of my favour from BDO office singhpora if any body have objection he/she may contact to tehsil office singhpora within seven days and after seven days no objection will be accepted

fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Sub .. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth..

Public Notice..

The registrar birth BDO Lalpora has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Zainab Bashir D/o Bashir Ahmad Mir R/o Marmosa Pattan with verified date of birth 25/03/2012 occurred at home in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained..

SD
Naib Tehsildar Pattan

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the General public that my daughter's name, parantage and Home address in her Aadhar Card bearing Aadhar No- 9377 6133 0063, has been wrongly mentioned as Anjum Asadulla D/O. Rukhsana Rashid R/O. Dundusa instead of Mir Anjum D/O. Mohd Assadullah Mir R/O. Hajin Now I am applying for its Correction as per School record. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may contact the same in the office of the General Manager Ranbir Govt Press Jammu within a period of seven days from the publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained after expiry of stipulated period.

Mohd Assadullah Mir
F/O. Mir Anjum
R/O :- Hajin. Tehsil :- Qaziabad. Distt : Kupwara.

fko

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
IRRIGATION DIVISION ANANTNAG

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS
Notice Inviting E-Tenders-NIT No.21of2024-25

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Jand K U.T, e-tenders on percentage basis are invited in Single cover system from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K.U.T Govt. for the following works:-

S. NO.	NAME OF WORK	Estt Cost (Rs in lacs)	Earnest Money (EMD) Rs	Time for completion	Class of Contract	Cost of Tender document (Rs.)	Major Head of Account	Tender opening authority
1	Upgradation of Irrigation Infrastructure, (Storage Tank along with water carrying Pipes, distribution system) Development and Upgradation of HAZELNUT FARM at LEHANWAN ANANTNAG under NABARD	57.65	172950/=	90 days	AAV	1000/-	NABARD	Ex. Engineer

The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, bill of quantities (BOQ) set to terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from:-

1. Publishing date	06.03.2025	06.00PM
2. Download Date Starts	06.03.2025	06.00PM
3. BID Submission Date Starts	06.03.2025	06.00PM
4. BID Submission Date Ends	26.03.2025	06.00 PM
5. Date of opening of tenders	27.03.2025	10:00 AM

The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website www.jktenders.gov.in and the bids uploaded shall be opened online on above mentioned date by the Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Anantnag in presence of the bidders who may wish to be present. In case of holiday or office happening to be closed on the basis of opening of the bid, the same will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copies (on 100dpi) of all necessary documents like Cost of Tender document in the form of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Anantnag / latest GST clearance certificate (GSTR-3B and GSTR-1) / Registration card duly renewed along with Verification/BID Security in the form of EMD as per above. And Additional performance security as per below. The date of CDR/FDR/BG should be between the date of start of bid and bid submission end date. After opening of tenders online, the 1st lowest bidder shall be asked to deposit the CDR/FDR/additional performance security pledged to tender receiving authority and other documents in original. The CDR/ FDR/ additional performance security and other documents in original shall be deposited within two Days positively after opening of tenders. The EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR of the successful bidder will be retained as performance security deposit till expiry of defect liability period, whereas the EMD of unsuccessful bidders will be returned latest by 30 days after award of the contract. The check list of documents for cover 1st is attached with the NIT & bidders are advised to recheck the uploaded documents as per the Check list.
- Additional Performance Security is to be uploaded by the bidder at the time of bid submission in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG as per the breakup given below failing which the tender shall be rejected.
- Any corrigendum/addendum/errata in respect of the above tender shall be made available only at our official website www.jktenders.gov.in in No further press advertisement will be given. Hence prospective bidders are advised to visit website regularly for above purpose. 28. Other terms & conditions shall be the same as laid down in the PWD Form-25. Remittance Head:- 0702 Position of AAA:- (1) Accorded Vide Government Order No. 511-Jk(APD) of 2024 dated 08-11-2024 and Chief Horticulture officer Anantnag's Authorization No. CHO/ANG/DEV/NBARD/24-25/13743-47 dated 16-11-2024 Position of TS:- (1) Accord of technical sanction vide order No. 82- BD of 2025 dated 05-03-2025 issued under superintending Engineer Hyd. Circle Anantnag's No. SE/Hyd/db/TS/8817-19 dated 05-03-2025 Position of Funds:- Budgetary Provision

No. IDA/8971-93
DIPK-12733/24
Dated: 07-03-2025

SD/-
Executive Engineer
Irrigation Division Anantnag

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan..

Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth..

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Zubaib Ahmad Dar s/o Abdul Qayoom Dar R/o Mundayi Pattan with verified date of birth 11/10/2021 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained..

fko

Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Public Notice

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that the Registration Certificate (RC) of my Maruti-800 car bearing Registration Number JK01R-5238 has been lost somewhere in between Burzahama to Hazratbal Srinagar. In this regard, this notice is being published to inform the general public that anyone finding the aforementioned document should kindly contact me at the earliest and also this notice serves to caution that the lost RC should not be misused by any unauthorized person. Additionally I am applying for the issuance of a duplicate Registration Certificate from RTO office Srinagar. If anybody having any objection kindly contact the concerned department within 7 days after publishing of this notice No objection will be accepted after 7 days.

For any information, please contact
Abdul Rashid Dar
Contact No. 9697814182
Burzahama, Hazratbal Srinagar

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اطلاع عام

برغاص و عام کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ میرے بیٹے سرفراز نظیر ولد نظیر احمد کے کی ماں کا نام غلطی سے الفت اختر اندراج ہوا ہے جبکہ اس کا اصلی نام الطافہ بانو ہے۔ اب اس کی درستی کرانی مطلوب ہے۔ اگر کسی کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دنوں کے اندر اپنا اعتراض پرنسپل سرسید ماڈل اسکول پالہ پورہ بدگام کے دفتر میں پیش کریں۔ معاذ کڈرنے کے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

مشیر نظیر احمد کے والد سرفراز نظیر سائیکہ پالہ پورہ بدگام۔

mcb

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
PW (R&B) DIVISION ZAINPORA
e-mail-xenrandbzainapora@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
CIVIL WORKS
SINGLE COVER SYSTEM (up to Rs. 2.50 Crores)
NIT No: 52/ZNP/RnB/e-Tendering/2024-25 Dated: 06-03-2025

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single 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:-

S. No.	Name of Work	Major Head of Account	Estt. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Earnest Money (EMD) (Rs.)	Time for Completion	Class of Contract	Cost of Tender Document (Rs.)	Major Head of Account	Tender opening authority
1	Construction of PCC Drain at Tharier	MH-3054	3.82	7640/-	DEE	15 Days	200/-	ARD/ESK/202425/25 Dated:10-02-2025	96-SE/PS of 2024-25 Dated: 04/03/2025
2	Repair & Renovation of R&B Division Office at Zainapora	MH-2059	4.48	8960/-	DEE	15 Days	200/-	ARD/ESK/202425/25 Dated:10-02-2025	96-SE/PS of 2024-25 Dated: 04/03/2025
3	Restoration of Manihal Batapora Road	MH-3054	2.43	4860/-	DEE	15 Days	200/-	ARD/ESK/202425/25 Dated:10-02-2025	92/ZN/ Dated: 05/03/25

Position of funds :- Committed
The Payment shall be made strictly as per the release of funds by the Competent authority.

- 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	06-03-2025
2	Document downloading Start Date.	06-03-2025
3	Document Downloading End Date.	12-03-2025
4	Bid submission Start Date.	06-03-2025
5	Bid Submission End Date.	12-03-2025
6	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	13-03-2025

1. Bids must be accompanied by a Treasury Challan (dated between the bid start date and the Bid Submission End date) deposited in M.H. 0059 in the name of Executive Engineer R&B Division Zainapora (tender inviting authority) as the cost of the tender document.
Note:- The Date of Treasury Challan 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 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 Zainapora. The successful bidder will have to provide Performance Security @ 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 Bid cost, which will be released after successful completion of the DLP/Maintenance Period. Bidders are advised to quote Rates without GST. GST @ 18% shall be added at the time of allotment by allotting authority.

- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids.
- The earnest money shall be forfeited if:-
 - Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.
 - Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.
- Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on website www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the Bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Zainapora (Tender receiving authority).

4(A). Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

- Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in to acquaint bid submission process.
- To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved Vendor.
- The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No bid will be accepted in physical form.
- Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid. Besides, original documents related to the bid shall be submitted by L1 before issuance of Allotment in his favour.
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copies of all necessary documents EMD, tender documents fee in terms of soft copies and all other documents required as per NIT with technical bid. No document (s) which has/have not been updated shall be entertained for technical evaluation in the form of hard copy. However in case of any clarification the bidders all have to produce original documents in support of soft copies if need arises.**

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

4.6(a) Bidders should note that if the documents uploaded/submitted on the basis of which the contract has been awarded are found forged/fake/not genuine at any time, the contract shall be cancelled and the contractor/bidder shall be recommended for blacklisting and debarred from taking part in tendering in PWD/Other Departments for a period of one year in the first instance, besides the performance security deposited for the said work shall be forfeited.

- The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.
- All bidders have to submit Bid Security money as per the circular of Finance. **Non submission of bid security money/EMD shall render the bidder as Non-responsive.**
- For item rate method** the unit rates and prices shall be quoted by the bidder entered in Indian Rupees and the rates quoted shall be deemed to include price escalation and all taxes upto completion of the work. Deduction on account of taxes shall be made from the bills of the contractor on gross amount of the bill as per the rates prevailing at the time of recovery. **The %age rate method** requires the bidder to quote a percentage above / below / at par at the bottom of the BOQ percentage template for the work. The percentage quoted by the bidder shall be deemed to include price escalation and all taxes upto completion of the work. Deduction on account of taxes shall be made from the bills of the contractor on gross amount of the bill as per the rates prevailing at the time of recovery.
- Bidders are advised not to make any change in BOQ (Bill of Quantities) contents. In no case they should attempt to create similar BOQ manually.
- Price escalation and Taxes:** No price escalation shall be permissible. The deduction on account of taxes shall be made from the bills of the contractor for the gross amount of the bill as per the rates prevailing at the time of recovery.
- Bidders are advised to use "My Documents" area in their user on R&B e-Tendering portal to store such documents as are required.
- In case of CRF and any other specified project. The relevant guidelines standard bidding document shall be followed.
- Instructions to Bidder (ITB)
- All bidders shall upload the following information and documents along with qualification criteria/qualification information with their bids:-
 - Copies of original documents defining constitution/ legal status, place of registration and principal place of Business
 - Cell No. and Correspondence address & e-mail.
 - Scanned copy of e-challan/Treasury receipt and EMD/Bid Security.
 - Scanned copy of Registration Card with latest renewal as well as verification from concerned issuing authority.
 - Scanned copy of Valid GSTIN No. & PAN No.
 - Scanned copy of GSTIN Registration and latest clearance certificate FORM GST-3B. I.e. latest clearance certificate FORM GST-3B of the latest quarter (October-December 2024-25) / preceding Month (January 2024-25).
 - All bidders shall upload Verification Certificate from concerned Chief Engineer /Superintending Engineer of Enlistment Registration Card in respect of online renewal registration card.**
- The bidder at his own responsibility and risk should visit and examine the site of work and its surroundings before submission of bid.
- Non attendance of pre-bid meeting will not be cause of disqualification of the bidder. (Not Applicable)
- All documents relating to the bid shall be in the English Language.

No: NIT/R&B/ZNP/DIV/6273-82
DIPK-12725/24 Dt: 07-03-2025

SD/-
(Er. H.M Jahangir)
Executive Engineer
R&B Division Zainpora

Police Books Two Drug Peddlers Under PIT NDPS Act

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Continuing the crackdown against drug trafficking, Police in Srinagar have booked two infamous drug peddlers under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (PIT-NDPS Act).

According to Associated News Bureau police spokesman said, the notorious drug peddlers namely Hazim Bashir Bazaz @ Zahid son of Bashir Ahmad Bazaz resident of Housing Colony Chanapora Srinagar and Momin Mehraj Bazaz son of Mehraj-ud-Din Bazaz resident of Syedpora Eidgah have been booked under PIT-NDPS Act after obtaining the formal detention orders from Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir on the basis of dossiers prepared by Srinagar police against them.

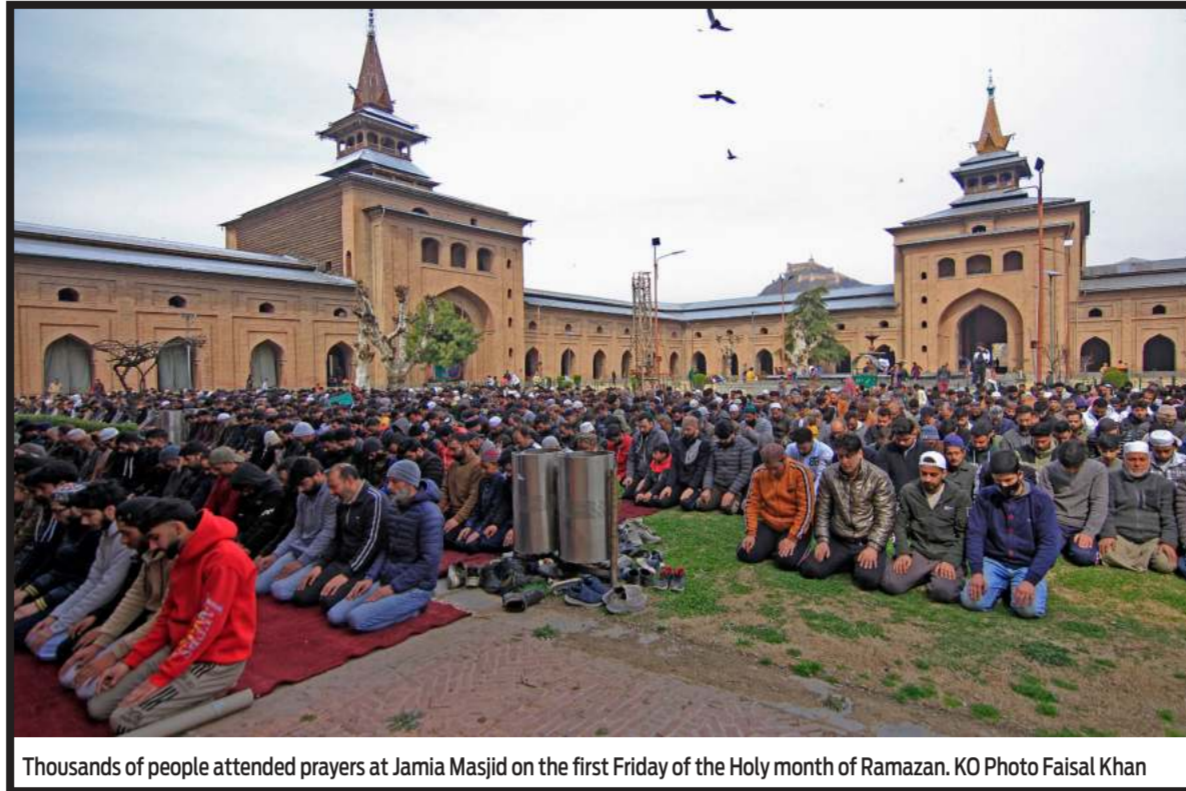
Consequently, these drug peddlers were detained and subsequently lodged in District Jail of Udhampur.

Pertinent to mention here that these drug peddlers have been involved in the peddling of narcotics among

the youth of Srinagar on an alarming scale. Besides, they were also involved in several NDPS Act cases of various police stations of Srinagar. Despite several NDPS Act cases registered against them, they did not mend their ways after getting bailed out from courts and were brazenly promoting drugs among the youth of the valley, especially in Srinagar, through their illegal narcotics network. Police have also set into motion the process to attach their properties under the provisions of PIT-NDPS Act.

J&K Police affirms its steadfast commitment of eliminating drug peddling in the region with the full might of law. We also caution those engaged in this unlawful activity that the long arm of law would catch them sooner than anticipated and every offender will face justice.

For any information related to drug dealers/peddlers in Srinagar, citizens are encouraged to contact the police through official helpline number 9596770550. Together, we can build a safer and healthier society.



Thousands of people attended prayers at Jamia Masjid on the first Friday of the Holy month of Ramadan. KO Photo Faisal Khan

DC Chairs Meeting Of Advisory Committee On Food Safety

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A meeting of District Level Advisory Committee (DLAC) on Food Safety and Healthy Diets was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex here to review the measures in place to ensure quality food to people in the District.

At the outset, DC took a comprehensive review of the functioning and achievements of the Food Safety Department with regard to public health.

The meeting held a detailed deliberation on the crucial issues related to food safety standards and hygiene being followed by the Food Business Operators in the District.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, who is also the Chairman of DLAC was apprised about the current status of food safety measures in place in Srinagar District and various proactive measures undertaken by the Food Safety Department to ensure the provision of safe and healthy food for the public.

Underlining the importance of

maintaining high standards of food safety for the well-being of the public, the DC issued instructions to Officers to ensure availability of quality and hygienic food in the market. He emphasized the need for inspection squads to monitor and curb the sale of unhealthy and expired food products, especially those targeted at children, besides to give focused attention towards curbing sale of misbranded food items.

The DC exhorted upon the Srinagar Food Safety Team to strengthen and upgrade the laboratories for conducting tests of food items. He assured all possible support from District Administration for the purpose to ensure quality and hygienic food items to the people.

Dr Bilal stressed on intensifying market checking across the District and laid emphasis on increasing the volume of lifting the food samples by adopting scientific procedures for study and sharing the findings with the Administration for the safety of human lives. He instructed for taking strict action under law against the FBOs involved in violation of the Food Safety Act.

The DC also stressed further strengthening the Complaint Redressal Mechanism in Srinagar District to encourage the genuine complaints of the consumers and taking timely action against the violators to control the most vital and concerned area related to the public health.

In addition, the DC directed the Officers to conduct awareness programs involving all stakeholders to educate the public on the importance of safe food and maintaining a healthy diet. He asked them to ensure effective implementation of the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, Rules and Regulations framed there under by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.

The DC also stressed on conducting special drives for enforcement of bakery items, milk, edible oil, spices, meat, poultry products and other daily consumables in the City markets.

With regard to FOSTAC, the DC asked for building a culture of self-compliance through systematic training and capacity building of food businesses under the food safety and certification system.

Thousands Throng City Mosques On First Friday Of Ramadan

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Thousands of people in Srinagar thronged mosques and shrines on the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan. A large gathering of worshippers was observed at the historic Jamia Masjid Speaking on the occasion, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq highlighted the immense significance of this blessed month, emphasizing that it provides a profound opportunity to connect with Allah.

Mirwaiz stressed the importance of Taqwa (piety and consciousness of Allah), stating that by embracing it, we can transform ourselves into better individuals and collectively build a better society.

Thousands of people also attended Friday prayers at Hazratbal shrine. At Hazratbal, the gathering witnessed an atmosphere of devotion and spirituality, with worshippers deeply engaged in prayers and supplication.

Rs. 9.82 Cr Spent On Mini Secretariat Construction: Sakeena

Observer News Service

Srinagar: An amount Rs. 9.82 crore has been incurred, so far, on construction of the Mini Secretariat at Batamalo.

This information was given by Minister for Education, Sakeena Ito, while replying on behalf of the Chief Minister in response to a question raised by Member Tariq Hameed Karra.

She further informed the House that the decision to execute the project was taken during a District Development Board meeting held on October 4,



2017, under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister of J&K (Chairman, District Development Board).

The project namely 'Construction of Mini Secretariat at Batamalo', commenced in 2018 with a technically vetted cost of Rs. 48.23 crore. "An amount of Rs. 1 crore was released for the project, against which Rs. 82 lakh stands incurred," the

Minister stated.

She further informed that during the current financial year, additional Rs. 9 crore have been incurred, bringing the total expenditure on the project to Rs. 9.82 crore so far. "It is pertinent to mention that the pile foundation work of the project has been completed," she added.

The Minister also stated that the executing agency has now submitted a revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) amounting Rs. 80.26 crore, which is currently under consideration of the department.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION-1st (KPDC), BEMINA, SRINAGAR

Notice Inviting Tender
e-NIT No. STD I / 11 of 2024-25 dated 06.03.2025

For and on behalf of the Managing Director KPDC, e-Tenders, (In Two Cover System) is hereby invited from reputed A-class electrical contractors / registered firms/suppliers enlisted with CPWD/MES/Railways/DGS&D/JKPPDF for the work mentioned as:-

S.No	Description of Work	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Cost of document (In Rs.)	Status of AA	Last date of submission of e-bid (online)
01	Augmentation of Mughal Masjid Receiving Station from 2x10 MVA to 2x10+1x6.3 MVA	Rs 57,000.00 Fifty Seven Thousand Only	Rs.1000.00 (One Thousand only) Non refundable	Accorded	21/03/2025; 03:00 PM

1.	Document Download/Sale (start) Date.	07/03/2025; 10:00 AM
2.	Document Download /Sale (End) Date.	21/03/2025; 03:00 PM
3.	Bidding Queries/Clarifications	07.03.2025 to 08.03.2025.
4.	Bid Submission Start Date	10/03/2025; 09:00 AM
5.	Bid Submission End Date	21/03/2025; 03:00 PM
6.	Commercial/Technical Bid Opening Date & Time	22/03/2025; 02:00 PM
7.	Financial Bid Opening	Shall be declared later on for the technically qualified bidders
8.	Venue of Commercial/ Technical Bid Opening	Electronically in the office of Executive Engineer STD-1st Bemina Srinagar, J&K.
9.	Cost of e-Bid document	Rs.1000.00 (One Thousand Only) Non refundable
10.	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 57000.00 Fifty Thousand only
11.	Position of Funds	Available

The bidders need to submit the proof/ cost of e-Bid document as stated in the above table through non-refundable Demand Draft pledged to Executive Engineer, STD-I, Bemina, Srinagar. The scanned copy of the Demand Draft must be uploaded on e-tendering portal in Commercial /Technical Bid Documents & hard copy of the same to be submitted in the office of them Executive Engineer, STD-I, Bemina, Srinagar before opening of techno-commercial bids.

- All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR/FDR only, pledged to the Executive Engineer, STD-I, Bemina, Srinagar. No interest will be payable on Earnest Money deposited with the Department.
- Hard Copy of original instrument of EMD shall be submitted to the office of the Executive Engineer, STD-I, Bemina, Srinagar, before opening of techno-commercial bids. In case any bidder shall submit/upload the bid declaration instead of EMD, his bid shall be summarily rejected and shall not be considered for techno-commercial evaluation.
- The date and time of opening of financial bids shall be notified on web site <http://jktenders.gov.in>. This is conveyed to the qualified bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The financial bids shall be opened accordingly online on the same web site at the office of the Executive Engineer, STD-I, Bemina, Srinagar.
- The e-Bids will be electronically opened in the presence of bidder's representatives, who choose to attend at the identified venue on indicated date and time mentioned in the above table or any subsequent day to the convenience of the Tender Opening Committee. An authority letter of bidder representative will be required to be produced.
- The Department reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids/ the e-Bid process without assigning any reason thereof. The decision of department will be final and binding.
- In the event of date specified for e-Bids opening being a holiday/closed day for department's office then the due date for opening of e-Bids shall be the following working day at the same time and place.
- All the required documents excluding Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded by the e-Bidder electronically in the PDF format, whereas Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded electronically in the same BOQ sheet provided with the SBD.
- To participate in e-bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' As per Information-Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding.
- Hard copy of technical bid, technical specification and commercial bid documents (complete) of LI Bidder must be delivered to the office of the Executive Engineer, STD-I, Bemina, Srinagar.
- The sealed cover shall be scribbled as "Techno-Commercial Bid against e-NIT No. STD-I/11 of 2024-25 dated 06/03/2025.
- The name of the LI bidder and e-NIT no. shall be clearly written on the cover. It may be noted that the hard copy should be an exact replica of the uploaded offer documents. For evaluation purposes the uploaded documents will be treated as authentic and final. The hard copy shall be used only for reference purpose.
- The name of the bidder and e-NIT no. shall be clearly written on the cover. It may be noted that the hard copy should be an exact replica of the uploaded offer documents. For evaluation purposes the uploaded documents will be treated as authentic and final. The hard copy shall be used only for reference purpose.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding documents.

No.- STD-I/5405-08
DIPK-NB-3673/24 dated: 07/03/2025

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Sub Transmission Division-I,
Bemina, Srinagar.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice

DEN/HQ/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.reps.gov.in with closing date- 26.03.2025 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on www.reps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information logon to www.reps.gov.in

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Packet System & Two Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
04.03.2025	12.03.2025	26.03.2025 15:00 Hrs

S.No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender								
1.	320-2024-25-ADEN-2-FZR	Repair to Toilets, Water supply, Storage Tanks, Safety cages and Duty huts at various LCs in the jurisdiction of SSE/W/JBD under ADEN-2/FZR.								
		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Advertised Value (Rs.)</th> <th>Earnest Money</th> <th>Validity of Offer</th> <th>Period of Completion</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>79,99,448.93/-</td> <td>1,60,000.00/-</td> <td>60 Days</td> <td>10 Months</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion	79,99,448.93/-	1,60,000.00/-	60 Days	10 Months
Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion							
79,99,448.93/-	1,60,000.00/-	60 Days	10 Months							
		Similar Nature Work :- "Any civil work other than track work".								
2.	321-2024-25-DEN-HQ-FZR	Supply, Installation, and commissioning of track based Electronic type rail gauge face lubricator 31 nos. (31x12x5yrs=1860 months) in the section of ADEN-1/FZR & ADEN-2/FZR under the jurisdiction of DEN-HQ/FZR for 5 years.								
		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Advertised Value (Rs.)</th> <th>Earnest Money</th> <th>Validity of Offer</th> <th>Period of Completion</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>4,13,96,503.20/-</td> <td>3,57,000.00/-</td> <td>90 Days</td> <td>60 Months</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion	4,13,96,503.20/-	3,57,000.00/-	90 Days	60 Months
Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion							
4,13,96,503.20/-	3,57,000.00/-	90 Days	60 Months							
		Special Technical Criteria :- "Only RDSO Approved/Development Vendors for Track based Lubricators can participate with this tender. Copy of approval certificate with validity date is to be submitted along with the tender".								

Note 1:- Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender. No.- 320-2024-25-ADEN-2-FZR & 321-2024-25-DEN-HQ-FZR Date: 04.03.2025 732/2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

AIRPORTS

SHEIK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

- Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)
- Mughal Road - (Closed)
- Srinagar-Leh - (Closed)

HIJRI CALENDAR

07 Ramadan
1446

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5: 28
ZUHR	12:43
ASR	4: 51
Magrib	6:35
ISHA	7: 55

This Day In History

- 1531- King Henry VIII is recognized as the supreme head of the Church in England by the Convocation of Canterbury
- 1658- Peace of Roskilde between Sweden & Denmark
- 1702- James II's daughter Anne Stuart becomes Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland following the death of William III
- 1722- Afghan monarch Mir Mahmud occupies Persia
- 1746- Duke of Cumberland's troops occupy Aberdeen
- 1754- Marquis of Ensenada becomes premier of Spain
- 1799- Napoleon Bonaparte's forces capture the city of Jaffa from the Ottoman Empire in Palestine, after a 5 day siege
- 1801- British drive French forces from Abukir, Egypt
- 1844- King Oscar I ascends to the throne of Sweden-Norway
- 1855- 1st train crosses 1st US railway suspension bridge, Niagara Falls
- 1857- British seismologist John Milne is hired by the Japanese government as a foreign adviser (oyatoi gaikokujin)
- 1861- St Augustine Florida surrenders to Union armies
- 1862- Battle of Elkhorn Tavern ends with Confederate withdrawal
- 1865- Battle of Kingston, North Carolina (Wilcox's ridge, Wise's Forks)
- 1867- British North America Act is passed in the House of Commons, serves as Canada's constitution for more than 100 years
- 1884- Susan B. Anthony addresses U.S. House Judiciary Committee arguing for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting women the right to vote, 16 years after legislators 1st introduced a federal women's suffrage amendment.
- 1904- Australian cricket spin bowler Hugh Trumble dismisses England batsmen Bernard Bosanquet, Plum Warner and Dick Lilley for his second Test hat-trick in 5th Test victory in Melbourne; Trumble's final Test
- 1916- US invades Cuba for 3rd time, this to end corrupt Menocal regime
- 1917- Russian "February Revolution" begins in earnest with protests celebrating International Woman's Day and riots in St Petersburg over food rations and conduct of the war
- 1920- Denmark & Cuba join the League of Nations
- 1921- Spanish Premier Eduardo Dato Iradier is assassinated while exiting the parliament building in Madrid.
- 1929- US worker union commission reports of slavery in Liberia
- 1934- Edwin Hubble photo shows as many galaxies as Milky Way has stars
- 1942- Japanese forces capture Rangoon, Burma
- 1942- KNIL, Dutch colonial army on Java, surrenders to Japanese armies
- 1943- 335 allied bombers attack German city of Nuremberg, a centre for military production
- 1945- International Women's Day is 1st observed
- 1952- Antoine Pinay forms French government
- 1957- Egypt reopens the Suez Canal after Israel withdraws from occupied Egyptian territory
- 1957- Israeli troops leave Egypt in compliance with UN resolution
- 1957- USSR performs atmospheric nuclear test
- 1959- Pro-Egyptian coup fails in Mosul Iraq
- 1961- US nuclear submarine Patrick Henry arrives at Scottish naval base of Holy Loch from South Carolina in a record undersea journey of 66 days 22 hrs
- 1963 Syrian Arab Rep Revolution Day - Military coup in Syria
- 1964 - Cassius Clay converts to Islam, and is renamed Muhammad Ali
- 1965 - US begins regular bombing & strafing of N Vietnam
- 1967 - A fire at a restaurant in Montgomery, Alabama kills 25 people.

Kashmiri Tradition for Sale

The Appropriation of Kashmiri Pheran

Mahoor Haya Shah

“
It is one thing for a traveler to take a piece of Kashmir home, to carry it like a relic of a place that touched them. That is different. That is personal. But when a piece of identity is uprooted, sold off in bulk, and rebranded like a cheap imitation of itself, it is no longer admiration—it is erasure. It is cultural vandalism dressed as commerce

The Pheran is not just a garment. It is winter woven into wool, a whisper of the mountains, a thing that holds centuries inside its heavy folds. It belongs to the people of Kashmir like the veins belong to the body. It carries stories, prayers, whispers of lost winters. You walk into an old Kashmiri home, and there it is, draped around a mother warming her hands over the kangri, wrapped around a poet who stares out at the endless white of the valley, held close by a child who grows into it like roots stretch into earth. The Pheran is the past, the present, the unyielding memory of a land that has spent too long being taken, stripped, rewritten.

And yet, in the marketplace of the world—where everything sacred is a commodity waiting to be sold—it is being pilfered, reshaped, mispronounced, and paraded like a novelty from some exotic hinterland.

Walk through the tourist-filled lanes of Himachal Pradesh, and you'll see it. Hanging like an artifact in boutique shops run by women who don't know its significance. "Authentic Himachali winter wear," they call it. Some have gone to the extent of calling it Himachali Pheran!

And there it is, hanging under the neon glow of commercial greed, its price tag mocking those who carry it in their blood. Non-local manufacturers, sitting in workshops far removed from the crisp air of Kashmir, have begun to mass-produce it, tweaking its designs, slapping on new labels, selling it to those who don't know, those who don't care.

It doesn't stop there. No, theft is never satisfied with just the body—it wants the soul too. They speak of it as if it belongs to them, whisper



“Walk through the tourist-filled lanes of Himachal Pradesh, and you'll see it. Hanging like an artifact in boutique shops run by women who don't know its significance

fiction about its origins, post filtered photographs with captions like Traditional Himachali Wear! The audacity tastes like iron in the mouth.

It is one thing for a traveler to take a piece of Kashmir home, to carry it like a relic of a place that touched them. That is different. That is personal. But when a piece of identity is uprooted, sold off in bulk, and rebranded like a cheap imitation of itself, it is no longer admiration—it is erasure. It is cultural vandal-

ism dressed as commerce.

The people who sell it now, who claim it as their own, will never know the way the Pheran holds warmth like a mother's arms in the dead of winter. They will never understand what it means to press frozen fingers into the soft heat of a kangri beneath its folds, or how it carries the scent of hearth smoke, of resilience, of loss.

They will never know that for every Kashmiri who wears a Pheran, it is not just

clothing—it is inheritance, it is defiance, it is survival.

To make it worse, some of the same people who drape themselves in the stolen warmth of the Pheran would not think twice before turning their noses up at a Kashmiri in any other state. The very garment they commercialize would be treated as 'too ethnic' when worn by the people it actually belongs to. The same outsiders who romanticize it in their curated Instagram posts would not sit

next to a Kashmiri man wearing one on a train, would not look at a Kashmiri woman in the eye without suspicion.

Theft is not just about taking something. It is about stripping it of context, about making it palatable for the people who wouldn't dare understand its true weight.

But let it be said—loudly, clearly—that it is Kashmiri. It is not an aesthetic to be borrowed, a trend to be worn for a season and discarded. It is history, it is identity, and it will always belong to those who have felt the weight of snow pressing against their roofs, who have walked through the fog of their own breath in the morning light.

The Pheran was never meant to be pretty. It was meant to shield you when the world turned its back. It was meant to carry the scent of burning coal and the echoes of conversations held in whispers. It was never made for Instagram aesthetics.

Cultural misappropriation is not just about theft. It is about erasure.

It is about taking something and scrubbing it clean of its pain, its politics, its pulse. It is about reducing an identity to an accessory. It is about turning a battle-worn flag into a decorative rag.

Let's honor heritage with authenticity. If you wear the Pheran, know its story. If you admire it, respect its roots. And if you speak of it, acknowledge where it truly belongs. Culture is not a trend—it is identity. Let's protect it, not appropriate it.

*Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer
The author is a Srinagar-based columnist*

As a flawed Muslim who used to take advantage of non-obligatory nature of the Ramzan Taraveeh prayers and not offer these, I would while away post Iftar time doing nothing. This became rather thematic every year. But this year-round, inspired by a dear friend of mine, who locked his house to offer taravee prayers along with his family, I resolved to put my laziness to rest. Taraveeh prayers beckoned me. The issue was where to offer these. The answer stared me in the face: it would be our very own Grand Mosque, Jamia Masjid.

First, a few words on the structural features and nature of Jamia Masjid.

An imposing structure in the heart of downtown Srinagar, our Grand Mosque dates back to almost seven centuries. The structural features of the Mosque are Persian in nature, with many turrets jutting outward toward the sky, a courtyard with a quasi-pond in the midst and spacious oblongish rectangular halls for prayers. Massive wooden columns support the top of the Mosque and connect these with the prayer halls. It appears that the locus of Downtown's life revolved around the Grand Mosque of Kashmir. Another feature of the Mosque is the institution of the Mirwaiz – a term of probable Perso-Arabic provenance that can be loosely translated as 'Master -Preacher'. The institution of Mirwaiz may be peculiar to Kashmir; it is the prerogative of a distinguished politico-religious family of Kashmir dating back to Maulvi Yusuf Shah. The current Mirwaiz of Kashmir is Maulvi Umar Farooq (who happens to be a class mate and relative of mine).

These are the structural and cultural features of our Grand Mosque. But Jamia Masjid is more than an awe inspiring religio-historical structure. It is reflective of a structure of our belief and belief system, around which revolves the locus of our existence (as in the structure of our belief, spirituality and the Oneness of God Almighty). This thematic aspect of our Grand Mosque was revealed to me in a kind of a 'Eureka moment' for me. When I resolved to offer my Taravee prayers at Jamia Masjid this Ramzan, and when I set my foot in the compound of the Mosque, I could feel an aura, a spiritual energy immediately in an intense form. As I sat myself on the prayer mats of the Grand Mosque, a certain calmness descended on my very being. It became more pronounced as the Imam of the Mosque commenced the Isha prayers that meshed into the Taraveeh prayers. The calm tonality and mellifluous voice of the Imam while he recited the Quran led to what may be called, the 'incredible lightness of Being' - a state of being that led to the emptying of the mind of worldly thoughts

Taraveeh Bliss

Sacred 'Lightness of Being' at Jamia Masjid

Wajahat Qazi



and the syncing of the mind, body and soul toward a sublime state of being. The word that best describes this state would not be mere peace but Sakina (tranquility). What was (in my mind) the chore of offering the Taraveeh prayers mechanically and as a mere ritual - something that made me averse to offering these prayers turned into a condition that could be held to be trance-like. The closest approximation of this trance-like condition could be the re-orientation of the self-soul-mind-

body toward a centre - the eschatological dimension of Being where the only 'thoughts' that filled the Being were that of God. At the conclusion of the Taraveeh, I felt light, effervescent and tranquil. I then mentioned this blissful, enchanting and sublime experience to my dear friend. We arrived at the conclusion that because of the centuries old ingress of Durood (praise of the Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH) with intense love and dedication), Azkaar (remembrance of Allah) and prayers that

come right from the heart and the soul, our Grand Mosque was an intensely sacred space. While every mosque is sacred space, but our Jamia Masjid of Grand Mosque had sediments and layers of prayers that made it more intense a sacred space. When I stepped out of the prayer hall into the exit compound of the Mosque, the 'incredible lightness of Being', that I felt was not peculiar to me. The jaded faces and demeanors of prayer goers when they entered the Grand Mosque had given way to glowing faces and joyous demeanors. The sacred aura of Jamia Masjid had affected all.

As I put on my shoes, the tranquility (sakina) I felt was seductive. I wanted a repeat of the experience NOW! But I have to wait till tomorrow. My centre - mind, body, soul - was in alignment. The 'lightness of being' was incredible. All I could think of was next day's evening, when Taraveeh prayers would be offered again at our very own grand mosque!



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When I stepped out of the prayer hall into the exit compound of the Mosque, the 'incredible lightness of Being', that I felt was not peculiar to me. The jaded faces and demeanors of prayer goers when they entered the Grand Mosque had given way to glowing faces and joyous demeanors

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer

The author has a Masters with Distinction in International Relations from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Worked as Associate Editor of Kashmir Observer.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

Kashmir's Ms. Rachel

Ghazala Noor's Initiative to Teach Kids the New Way!

Aashiq Hussain Andrabi

Education in Kashmir has long been hindered by systemic challenges, but trailblazers like Ghazala Noor Khan are lighting the path toward transformative change. As an educator, innovator, and founder of LittleRock Elementary, Ghazala's mission is to nurture foundational literacy, promote inclusivity, and redefine the way children learn. On the occasion of International Women's Day, we had an insightful conversation with her, in which she shares her journey, philosophies, and vision for education in Kashmir.

Q: Can you tell us about your journey and what led you to become an educator?

Growing up in Ranbirpora Mattan, a rural village in South Kashmir categorized as RBA (Reserved Backward Area), I witnessed firsthand the barriers to education. Despite my father being the first graduate in our area, our village lagged behind in literacy and quality education. Farming dominated our livelihoods, and the community lacked the motivation to prioritize education for their children.

Determined to change this, I pursued professional degrees in education (B.Ed, M.Ed) and a Master's in Sociology from Kashmir University. Working in reputed schools across Anantnag allowed me to gain diverse teaching experiences. While I initially taught older students, an opportunity to teach young children revealed how deeply rewarding it is to shape young minds. This realization became the foundation of my educational philosophy.

Q: What drives your passion for education, and what changes do you hope to bring about?

Empathy and compassion are at the heart of my passion for education. I believe education has the power to transform lives, as it is not just a tool for knowledge but a means of self-actualization. As someone aptly said, "It is better to teach a child than to give gold in alms."

My vision focuses on a pragmatic approach to education, emphasizing foundational development from an early age. Education should nurture the mind, body, and soul, not just literacy and arithmetic. I advocate for skill-based, child-centric education that replaces traditional, restrictive classroom settings with open, interactive environments. Teachers should act as facilitators, guiding students to discover their unique potential.

Q: You've criticized conventional teaching methods in Kashmir. How does your approach differ?

Traditional pedagogies in Kashmir often rely on rote memorization, which stifles creativity and logical thinking. Children as young as three are conditioned to memorize sight words and shapes instead of developing phonemic awareness, a critical skill for reading and writing. This approach creates defective learning pathways, leaving many children dependent and struggling academically.

My method introduces a structured, synthetic phonics approach that fosters phonemic awareness, blending, and segmenting skills. This multi-sensory program caters to diverse learning abilities, enabling children to become early readers, writers, and speakers. Learning is integrated with play, stories, songs, and actions, ensuring a subconscious, lasting impact on the child's development.

Q: What inspired you to start



LittleRock Elementary, and how does it reflect your vision for education?

LittleRock Elementary was born during a challenging period in my life. After the birth of my first child, I faced severe health issues, including three disc prolapses, which left me bedridden. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted traditional schooling, leaving parents and teachers struggling to support young learners remotely.

Despite these challenges, my passion for education and resilience drove me to create LittleRock Elementary in December 2022. This online academy provides flexible, innovative teaching methods tailored to children aged 4 to 8, focusing on foundational literacy and skill development. It also serves as a resource for parents and teachers, promoting community-driven education.

Q: Your program emphasizes language development through LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) abilities. Can you elaborate?

Language is the cornerstone of self-expression, fostering independence, creativity, and self-advocacy. My program emphasizes stimulating LSRW abilities through phonemic awareness—the understanding of phonemes, the smallest units of sound in a language.

Children are guided through a systematic process: developing phonemic awareness, mastering letter formation, blending sounds to form words, and segmenting sounds in words. This multi-sensory approach caters to diverse learning needs, enabling children to achieve 95% literacy within weeks. The remaining skills are honed through supplementary techniques, ensuring a comprehensive foundation for lifelong learning.

Education in Kashmir often follows a "one-size-fits-all" model, neglecting individual differences and the needs of slow learners, gifted children, and those with learning disabilities. My methods are rooted in research and global best practices, such as synthetic phonics, which have proven effective worldwide

Q: How do you address criticism of your unconventional methods?

I welcome constructive criticism with an open mind. Having worked in various schools, I understand the limitations of conventional approaches. Education in Kashmir often follows a "one-size-fits-all" model, neglecting individual differences and the needs of slow learners, gifted children, and those with learning disabilities.

My methods are rooted in research and global best practices, such as synthetic phonics, which have proven effective worldwide. Innovation in education isn't about being different—it's about being better. The success stories of children who have thrived under my program speak volumes about its efficacy.

Q: What are your plans for the

I also plan to provide teacher training programs to promote effective pedagogical practices in schools throughout the valley. Ultimately, I hope to establish a physical school that embodies my educational philosophy, focusing on holistic development and nurturing each child's unique potential.

Q: What advice would you give to parents and educators supporting children with learning difficulties?

True education ignites a child's brain, creating the right

opens doors to opportunities, and fosters community involvement. Introducing programs like synthetic phonics in public schools can bridge socio-economic disparities and build a culture of lifelong learning.

Q: Finally, what advice do you have for aspiring educators and changemakers?

Transforming education is a slow, challenging process that requires resilience, focus, and empathy. Every small step you take can create a ripple effect of positive change. Build strong connec-

I ADVOCATE FOR SKILL-BASED, CHILD-CENTRIC EDUCATION THAT REPLACES TRADITIONAL, RESTRICTIVE CLASSROOM SETTINGS WITH OPEN, interactive environments. Teachers should act as facilitators, guiding students to discover their unique potential.

neural patterns for learning. Parents and educators should prioritize a systematic, empathetic approach that stimulates creativity and problem-solving skills. Every child has the potential to achieve great things with the right guidance, patience, and encouragement.

Q: How do you see your work contributing to education and social change in Kashmir?

tions within communities, adopt evidence-based methods, and stay committed to the belief that education is the greatest equalizer. Together, we can create a brighter future for all children.

Through her unwavering dedication and innovative approach, Ghazala Noor Khan is revolutionizing education in Kashmir, one child at a time. LittleRock Elementary stands as a beacon of hope, inspiring educators and changemakers to think beyond tradi-



future?

My dream is to expand this initiative across Kashmir, reaching children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

By addressing foundational literacy gaps, my work contributes to creating a more equitable education system in Kashmir. Literacy empowers individuals,

traditional methods and embrace the transformative power of learning.

The author is a Kashmir-based reporter

Omar Bets Big

fiscal indicators, he projected the tax-GDP ratio at 7.5 per cent for 2025-26.

The budget has estimated the fiscal deficit for 2025-26 to be at 3.0 per cent of the Union Territory's GDP.

"This is substantially lower than the 5.5 per cent in 2024-25 (RE)," he added.

The GDP for 2025-26 is projected at Rs 2,884.22 crore, reflecting a growth of 9.5 per cent over the previous year, he added.

The chief minister said the budget for J&K Police, which was around 11 per cent of total allocation, has been migrated to the ministry of home affairs' budget from 2024-25 onward.

"In addition to this, J&K will receive an extra Rs 5,000 crore in grants for 2024-25 and 2025-26. I sincerely thank the prime minister, home minister, and finance minister for their unwavering support in strengthening J&K's fiscal health and realising its vision for growth and prosperity," he said.

The budget emphasises inclusive growth, fiscal prudence, and strategic investments in key sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture, industry, healthcare, education, digital governance, and tourism.

To strengthen food security, Abdullah announced that 10 kg of free ration per person will be provided to AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana) beneficiaries from April 1 this year.

For social security, pension amounts have been increased to Rs 1,250 per month for persons below 60 years, Rs 1,500 per month for persons aged 60-80 years, and Rs 2,000 per month for those aged 80 and above, he said.

"This will increase the total pension outlay from Rs 1,209 crore to Rs 1,755 crore annually," he added.

Announcing free public transport for women, he said, "On International Women's Day, I announce free ridership for women on all government-owned public transport, including e-buses, starting April 1, 2025".

"This will enhance access to education and employment while ensuring safer, more affordable travel," he said.

He further proposed that the financial aid under the Marriage Assistance Scheme for AAY category girls will be enhanced from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000.

The Chief Minister announced a complete exemption of stamp duty on property transfers through gifts within blood relations. The move will promote ease of transactions, reduce inheritance disputes and encourage legal documentation of property transfers.

About hydropower and energy reforms, he said J&K has a hydropower potential of 20,000 MW, but only 3,400 MW has been harnessed and added that initiatives are being taken so that Pakal Dul, Kiru, Kwar, and Ratle projects could add 3,000 MW by 2027.

"A new hydropower policy will be formulated to attract private investment and fast-track projects," he said.

The chief minister also announced 200 units of free electricity per month for Antyodaya families.

The budget also proposed to introduce a new hydropower policy to tap the UT's full potential of 20,000 MW and attract private investment.

"We are focused on bridging regional disparities, empowering youth and women, and fostering a business-friendly environment to attract investment and innovation," Abdullah, who also holds the finance portfolio, said while presenting his maiden budget in the assembly.

With an aim to unlock Jammu & Kashmir's industrial potential, Abdullah announced a significant step towards establishing a leather tanning industry.

"Currently, around 5,000-6,000 pelts produced daily in Kashmir go to waste due to the absence of processing facilities. To harness this opportunity, the government will formulate a policy to promote leather tanning industries, ensuring value addition. Processing these skins into leather will contribute an additional Rs 100 crore to J&K's economy," he said.

Emphasising the importance of a resilient rural economy, Abdullah announced the launch of the "J&K Green Mission" in 2025.

"We will unite communities to make villages clean and green through waste segregation, proper disposal, and vermicomposting," he said.

To ensure sustainability, the government will implement the Own Source Revenue (OSR) policy to make every village panchayat self-sufficient over the next five years.

Additionally, under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin, 3.40 lakh houses have been sanctioned, with 50,000 more to be built in 2025-26, he said.

Buoyed by the tourism sector's record-breaking show in 2024, with 2.36 crore tourist footfalls, Abdullah announced a strategic expansion plan under the SPREAD (Sustainable Promotion of Emerging Alternate Destinations) initiative.

"This initiative will help develop world-class alternative destinations across J&K, reducing pressure on heavily visited locations. With the central government's support, we are already in the planning phase," he said.

He also announced an eco-tourism policy that will ensure sustainable tourism while tackling waste management challenges, particularly plastic waste at tourist sites.

A multi-stakeholder advisory committee to address issues in the tourism and hospitality sector will be set up too, he said, adding that Gulmarg Gondola attracted 7.68 lakh visitors in 2024, and the Kashmir Marathon saw 1,800 global participants.

"Tourism's contribution to GSDP will be increased from 7 per cent to 15 per cent in

the next 4-5 years," he added.

In order to bolster J&K's startup ecosystem, the government has also allocated Rs 50 crore for providing financial aid, mentorship and incubation for entrepreneurs.

"This will foster innovation, empower startups, and position Jammu and Kashmir as a dynamic hub for entrepreneurship," Abdullah said.

For MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises), he announced a new policy to provide price preference to local small businesses in public procurement, addressing concerns regarding central government's online marketplace GeM.

To combat illegal mining, he said that a mining surveillance system using satellite imagery will be implemented in collaboration with BISAG. Additionally, handheld e-challan devices will be introduced for enforcement, he noted.

Abdullah also unveiled the SEHAT App, saying this is set to revolutionise healthcare in J&K.

"This app will offer teleconsultation services, online doctor appointments in government hospitals, and a digital health records system integrated with AB-PMJAY-SEHAT insurance," he said.

The chief minister also added that the app will include AI-powered diagnostics, e-prescriptions, medicine delivery, and emergency health support. "Ambulance services and real-time updates on preventive care, vaccinations, and wellness programmes will also be provided."

On the education sector, he said the government will upgrade 40 higher secondary schools -- one boys' and one girls' school per district -- into integrated K-12 institutions.

"We are committed to transforming J&K into an educational hub by fully implementing NEP 2020 and launching four-year undergraduate programmes in all colleges," Abdullah said.

He also announced 600 additional seats in polytechnic colleges.

The government will encourage private universities to set up satellite campuses in J&K, he added.

To transform J&K into a hub of sporting excellence, the budget has envisaged setting up of national centres of excellence for water sports at Dal Lake (Srinagar) and Basohli (Jammu) and a gymnastics academy at Gindun Rajbagh and Khel Gaon, Nagrota.

The FY26 budget has proposed four state-of-the-art cricket academies with an allocation of Rs 8 crore, youth hostels in Jammu & Kashmir divisions with an outlay of Rs 10 crore, apart from the development of 247 playgrounds, stadiums, and sports courts.

The government aims to engage "75 lakh youths in sports activities across J&K, fostering a culture of fitness and excellence", he added.

The government has plans to establish the Jammu & Kashmir Skill and Entrepreneurship University (J&K SEU), he noted.

"This university will offer cutting-edge training in technology, healthcare, tourism, renewable energy, and traditional crafts while fostering innovation and industry partnerships," Abdullah said.

On infrastructure and government housing, he said a new legislative complex in Jammu has been allocated Rs 50 crore (Rs 208 crore total project cost). Additionally, 4,500 government residential units in Jammu and Srinagar will be constructed, with new projects for 300 more units.

"Twin towers with 64 modern 3 BHK and 4BHK flats at Canal Road, Jammu (Rs 20 crore allocation) will be constructed too," he said.

"This budget is a step towards a self-reliant, prosperous, and equitable Jammu & Kashmir," Abdullah said.

With major investments in industry, tourism, education, and infrastructure, the budget lays the foundation for economic growth, sustainability, and social welfare, he added.

Power, Infrastructure,

Chief Minister's Awards will be instituted to recognize outstanding efforts in reducing Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses and conducting energy audits.

Highlighting that major highways and tunnels were under execution, and rail connectivity via USBRL project was progressing rapidly, CM said that the budget has proposed 4,000 km of roads to be blacktopped in 2025-26 to improve connectivity across J&K.

CM said that Agriculture and allied sectors are crucial for the livelihoods of most of our population and Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) has an outlay of Rs 5013 crore until 2027-28 which is reshaping subsistence farming into commercial agri-economy.

On Industrial Development, CM said that J&K currently has 64 Industrial Estates and 46 more are under development and Government is committed to ensure infrastructure development in these estates. He said that the Government is streamlining SGST reimbursement and turnover incentives. He said to strengthen industry collaboration, the Government would constitute an Advisory Committee on Industries, ensuring regular engagement with businesses. CM proposed Rs 50 crore this year to support financial aid, mentorship and incubation for emerging entrepreneurs, He said that Government will bring a new policy to provide price preference to local MSMEs in public procurement

In tourism sector, CM said new master plans shall be prepared for major tourist destinations like Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg. J&K's first National Water Sports Centre at Dal Lake & Basohli shall be established. A water park at Dwara village near Sidra Golf Course under PPP model

shall be developed in Jammu. The budget proposes to constitute a multi-stakeholder Advisory committee in Tourism & Hospitality sector.

CM said that Mission YUVA will be launched in the next financial year aiming to create 1,37,000 enterprises and to create 4.25 lakh jobs over five years through startups, MSMEs & skilling programs. The budget has proposed establishment of Jammu & Kashmir Skill & Entrepreneurship University (J&K SEU) to provide cutting-edge training in technology, healthcare, tourism, renewable energy & traditional crafts. To support structured skill development, one lakh youth shall be trained over 5 years under PMKVY 4.0, PM Vishwakarma and other schemes besides reviving the Udaan Scheme. Special focus shall be given on first-generation entrepreneurs, women & youth from remote areas through credit support & market linkage.

CM said that his Government was committed to construct state-of-the-art Legislative complex in Jammu and an allocation of Rs 50 crore has been proposed in this budget for FY 2025-26. He said that provision of Rs 50 crore has been proposed in this budget to establish a National Law University in J&K and that Rs 125 crore has been apportioned for state-of-the-art judicial infrastructure across J&K.

Under the disaster management, CM stated that Rs. 39 crore Disaster Mitigation Fund has been proposed in the budget for flood & landslide protection, and GLOF monitoring systems for climate resilience.

Concluding his Budget speech, the chief minister commended the Budget for the financial year 2025-26 of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to the Legislative Assembly for consideration.

Later, the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also presented the Supplementary Statement of Expenditure for the year 2024-2025 before the House.

Budget Love

criticism but described the Budget as a gift to the people of J&K. "I don't expect anything but criticism of this Budget from the Opposition... This Budget is a love letter to the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

He said that he would never present the Budget again while observing Ramzan fast. Abdullah said this was the first budget of the J&K Assembly after 2018 and his first Budget as the finance minister.

He presented the Budget in the Assembly and spoke without stopping for almost one hour and 45 minutes while observing the sixth day of Ramzan fast.

The chief minister said he could have advanced or postponed the Budget Session.

"After today's experience, I will never present my Budget again while having Ramadan fast. Either I will pre or postpone the session or request the Speaker with folded hands to arrange the session around 6.30 pm (after breaking the day-long fast)," Abdullah told a press conference here.

He was responding to a question about the difficulty in holding the Budget Session during the ongoing holy month of Ramzan, especially in presenting the Budget when one does not swallow even a drop of water.

The chief minister said he was facing difficulty in speaking after the Budget speech that continued for nearly one hour and forty-five minutes in the Assembly.

"Interestingly, this was also the first time that any chief minister of J&K presented the Budget himself while holding the portfolio of the finance minister," Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister once again criticized the existing political structure of Jammu and Kashmir, calling it the "worst form of government" in the country. "I still maintain that a UT with an Assembly is by far the worst form of government in the country. I have no hesitation in saying this. There should only be two systems in this country—either you have a UT without an Assembly or a state," he asserted.

J&K To Get 2

have been proposed in the budget for the "transformative initiative".

Omar said the Government proposes the establishment of the Jammu & Kashmir Skill and Entrepreneurship University (J&K SEU) to empower the youth of Jammu & Kashmir with industry-relevant skills and entrepreneurial opportunities.

"Our Government proposes the establishment of the Jammu & Kashmir Skill and Entrepreneurship University (J&K SEU). This institution will provide cutting-edge training in technology, healthcare, tourism, renewable energy, and traditional crafts while fostering innovation, startup incubation, and industry partnerships," he said.

He said the Government is committed to constructing a state-of-the-art Legislative Complex in Jammu to replace the century-old facility at the Civil Secretariat.

"With an estimated cost of Rs 208 crore, Rs 72 crore has already been utilized. I propose an allocation of Rs 50 crore in this budget for its timely completion, creating a modern, technology-driven environment for efficient and transparent lawmaking," Omar said. (KNO)

Promises Support,

Srinagar. "We will take concrete steps to revive and support the Press Club in Jammu & Srinagar, providing a dedicated space for journalists to engage, collaborate, and contribute meaningfully to public discourse," he said.

He said a free, independent, and responsible press is the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy.

"Our Government is unwavering in its commitment to upholding press freedom and ensuring that journalists operate in a

secure and transparent environment," he said.

He said the media plays a vital role in shaping public opinion, strengthening democratic institutions, and keeping citizens informed.

"In this spirit, we are committed to strengthening press infrastructure, facilitating greater access to information, and protecting the rights of journalists," he said.

300 New Housing

ensure the timely completion of the project, Rs 38 crore has been allocated in this year's budget," Omar said, adding that the initiative reflects the government's commitment to improving living conditions for its employees. (KNO)

Tourism Sector

popularity of locations such as Gulmarg and the success of events like the Kashmir Marathon, which attracted 1,800 global participants.

"The tourism sector has been granted industry status and is poised for strong growth," Abdullah said. He outlined plans for the development of new master plans for tourist hotspots including Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg, alongside efforts to enhance infrastructure and amenities in underdeveloped areas. He said initiatives like the SPREAD (Sustainable Promotion of Emerging Alternate Destinations) programme are aimed at diversifying tourist attractions to alleviate strain on overcrowded sites.

Abdullah also announced plans to promote water sports across J&K's picturesque water bodies, including kayaking and canoeing at Manasbal and introduced upgrades to winter sports infrastructure at Gulmarg and Sonamarg. "Sonamarg has become an all-weather destination," he said, adding that the region has a potential to host international winter sports events.

Moreover, the budget allocation for tourism has been raised to Rs 390.20 crore, representing an increase of Rs 121.77 crore compared to 2024-25. This boost in funding is expected to catalyse infrastructure enhancements, sustainability initiatives, and new tourism projects, thereby reinforcing the region's global standing.

The industrial development section of the CM's address highlighted efforts to stimulate entrepreneurship and boost the local economy. An allocation of Rs 50 crore has been proposed to support mentorship and incubation for emerging entrepreneurs, with the goal of transforming Jammu and Kashmir into a dynamic hub for startups.

"Local procurement through the GeM portal has surged, with purchases from local suppliers reaching Rs 1,527.74 crore," Omar said, adding that the government is committed to supporting local businesses. He also announced the implementation of a new policy to provide price preferences for local MSMEs in public procurement, aiming to level the playing field amidst rising competition.

To enhance the handicraft sector, the Chief Minister announced initiatives to promote 'Brand J&K', including the development of PM Unity Marks for artisans and the expansion of the Karkhandar Scheme. With employment support for over 4.22 lakh individuals, many from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, Abdullah said the government is dedicated to preserving and promoting J&K's rich cultural heritage.

Oppn Calls

The party said by "limiting" the benefit only to AAY ration card holders, the government has effectively excluded a vast majority of the state's population.

"Out of 16 lakh ration card holders, merely 95,000 will benefit, which is just 5-7 per cent of the total population. This raises serious questions like why did the government mislead people during the elections? Why was this scheme not extended to all households, as originally promised? Why were 1,27,000 AAY ration card holders removed from the list right before this announcement?" the PDP said.

It said this selective approach "exposes their anti-people policies."

The party added, "If they truly intended to help the people of J&K, they should have ensured that their promise was fulfilled in its entirety, rather than shrinking the beneficiaries to a fraction of what was originally committed."

Peoples' Conference chief Sajad Lone slammed the budget, saying it was a "disappointment."

"The budget speech was, as expected, a disappointment -- same old style of parroting of Centrally Sponsored Schemes with Hindi nomenclature," Lone said in a statement.

He said the budget reflected a significant gap between political rhetoric and economic figures, emphasising that the presented data contradicted the ruling party's previous stance.

"It glorified and endorsed the BJP's 'Naya Kashmir' discourse. And statistics, which have been berated by the NC over the past decade have become the gospel truth."

"Suddenly, every government statistic from the past five years is being treated as gospel truth, and the incumbent government seems eager to jump into the frame and take credit for the same statistics that, until the other day, they told us were either fudged or fiction," Lone, the MLA from north Kashmir's Handwara, said.

He said he had expected a politically viable and "economically vibrant" budget, and not a routine statement of outlay and expenditure.

"Even the promised 200 units of electricity are only for AAY beneficiaries and are linked to the Centrally Sponsored Rooftop Scheme, which has approximately a 65 per cent Central share with a cap of 3

kW. Too many strings attached," he stated.

The Peoples' Conference chief said linking social welfare payments to Dearness Allowance means, "We have to pray for a miraculous zero inflation for real increase."

"Petrol and diesel prices are set to increase by Rs 1 per litre and Rs 2 per litre, respectively, due to a reduction in rebates on petrol and diesel," he claimed.

The Handwara MLA also said the budget neglected "key employment sectors," emphasising that it offered nothing for job creation, daily wagers, contractual employees, or minimum wages.

He asserted that "the soul of statehood, which we believe was stolen from us, was relegated to yet another statistic."

In a jibe at the chief minister for praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Lone said "the saga of love letters continues. This is a love letter to BJP-Part II."

The J&K unit of the BJP accused the NC government of "deceiving" the people of the Union Territory.

"The budget is nothing but jumla bazi and a stark betrayal of the promises made during the elections. Where are the 12 free gas cylinders that Omar Abdullah promised? Where is the one lakh job guarantee? Where is the free ration? This budget is a cruel joke on the people of J&K," BJP's J&K spokesperson Altaf Thakur said in a statement.

The BJP leader too slammed the government for offering 200 units of free electricity only to AAY beneficiaries, which he said covers just 1.5 per cent of J&K's population.

"This is outright deception. Omar Abdullah came to power by making grand announcements, but his government has failed on every front. The people will not forgive this betrayal," Thakur said.

He said the budget is nothing but a "desperate attempt to cover up the NC government's incompetence."

HC Halts Promotions

The court also termed as strange a circular issued by the General Administration Department on 5 March 2021 by virtue of which all the Administrative Secretaries have been directed to keep the slots meant for reserved category employees vacant and unfilled.

The court was hearing a plea by various Engineers serving in J&K Power Transmission Corporation Limited, Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited and Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited, belonging to various reserved categories like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Residents of Backward Area (RBA), Actual Line of Control (ALC) and Other Social Castes (OSCs), alleging that they have been denied reservation in promotions to which they are entitled to in terms of Article 16(4A) of the Constitution of India in the Jammu and Kashmir, due to Circular No. 10-JK (GAD) of 2021 dated 05.03.2021 issued by the GAD.

"It is strange that on the one hand, the Union Territory of J&K has prayed before the Apex Court for quashing of the judgment of this Court quashing provisions relating to reservation in promotion, stating that the basis of the judgment of this Court that the provision enabling the State Government to enact provision, providing for reservation in promotions had not been applied to the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir has eviscerated, whereas on the other hand the Respondent No. 3-General Administration Department has come up with the Circular No. 10-JK(GAD) of 2021 dated 05.03.2021 directing all the Administrative Secretaries to keep the slots meant for reserved category employees 2025 vacant/unfilled," the court said, adding, "It is not comprehensible as to how the said directions can be passed in utter disregard to the constitutional provisions applicable to the UT of J&K with the application of the constitutional provisions in the year 2019."

The court said that applying the directions issued in terms of Circular dated 5 March 2021 "in denying benefits of reservation in promotion in J&K amounts to denying/treating reserved category employees/candidates of the UT of J&K differently than the reserved category employees/candidates of the rest of the Country, which amounts to class legislation, which is antithetical to the concept of equality laid down in the Constitution of India."

Referring to an affidavit filed by the government before the Apex Court with regard to its intentions to implement the reservation in promotions, the court said, "therefore denying reservation to all the members of the service, who are entitled to such reservation in promotions, amounts to denying them of their constitutional rights."

Subsequently, the court directed the authorities to collect quantifiable data having regard to the "cadre" as "unit" for consideration of collection of quantifiable data within a period of six weeks from the date of the judgment and then accord consideration to the reservation in promotions to the petitioners as and when promotions to the next cadres are considered.

"In absence of collecting any quantifiable data, the respondents (authorities) shall proceed to consider the petitioners for reservation in promotions against the reserved slots in view of Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004 and rules framed thereunder till the exercise for collection of quantifiable data is made by the Administrative Departments", " the court said, adding, "The respondents are restrained from making any promotions unless candidates belonging to the SC/ST reserved categories entitled for consideration for reservation in promotions are considered."

Kashmiri Youth Trapped in Myanmar, Traffickers Demand Ransom

Syed Mohammad Burhan

SRINAGAR: What began as a journey for a better future has turned into a nightmare for Faizan Rasool, a 28-year-old from Safakadal, Srinagar. Promised a job in Thailand, he instead found himself trafficked into Myanmar, where he is now being held for ransom by abductors demanding ₹4.5 lakh for his release.

His family, struggling to make ends meet, is desperate and powerless. "He left home with dreams in his eyes... now we don't even know if he's alive," sobs his mother, clutching an old photograph of her son.

Faizan's ordeal began when a friend lured him with the prospect of overseas employment. Instead of reaching Thailand, he was trafficked across dangerous borders and abandoned in Myanmar—a region notorious for human trafficking and organized crime. His abductors now control his fate, threatening dire consequences if the ransom isn't paid.

His family is not alone in their suffering. Another Kashmiri youth—also named Faizan—recently returned home after paying the same ransom amount. His family, among the poorest in their neighborhood, is now buried under debt.

Growing Trend of Human Trafficking

“He left home with dreams in his eyes... now we don't even know if he's alive,”

Faizan's case is part of an alarming trend where Kashmiri youth, desperate for jobs, are being lured into employment scams and smuggled into conflict-ridden territories. Many are forced to work in cyber-crime syndicates, while others are simply held for ransom.

Parents, devastated and helpless, are now calling for urgent government intervention. Faizan's father, his voice shaking, pleads: "We are helpless. If the government does not act, we may never see our son again."

Authorities Must Act Before It's Too Late

With traffickers growing bolder and families left to fend for themselves, experts warn that swift intervention is critical. The question remains—how many more Kashmiri youth will vanish before action is taken?

For now, Faizan's family clings to hope, waiting for a miracle that may never come.

Around 62 LMT Of Apples Produced In Last Three Years: Govt

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The government on Friday revealed that approximately 62 LMT of apples were produced in Jammu and Kashmir over the past three years, while an effective mechanism has been put in place to ensure the availability of quality agricultural inputs to farmers.

Responding to a query from Dr Bashir Ahmad Veeri, MLA Bijbehara, Minister for Agriculture Production, said that J&K produced 20.40 LMT of apples in 2022-23, 20.64 LMT in 2023-24, and 20.56 LMT in 2024-25, bringing the total production to around 62 LMT over three years.

Addressing concerns regarding the sale of substandard fertilisers and pesticides, the minister said the Department of Agriculture has established a robust monitoring system to ensure the distribution of quality inputs, including pesticides, fertilisers, and seeds among the farming community.

"All companies must register their products under relevant regulations, including the Insecticides Act of 1968, the Fertilizer Control Order of 1985, and the Seed Act of 1966. The Directorate of Enforcement within the Agriculture Department actively monitors quality parameters to prevent the sale of substandard products," he said.

The minister said the horticulture sector plays a significant role in J&K's economy and serves as a source of livelihood for 35 lakh people, directly or indirectly involving around 7 lakh families. "In 2021-22, horticulture production stood at 23.41 LMT, with 12.07 LMT exported. In 2022-23, production increased to 27.21 LMT, with 17.48 LMT exported. The following year, 26.43 LMT were produced, with exports reaching 18.57 LMT. So far, in 2024-

25, 26.46 LMT of horticulture produce has been recorded, with exports amounting to 13.13 LMT," he said.

Regarding Controlled Atmosphere (CA) storage, the minister said the estimated requirement is 6.00 LMT, which accounts for 30% of annual fruit production.

Currently, J&K has a storage capacity of 2.70 LMT, with an additional 0.37 LMT being added this year, bringing the total capacity to 3.07 LMT. Most CA storage facilities are located in the Industrial Growth Centre at Lassipora, Pulwama, and the Industrial Estate at Aglar, Shopian. Efforts are ongoing, in collaboration with the Industries and Commerce Department, to establish sector-specific industrial estates for horticulture and post-harvest management in other districts.

To realise the full potential of the horticulture sector, the government said it has undertaken several initiatives, including the High-Density Plantation Scheme. Since the scheme's inception in 2016-17, an area of 663 hectares has been covered, and during 2024-25, an additional 173 hectares were brought under high-density plantations, bringing the total to 836 hectares as of January 2025, the minister said.

The minister also highlighted efforts in agricultural marketing through the e-NAM (National Agricultural Market) initiative. He said a network of fruit and vegetable markets has been established across J&K to facilitate better marketing for growers and traders, creating employment opportunities. Currently, 24 mandis are operational, with 13 more under development. Seventeen mandis are integrated with the e-NAM portal, allowing electronic transactions, and over 50,000 farmers and traders have registered on the platform.

Muslims Perform Last Rites Of Kashmiri Pandit Woman In Pinglana

Agencies

PULWAMA: In a touching display of communal harmony, Muslims in Pulwama's Pinglana village came together to perform the last rites of Rania Ji, a Kashmiri Pandit woman who had chosen to stay in her homeland despite the turbulent times. With no close family around, it was her Muslim neighbors who ensured that she received a dignified farewell.

The villagers not only shrouded her bier but also arranged

for all the rituals according to Hindu customs, reaffirming the spirit of Kashmiriyat. "We considered her one of our own. It was our duty to give her a respectful send-off," said a local resident.

Rajesh Raina, a relative who had traveled from Jammu, expressed deep gratitude for the villagers' gesture. "We are deeply thankful to the people of Pinglana. In times like these, their love and respect for Rania Ji remind us that humanity and Kashmiriyat are still alive," he said. [KNT]



STUDENTS WALK CHEERFULLY as schools reopened in Kashmir on Friday after winter break. KO PHOTO, FAISAL KHAN

CM Proposes Allocation Of ₹15Cr For Flood Risk Monitoring

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Friday proposed an allocation of ₹15 crore for monitoring glacial lake outburst flood risk, setting up early warning systems and mitigation strategies.

He forwarded the proposal in his budget speech in the legislative assembly, recognising the rising threats of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF) and landslides.

"Our Government is taking proactive measures to protect vulnerable communities and infrastructure through GLOFs and landslides. I propose an allocation of ₹15 crore for GLOF risk monitoring, early warning systems, and mitigation strategies," the chief minister said.

Additionally, under the National Landslide Risk Mitigation Programme (NLRMP), ₹15 crore is earmarked for risk assessment, monitoring and engineering solutions



to stabilise landslide-prone areas, he said. "These initiatives will enhance disaster preparedness and build a climate-resilient Jammu and Kashmir."

The chief minister said the 2014 floods in the Kashmir valley highlighted the need for proactive disaster mitigation.

"To enhance resilience, our government is establishing a ₹39-crore Disaster Mitigation Fund, the first dedicated fund for prevention, early warning systems, and preparedness.

"By investing in tools, manpower, and infrastructure, we aim to reduce risks and safeguard lives and property across Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

The chief minister also said his government remains committed to ensuring a smooth and secure annual pilgrimage to the 3,880-meter-high cave shrine of Amarnath, scheduled to commence on July 3 this year.

"With seamless coordination between various government agencies and stakeholders, we will enhance pilgrim facilities, improve safety measures, and ensure the efficient conduct of this sacred journey," he said.

Recognising the pilgrimage's significant economic impact on the region, he said, "We are dedicated to supporting local businesses, boosting tourism and creating livelihood opportunities while upholding the spiritual and cultural essence of this revered pilgrimage."

"WITH SEAMLESS COORDINATION BETWEEN VARIOUS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND STAKEHOLDERS, we will enhance pilgrim facilities, improve safety measures, and ensure the efficient conduct of this sacred journey"

HC Bans Plastic Use, Commercial Activities At Zojila Pass

M Ahmad

SRINAGAR: To protect the environment and maintain tranquility, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has "strictly banned" use of polythene bags, plastic packets, and other plastic related materials in and around Zero Point of Zojila Pass with immediate effect.

Hearing a Public Interest Litigation, a bench of Chief Justice Tashi Rabstan and Justice M. A. Chowdhary also banned all types of commercial activities such as using Snow Scooters, sledges in and around Zero Point of Zojila Pass with immediate effect.

"Respondents (authorities) are further directed to launch extensive cleanliness drive of Zero Point of Zojila Pass and the nearby snowbound areas on war footing in collaboration with the officials of both the UTs (J&K and Ladakh) as well as with the help of NGOs/social organizations".

The court directed S.S.P. Ganderbal, UT of J&K and S.S.P. Kargil, UT of Ladakh, to strictly implement the order and file the action taken report "well before" the next date of hearing on April 15.

The court directions followed perusal of a report by Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil, contending that the administration of Ganderbal and officials of Police Station Sonmarg often allow tourist vehicles upto zero point of Zojila Pass while restricting passenger vehicles from Ladakh, leading to traffic congestion and endangering lives on this treacherous route. While advocating the environmental regulations and protections to preserve the unique ecological balance of the area, LAHDC Kargil also stated that the Wildlife Warden, Kargil vide his report dated 24 October 2024 has also shown concern about the increased tourism

and human activity in the fragile ecosystem of Ladakh, which has an adverse impact on the unique flora and fauna in this specific area.

The court also reproduced a relevant portion of the report: "Habitat Destruction: The unregulated tourism and increased human activities in the fragile landscape could lead to the destruction of natural habitats. This could impact species that are already adapted to the area's harsh climate and sensitive ecosystem, potentially leading to loss of biodiversity. The area is home to species like Himalayan Brown Bear, Long Tailed Marmots."

Referring to disruption of Wildlife migration and Breeding Patterns, the report said that increased human presence and activities such as moving in the habitat zones, usage of vehicles could disrupt the natural migration and breeding routes of Wildlife species.

"Many animals rely on specific migratory patterns for survival and interference in these patterns could lead to population decline."

As regards pollution, the report said that heavy traffic, especially from vehicles, may lead to air and noise pollution.

Additionally, the report said, improper waste disposal and littering from increased tourism can contaminate the region, affecting plant life and animals that depend on clean water sources and unpolluted land.

The court also noted submissions by amicus curiae that in and around Zojila Pass there are many illegal commercial activities being going on and their unchecked expansion may not only lead to detrimental consequences for the fragile high mountain pass ecosystem and indigenous communities, but

also pose significant environmental and social challenges, besides threat of habitat disturbance and poaching risks.

The Amicus Curiae also submitted that recreational activities such as sledging and using snow scooters in the snow-bound high mountain pass can not only disturb the snow and ice cover, leading to soil erosion once the snow melts, but also contribute to air pollution through emissions from fuel consumption and the snow itself become contaminated with exhaust particles, oil spills, and other pollutants, thus posing a serious threat to ecological balance.

The court was hearing a Public Interest Litigation, treating a letter addressed by one Abdul Wahid in his capacity as Councillor, 2-Bhimber Constituency, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil.

The letter dated 1 July 2024 under the subject "Save Ladakh's Environment, Ecology and Land from Encroachers and Resolve the Boundary Dispute between District Kargil Of UT Ladakh and District Ganderbal of J&K" had been addressed to the Chief Justice Abdul Wahid and same was placed before the Chief Justice who directed it to be treated as PIL.

In the letter, "deep" concern had been expressed over the safety of the environment and ecology of Ladakh. It was averred in the letter that the residents of District Ganderbal have encroached upon the land of Ladakh under the garb that the Border Roads Organization (BRO) has divided the snow area land into equal proportions and this action on part of the inhabitants of Ganderbal has endangered the flora and fauna of the Ladakh region which being a threat to the environment and ecology of the said region.

15% Power Deficit

J&K Struggles to Bridge Demand-Supply Gap

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir is grappling with a severe power shortage, with an excessive gap of over 15% between electricity demand and the actual supply available to consumers. The shortfall, which peaks during winter months, continues to strain the region's energy infrastructure, forcing authorities to rely on external arrangements to mitigate the crisis.

According to official documents, the power deficit in J&K stands at approximately 14-16%, a figure significantly higher than the national average. The primary reason for the shortfall is the drop in electricity generation from hydropower plants during winters due to reduced water

High Losses & Efforts to Improve Efficiency

A significant portion of J&K's power crisis is attributed to high transmission and distribution (T&D) losses, along with commercial losses due to power theft. Officials admit that these losses remain "substantial," but efforts are underway to improve the system and curb pilferage through enforcement drives.

Despite these challenges, the government has reported notable improvements in revenue collection and billing efficiency. By November 2024, revenue collection efficiency had increased to 81%, leading to a reduction in Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses to 18.82%—a key indicator of improved power management.

“To address this seasonal shortfall, bilateral power purchase agreements are executed with other states that have surplus electricity in winters. Similarly, J&K supplies power to these states in summers when its own generation is higher,”



flow in the region's snow-fed rivers.

"To address this seasonal shortfall, bilateral power purchase agreements are executed with other states that have surplus electricity in winters. Similarly, J&K supplies power to these states in summers when its own generation is higher," the documents state.

Additionally, unallocated power is secured from the Ministry of Power, drawing from quotas allocated to the Northeastern and Western states. However, authorities acknowledge that these measures are insufficient to fully bridge the gap.

Dominance of Residential Consumers

The consumer base in J&K is overwhelmingly residential, accounting for 84% of total electricity users. Commercial consumers make up 13%, while the remaining 3% includes agriculture, industry, and government sectors.

With power demand continuing to rise, experts stress the need for long-term solutions, including infrastructure upgrades, reduced dependence on hydropower, and diversification of energy sources to ensure a stable supply throughout the year.

JK Schools Face Increase In Dropout Rate

Agencies

SRINAGAR: In a worrisome revelation, Jammu and Kashmir in the past two years is facing an increase in dropout rate at primary, upper primary and secondary school levels.

According to the official figures available, at primary level J&K was facing a dropout rate of 3.89 percent in the year 2022-23 at primary level that further increased to 8.87 percent in the year 2023-24.

It also states that that school at upper primary level, Jammu and Kashmir was facing a dropout rate of 2.65 percent in the year 2022-2023 and 4.23 percent in the preceding academic year.

The official figures further reveal that the dropout rate at secondary level was alarming from the past four years.

It reveals that in 2020-21,

Jammu and Kashmir schools at secondary level were facing a dropout rate of 3.68 percent followed by 5.96 percent in 2021-22 and 6.20 percent in the academic year 2022-23.

The report suggests that in the academic year 2023-24, schools in Jammu and Kashmir at secondary level were facing a dropout rate of 9.07 percent.

According to the report, J&K is having a network of 24,241 schools including 18,724 government and 5,517 other management schools with a total enrollment of over 25.94 lakh students from Pre-Primary to class XII during 2023-24.

"Enrollment ratio has increased from 93.15 to 104.02 at Primary level, 66.55 to 68.93 at upper primary level and 58.66 to 60.85 at Secondary level from 2019-20 to 2023-24," it reads. —(KNO)

40 Posts Lying Vacant At GMC Kathua: Health Minister

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Among the 118 sanctioned positions for teaching faculty, Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), and Lady Medical Officers (LMOs) at Government Medical College (GMC) Kathua, only 70 are currently filled, leaving 48 positions vacant, Health Minister Sakina Itoo said on Friday.

Responding to a question from MLA Dr Bharat Bhushan, Minister for Health and Medical Education Sakina Itoo, said that at Mahatma Gandhi Hospital Kathua, 12 out of 14 sanctioned positions remain vacant. She assured that all vacant teaching faculty positions at GMC Kathua have been referred to the J&K Public Service Commission for advertisement and selection of suitable candidates.

The vacant posts are being filled regularly on an academic arrangement basis under SO 364 of 2020, dated 27.11.2020,

to address the faculty shortage in each discipline, Itoo said.

Regarding the installation of MRI equipment, the minister said the department is currently exploring funding options to equip the hospital with MRI facilities.

Replying to a question from MLA Javid Riyaz about the re-establishment of the Gynaecology Unit at CHC Pattan, the Health Minister said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, CHC Pattan was designated as a Maternity and Child Hospital (Non-COVID) for district

Baramulla. "During this period, adequate staff, including gynaecologists, anaesthesiologists, paediatricians, anaesthesia technicians, and staff nurses, were deputed from other medical blocks such as Sopore, Kreeri, Sheeri, and Tangmarg to decongest major healthcare centres and contain the spread of COVID-19," she said.



Will Kohli, Rohit Retire After Champions Trophy Final Against NZ?

Agencies

NEW DELHI: As anticipation builds for India's ICC Champions Trophy final clash against New Zealand in Dubai on March 9, the cricket world is abuzz with speculation surrounding the ODI futures of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma.

Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra has weighed in on the matter, suggesting that an ODI retirement for the two legends post-final would be understandable, though he remains uncertain about their intentions.

Following their retirement from T20Is after India's 2024 T20 World Cup victory, many believe a similar decision regarding ODIs could be imminent, regardless of the Champions Trophy outcome.



Speaking on his YouTube channel, Chopra addressed the swirling rumours, highlighting the complexities influencing their potential choices.

"It's entirely up to them. I will be very honest, it's not going to be easy. In 2025, Kohli's performance with the bat has been outstanding and Rohit's has been okay, okay. I won't say his performance is very good. He might change the scenario by scoring a hundred in the final," Chopra stated, acknowledging the players' varying form in the lead-up to the final.

"Someone asked me whether they would retire. I said I don't know. Their retirement after winning the T20 World Cup seemed slightly logical and it was along expected lines.

"It wasn't shocking, but here if they leave both T20Is and ODIs,

only Tests will be left then. Will they go down that route? Who knows."

"The (ODI) World Cup is still two years away, and two years is a long time. Two years is a longer time when you are not playing the T20 format as well, although, to be fair, many ODIs have been kept in the coming 12 months. So they will remain involved," Chopra predicted.

At 36 and 37, Kohli and Rohit face the daunting task of committing to another three-year cycle, raising questions about their longevity and India's transition.

Whether the Champions Trophy final marks the culmination of their ODI careers remains uncertain, but their decision will undoubtedly have a profound impact on the future of Indian cricket.

Short TAKES

NZ Pacer Matt Henry Doubtful For CT Final Against India

New Zealand pacer Matt Henry has been rendered doubtful for the Champions Trophy final against India owing to a shoulder niggle but coach Gary Stead is hopeful that the in-form bowler will recover in time for the clash on Sunday.

Henry leads the tournament's top wicket-takers' list with 10 scalps, including a 5/42 against India in their group match.

The 33-year-old injured himself when he landed on his shoulder during the semifinal against South Africa in Lahore on Wednesday.

The coach was hopeful that Henry would be ready in time for the final.

New Zealand lost only one match during the preliminary engagements, against India. Henry's figures in that game are the best of the tournament so far.

Stokes In Contention For England's Next White-Ball Captain

England Test captain Ben Stokes is in contention to become the country's next limited-overs skipper, replacing Jos Buttler, as ECB director Rob Key feels it would be "stupid" not to consider the talismanic all-rounder, who has proven himself to be an "unbelievably good tactician".

Buttler resigned as England's white-ball captain midway into the Champions Trophy where the team failed to log a single win. This was just a few days after the side was hammered by India in a limited-overs away rubber. The 33-year-old Stokes missed the Champions Trophy due to a hamstring injury.

He has not played ODIs since the 2023 World Cup, where he reversed his initial decision to retire from the format.

Stokes is currently in Abu Dhabi recovering with an England Lions training group and is expected to be fully fit for the summer assignments, which include a five-Test series against India in June-July-August.

Chelsea's 2024 Squad Most Expensive Ever In Europe: UEFA

Chelsea's squad at the end of the 2024 financial year was the most expensive ever assembled in Europe in terms of transfer fees, according to a report released by governing body UEFA.

The "European Club Finance and Investment Landscape" report said Chelsea spent 1.656 billion euros (\$1.79 billion) on combined transfer costs.

That comfortably surpassed the value of Manchester United's squad in 2023, which cost 1.42 billion euros to assemble, and the 1.33 billion euros spent by Real Madrid, which was the highest squad cost in 2020.

Chelsea have signed 41 players since Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital bought the club in 2022. According to the report which analyses all of Europe's top divisions, Real Madrid (1,073 million euros), Manchester City (854 million euros), Paris St Germain (808 million euros), Manchester United (771 million euros) and Bayern Munich (765 million euros) had the highest revenues in 2023.

Team J&K Lifts North Zone Softball Championship Title

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The J&K men's team clinched the 15th North Zone Softball Championship title after a commanding 4-1 victory over Punjab in the summit clash at Shri Guru Granth Sahib World University, Fatehgarh, Punjab, on Wednesday.

The three-day championship, held from March 3 to March 5, was organised by the Punjab Softball Association under the aegis of the Softball Association of India.

Displaying exceptional skill, resilience, and composure, Team J&K dominated the game from the outset, maintaining their supremacy until the final whistle to secure a well-deserved 4-1 triumph over the formidable Punjab side.

Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, congratulated the athletes on their outstanding achievements, calling it a proud moment for J&K. He reaffirmed the gov-



ernment's commitment to enhancing sports infrastructure, coaching facilities, and training programs to help athletes compete and win at both national and international platforms.

Secretary J&K Sports Council, Nuzhat Gul, congratulated the team on their outstanding performance, lauding their dedication and teamwork. She emphasized that this victory reflects the growing strength of softball in J&K and expressed confidence that the team will continue to shine in future competitions.

Meanwhile, the selection tri-

als for the J&K men's football team, set to compete in the Swami Vivekananda U-20 Men's National Football Championship 2025, concluded on Thursday at Mini Stadium, Parade, Jammu. Conducted under the supervision of J&K Sports Council coaches, the trials saw enthusiastic participation from young footballers across the region.

The selection process will now move to TRC Synthetic Football Turf, Srinagar, where trials for Kashmir Division players will be held on March 10, 11 and 12.

Vision To Make Sports Integral To Community Dev: CM Omar

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Aiming to give sports a major lift, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday announced a budgetary allocation of ₹152.69 crore for 2025-26 while announcing several developmental initiatives.

The CM told the Legislative Assembly that National Centres of Excellence for Water Sports will be established at Dal Lake in Srinagar and Basohli in Jammu. He said his government is prioritizing water sports promotion, including kayaking, canoeing and paddle boating.

"Tourism assets at Manasbal are being enhanced, and jet skiing, speed boating and houseboats are being developed at Ranjit Sagar Lake," he said.

He added that the Z-Morh Tunnel has made Sonamarg an all-weather destination, "unlocking its potential for international standard skiing and ice-skating facilities."

The CM added that a Gymnastics Academy will be set up at Gindun Rajbagh and Khel Gaon, Nagrota.

Four state-of-the-art cricket academies will be also established with a budgetary allocation of ₹8 crore. Two new Youth Hostels, one each in Jammu and Kashmir, will be constructed with a provision of ₹10 crore. High-Performance Training Centers will be developed in all districts.



He added that to promote mass participation, "we aim to engage 75 lakh youth in sports activities across Jammu & Kashmir."

"We are developing 247 playfields, stadiums, and sports courts across the region, along with the construction and upgradation of 19 sports buildings," the CM said.

The CM said two new swimming pools will also be commissioned in both capital cities. He said that dedicated sports facilities will be created for migrant populations to ensure inclusivity, while special emphasis will be placed on involving the rural and tribal population in games.

"Our vision is to make sports an integral part of community development, ensuring participation from all sections of society," Omar said.

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