

## KO Classifieds

• PUBLIC NOTICES • NAME CHANGE • SALE/ PURCHASE • BIRTHDAY WISHES • OBITUARIES

PLACE YOUR  
**AD** TODAY!

You can  
do it all  
here

## FM Tables Economic Survey 2025-26 In LS

Projects 6.8-7.2% Growth, Flags Global Uncertainty



KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday tabled the Economic Survey 2025-26 in Parliament, projecting GDP growth for the next financial year in the range of 6.8 to 7.2 percent and flagging global uncertainties while maintaining that India's economy remains on a steady expansion path.

The Survey estimated medium-term growth potential at around 7 percent and said the economy is adapting to structural reforms, including changes in the Goods and Services Tax. It described FY27 as a year of adjustment, noting that growth projections for the next fiscal are lower than the 7.4 percent expansion estimated for the current year.

Prepared by the Economic

Survey Warns of Market Risks if AI Boom Fails

- » Medium-term growth seen at around 7%
- » FY27 to be a year of adjustment amid reforms
- » Inflation in FY27 likely higher but not a concern
- » Calls to cut online teaching, promote offline learning
- » Push for age limits on social media
- » Recommends simpler devices for children
- » Seeks ad curbs on ultra-processed foods
- » FTA with Europe to boost manufacturing and exports
- » Gold, silver prices likely to rise amid global uncertainty

Division of the Department of Economic Affairs under the supervision of the Chief Economic Adviser, the Economic Survey is presented annually ahead of the Union Budget to assess econom-

ic | **More on P6**

## 'Seamless Synergy, Heightened Alertness' Army's Northern Commander Reviews Security In Jammu



KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Army's Northern Commander Pratik Sharma on Thursday reviewed the evolving security situation in the Jammu region, with focus on strengthening the

counter-terrorism grid, officials said.

The review meeting was held at the Jammu-based White Knight Corps, also known as XVI Corps, amid a series of recent encounters in Kathua and | **More on P6**



Winter joy in the valley: Children slide down a snow-covered slope in Khanshab area of Budgam. KO Photo By Abid Bhat

## Fresh Snowfall Likely From Feb 1

Sub-Zero Nights Recorded At Most Places

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Kashmir continued to reel under cold conditions on Thursday as night temperatures remained several degrees below freezing at most places, officials said.

According to data from the Meteorological Department, Sonamarg in central Kashmir recorded the lowest temperature at minus 11.2 degrees Celsius, down from minus 9.8 degrees Celsius the previous night.

Other tourist and hill stations also witnessed sub-zero temperatures, with Gulmarg recording minus 9 degrees Celsius, Pahalgam minus 4.5 degrees Celsius, Kupwara minus 3.5 degrees Celsius, and Qazigund at zero degrees Celsius.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 0.6 degrees Celsius, slightly above the seasonal average. Kokernag also registered a minimum temperature of minus 0.6 degrees Celsius.

Officials said the ongoing Chillai-Kalan, the 40-day harshest phase of winter that began on December 21, is set to conclude | **More on P6**

## Survey Suggests Age Limit For Social Media, Fewer Online Classes

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Warning of a growing digital addiction crisis, the government's Economic Survey 2025-26 on Thursday called for age-based access to online platforms, stricter enforcement of age verification by tech companies, and a reduction in online teaching to protect children's mental health.

The Survey, tabled in Parliament, said younger users are particularly vulnerable to compulsive online behaviour and exposure to harmful content. It recommended that policies on age-based access limits be considered, especially for social media platforms, gambling apps, auto-play features, and targeted advertising.

"Platforms should be made responsible for enforcing age verification and age-appropriate default settings," the Survey said, stressing the need for stronger safeguards



for children.

Highlighting the role of educational institutions, the Survey said schools must play a critical role in shaping healthy digital habits. It called for the introduction of a Digital Wellness Curriculum that includes screen-time literacy, cyber safety, and mental health awareness. It also recommended reducing the dependence on online teaching tools, which expanded sharply during the Covid-19 pandemic, in favour of greater offline engagement.

To limit exposure to harmful online material, the Survey suggested promoting simpler

devices for children, such as basic phones or education-only tablets with content filters and usage limits.

The Survey also emphasised the role of families in addressing digital addiction. It urged parents and guardians to promote screen-time limits, device-free hours, and shared offline activities. It recommended parental workshops through schools and community centres to help families recognise signs of addiction and use parental control tools effectively.

In addition, the Survey proposed network-level safeguards, including internet service provider interventions such as family data plans with separate quotas for educational and recreational use, along with default blocking of high-risk content categories, with opt-in options for guardians.

Citing measures adopted by countries such as Australia, China, and | **More on P6**

## LG Joins Beating Retreat Ceremony In Jammu



Observer News Service

Jammu: The customary Beating Retreat ceremony on Thursday marked the conclusion of the four-day Republic Day celebrations at the MA Stadium in Jammu.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha graced the ceremony as the chief guest.

The event witnessed performances by the Brass and Pipe Drum bands of the Armed Forces and the Jammu and

Kashmir Police, creating a patriotic atmosphere at the venue. The audience was treated to musical renditions of patriotic songs, including "Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon".

In recognition of their performances, the Lieutenant Governor felicitated contingents of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and security forces, the parade commander, ex-servicemen, pipe and brass bands, marching contingents of boys and | **More on P6**

## PMAY-U: J&K Gets Over 14K Urban Homes In 3 Years

Observer News Service

New Delhi: Jammu and Kashmir has seen a steady rollout of urban housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U), with more than 14,000 houses completed and delivered to beneficiaries over the past three years, official data tabled in Parliament shows.

The information was provided by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in a written reply to an unstarred question in the Lok Sabha. Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu said the Centre sanctioned 5,215 houses for Jammu and Kashmir between 2022-23 and 2024-25, while 19,375 units were completed and handed over during the same period.

According to | **More on P6**

## 18-Yr-Old Kashmiri Shawl Seller Assaulted In Dehradun

Prime Accused Arrested; CM Calls Assault 'Unacceptable'

Agencies

Dehradun: An 18-year-old Kashmiri shawl seller was assaulted by goons in the Vikas Nagar area of Dehradun, prompting swift police action and widespread condemnation from Jammu and Kashmir leaders.

Reports said that the teenager was "beaten mercilessly" and sustained "multiple injuries," including a "fractured left arm and serious head trauma, after being struck with iron rods."

He was first admitted to a local hospital and later shifted to Doon Hospital for further treatment.

"Attackers initially questioned the family about their identity. When they learnt the victims were Muslims



from Kashmir, the violence escalated. Other family members were reportedly dragged, slapped, and struck with rods," representatives of Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) said. Chief Minister Omar

Abdullah condemned the incident, calling attacks on Kashmiris outside the Union Territory "unacceptable."

Posting on social media, he said the J&K government would take necessary steps to ensure the safety of Kashmiris living or traveling elsewhere.

He also urged the Union Home Ministry to sensitise other states to prevent targeted attacks.

Following the JKSA's complaint, Uttarakhand Police registered a First Information Report (FIR No. 26/2026) at Vikas Nagar Police Station under Sections 117(2) and 352 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Sanjay Yadav, the primary accused, has been arrested and taken into custody, while legal proceedings are underway, Uttarakhand | **More on P6**

## Govt Jobs Alone Can't Fix Unemployment: CM

Says J&K Expects Industrial Package In Union Budget

Observer News Service

Jammu: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be addressed through government jobs alone and expressed hope that the upcoming Union Budget would provide a substantial industrial package to boost economic growth in the Union Territory.

"Our expectation from the



Union Budget is that Jammu and Kashmir receives a good industrial package. The region has not received any central industrial incentive package since 1990," Omar told reporters after | **More on P6**

## Questions Protests In Jammu Over Law University

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday downplayed the protest by university students in Jammu demanding the establishment of a National Law | **More on P6**

## India Has 22 Judges Per 10 Lakh People

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: India has nearly 22 judges per 10 lakh population, the Rajya Sabha was told on Thursday.

In its 120th report way back in 1987, the Law Commission had recommended a judge-to-population ratio of 50 judges per million (10 lakh) of the Indian population.

In a written reply, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said that at present, the judge-to-population ratio in the country works out to be approximately 22 judges per million population.

"In order to calculate the judge population ratio per million population in a particular year, the Ministry of Law and Justice uses the criterion based on the 2011 Census population data (1210.85 million) and the sanctioned | **More on P6**



## Follow Traffic Rules or Face Challans, Warns SSP Traffic

Observer News Service

Srinagar: SSP Traffic Srinagar City, Ajaz Ahmed Bhat, on Thursday said challaning of traffic violators will continue until motorists show discipline and begin following traffic rules in letter and spirit.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a traffic awareness drive, the SSP said a rally was organized from Lal Chowk to Jahangir Chowk to sensitise people about the importance of traffic discipline. He said the city has been witnessing a large number of traffic violations, prompting an increase in challan numbers.

The SSP said that challan figures tend to come down automatically when people understand and follow traffic rules. He said due to recent snowfall, chal-

lan numbers had reduced, but with improvement in weather and traffic movement picking up, the number of challans has started increasing again.

The SSP said traffic police personnel are working with dedication on the ground and deserve appreciation for their efforts. He said criticizing traffic cops without reason is not in good taste. However, he added that in exceptional cases where a traffic cop fails to perform or acts improperly, people should bring such matters to the notice of the authorities for appropriate action.

According to KNT, he reiterated that the focus of the department remains on awareness, discipline and smooth regulation of traffic to ensure safety of commuters across Srinagar city.



## Smart Cities Projects Nearing Completion

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir has completed 281 of the 288 projects approved under the Smart Cities Mission, achieving a completion rate of nearly 97.6 per cent, according to government data tabled in Parliament.

The figures, according to KNO place the Union Territory slightly above the national average as the centrally sponsored mission transitions into an operations and maintenance phase.

The data from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs show that Jammu and Kashmir claimed central assistance of Rs 941 crore under the mission, of which Rs 885 crore have been utilised so far.

Across the two cities, only seven projects with a combined cost of Rs 140 crore remain under execution.

In Jammu, 127 projects with an estimated cost of Rs 2,969 crore were sanctioned, of which 125 have been completed. Srinagar accounted for 161 projects costing Rs 3,634 crore, with 156 completed, the data showed.

At the national level, the Smart Cities Mission has taken up 8,064 projects with a total outlay of Rs 1,64,811 crore. Of these, 7,767 projects worth

Rs 1,55,859 crore have been completed, while 297 projects costing Rs 8,952 crore are ongoing across the country.

The parliamentary annexure noted that Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) have been established in all 100 smart cities, forming the backbone for urban monitoring and governance.

Digital infrastructure such as SCADA-based water network moni-

conditions.

The Smart Cities Mission focuses on improving core urban services including water supply, urban mobility, waste management, public spaces and heritage conservation.

According to national data, the mission has resulted in the installation of nearly 17,000 kilometres of water networks under SCADA systems, deployment of more than 83,000 CCTV

**“The parliamentary annexure noted that Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) have been established in all 100 smart cities, forming the backbone for urban monitoring and governance,”**

toring and CCTV surveillance systems for public safety have been developed as part of the mission's long-term urban management framework.

Officials said the relatively small value of the remaining projects in Jammu and Srinagar indicates that pending works are limited in scope and could be completed within short timelines, subject to administrative clearances and seasonal construction

cameras and development of over 1,300 public-space projects.

Once fully operational, officials said the completed interventions in Jammu and Srinagar are expected to help reduce non-revenue water losses, improve traffic and mobility management, modernise solid waste systems and enhance civic amenities, contributing to improved urban resilience, public safety and tourism infrastructure.

## Progress of Infrastructure Upgradation Reviewed at GMC Hospitals

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo along with the Principal, Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, Prof. Ifiat Hassan Shah on Thursday reviewed infrastructure upgradation and developmental requirements of GMC & Associated Hospitals operating under GMC Srinagar.

The review was aimed at addressing several issues that require inter-departmental coordination for further strengthening of healthcare infrastructure, improving patient care, medical education and enhancing overall hospital facilities across the Associated Hospitals, including SMHS Hospital, Super Speciality Hospital-Shireen Bagh, LD Hospital, Bone & Joint Hospital, Chest Disease (CD)

Hospital, Psychiatry Hospital and the Children's Hospital, Bemina.

Administrator GMC Srinagar, Mohammad Ashraf Hakak, Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aadil Fareed, Joint Commissioner SMC, Nuzhat Khurshid, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B North Division, Shabir Ahmad, Superintending Engineer R&B South Division, Tatheer Manzoor, Medical Superintendent SMHS Hospital, Dr. Andleeb, Medical Superintendent Super Speciality Hospital, Shireen Bagh, Dr. Rubeeza, Executive Engineers from R&B, Water Works and Master Plan Division, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Traffic) and other senior officers of the District Administration and GMC Srinagar were present in the spot review.

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092, 2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488, 2452222, 2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

**AIRPORTS**  
SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

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

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

**PRAYERS**

**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
10-Shaban  
1447

FAJR	6: 04
ZUHR	12:44
ASR	4: 21
Magrib	6:02
ISHA	7: 25

### This Day In History

- 1018 - The Holy Roman Empire and Poland conclude the Peace of Bautzen
- 1077 - Pope Gregory VII pardons German emperor Henry IV
- 1349 - Gunther of Schwarzburg chosen German anti-king
- 1467 - Battle at Velke Kostolany: Hung king Matyas Corvinus beats Bratric
- 1487 - Bell chimes invented
- 1522 - Duke of Albany takes captured French back to Scotland
- 1607 - Massive flooding in England destroys around 200 square miles of coastline and results in approximately 2,000 casualties
- 1648 - Spain & Netherlands sign Peace of Munster, ending the Thirty Years War
- 1713 - England & Netherlands sign 2nd anti-French boundary treaty
- 1815 - Burned US Library of Congress re-established with Thomas Jefferson's 6,500 volumes

**NOTICE**

I want to change the name in electric connection from Ashfaq Ah Sheikh bearing consumer id No :- 0204020012308 to Showkat Javaid Wani S/o Mohammad Akbar Wani R/o:- Akhzar Avenue Ellahi Bagh, Srinagar.

If anybody has any objection, he/she may contact office of the Assistant Executive Engineer PDD Sub-Division Hawal Srinagar within 7 Days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Showkat Javaid Wani  
S/O: Mohammad Akbar Wani  
R/o :- Akhzar Avenue Ellahi Bagh, Srinagar.

**Expression of Gratitude**

We express our heartfelt gratitude to all our friends, relatives, and neighbours—especially the residents of B.T.M. First Stage, Bangalore; the residents of Gulpoosh Colony (Bypass near Anna Hospital); the residents of Chinar Lane, Lal Bazaar; members of all trades of the Kashmir Traders Welfare Association, Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh; and the Kashmir Welfare Association, Bangalore—for their kindness, support, and consolation during this hour of profound grief.

We are deeply thankful to everyone who stood by us by visiting our home or reaching out through calls and messages on the sad demise of Shahid Mehmood Shah. May Allah Almighty reward all those who shared in our sorrow.

The Bereaved Family  
Syed Mujahid Hussaini (9492990916)  
Tariq Mehmood Shah  
Malik Ishaiq (9149937564)  
Malik Rouf Muhammad  
Faheem Shahdar  
Qazi Sarwar

**The Jammu and Kashmir State Board Of School Education**  
New Campus Bemina Srinagar  
Notice for General Public

The candidate whose photograph is above reports that he/she has lost his/her qualification certificate/s having the following description:-  
Roll No: 735485  
Class: 10th (matric)  
Year & Session: Annual / private - 2009  
Registration No: N-94-29242 - 7024  
Name: Mushiq Ahmad Bhat  
Father's Name: Bashir Ahmad Bhat  
Mother's Name: Hajra Bano  
Date of Birth: 04-04-1979  
Residence: Gudora Pulwama

According to the candidate concerned has approach to this office for issuance of Duplicate Qualification /Marks Certificate/s, so before the same is processed and provided to the candidate, under rules, anybody having any objection in this regard, shall bring into the notice of Assistant Secretary of Certificate as well as Assistant Secretary Examination Unit I & III KD within the period of 10 & 7 days respectively, from the date of publication of this notice.  
(Besides the above referred "Qualification / Marks Certificate/s" bearing No: KMAPO 09- 1212006 be treated as "CANCELLED")  
No: F(Cer is-I-DQC)/B/KD/  
Dated

Assistant Secretary  
Certificates, KD.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

I have passed/appeared in SSE/HSE-II/HSE-II (Class 10th ) under Roll No. 121022104, Session Ann. Reg. 2024, Year 2024 through the J&K Board of School Education. The error has been committed against my name/cast/M/F/N as Aman Ajaz Ganai instead of Aman Ajaz Ganai S/o Ajaz Ahmad Ganai M/N Roufa Mir. Now I have applied for correction in the J&K Board of School Education Magam. If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary JKBOSE MAGAM within seven days from the date of the publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection will be entertained. This is published for the information of the general public. The correction particulars be recorded as under:  
Name: AMAN AJAZ GANAI  
Father's Name: AJAZ AHMAD GANAI  
Mother's Name: ROUFA MIR  
Date of Birth: 09-01-2009  
Residence: Ratnipora Payeen  
Mobile No.: 8825023559

**Public Notice**

It is hereby notified that Abdul Ahad Sofi, S/O Nabir Sofi, resident of Gund Arjan Khansahib Budgam has applied for RBA certificates in favour of his Children Muzamil Ahmad Sofi, Suhail Ahmad Sofi, Sumeena Akhtar and Riyaz Ahmad Sofi from the Office of Tehsildar Khansahib. The detailed report of the said family is as:

S.No	Name of the family member	Relation with the Head of the family	Occupation
1	Abdul Ahad Sofi	Self	Pensioner (Rt. Follower in JK police)
2	Rahti Bano	Wife	Homemaker
3	Riyaz Ahmad Sofi	Son	Labourer (Occasional)
4	Sumeena Akhtar	Daughter	Pursuing Studies
5	Masrat Yousuf	Daughter in Law	Homemaker
6	Suhail Ahmad Sofi	Son	Govt Employee
7	Muzamil Ahmad Sofi	Son	Pursuing Studies

If any person has any objection regarding the grant of the said RBA Certificates, the same may be submitted to the office of the Naib Tehsildar Parnewa / Tehsildar Khansahib within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

I, FAYAZ AHMAD RATHER, R/O NURSINGPORA, hereby inform the general public that I have applied for the issuance of Date of Birth Certificates of my wards. The parentage/Date of Birth has been wrongly mentioned in the Aadhaar Card as Hameeda Bano D/O Fayaz Ahmed Rather DOB:-14-07-2013, instead of his correct detail HAMEEDA BANO, D/O FAYAZ AHMAD RATHER DOB: 14-03-2012 and Bisma Jan D/O FAYAZ AHMAD RATHER DOB:- 19-11-2016 instead of his correct detail BISMA JAN, D/O FAYAZ AHMAD RATHER DOB: 19-01-2016. Now, I am applying for the necessary correction. If any person has any objection in this regard, he/she may file the same in the office of the Block Development Officer, Beerwah within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

I, Rameez Ahmed Bhat, want to change my name in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 7276 7456 8997 from Rameez Ahmad Bhat to Rameez Ahmed Bhat. If anybody has any objection in this regard, he/she may file the same at the concerned Aadhaar Centre within a period of seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

Rameez Ahmed Bhat

**Government of Jammu and Kashmir**  
**Office of the District Development Commissioner Pulwama**  
email:- cpopul-jk@nic.in  
**Subject:- Registration of District e-Governance Society, Pulwama**

**NOTICE**

District Administration Pulwama is processing the registration of District e-Governance Society under the name of "DISTRICT E GOVERNANCE SOCIETY PULWAMA" as per the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (Central Act) with the composition of following members:

S.No	Name & Designation	Address	Remarks
1	Deputy Commissioner/ District Development Commissioner, Pulwama (J&K)	Pulwama	Chairman/ CEO
2	Additional District Development Commissioner	Pulwama	Convener
3	Chief Planning Officer / Joint Director (Planning)	Pulwama	Member-Secretary
4	General Manager, DIC	Pulwama	Member
5	District Informatics Officer/ Joint Director (IT) NIC	Pulwama	Member
6	Chief Education Officer	Pulwama	Member
7	Chief Medical Officer	Pulwama	Member
8	District Statistical & Evaluation Officer,	Pulwama	Member
9	Assistant Commissioner Revenue	Pulwama	Member
10	Assistant Commissioner Development	Pulwama	Member
11	District Social Welfare Officer	Pulwama	Member
12	District Information Officer	Pulwama	Member
13	District Panchayat Officer/ACP	Pulwama	Member
14	Assistant Director, CA&PD	Pulwama	Member
15	Divisional Engineer, BSNL	Pulwama	Member
16	Accounts Officer, DC Office	Pulwama	Treasurer
17	Lead District Manager	Pulwama	Co-opted Member
18	District Coordinator, CSC e-Governance	Pulwama	Co-opted Member

Anybody, having any objection regarding constitution and registration of District e-Governance Society, Pulwama may submit his objection in writing to this office within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notification.

DIPK-10448/25 Dr. Basharat Qayoom (IAS)  
Deputy Commissioner,  
Pulwama

No:- DDCP/CSC/2026/ 8015-16  
DIPK-10448/25 dated; 29-01-2026

**NOTICE**

I Shabir Ahmad Khanday want to change my Daughter 's name in his Aadhar card bearing no 6851 5322 3737 from Sahira Shabir to Ibra Jan. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned centre within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

**NOTICE**

I Shabir Ahmad Khanday want to change my Daughter 's name in his Aadhar card bearing no 9549 2349 7352 from Suha Shabir to Sadiya Shabir. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned centre within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

## KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of Kashmir Observer LLP  
Printed at: K.T Press Pvt. Ltd 120-Electronic Complex, Industrial Estate, Rangreth-Budgam  
Published from: 5-Boulevard Srinagar J&K  
Editor-in-Chief: Sajjad Haider  
Managing Editor: Bilal Handoo  
News Editor: Farzana Nisar  
Online Editor: Syed Hamid  
Head Layout & Design: Muntazir Yaseen,  
Digital Media Head: Amir Ali Shah  
Distribution & Advertising: Firdous Ahmad  
RNI Registration No: 69503/98  
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16  
Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja  
Switchboard: (0194) 2502327 | +91 1947969705  
Editorial: (0194) 2502327  
Email: editor@kashmiroserver.net

### KO VIEW

## Plastic-Free Kashmir Now

**K**ashmir is at a critical juncture. Changing lifestyles have created new, unsettling normals, and one of the most pressing challenges is the impact on the environment.

People cannot remain passive as their ecosystem face mounting pressures.

Every member of the community now has a responsibility toward the environment, and actions that harm it can no longer be ignored.

Even small lapses in ecological responsibility have collective consequences, affecting everyone in the valley.

A recent debate highlighted why environmental enforcement in Kashmir has often struggled. In earlier times, water patrols monitored littering and pollution, ensuring that violations had consequences.

Reintroducing such enforcement would deter behaviour that slowly erodes the valley's natural beauty and health.

The ongoing winter tourism underscores what's at stake. Visitors are arriving in Kashmir's snowbound landscapes, capturing picture-perfect moments.

But beneath this pristine white, meadows, riverbanks, and peaks bear the marks of plastic and polythene. This pollution threatens both the environment and the industries that rely on its natural charm.

Focusing only on individual vendors or raiding shops will not solve the problem. A broader approach is needed, one that holds producers, distributors, and the entire plastic supply chain accountable.

Policies may be unpopular, but they must prioritize the valley's long-term ecological and economic well-being.

The cultural shift brought by plastics is already evident in everyday life in Kashmir. Traditional utensils like copper pots once supported health, held value, and even served as trade commodities.

Modern plastic items offer none of these benefits, giving scant support to a community caught in life's unpredictable currents.

Conscious choices in daily life can bring balance back, protecting both our health and the environment that sustains us.

### CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

## Community Distress Funds

Small local contributions can support families during income drops.

Irshad Mushtaq

**M**any families in Kashmir earn money seasonally. They rely on tourism, small businesses, or temporary work. When these slow down, households face sudden pressure. Children still need food, school, and care. Parents must manage daily life even when money is tight.

Communities already come together to collect money for funerals. This shows how people can help each other. A similar approach can work for families in crisis. Regular small contributions from households can create community distress funds. These funds can help families handle short-term problems without letting them spiral.

Women and children feel the impact first. Families on the edge often struggle silently. Their hardships affect the wider community. Society has a responsibility to support its members. Community funds can step in to cover essential needs like school fees, medical care, or temporary income lapses. This keeps families afloat and children secure.

Economic disruptions happen often. Seasonal changes, slow tourism, or wider market shifts create repeated challenges. A community fund can act quickly, helping families before problems grow. It also builds a sense of shared responsibility. People feel supported, and children grow up in more stable households.

Every household can give what it can, and each contribution adds up to real help.

These funds are an investment in the community's balance. They ensure families get essential support, maintain self-respect, and keep society strong.

Acting together now prevents bigger problems later and shows how a conscious, caring society can make a difference.

— The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

# J&K Eyes Green Growth

Key Budget 2026 expectations for Jammu & Kashmir include climate-focused projects, improved livelihoods, and regional economic expansion.



## Budget 2026 Expectations

Mohammad Hanief

**“Budget 2026 has the potential to turn projected growth into visible progress. Investments in infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, job creation, and social services can firmly anchor Jammu & Kashmir within India's economic journey. Success will be measured by improved livelihoods, stronger connectivity, and broader economic participation across the Union Territory.”**

**T**he Union Budget 2026 arrives at a pivotal moment for India, offering a chance to accelerate national growth while addressing the unique needs of regions like Jammu & Kashmir.

Set for presentation on February 1, this 88th fiscal blueprint comes at a time when India remains one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, projected to expand 6.5-6.8 percent in 2025-26 after a 7 percent jump last year.

These figures reflect a sustainable growth path underpinned by robust domestic demand, public investment, and structural reforms.

Budget 2026 presents an opportunity to transform these macroeconomic gains into tangible improvements on the ground, particularly in Jammu & Kashmir.

Infrastructure spending continues to be a key driver of economic momentum. Investments in roads, railways, energy, and digital connectivity can unlock new opportunities in a region long constrained by terrain and connectivity gaps.

Improved transport networks and last-mile access can link rural producers to markets, support tourism, and encourage private investment.

Agriculture and horticulture remain central to Jammu & Kashmir's economy, employing a significant portion of the population.

Apples, walnuts, almonds, and saffron dominate local production, but growth remains limited by storage, processing, and transport bottlenecks.

Targeted investments in cold storage facilities, modern mandis, agro-processing units, and better logistics can enhance incomes while expanding market access.

Strengthened irrigation systems and risk-mitigation measures will support farmers in adapting to climate variability and protecting yields.

Tourism offers another path to sustainable growth.

The region's landscapes, cultural heritage, and adventure-tourism potential have already attracted a steady flow of visitors. Budgetary support for tourism infrastructure, hospitality services, and local skill development can consolidate these gains.

Focusing on environmentally responsible models ensures that economic expansion aligns with conservation, preserving Jammu & Kashmir's ecological and cultural assets for long-term appeal.

Employment generation and youth empowerment form another critical dimension of the Budget.

Educated youth in Jammu & Kashmir face persistent job challenges. Expanding skill development programs, entrepreneurship support, and incentives for local micro, small, and medium enterprises can turn this demographic advantage into productive participation.

Linking training initiatives to regional economic priorities ensures that youth talent meets market demand and drives inclusive growth.

Education and healthcare investments strengthen the foundations for long-term prosperity. Enhancing schools, higher education institutions, digital learning platforms, and medical facilities in remote areas improves human capital, boosts productivity, and raises quality of life.

Equitable access to these services also reinforces social cohesion and ensures that growth benefits reach all communities.

Central support remains vital for Jammu & Kashmir's development, given its administrative and fiscal requirements.

Budget 2026 must ensure that allocations translate into visible outcomes. Streamlined project execution and performance-based monitoring can strengthen public trust while accelerating development across infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, and social services.

Balancing regional development within the Union Territory is equally essential. Equitable distribution of resources, including roads, schools, and hospitals, promotes inclusive growth and reduces disparities across districts.

Such an approach also stabilizes social and political dynamics, enhancing Jammu & Kashmir's contribution to national progress.

Tax policy reforms in Budget 2026 can bolster these objectives. Simplified tax structures, rationalised rates, and improved compliance support consumption, encourage private investment, and enhance ease of doing business.

A predictable tax environment strengthens investor confidence and generates spill-over benefits across regions, including Jammu & Kashmir.

India's development strategy increasingly prioritizes sustainability. Funding renewable energy, water management, climate adaptation, and environmental conservation allows economic growth to advance alongside ecological protection.

In Jammu & Kashmir, where communities depend on forests, rivers, and farmland, targeted budget support for climate-resilient projects preserves natural resources while opening new avenues for economic activity.

Budget 2026 has the potential to turn projected growth into visible progress. Investments in infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, job creation, and social services can firmly anchor Jammu & Kashmir within India's economic journey.

Success will be measured by improved livelihoods, stronger connectivity, and broader economic participation across the Union Territory.

The author is a senior analyst and can be reached at [m.hanief@gmail.com](mailto:m.hanief@gmail.com).

### Letter to Editor

## Kashmir's Legal Backbone Works Without Backing

**I**n Srinagar, lawyers move through crowded courtrooms and busy bar rooms, carrying cases that protect everyone else. They argue, file, and draft with care, but few notice the uncertainty that shadows their work.

Unlike judges or court staff, most advocates earn no fixed income, receive no pensions, lack health coverage, and have no financial support for their families if something goes wrong.

Young lawyers face these challenges from day one, and first-generation advocates often struggle to keep their practice going while trying to make ends meet.

Some Indian states give stipends to junior advocates, offering a small cushion. Jammu and Kashmir offers nothing. Families live with risk while their

lawyers fight cases that defend rights, enforce laws, and keep the justice system alive.

Lawyers hold seats in Parliament and state legislatures. They help craft laws, serve as ministers, and frame policies. Their presence grows, but their own welfare rarely enters legislative debate.

Bar Councils and Associations hold the mandate to speak up, but their engagement often fails to turn policy into action. The result leaves advocates vulnerable while courts rely on them to function.

Many experienced lawyers in Kashmir even work without chambers. They operate from cramped bar rooms, hallways, or even cars. Confidential conversations happen under uncomfortable

conditions. Professional status suffers, and client confidence wavers.

These lapses affect every litigant and the quality of justice delivered.

The law recognizes the importance of advocate welfare. The Advocates Act empowers Bar Councils to set up welfare funds, while the Bar Council of India oversees legal education and welfare initiatives.

The Advocates' Welfare Fund Act offers financial aid to lawyers and their families. Implementation remains uneven, funding falls short, and procedural delays reduce the impact of these measures.

Kashmir needs a full framework for lawyer welfare. Advocates deserve a minimum pen-

sion after years of practice, health coverage for themselves and their families, life and accident insurance, emergency relief funds, and proper chambers to work in.

Supporting lawyers protects the profession and reinforces the system that delivers justice to every citizen.

Lawyers in Kashmir work tirelessly, often unseen, often unsupported.

Building structures and welfare for them ensures justice thrives.

When lawyers feel secure, the system does too.

Sincerely,

Suhail Gaznavi  
[suhailadv13@gmail.com](mailto:suhailadv13@gmail.com)

# A Global Chorus Greet the India-EU Pact

Leaders, global media, business chiefs, and policy thinkers describe the India-EU Free Trade Agreement as historic in scale, sharp in timing, and central to the global economy.

Ansar Hussain

What came after the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement may matter as much as the deal itself.

Reactions across newsrooms, government offices, corporate boardrooms, and policy institutions suggest a shared view: this pact reflects the economic and political moment the world is living through.

Coming after nearly two decades of talks, the agreement links the world's largest economic bloc with one of its fastest growing major economies, placing trade, supply chains, and long term partnerships at the center of a shifting global order.

International media coverage has focused on the size, scope, and timing of the agreement, with several outlets framing it as a defining moment in global trade.

The Telegraph, in an article by James Crisp, called the pact the "mother of all trade deals" and argued that India has emerged as the key strategic winner.

The paper reported that the deal removes or reduces tariffs on 96.6 percent of European Union exports to India, while the EU will cut tariffs on 99.5 percent of Indian goods over a seven year period.

Bloomberg echoed that framing in an article by Dan Strumpf titled "All Roads Lead to Modi as World Hedges Trump," writing that the "mother of all deals" between India and the European Union reflects a broader trend, with New Delhi becoming a preferred partner for countries seeking stable economic ties.

The Wall Street Journal placed the agreement in the context of global tariff disruption, describing it as part of a wider move by middle powers to expand alliances amid uncertainty tied to United States trade policy.

The New York Times highlighted the significance of bringing together the European Union and India after years of talks, stressing the economic weight of both partners and the long road to consensus.

The Washington Post described it as a historic agreement with the

headline, "India and EU clinch the 'mother of all deals' in a historic free trade agreement," while The Guardian ran a similar line, "Mother of all deals: EU and India sign free trade agreement."

The BBC followed with "India and EU announce 'mother of all trade deals'," reinforcing the shared global framing.

Bloomberg, in a separate report, examined the implications for manufacturing and logistics, noting that duties on cars will fall as low as 10 percent compared to earlier levels above 100 percent, while tariffs on auto components will disappear entirely.

Associated Press underlined the breadth of the pact with its headline stating that India and the European Union have reached a free trade deal representing a third of global trade. Al Jazeera highlighted the combined economic weight with its description, "'Mother of all deals': How India-EU trade deal creates \$27 trillion market." Reuters called it a landmark agreement, writing, "India, EU reach landmark trade deal, tariffs to be slashed on most goods."

The impact beyond Europe also drew attention.

On Fox News, Pakistani journalist Qamar Cheema said India stands to gain substantially as tariffs will fall to zero in several key sectors, adding that neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh will struggle to compete with India in the European market under the new terms.

Political leaders across Europe welcomed the agreement in public statements that emphasized growth, partnership, and global positioning.

Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz described the conclusion of the negotiations as a "very positive sign" and called for rapid implementation to drive growth and prosperity. Finnish President Alexander Stubb called the India-EU FTA historic and the largest trade deal ever concluded by either side, saying it would sharply intensify both economic and political ties.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said the agreement signals



is not an agreement like the others." Sandro Gozi, a Member of the European Parliament, said the deal an accelerator of opportunities on both sides. Wouter van Wersch, President of

Airbus International, described it as a "fantastic day" and reaffirmed Airbus' long term commitment to Make in India, technology transfer, defence, space, and advanced manufacturing.

Jan Noether, Director General of the Indo German Chamber of Commerce, said the agreement brings together two billion people and almost a quarter of global GDP, calling it the "mother of all free trade agreements."

Sebastian Stiezel, President of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce, said the India-EU FTA marks an important opening in an increasingly tense global setting and added that India stands as a market of the present, urging Berlin to seize the opportunities now taking shape.

Industry leaders from major German carmakers including Volkswagen, BMW, and Mercedes Benz welcomed the deal for its potential to lift exports to India and reinforce global supply chains.

Business groups such as the Croatian Employers' Association and BusinessEurope described the pact as one of the European Union's most important trade moves at a time of rising protectionism.

Swedish organizations including Svenskt Näringsliv and Företagarna pointed to reduced tariffs and improved market access as key gains. In Ireland, Chambers Ireland and other economic bodies welcomed the agreement as historic, highlighting expanded access and diversification prospects for exporters, especially in machinery and agri food.

Additional business voices joined the chorus. Frank Schlöder, Managing Director of Häfele South Asia, Thomas Wolter, Managing Director of Krones Machinery India, Lars Eric Johansson, Executive Vice President at Oxea GmbH, Jan Olof Jacke, CEO of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, and Fredrik Persson, President of BusinessEurope, all described the agreement as a strong signal in support of rules based trade, supply chain strength, small and medium enterprise growth, and long term competitiveness.

Policy experts and research institutions framed the pact as both

substantial in content and well placed in timing.

Richard Rossow, Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the deal brings together a quarter of the world's population and a vast share of global trade, adding that the positive optics rest on strong substance. He also said India's recent free trade agreements show a clear move toward deeper and more ambitious commitments.

Michael Kugelman, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, called the India-EU FTA the "right deal at the right time," saying it goes beyond responding to United States tariffs and instead strengthens a wider and fast growing strategic partnership.

Geopolitical strategist Velina Tchakarova described the agreement as one of the most consequential geoeconomic deals of the decade in terms of scale and intent.

The Kiel Institute for the World Economy said deeper integration between the European Union and India could raise bilateral trade by 41 to 65 percent and lift real incomes by about 0.12 to 0.13 percent of GDP on both sides.

The European Council on Foreign Relations described the pact as one of the largest trade agreements concluded in recent years, covering goods, services, investment, digital trade, and regulatory cooperation. The International Institute for Strategic Studies said India's recent focus on trade agreements with multiple partners signals a move toward a more open economy and supports its longer term development ambitions.

Taken together, the reactions underline a shared view across media, politics, business, and policy circles that the India-EU Free Trade Agreement stands as a defining economic and strategic moment, one that aligns market access, global partnerships, and long range planning at a time when many countries are searching for dependable paths forward.

— The author works as an editor at Kashmir Observer.

# Kashmir & the Case for IGNOU

A story of files that stalled, meetings that went nowhere, and one question that refused to fade until Kashmir was heard.

Prof M. Aslam

In that watershed year of 1989, I was posted in Kashmir with a key education responsibility on my shoulders.

Back then, Indira Gandhi National Open University was still a new idea in the country. But the concept of an open university felt right straight away.

Education that came to people, instead of asking them to leave home, seemed designed with places like Kashmir in mind.

But even at that early stage, I sensed that the idea was not reaching the valley in the way it was meant to.

IGNOU had been created in November 1986 with a clear social intent. It spoke about reaching people who had stayed outside formal higher education because of distance, money, or circumstance.

It began with diplomas in management and distance education and gradually expanded into certificates, degrees, and doctoral programmes.

Teachers from regular universities stepped in as counsellors, enrolment grew quickly, and the system appeared solid in design.

But living inside Kashmir's education landscape, I could see the cracks.

Throughout the 1990s, IGNOU worked in the valley through study centres run from outside.

By 1999, nine centres were handling students from Jammu and Kashmir along with Punjab and Haryana. Official records called this an efficient setup, but students lived a different reality, with counselling held far away, slow administrative responses, and a growing sense of being enrolled without real support.

I saw students arrive with hope and leave with unanswered forms and doubts, and those encounters stayed with me.



**LOOKING BACK TO THAT OFFICE IN 1989, I SEE A LONG, WINDING JOURNEY RATHER THAN A SINGLE MOMENT OF SUCCESS.** Every stage was marked by doubt, delays, and persistent effort. I experienced the tension firsthand, held on to the question, and finally saw it take form in a regional centre that now belongs to the valley and the students who had been waiting for it.

I began raising a simple point whenever the space allowed it. Kashmir needed its own regional centre. The idea met polite rigidity and resistance. Discussions drifted toward security, logistics, and convenience.

Files moved from one table to another and returned unchanged. Even so, I stayed with the argument because the ground reality left no room for comfort. Formal reviews slowly added

weight to the case. Committees under the education ministry studied how distance education could serve Jammu and Kashmir better. Their reports spoke clearly about remote populations and the value of open learning.

Every line pointed out what students and teachers had already been saying for years, even if they had never put it in the language of policy.

The moment that changed the direction came in June 1998.

A senior IGNOU team led by the vice chancellor arrived in Srinagar. This visit felt different from the start.

Beyond ceremonies, it unfolded through long meetings and honest discussions with education officials and senior faculty from the University of Kashmir.

We spoke about terrain, weather, travel, and the daily experience of students who depended on a centre located far from their lives.

Over those days, doubt slowly turned into acceptance, and it became clear that a system managed from outside the valley could never fully serve learners here.

Support from the University of Kashmir helped push the effort forward. Its leadership offered cooperation and space, removing hurdles that had slowed earlier attempts.

Soon after, IGNOU agreed to establish a regional centre in Srinagar.

The centre began in a rented building in Rajbagh. The space was modest, but the impact it made was felt right away.

Students finally had a door to knock on nearby.

Counselling became accessible, administration took on a human face, and open learning no longer felt distant but alive and within reach.

The Srinagar regional centre gradually widened its presence across the valley and developed a robust academic network.

Today, more than forty-seven thousand students are enrolled, including both fresh admissions and re-registrations, and the centre runs close to a hundred programmes.

Academic support has also changed

dramatically, expanding from just four counsellors in the early days to over a hundred online counsellors drawn from established institutions.

The enrolment pattern reveals clear trends.

Master's programmes attract the largest number of learners, followed closely by certificates, diplomas, and postgraduate diplomas.

Courses in English and History maintain consistent interest, while undergraduate enrolment remains smaller, showing that many students turn to open education to advance or complete higher studies rather than start them.

These numbers also reveal unfinished work.

Programmes linked to employment and local development still hold wide potential. Management, computer applications, teacher education, and training for public representatives match the region's priorities well.

Open learning fits these fields naturally when digital delivery meets local academic support.

Looking back to that office in 1989, I see a long, winding journey rather than a single moment of success.

Every stage was marked by doubt, delays, and persistent effort.

I experienced the tension firsthand, held on to the question, and finally saw it take form in a regional centre that now belongs to the valley and the students who had been waiting for it.

— The author is the former Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU, New Delhi, and a longtime educator and scholar. He has worked extensively in continuing education and international development, including collaborations with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

# India's Internet User Base Crosses 950 Million in 2025

Press Trust Of India

Bengaluru: India's internet user base crossed 950 million in 2025, driven largely by rapid growth in rural connectivity, rising short-video consumption, and increasing adoption of AI, according to a report released by IAMAI on Thursday.

The report also revealed that rural India accounts for 57 per cent of India's active internet users, i.e., approximately 548 million active users.

The 'Internet in India Report 2025', jointly prepared by Internet and Mobile Association of India and KANTAR, which highlights these trends, was released at the India Digital Summit in the presence of Manjula N, Secretary to the Government, Department of Electronics, IT/BT and Science & Technology, Government of Karnataka.

According to the report, India now has 958 million Active Internet Users (AIU), marking an approximate 8 per cent year-on-year growth,

reinforcing India's position as one of the world's largest and fastest-evolving digital markets.

It also reveals that 44 per cent of users have engaged with AI-enabled features such as voice search, image-based search, chatbots, and AI filters.

"This growth of internet users continues to be led decisively by rural India, which is now home to approximately 548 million active internet users," the report said.

Rural regions now account for over 57 per cent of India's active internet users and are growing at nearly four times the pace of urban India, signalling a structural shift in where and how digital adoption is expanding, it added.

The report highlighted that artificial intelligence has reached mass adoption in India, with 44 per cent of users engaging with AI-enabled features such as voice search, image-based search, chatbots, and AI filters.

"Usage is highest among younger audiences, with 57 per cent of users aged 15-24 years and 52 per cent of those aged 25-44 years reporting AI usage

in the past year," it added.

The report further revealed that short-video consumption has emerged as a key growth driver within this expanding user base.

It noted that in 2025, 588 million (61 per cent) internet users consumed short-video content, with rural users marginally outnumbering urban users. Adoption is strongest among younger audiences, cementing their role as a key driver of digital engagement.

In the statement, citing the report, IAMAI said that quick commerce is leading a fundamental shift in how Indians shop online, with social commerce close behind, as the e-commerce ecosystem expands beyond traditional online marketplaces.

Among urban users, 230 million people (56 per cent of the urban active internet base) shopped online in the past year, with quick commerce and social commerce gaining prominence alongside established marketplaces, it added.

IAMAI also noted that multi-device usage is on the rise, with

India now having 193 million multi-device internet users, representing 20 per cent of all active internet users, up from 165 million in 2024.

"Urban adoption stands at 31 per cent, while rural India is catching up at 12 per cent. Shared device usage continues to be a key enabler of digital access: 18 per cent of internet users go online through someone else's mobile device, and nearly 80 per cent of these users are based in rural areas," the report stated.

It also revealed that despite strong momentum, 38 per cent of India's population—about 579 million people—remains non-active internet users.

"However, this proportion has been steadily declining year after year, signalling substantial headroom for the continued expansion of India's digital economy," it said.

The 2025 edition of the Internet in India report is based on a sample of nearly 100,000 consumers across more than 400 towns and over 1,000 villages, it added.

## Jammu: Four Long-distance Trains to Resume from April

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Four long-distance trains, including two Vande Bharat Express services operating between New Delhi and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi (SMVD) Katra, will resume operations in April, officials said on Thursday.

According to an official statement from the Jammu division of the Northern Railway, the cancellation of 20 trains has been extended for another two to three months. Besides, 14 trains in the Jammu division will continue to operate with short termination or short origination due to operational reasons.

The trains scheduled for restoration from April 2 include the Vande Bharat Express services running between New Delhi and SMVD Katra in both directions, the statement said.

Similarly, the service between Bhagat Ki Kothi railway station in Rajasthan and Jammu Tawi railway station will resume on April 1, with the return service beginning the following day.

The extended cancellations include long-distance services such as Garib Rath, Duronto,

Humsafar, Janmabhoomi Express and select Vande Bharat, mail and superfast trains. The revised dates these services range between late May and early June, the statement said.

Railway authorities have also extended the period of short termination and short origination for multiple trains, including Jammu Mail, Durg-MCTM Express, Kota-MCTM Weekly Express and Ahmedabad-SMVD Katra services.

Passengers have been advised to check the latest status of their trains through the official Indian Railways website or helpline numbers before travelling, the statement added.

Over 50 trains were suspended or terminated short of their destinations in August last year after several tracks and bridges were damaged due to heavy rainfall. However, the majority of the suspended trains have since been restored.

Divisional officials are periodically reviewing various sections to ensure safety and services are being restored in phased manner.

## Rajasthan Governor Interacts with Kashmiri Students

Press Trust Of India

Jaipur: A delegation of students from Kashmir, visiting Rajasthan under the 'Bharat Darshan' programme, called on Governor Haribhau Bagde at the Raj Bhavan here on Thursday.

Interacting with the delegation, Bagde said that Kashmir is the soul of the idea of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat".

India's culture reflects unity in diversity and is deeply rooted in the traditions of its states, their historical heritage and natural beauty, he said.

The governor described the history, culture and traditions of Kashmir as an integral part of India's identity and said everyone should work with the spirit of dedication towards "Maa Bharati".

The delegation, which was accompanied by officials of the 10th Battalion of the Sashastra Seema Bal, Srinagar, included students from Srinagar, Pulwama, Baramulla and Kupwara districts.

The students also shared their experiences of the tour and their impressions of Indian culture during the interaction.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

## FM Tables Economic

performance and outline short- to medium-term prospects. The first Survey was presented in 1950-51 and was separated from the Budget documents in the 1960s.

On fiscal management, the Survey said the government remains on track to achieve its fiscal consolidation roadmap and aims to meet the fiscal deficit target of 4.4 percent of GDP in FY26. Inflation in FY27 is expected to be higher than the current year but is unlikely to pose a major concern, it said.

The Survey called for caution amid an uncertain global environment but said there was no reason for pessimism about India's economic trajectory. It also noted that the rupee's valuation does not accurately reflect the country's strong economic fundamentals.

Raising concerns over social and digital challenges, the Survey called for reducing reliance on online teaching tools that expanded during the Covid-19 pandemic and promoting offline engagement. It recommended age-based access limits for social media platforms and said companies should be made responsible for enforcing age verification and age-appropriate default settings. The Survey also suggested promoting simpler devices for children, such as basic phones or education-only tablets with content filters.

On public health and nutrition, the Survey advocated restrictions on the marketing of ultra-processed foods, including a proposed ban on their advertising between 6 am and 11 pm. It also recommended introducing a nutrient-based tax on ultra-processed foods, with the highest GST rates and surcharges on products exceeding thresholds for sugar, salt, or fat.

The Survey pitched for reforms to improve working conditions for gig workers and called for a National Input Cost Reduction strategy to enhance competitiveness. It said a free trade agreement with Europe could strengthen India's manufacturing capacity, export resilience, and strategic positioning.

On trade and industrial policy, the Survey said a disciplined approach to Swadeshi was necessary in the context of export controls and technology denials by developed countries, while cautioning that not all import substitution is feasible or desirable. It proposed a transition from Swadeshi to what it termed "strategic indispensability," where Indian products become a default global choice.

The Survey also warned of the risk of financial contagion if the global artificial intelligence boom fails to deliver expected productivity gains, potentially triggering corrections in asset valuations. It added that prices of gold and silver are likely to continue rising due to sustained demand as safe-haven assets amid global uncertainty.

US tariffs' most disruptive' India must focus on building enduring national capabilities and economic sovereignty in the face of shrinking space for rules-based trading, anti-immigrant stance, weaponization of energy sources and growing use of export controls in critical sectors, the Economic Survey said.

It said the global economy has been subjected to "multiple upheavals" and the "most disruptive" amongst these disturbances was the imposition of tariffs by the US on imports from its trade partners.

In a world where economic relationships are increasingly strategic and contested, the ability to learn becomes a core element of "statecraft", it said, noting that India must build enduring national capabilities to deal with the challenging geopolitical scenario.

The assessment comes against the backdrop of growing concerns over the Trump administration's policies on trade, tariffs and immigration, China's export control measures relating to critical minerals and increasing disquiet in the West over India's energy ties with Russia.

The Survey also said that the telecom sector has seen an increase in exports, a decline in imports, with locally-produced gears under production linked incentive scheme clocking sales of Rs 1 lakh crore.

"The telecom sector has achieved notable success, with exports rising by 1.5 per cent (average annual growth rate), while imports have concurrently declined by 18.5 per cent (AAGR)," the Survey said.

The Union Budget for 2026-27 will be presented by Sitharaman on Sunday, marking her ninth consecutive Budget, a first for a woman finance minister in the country.

## Fresh Snowfall Likely

on January 30. Despite its end, cold conditions are expected to persist during the subsequent Chillai-Khurd and Chillai-Bachha phases.

The Meteorological Department said the weather is likely to remain generally dry till January 31. A fresh western disturbance is expected to affect the region from February 1, bringing light to moderate rain or snowfall at several places on February 1 and 2. Partly cloudy conditions are forecast from February 3 to 6.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority issued an advisory, warning of a medium-level avalanche risk above 2,400 metres in parts of Bandipora over the next 24 hours. Residents and travellers were advised to avoid avalanche-prone areas and check road conditions before travel.

## Survey Suggests Age

South Korea, the Survey said a combination of policy, institutional, and community-level interventions was required to address the problem.

The Economic Survey noted that digital addiction is adversely affecting academic performance, workplace productivity, and mental health among both youth and adults. It cited research linking social media addiction to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and cyberbullying stress, particularly among those aged 15 to 24.

The Survey also pointed to compulsive scrolling, social comparison, and binge-watching as factors contributing to poor sleep, reduced concentration, and heightened stress. It noted that the World Health Organisation has recognised Gaming Disorder in its International Classification of Diseases, describing it as a pattern of behaviour marked by impaired control, prioritisation of gaming over daily activities, and continuation despite negative consequences.

According to the Survey, gaming addiction has been linked to sleep disruption, aggression, social withdrawal, and depression, with adolescents particularly at risk. It also warned that online gambling and real-money gaming have been associated with financial stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

"Together, these findings underline the multifaceted nature of digital addiction and its serious impact on mental health," the Survey said.

## LG Joins Beating

girls, daredevils, commentators, cultural performers, and creators of the best tableaux.

Winners of the Vande Mataram singing competition and the UT-level online essay writing competition, organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations, were also felicitated during the ceremony.

The Beating Retreat ceremony concluded

with the performance of 'Saare Jahan Se Achha', accompanied by a fireworks display and sound-and-light presentation, followed by the National Anthem.

## Army's Northern Commander

Kishtwar districts during ongoing anti-terrorist operations in higher reaches of the region.

An Army paratrooper and a Pakistani terrorist affiliated with the Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit were killed in separate encounters in Kishtwar and Kathua districts over the past fortnight, officials said.

In a post on X, the Army said Lt Gen Sharma, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, chaired a comprehensive joint security review meeting with key stakeholders at Nagrota to assess the prevailing security dynamics.

"The forum discussed seamless synergy in operations, joint combat readiness and strengthening of the counter-terrorism grid. Modalities for heightened alertness were also formulated, leveraging all available resources in the region," the Northern Command said.

Officials said the Army remains on high alert and continues to recalibrate its operational posture to effectively respond to emerging security challenges in the Jammu region.

## India Has 22 Judges

strength of judges in the Supreme Court, high courts and district and subordinate courts in the year 2026," he said.

Meghwal also said that the number of under-trials in the country in 2023, as per the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), stood at 3,89,910.

The disposal of cases, Meghwal noted, is within the exclusive domain of the judiciary.

The pendency of cases in courts arises due to several factors, which include the complexity of the facts involved, the nature of evidence, the cooperation of stakeholders -- the Bar, investigating agencies, witnesses and litigants, as well as the availability of physical infrastructure and supporting court staff.

## Govt Jobs Alone

inaugurating the Startup Mela at the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI).

He said the government is working closely with the Centre to ensure that J&K gets an effective industrial incentives package to strengthen the industrial sector and generate employment.

The event saw the disbursement of seed funds to startups, release of capital grants to incubators, and felicitation of winners of an idea challenge.

Omar said creating a strong startup ecosystem was both a necessity and a responsibility, stressing that government recruitment alone cannot

absorb the growing number of job seekers.

"Unlike some other states, I cannot simply tell our people to leave Jammu and Kashmir for jobs elsewhere," he said, referring to recent incidents of harassment of Kashmiri shawl sellers in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

He said such incidents have pushed people to look inward for livelihood opportunities. "These developments show that our people are now increasingly hesitant to go outside the region for work," he added.

On reviving sick industrial units, the chief minister said his government would support units that are capable of restarting operations.

"If they can restart, we will help them. If not, we will assist them in setting up a new business. And if that is also not possible, the land allotted to them will be taken back and given to others so that industrial activity is not stalled," he said.

Speaking on entrepreneurship, Omar said failure should be treated as a learning experience rather than a setback, noting that many successful entrepreneurs have faced repeated failures before succeeding.

He also said entrepreneurship is not limited to manufacturing and cited service and technology-driven businesses as examples of how innovative models can create employment.

"The government alone cannot identify startups or provide fearless funding. Educational institutions and JKEDI must be empowered to play this role effectively. The seed capital support provided by EDI should be expanded so that it can function as intended," he said.

Omar said the government is working to bring visible improvements in the next two to three years and added that efforts are underway to ensure that the single-window clearance system functions efficiently to reduce red tape and save time for entrepreneurs.

Asked about demands for a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash, the chief minister said Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar had already termed the incident an accident and cautioned against politicising the issue.

"I don't think there is anything more to be said on this," Omar said.

## Questions Protests

University, questioning the basis of the agitation.

Responding to queries from reporters in Samba, Omar Abdullah asked, "Which protest? Protest for what and why?" He said similar objections were not raised when premier institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Management were established in Jammu.

The Chief Minister said Kashmir did not protest when Jammu was allotted the IIT and IIM, nor did people in Jammu demand that one of those institutions be shifted to Kashmir. Selective protests over higher education

institutions, he said, were unwarranted.

Omar Abdullah further said that during his tenure as Chief Minister, he had persuaded then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to establish Central Universities in both Jammu and Kashmir to ensure balanced regional representation in higher education.

He reiterated that decisions related to higher educational institutions should be viewed in a broader context of regional balance and long-term academic planning rather than through selective regional demands.

## 18-Yr-Old Kashmiri

DGP Deepam Seth informed the JKSA.

The DGP assured that the strongest possible action would be taken to prevent any form of communal intimidation and to protect the constitutional rights of J&K citizens in the state.

He said the investigation would proceed strictly on merit, with zero tolerance for attacks targeting traders from Kashmir.

Welcoming the police action as an "important first step," the JKSA called for accountability that is time-bound, transparent, and exemplary.

The association said acts of "communal profiling and mob violence" must not be normalised.

In a statement, Congress described the attack as part of a disturbing trend of increasing incidents against Kashmiris in recent years, particularly in BJP-ruled states. The party demanded strict action against the perpetrators and urged the government to ensure justice for the victim and his family.(KNO)

## PMAY-U: J&K

the ministry's data, 266 houses were sanctioned in 2022-23, followed by 3,677 units in 2023-24 and 1,272 units in 2024-25. On the delivery front, 6,622 houses were completed in 2022-23, 3,626 in 2023-24 and 9,127 units in 2024-25, indicating an upward trend in completion.

The ministry clarified that PMAY-U and its revamped version, PMAY-U 2.0, are demand-driven schemes without fixed targets. States and Union Territories are tasked with identifying beneficiaries, preparing proposals and implementing projects, while the Centre provides financial assistance after approvals by the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee.

Launched in 2015, PMAY-U aims to provide all-weather pucca houses with basic civic amenities to eligible urban beneficiaries, mainly from the Economically Weaker Section and Lower Income Group categories. In September 2024, the Centre launched PMAY-U 2.0 to extend housing support to one crore additional beneficiaries nationwide over the next five years.

At the national level, more than 122.28 lakh houses have been sanctioned under PMAY-U and PMAY-U 2.0 so far, with over 97 lakh units completed and delivered as of January 22, 2026, the ministry informed Parliament.



The methods used to consume news have changed over time from newspapers, to television, to the Internet on our computers to carrying the news around with us 24/7 on smartphones in our pockets. Kashmir Observer, with 29 years of experience in news gathering is now available 24x7 on all digital platforms like laptops, cell phones or via Bluetooth on your smart TV's across the world. Kashmir Observer is a one stop information bank for you. Watch live debates, talk shows and documentaries on critical issues facing Kashmir on KO youtube channel.

OUR SPECIAL PROGRAMMES

THE OTHER SIDE   **INKISHAF**   VOX POP   UNRAVEL KASHMIR

VISIT  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/kobserver>



# Kashmir Hospitality Sector Rebounds After Slump

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The first blanket of snow this winter not just covered Kashmir's peaks but has dusted off months of anxiety for those whose livelihoods depend on the rhythm of arriving footsteps and clinking tea-cups.

From Dal Lake to the slopes of Gulmarg, and Pahalgam to Sonamarg, the Valley's tourism heartbeat is gaining momentum once again.

Qamar Sajad, the Director of Tourism Kashmir told KNO that the turnaround of visitors reflects not just nature's grace but the teamwork behind the industry's revival.

"We are witnessing a steady rise in tourist footfall, and that is because everyone, from shikara operators to hoteliers and from the government to ground-level workers, has played their part," he said. "This is not just about snowfall, but about the spirit of people who have worked tirelessly to make Kashmir shine. The government and stakeholders together have made tourism breathe again."

On Dal Lake, the reflection of houseboats shines again as Manzoor Pakhtoon, Chairman of the Houseboat Owners Association Kashmir, said they are getting back on track.

"We are getting queries again," said Pakhtoon with a smile. "After the recent snowfall and New Year rush, tourists have started showing interest. We expect a good summer season ahead if this continues."

Across the Valley, the optimism echoes.

Mushtaq Chaya, Chairman of the J&K Hoteliers Club, said the



## Khalid Al Ameri Captures Kashmir's Snowy Serenity

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The UAE-based social media influencer Khalid Al Ameri is drawing global attention with his posts and visit to and from Kashmir.

According to the details available with KNO, Al Ameri is highlighting the Valley's snowy landscapes as part of a deeper, mindful experience.

Al Ameri describes his visit to Kashmir as a journey of mindfulness, cultural immersion and calm, sharing reflections that have earned millions of views and sparked engagement worldwide.



The 42-year-old Emirati content creator, a Stanford graduate with over 18 million followers, spent several days exploring the Valley, documenting experiences that went beyond sightseeing and reshaped his under-

standing of travel.

In a video shared on social media, Al Ameri is seen wearing a traditional Kashmiri pheran while riding a shikara on Dal Lake, calling it "a quiet tribute to local life rather than just a tourist spectacle."

He also shared footage of a snow bath in Gulmarg, saying such quiet moments helped him reflect on pace, clarity and intention, rather than just capturing pictures.

"There is a calm in Kashmir that goes beyond its landscapes. It is in the stillness, the unhurried pace and the space it creates to think clearly," he wrote.

hospitality sector is regaining its lost confidence.

"Over 70 per cent of hotels in Gulmarg and nearly 75 per cent

in Sonamarg are booked. The snowfall has built trust again.

People are coming back in numbers," Chaya said. "Visitors are focusing on Gulmarg, enjoying skiing and the snow rides. But we hope the government opens more destinations soon, so the benefits spread evenly."

Gulmarg Abuzz with Winter Cheer

Bilal Ahmad, who runs a hotel, said the rush has surpassed expectations. "We have been full for two weeks now. Guests are waking up to the sight of snow-covered pine trees and calling it a dream. Many are extending their stays, and some do not want to leave at all."

In Pahalgam, too, winter has found its admirers.

Adil Shah, who manages a resort, said tourists are rediscovering the calm of the snow-fed Lidder valley. "January is usually quiet for us, but this time, the snowfall changed everything. Families and people are slowly coming back. For us, that is the sound of life returning."

Sonamarg's Air Too Welcomes Winter Visitors

Nissar Ahmad, a hotel owner, said, "We used to wait for summer to see numbers. But now, our rooms are 70 per cent booked, and tourists are thrilled by the white landscape. They are calling it their best winter trip ever."

He said the Sonamarg Tunnel has become a point of attraction for visitors as they are coming in good numbers to see it.

The people of Kashmir are once again welcoming strangers as friends by offering warmth, kahwa and stories. "When the snow returns, hope returns with it," said an elderly shikara riding man with a smile.

## BJP Denounces Attack on Kashmiri Vendor in Uttarakhand

**SRINAGAR:** BJP leader Sajid Yousuf Shah on Thursday condemned the attack on a Kashmiri shawl vendor in Uttarakhand.

"Strongly condemn the attack on Tabish Ahmad, an 18-year-old Kashmiri shawl vendor who was brutally assaulted by a mob while selling shawls with his family in Vikas Nagar, #Uttarakhand," Shah, a spokesman of the BJP, said in a post on X.

He said Kashmiris are as patriotic as other citizens of the country.

"Such acts of hatred are unacceptable, and strict action must be taken against the culprits to ensure this is not repeated. Requesting immediate intervention by CM @pushkardhami Ji, Governor @LTGenGurmit Ji & @uttarakhand-cops," he added. (Observer News Service)

## Kakapora Residents Decry deteriorated Roads

**PULWAMA:** Residents of Kakapora town in south Kashmir's Pulwama district have expressed strong resentment over severe waterlogging and the dilapidated condition of roads, particularly at Kakapora Main Chowk, which has become a major source of inconvenience for commuters, patients and students.

Locals told KNO that even a light snowfall of barely one inch has exposed the poor drainage system in the area, with rain and melted snow accumulating on roads and turning the main chowk into a virtual pool of water.

The situation, they said, worsens during minor spells of rain or snowfall, making movement extremely difficult.

"This is shocking and unfortunate. Just one inch of snow and the entire main chowk is submerged in water. It shows how bad the drainage system is," said Abdul Rashid, a local shopkeeper. "Customers avoid coming here, vehicles get stuck, and pedestrians are forced to walk through dirty water."

Residents said the road surface has deteriorated badly, with potholes filled with stagnant water, posing a serious risk to pedestrians and two-wheeler riders.

They claimed that the problem has persisted for years despite repeated representations to the concerned authorities.

Students and patients are among the worst sufferers, locals said. "Children going to school have to wade through water every morning. Their uniforms and shoes get soaked, and there is always a risk of slipping," said Farooq Ahmad, a resident of the area. "What will happen during heavy rains or snowfall if this is the condition now?"

Patients visiting nearby health facilities also face immense hardship. "Ambulances and private vehicles find it difficult to pass through the chowk. Elderly patients and pregnant women suffer the most," said Gulam Nabi, another local.

Residents have urged the District Administration Pulwama and the concerned departments to take immediate steps to address the issue by repairing the damaged road, desilting drains, and ensuring proper water outflow. (Observer News Service)

## CM Omar Lays Foundation Stone of 10 MVA Receiving Station



Observer News Service

**SAMBA:** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday visited Samba district, laying foundation stone for 10 MVA Receiving Station at Harminder and also inaugurated a bus stand at Thandi Khui, Vijaypur.

At Harminder Samba, after inaugurating the receiving station, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, while interacting with the locals, said that the foundation stone for the 10 MVA receiving station at Harminder was laid with the sole objective of enhancing power availability and improving voltage stability across Samba, particularly this area. He added that once commissioned, the receiving station is expected to reduce load stress on existing infrastructure and ensure a more reliable and uninterrupted electricity supply for households, farmers, commercial establishments and industrial units.

Terming farmers as the backbone of J&K's economy, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said like soldiers at borders who protect us from adversaries, farmers protect us from hunger. He added that both soldiers and farmers need support and protection, and the Govern-

ment is committed to their welfare and wellbeing.

While listening to various issues and demands of locals on the spot, the Chief Minister said that Government is committed to strengthen the basic facilities in every nook and corner of Jammu and Kashmir, adding that this initiative of establishing receiving station at Harminder, reflects the government's sustained focus on upgrading power infrastructure to meet growing demand and support economic activity of farmers in the area. He assured the locals that the road connectivity to Harminder will be improved and gave on-spot directions to Deputy Commissioner Samba for formulating a proposal on the same.

Later, the Chief Minister also inaugurated the newly constructed modern bus stand at Thandi Khui, Vijaypur, developed to provide safe, convenient, and commuter-friendly transport facilities.

Interacting with the officers on the occasion, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that the facility should be dedicated for the public use at the earliest and the other infrastructure developed with this Bus Stand should be properly utilised.

## CS Reviews Progress of Digital Connectivity Projects

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Thursday chaired the 10th State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting to review the status of key digital infrastructure initiatives, including 4G Saturation Project, Amended Bharat-Net Programme (ABP), 5G Readiness, Call Before You

of all sanctioned sites. While reviewing the 4G Saturation Project, the Chief Secretary was informed that work orders have been issued for 775 mobile tower sites, aimed at providing 4G mobile connectivity to uncovered and remote villages, particularly in border, hilly and far-flung areas. The project is being implemented under the Univer-



Dig (CBuD) and other allied telecom projects being implemented across J&K.

The meeting, convened by the Information Technology Department was attended by ACS, PWD; Commissioner Secretary, Forests; DDG, LSA, J&K; Secretary, Information; Secretary, RDD; Representatives from BSNL and other concerned officers from different departments here.

Deputy Commissioners attended through video conferencing from their respective offices.

During this meeting a detailed presentation was made by the Secretary, IT, Dr Piyush Singla on the incremental progress achieved since the last SBC meeting held in October. The Chief Secretary took note of the steady advancement across multiple verticals and emphasized the need for accelerating execution timelines to ensure timely completion

sal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) of the Government of India, with BSNL as the executing agency.

The Secretary further apprised that land has already been allotted at all identified locations, and power supply has been extended to most sites with the support of the Power Development Department (PDD). The Chief Secretary impressed upon the implementing agencies to further pace up installation and commissioning works, particularly for the 269 sites targeted for completion by March 31, 2026, and to fast-track approvals for the remaining locations.

The meeting also reviewed the status of border village saturation, covering 1,421 border villages, and stressed the importance of ensuring seamless connectivity in strategically important areas to bridge the digital divide and enhance service delivery.

## Northern Railway GM Inspects Srinagar-Katra Section

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** General Manager of Northern Railway Ashok Kumar Verma on Thursday conducted an extensive inspection of the Srinagar-Katra rail section in Jammu and Kashmir, an official said.

The inspection comes amid challenging weather conditions due to recent snowfall and sub-zero temperatures, especially in the Kashmir valley, the official said.

During the visit, the general manager inspected several key stations, including Srinagar, and meticulously reviewed the passenger amenities available at these stations to ensure that travellers are comfortable despite the harsh winter, the official said.

He said Verma paid special attention to the ongoing maintenance and con-

struction work on various tunnels and bridges. To ensure the highest safety standards, he personally inspected critical track elements, including points, switches and turnouts, ensuring they remain operational during the freezing conditions, the official said.

He said the general manager interacted with the ground staff and track maintainers, and sought their direct feedback regarding the challenges they face in maintaining the tracks during winter.

"The safety and well-being of our ground staff, who work tirelessly in sub-zero temperatures, is paramount," Verma said. He instructed the accompanying officials to ensure that all necessary winter equipment and safety gear are provided to the ground staff immediately.

## 8 Patients Airlifted from Snow-Covered Tangdhar

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Following recent heavy snowfall that shuttered key border roads in Kupwara district, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shrikant Suse on Thursday said that eight people have been airlifted to and from Tangdhar, with operations resuming after a weather-induced pause.

Shrikant, while briefing the media, said the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is working tirelessly to clear snow-covered stretches, though a few remain amid avalanche

warnings and slides.

"We have repeatedly urged patients from these areas to respond promptly," the DC said, as reported by KNO.

He said the heli services restarted today, and so far, eight individuals have been evacuated, including three critical patients now receiving treatment at Srinagar hospitals.

The DC said the snow clearance in Keran and Machil sectors is nearly complete, with Keran road fully open for traffic. Operations continue in Tangdhar.

## Man killed in Pattan Road Accident

**BARAMULLA:** A man was killed and another injured in a road accident in Pattan area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Thursday, officials said.

An official told KNO that a collision took place between a truck and a Maruti Eeco at Hyderbeigh Pattan, resulting in the death of one person and injuries to another.

He said one of the victims, identified as Rayees Ahmad Najar, son of Ghulam Nabi Najar, a resident of Hygam, succumbed to his injuries at the hospital.

Another, Javid Ahmad Najar, sustained serious injuries in the mishap and was shifted to JVC Srinagar for specialized treatment.

Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance of the incident. (Observer News Service)

## ACB Books Former MD, Serving Deputy MD of SICOP over Illegal Appointment

**JAMMU:** The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Jammu has registered a case against R.K. Razdan, former Managing Director of SICOP Jammu (now retired), Kunal Choudhary, currently Deputy General Manager of SICOP, and others over allegations of illegal appointment, regularisation, and promotion.

According to a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, the case, FIR No. 01/2026, was registered under Section 5(1)(d) read with Section 5(2) of the J&K Prevention of Corruption Act, 2006, and Section 120-B of the RPC, at P/S ACB Jammu.

"Preliminary verification revealed that Razdan, during his tenure as MD, allegedly engaged Choudhary as a Technical Assistant on a temporary basis for six months without issuing an advertisement or inviting applications from eligible candidates," it said.

The appointment, it said, was reportedly made at Razdan's discretion. "Further findings indicated that Choudhary was regularised after six months without fulfilling eligibility criteria for obtaining government sanction for regularisation," it added.

He was subsequently promoted to the post of Manager without following proper procedure, including advertisement or consideration of seniority of other eligible candidates.

ACB officials said that Razdan, in alleged criminal conspiracy with others, including Choudhary, abused his official position to confer undue benefits in terms of salary, allowances, and seniority. Investigation into the matter is ongoing, the ACB said. (Observer News Service)

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER(R&B) DIVISION GANDERBAL**

ADDRESS: MINI SECRETARIAT GANDERBAL TEL NO.0194-2416058  
No.: 11428-33 | Dated:- 29-01-2026

**Subject:-** Construction of Library Room, Computer Room & Art & Craft Room at Govt High School Anderwan Kangan.  
**Reference:-** This Office NIT No.92 of 2025-26 issued under endorsement No. 11243-48 Dated:24-01-2026.

**EXTENSION NOTICE**

The Bid submission end date for the subject work floated for tenders vide this office NIT No. referred to above which were scheduled to be on 30-01-2026 upto 04:00 PM is hereby extended and the details were of are given as under:-

1	Date of issue of Tender	24-01-2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	24-01-2026 from 05:30 PM
3	Bid submission start date	24-01-2026 from 05:30 PM
4	Bid submission End date	03-02-2026 upto 04:00 PM
5	Date & time of opening	04-02-2026 at 11.00 AM in the office Of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderbal.

The other terms and conditions of the aforesaid NIT shall remain unaltered.

Sd /-  
Executive Engineer  
(R&B)Division Ganderbal

DIPK-10461-25  
DT: 29/01/2026

GOVT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

**OFFICE OF THE ZONAL EDUCATION OFFICER GANDERBAL**

Tel. No. / Fax - 0194-2416128  
Block -1, 2 nd Floor Qadri Complex Beehama

**Subject:-** Dismantling of unsafe block containing Kitchen Shed and Washrooms at PS Naqashband Mohalla Gutlibagh - auction thereof.  
**Reference:-** CEOG/Plg/2025-26/1547-50, Dated:- 8/12/2025.

**AUCTION NOTICE**

Due to poor response to the Auction notice published in Print Media (Kashmir Thunder,Alsa News,Veyth) on 15/01/2026 for general public, that an unsafe block containing Kitchen Shed and Washrooms at MS Naqashband Mohalla Gutlibagh District Ganderbal will be auctioned by the Auction committee and the date has been extended till 5 Feb 2026 and the auction will be held on 9/2/2026 at 11:00 am at PS Naqashband Mohalla Gutlibagh. Terms and condition of the auction notice will remain same.

DIPK-10449-25  
DT: 29/01/2026

Zonal Education Officer  
Ganderbal

## YSS-JKSC Football, Cricket Leagues Set for Jammu

Press Trust of India

**JAMMU:** Jammu will host the YSS-JKSC Football and Cricket Premier Leagues in a bid to strengthen grassroots sports, with matches scheduled to begin early next month, an official said on Thursday.

An initiative of the Department of Youth Services and Sports (YSS) in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council (JKSC), the leagues aims to revive competitive sports and provide a platform for local talent, the official said.

The tournament will be held at the Synthetic Turf Football Ground, Parade, and the M A Stadium.

"The YSS-JKSC Cricket and Football Premier Leagues 2025-26 are an initiative to significantly contribute towards the



revival of Jammu's professional cricket and football tournaments," a J&K Sports Council spokesperson said.

The JKSC spokesperson said that organising committees and sub-committees, comprising

former national and international players, referees, umpires, coaches, club owners, and JKSC officials, had been constituted to ensure matches are conducted professionally.

Running parallel to the foot-

ball tournament, the cricket league will be held at the historic M A Stadium, signalling the return of the game to one of Jammu's most cherished sporting venues.

"The competition will consist of a total of 41 matches in football and 39 games in cricket, with the format and match composition to be framed after the finalisation of the participating teams," the spokesperson said.

Emphasising the focus on local talent, the spokesperson said that only permanent residents of the Jammu Division would be eligible to participate in the tournaments.

"However, in cricket, there will be a cap of five out-stationed players per team. The objective is to give players from the Jammu Division ample opportunities to participate in a competi-

tion," he said.

"To give the event prominence, grand opening and closing ceremonies will be arranged. Matches will also be conducted under floodlights to attract maximum sports enthusiasts. The matches will be telecast live on social media platforms," he said.

To ensure high professional standards, AIFF-accredited referees and BCCI-certified umpires would officiate the matches, the spokesperson said.

"It is anticipated that large audiences will return to the stands at the two stadiums to witness the matches," the spokesperson said.

"This platform will provide aspiring sportspersons in Jammu the opportunity to exhibit their talent and achieve podium finishes at the national and international levels."

## Salah Scores First Liverpool Goal Since November

**LIVERPOOL:** Mohamed Salah continued his rehabilitation at Liverpool by scoring for the team for the first time since the start of November in a 6-0 thrashing of Qarabag in the Champions League on Wednesday.

The Egypt winger curled home a shot at a free kick in the 50th minute to put Liverpool 3-0 up at Anfield, helping the English club finish in third place in the 36-team standings and qualifying directly to the round of 16.

Salah's future at Liverpool, where he has starred since 2017, was plunged into doubt when he said in early December that he'd been "thrown under the bus" after being dropped for the third game in succession by manager Arne Slot.

He went to the Africa Cup of Nations with uncertainty surrounding his position at Liverpool but has started three straight games since his return from the tournament in Morocco, and now has a first goal since scoring against Aston Villa on Nov. 1.

The victory ensured Liverpool avoided needing to go through the playoffs — just like last season when Arne Slot's team did even better, finishing top of the standings, only to get drawn against Paris Saint-Germain in the round of 16. Liverpool lost in a penalty shootout and PSG went on to win the title for the first time.

"It's great to be in the top eight again," said Alexis Mac Allister, who scored twice for Liverpool against Qarabag, "but then I think back to last season when we finished top and then got Paris in the next round.

"It's going to be very difficult, but we've done well to get there and it was a good night for us." (AP)

## Int'l Series Returns to India in Bengaluru

**NEW DELHI:** The International Series will return to India for the second time when the LIV Golf-backed Asian Tour event is held at the Prestige Golfshire Club in Bengaluru from October 8-11 as part of its 2026 global schedule announced on Thursday.

The Bengaluru leg, the fifth stop of the season, follows the tournament's successful India debut in 2025. It was in 2025 that American Bryson DeChambeau captured global attention by bringing a whole new audience out to watch golf royalty in action.

The edition was a spectacular success, drawing large crowds and showcasing world-class golf on Indian soil with top LIV Golf players like Joaquin Niemann, Paul Casey, Carlos Ortiz, Abraham Ancer, Harold Varner III, local hero Anirban Lahiri, along with DeChambeau and a host of other stars.

Announcing the return, Rahul Singh, head of the Series, stated in a release, "This year's edition will once again offer a unique opportunity for golf fans across the subcontinent to witness world-class golf and celebrate the prominent position India now holds on the global golfing stage."

"The International Series has become one of the most scalable and genuinely global pathways in men's golf, and the 2026 schedule reflects just how far the Series has evolved," he added.

The tournament is part of a nine-event global calendar that tees off with International Series Japan at Caledonian Golf Club from April 2-5. (PTI)

## Pak Team to Leave for Colombo Feb 2, Boycott Unlikely



Press Trust of India

**LAHORE:** The Pakistan Cricket Board has already scheduled its T20 World Cup squad to depart for Colombo early on February 2, virtually ruling out any possibility of boycotting either the tournament or the marquee clash against India on February 15, sources close to the board said on Thursday.

"The PCB has already made travel arrangements for the World Cup squad to leave early morning on February 2 for Colombo," he said.

The source added that PCB had shown its full support to Bangladesh Cricket Board over their "security concerns" in playing in India and could not do anything further without damaging its own

position within the ICC.

The BCCI, PCB and ICC had also entered into a tripartite agreement under which all India-Pakistan matches in ICC events until 2027 will be played at neutral venues.

"Keep in mind Pakistan's entire World Cup schedule is in Sri Lanka, including the final if they qualify. So on what grounds can they boycott the tournament or the match against India?" he asked.

It is expected that the PCB would confirm their participation on Friday.

There has been speculation in sections of the media that Pakistan could pull out of the tournament or refuse to play India.

But an insider dismissed such reports as rumours.

## Aquatics, Rowing, Cycling Set for Increased Attention

Poonam Mehra

**NEW DELHI:** In the corridors of power where India's 2036 Olympic bid is taking shape, infrastructure is hardly a concern given "how prepared" contender city Ahmedabad already seems to be.

But what's keeping the officialdom occupied is the brainstorming over some foundational changes in India's medal strategy to ensure that the country finds its footing in disciplines like aquatics and cycling. Both these events offer over a 100 Olympic medals combined but none so far for India.

"Would it look nice if at our home Olympics, our athletes end up 71st in the overall tally with six medals, like it happened in Paris (2024)? We have to address that most urgently.

"Host countries scale up their Olympic performances to ensure that they don't feel left out of their own party," a Sports Ministry source, privy to the developments with regards to the high-profile bid, told PTI.

This is exactly what China did in the 2008 Beijing Games, drastically improving its performance in disciplines that it didn't do well previously, such as boxing, canoe-

### 2036 OLYMPIC BID



ing and archery, for a record tally of 100 medals.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has kept the host selection process on hold to reassess its criteria after taking feedback from member nations.

"That process will restart in another six months," the source said.

"India is at an inflection point in its sporting journey. And the challenge is to make sure that we rise and not fall from here. It's not infrastructure that is a concern, that's the easiest box to tick and perhaps the most visible, that's why the obsession with it.

"The bigger concern is our standing as a sporting nation," he pointed out.

And that's why the increased focus going forward would be on schools where the potential stars of 2036 are currently scattered across the length and breadth of the country.

The disciplines in which India

does not have much of a standing but which yield a high medal count are the ones where talent identification programme would turn its aggressive attention. So, aquatics, rowing, and cycling are set to figure high on the priority list.

Aquatics, which includes swimming, diving, water polo, artistic swimming, and open water swimming, will offer 55 of the more than 350 overall medals that will be up for grabs across 36 disciplines in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. But India is not expected to get any. Ditto for rowing, which has 45 medals at stake in Los Angeles across 15 events, and cycling, where 22 events will throw up 66 medals.

"The challenge is to shift our focus from events that we have mastered to a great extent to events, where the medal yield is high but we are nowhere in the picture," said another official closely linked to the country's athlete development programme.

"It does not mean that we ignore something like boxing or wrestling or shooting. But the plan is to steer potential performers towards these high medal-yielding disciplines so that our tally can hit the top-10 mark. We cannot afford to ignore them." (PTI)

MIRAE ASSET Sharekhan

# Achieve financial freedom

Set up Systematic Investment Plans in Exchange Traded Funds (Shariah Based ETF)



Contact: M I Securities - 9906518342 / 9906684475

1, 10 Samad Complex, Ma Link Road, Srinagar, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, Srinagar - 190001