

CM urges early completion of major hydropower projects in J&K

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday chaired a review meeting of the Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Limited (JKSPDC) here at Civil Secretariat to assess the progress made in execution of new hydro- electric projects and the expected enhancement in power generation from these projects.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary Power Development Department (PDD) Rajesh H Prasad, Principal Secretary Finance Santosh D Vaidya, Managing Director JKSPDC Pankaj Magotra and other senior officials.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister emphasized the need for timely execution of these projects to ensure their public utility and stressed the importance of tackling challenges such as contractual issues,time and financial over runs in case of projects under construction and operation and maintenance issues of commissioned projects.

The roadmap for the next five years was presented show-



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chairing meeting of JKSPDC at Civil Secretariat, Jammu.

ing substantial capacity addition to meet growing energy demands which would gradually reduce reliance on power imports, and boost the state's energy self-sufficiency. Upcoming projects, Detailed Project Report (DPR) formulation and appraisal were also discussed and JKSPDC was asked to focus on strategic project planning for development of hydropower assets on Chenab, Jhelum, Ravi and Indus rivers.

Highlighting the government's commitment to sustainable energy, the Chief Minister urged officials to study revival plans for stalled projects and execute them efficiently.

He called for a proactive approach to address the challenges faced by JKSPDC and stressed that enhancing J&K's hydropower capacity is essential for meeting our energy

demand.

"The timely execution of hydropower projects is essential to unlocking Jammu and Kashmir's potential as a power-surplus state. I urge all stakeholders to address challenges proactively and expedite ongoing works to serve the public interest," the Chief Minister said. Earlier, Principal Secretary PDD provided a comprehensive update on the status of hydroelectric power development in Jammu and Kashmir.

Of the region's estimated 18,000 MW hydropower potential, 15,000 MW has already been identified, making it a key driver for future energy initiatives.

A detailed review of commissioned projects, including the Baglihar Hydroelectric Power Project (Stages I & II) on the

Chenab River, Upper Sindh Hydroelectric Project (Stages I & II) on the Sind River, Lower Jhelum Hydroelectric Project in Baramulla was carried out

during the meeting. The meeting also deliberated on projects under construction, including the New Ganderbal Hydroelectric Project (93 MW) on the Sind River; the Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Project (1,000 MW) under the Chenab River cascade, and the Ratle Hydroelectric Project (850 MW), which has been revived through a joint venture between NHPC and JKSPDC.

Discussions highlighted the importance of expediting work on these projects to ensure these become operational at the earliest.



IT Department intensifies efforts against fraudulent refund claims

‘Taxes are what we pay for civilized society’



Principal Commissioner IT, J&K and Ladakh, Vikram Sahay speaking in a meeting.

Vikram Sahay, Principal Commissioner of Income Tax, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

During the event, Vikram Sahay emphasized the crucial role of teachers and educators in society.

He stated, "Teachers and educators are essential pillars of society, inspiring students to achieve their full potential. Accurate income tax filing demonstrates commitment to integrity and contributes to national development."

He also warned of the consequences of claiming wrongful deductions to obtain refunds.

Shantamanu highlighted the importance of increasing awareness of fiscal citizenship.

He remarked, "There is a need for providing comprehensive income tax training for our educators. By equipping them with the necessary knowledge and resources, we empower them to fulfill their tax obligations responsibly and transfer this knowledge to students, thereby contributing to national development and public services."

The participants in the event were reminded of their responsibility to file accurate Income Tax

Returns (ITRs), ensuring all income sources, deductions, and exemptions are correctly reported. Claims must be supported by authentic documentation such as valid rent receipts, genuine investment proofs, and legitimate medical insurance premiums. Employees must also verify their Form 16 and Form 26AS to avoid discrepancies in tax deductions. Honest tax filing is presented as a vital duty for nation-building, fostering a transparent and equitable tax system.

The Income Tax Department has adopted a proactive approach to curbing fraudulent claims. Advanced data mining tools are used to identify suspicious returns, touts, and collusive practices. High refund cases as being scrutinized and serious cases are being referred for further action against such person.

The department has also initiated criminal proceedings, with FIRs filed against individuals and

professionals in the past found involved in making bogus claims, sending a strong message about zero tolerance for tax fraud.

Taxpayers were also reminded of opportunities to rectify errors through updated or revised returns, helping them avoid additional penalties while ensuring compliance. The department's focus remained on fostering a cooperative approach and providing avenues for correction.

On a national level, the Income Tax Department has launched a widespread campaign to flag suspicious returns and scrutinize large refund claims. Taxpayers across India are urged to file accurate returns and seek professional assistance to avoid complications. By fostering compliance, the department seeks to reinforce a culture of fiscal responsibility and integrity, ensuring honest taxpayers play their part in strengthening the nation's economic foundation.

India's first underwater deep sea human mission this year: Dr Jitendra



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh chairing the meeting of the Steering Committee on Deep Ocean Mission (DOM) at Prithvi Bhawan, New Delhi on Thursday.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: In a significant step toward advancing India's scientific capabilities and bolstering the blue economy, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh, announced that the country is set to launch its first human underwater submersible (Deep-Sea Manned Vehicle) this year.

Speaking at the second meeting of the Mission Steering Committee on the "Deep Ocean Mission", Dr. Jitendra emphasized the groundbreaking nature of this initiative, which positions India among a select group of six nations with the technological prowess to undertake such an ambitious endeavour.

The Minister shared that the initial submersible will operate at a depth of up to 500 meters, with a subsequent goal of reaching a staggering depth of 6,000 meters by next year.

This achievement will align with the timelines of India's other landmark missions, including the Gaganyaan space mission, marking a "pleasant coincidence" in the nation's journey toward scientific excel-

lence.

Dr. Jitendra underscored its potential to unlock vast resources, including critical minerals, rare metals, and undiscovered marine biodiversity; all of which are crucial for the country's economic growth and environmental sustainability.

"Through this mission, we are not just exploring the depths of our oceans but also building a robust blue economy that will drive India's future," Dr. Jitendra said.

The Minister emphasized that the entire initiative is based on indigenous technology, developed and manufactured entirely in India, showcasing the nation's self-reliance in cutting-edge science.

The mission also aims to enhance understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, contributing to sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation. By tapping into these underwater treasures, India is poised to secure long-term benefits for its economy, scientific community, and environmental resilience.

The Deep Ocean Mission faced delays due to the pandemic, but Dr. Jitendra expressed optimism about the progress made, calling it a testament to India's determination and innovative spirit.

He also highlighted the unique dual achievements of the coming years, with one Indian traveling to space and another venturing into the depths of the ocean, signifying the country's unparalleled advancements in both space and marine exploration.

As India prepares to launch its first human deep-sea submersible, the mission is a beacon of hope for sustainable development and scientific discovery, paving the way for a future where the ocean's potential is harnessed responsibly and effectively.

The meeting saw the participation of distinguished leaders such as Pankaj Chaudhary, Minister of State for Finance; Sanjay Seth, Minister of State for Defence; Suman K Bery, Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog; Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India; Dr. M Ravichandran, Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, along with senior officials from various Ministries.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: In a major relief to bereaved families, J&K Bank facilitated the swift settlement of insurance claims under its MetLoan & Life Suraksha (MLLS) product for deceased borrowers in its Mumbai Zone. Insurance claims amounting to Rs 80 lakhs were paid to five families, alleviating their financial burden during difficult times.

The Bank's General Manager & Divisional Head (ROI) Rajesh Gupta and Zonal Head (Mumbai) Irfan Anjum, alongside Associate Director & Head (PNB MetLife) Irfan Ali Zargar displayed the symbolic cheque of Rs 80 lakhs in the presence of AGM Hayat Mohammad Rather, Credit Head (Mumbai) Zahoor Ahmad Qanoongu and other



J&K Bank's GM & Divisional Head (ROI) Rajesh Gupta and Zonal Head (Mumbai) Irfan Anjum, alongside Associate Director & Head (PNB MetLife) Irfan Ali Zargar displaying symbolic cheque in presence of AGM Hayat Mohammad Rather, Credit Head (Mumbai) Zahoor Ahmad Qanoongu.

senior officials at the Bank's Mumbai Zonal Office.

The event was also attended by Branch Heads, Advances Managers, Zonal Insurance Coordinator (Mumbai) Rajinder Kumar Razdan and senior representatives from PNB MetLife, including Regional Manager Peer Jeelani and Senior Territory Manager Taha bin Nazir.

Expressing gratitude for quick redressal, the claimants appreciated the Bank and its insurance partner PNB MetLife for their timely support. "We are thankful to the Bank for covering these loans under insurance and facilitating the swift settlement of claims. PNB MetLife's prompt action has relieved us from a significant financial burden," they said.

Speaking on the occasion, Divisional Head (ROI) Rajesh Gupta emphasized the importance of insuring loans to secure the financial future of families.

"We along with our partners remain committed to safeguard the interests of our customers through timely and customer-centric products and services. And

by insuring loans with products like MLLS, we are able to reduce the financial burden on borrowers and their families during challenging times," he said.

Zonal Head (Mumbai) Irfan Anjum said, "With a single premium option and bank funding available, insuring loans goes a long way in reducing the financial burden on families during such difficult times."

Associate Director & Head (PNB MetLife) Irfan Ali Zargar also urged customers to consider loan insurance for their peace of mind. "While we cannot compensate for the emotional loss, promoting good insurance products can provide much-needed financial support to bereaved families, relieving them from the burden of liabilities in unforeseen circumstances," he said.

Urgent repair needed for non-functional street lights-a growing safety concern

For Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), the installation of street lights has been a key development project under a tripartite agreement between the Power Development Department (PDD), Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), and the Housing & Urban Development Department. The agreement outlines a two-phase approach to ensure proper lighting across all 75 wards, with PDD providing the required infrastructure such as poles and wiring, EESL supplying the street lights of various wattages, and JMC overseeing the installation while handling payments for maintenance. While significant progress has been made-over 61,000 street lights were installed in Phase-I and more than 31,000 are already up in Phase-II-issues with non-functional street lights continue to persist. Despite the installation efforts, many areas still face problems with street lights not working as intended, raising concerns about the effectiveness of the project and the reliability of its maintenance plan. Despite being a vital part of the urban landscape, the JMC-installed street lights have failed to deliver their intended function in many parts of the city. The issue has persisted for several days, with no immediate solution in sight, causing increasing frustration among locals.



Sudhir Nand, a concerned resident, emphasizes how the lack of proper lighting has made it hazardous for pedestrians. "The streets are almost pitch-dark after sunset," he said, adding, "Walking around in such conditions is not just uncomfortable-it's dangerous. People are worried about their safety, especially when they have to navigate poorly lit areas."



Raj Kumar, another local resident, has noticed a similar impact. "The lights have been non-functional for several days now. It's becoming increasingly difficult for people to walk around or even drive safely in the evening hours. The darkness is especially problematic for the elderly and children who are most at risk," he explained.



Tajab Hussain, an auto driver, stressed that the absence of street lights has significantly reduced visibility, leading to heightened risk on the roads. "When driving at night, I rely on the street lights to ensure I can see clearly and avoid obstacles. With them out of order, there is almost zero visibility in some areas. This increases the likelihood of accidents and makes the roads unsafe for everyone-drivers, passengers, and pedestrians alike."



Balwant Singh, another local resident, said the safety hazards aren't limited to vehicular traffic. The lack of lighting has also made these areas more vulnerable to potential criminal activity, with some locals fearing that the darkness could provide cover for miscreants. "The absence of proper lighting has made certain areas feel unsafe, especially at night. It's a breeding ground for unwanted activities, which raises concerns for everyone in the community," he added.



Ramesh Chander Bali, President of the Janipur Market Association, in response to these growing concerns, has appealed to the Jammu Municipal Corporation. "It is frustrating to see that despite the street lights working during the day, they fail to turn on at night when they are needed the most. This is exacerbating the already problematic situation, and citizens are growing increasingly worried", he said. The malfunctioning street lights not only represent a lapse in basic public service but also signal a more pressing issue of poor maintenance and accountability. As darkness continues to encroach on local streets, the urgency for repair and maintenance of the street lights cannot be overstated. This is not just an inconvenience-it's a matter of public safety, and the community demands swift and decisive action from the authorities.