

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! CM inaugurates, lays...

Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javid Ahmed Dar and Satish Sharma. Advisor to the CM Nasir Aslam Wani, DDC Chairman Mahan Singh, MLAs Dr Bharat Bhushan (Kathua), Satish Sharma (Billawar), Dr Rameshwar Singh (Bani), Darshan Kumar (Basohli) and Vijay Kumar (Hiranagar).

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to CM Dheeraj Gupta, Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma, senior officers and heads of departments were also present.

Deputy Commissioner Kathua presented a brief district profile and progress under various schemes, following which the Chief Minister reviewed sector-wise physical and financial performance and directed departments to ensure time-bound execution with emphasis on quality and visible outcomes on the ground.

Reviewing PMGSY and NABARD-funded roads, the Chief Minister called for identification of bottlenecks and stressed proper drainage, slope protection and safeguards to make roads durable and all-weather. The Deputy Chief Minister informed that the Juthana Bridge is nearing completion and will be opened to the public shortly.

While reviewing agriculture and allied sectors, the Chief Minister directed that the pesticide testing laboratory be made operational within the stipulated timeline and that the DPR of the Regional Cultural Centre of JKAACL be fully equipped, assuring early release of funds after submission of the required proposal.

On the occasion, the Ministers made interventions relating to their respective departments and issued appropriate directions.

On labour welfare, the Deputy Chief Minister emphasised wider outreach under e-Shram, particularly in remote areas, while the Chief Minister directed maximum coverage of eligible beneficiaries and stressed focused water conservation efforts. Issues relating to food grain distribution were also reviewed, with directions for strict quality checks and random inspections.

Emphasising employment generation, the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister directed that job fairs be outcome-oriented and that Mission YUVA be implemented with active involvement of elected representatives to maximise outreach among youth.

Reviewing education and health sectors, Minister Sakina Itoo stressed rationalisation of teaching staff, filling of vacant gynaecologist posts and ordered that certain transfer orders issued earlier be kept in abeyance pending enquiry.

Elected representatives raised issues relating to staff shortages in health and education, completion of major infrastructure projects, drinking water supply, electrification of uncovered villages, road connectivity, sports infrastructure, monkey menace, flood protection measures, land-related issues of educational and horticulture projects and absorption of local youth in industrial units. They also sought upgradation and renovation of health facilities and administrative infrastructure in different constituencies.

The MLAs also thanked CM Omar Abdullah and Health Minister Sakina Itoo for sanctioning MRI machine at Associated Hospital, GMC Kathua which will benefit people of the region.

Responding to the concerns, the Chief Minister assured that all genuine demands would be examined and addressed in a phased and time-bound manner.

Reviewing District Capex performance, the Chief Minister appreciated the district administration for its sustained efforts, including during the recent floods, and directed departments to push men and machinery to achieve full expenditure with quality asset creation. He also directed intensification of water quality testing under the Jal Jeevan Mission, timely completion of SASCI projects and examination of reforms under the Industrial Policy to enhance local employment opportunities.

631 vehicles seized...

Singh said. Illegal mining, he said, leads to environmental degradation, loss to public revenue, and damage to public infrastructure.

Giving details about the crackdown against illegal mining, Singh said police has intensified enforcement measures across Jammu district to curb the unlawful exploitation of natural resources and deter organised mining violations.

Police officials said that 631 vehicles involved in illegal mining were seized out of which 572 vehicles were released after completion of statutory formalities in 2025. "Fines amounting to Rs 99,85,327 were imposed on violators during the year," they added. With 202 vehicles seized, Satwari Police Station recorded the highest enforcement action, followed by Akhnoor with 73 vehicles and Domana with 65 vehicles. Vulnerable mining zones saw more seizures based on intelligence inputs, police said. "Vehicles found repeatedly involved in illegal mining have been placed under close watch and further legal action is being initiated as per law to prevent recurrence of such offences," they said.

SC to hear...

matter. "Tomorrow? My brother (Justice Varale) wanted to go through this matter," Justice Kumar observed. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Sonam, agreed to the suggestion.

The matter was earlier heard by a bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria.

The plea claims the detention is illegal and an arbitrary exercise violating his fundamental rights.

On November 24, the top court deferred the matter after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Union Territory of Ladakh, sought time to respond to the rejoinder filed by Angmo.

On October 29, the court sought responses from the Centre and the Ladakh administration on an amended plea of Angmo.

Wangchuk was detained under the stringent National Security Act (NSA) on September 26, two days after violent protests demanding statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh left four people dead and 90 injured in the Union territory. The government had accused him of inciting the violence.

According to the amended plea, the detention order is founded upon "stale FIRs, vague imputations, and speculative assertions, lacks any live or proximate connection to the purported grounds of detention and is thus devoid of any legal or factual justification".

"Such arbitrary exercise of preventive powers amounts to gross abuse of authority, striking at the core of constitutional liberties and due process, rendering the detention order liable to be vitiated by this court," it alleged.

The plea said it is wholly preposterous that after more than three decades of being recognised at the state, national, and international levels for his contributions to grassroots education, innovation, and environmental conservation in Ladakh and across India, Wangchuk would suddenly be targeted.

Angmo said the unfortunate events of violence in Leh on September 24 cannot be attributed to the actions or statements of Wangchuk in any manner.

Wangchuk himself condemned the violence through his social media handles and categorically stated that violence would lead to the failure of Ladakh's "tapasya" and peaceful pursuit of five years, Angmo said, adding that it was the saddest day of his life. The NSA empowers the Centre and states to detain individuals to prevent them from acting in a manner "prejudicial to the defence of India". The maximum detention period is 12 months, though it can be revoked earlier.

Police raids multiple...

identification of 22 suspects in the Kashmir Division. During the searches, police seized incriminating material, digital devices and financial records. The 22 individuals are being questioned to establish their roles in cyber frauds, illegal gaming, betting platforms and suspicious financial transactions.

The investigations have so far exposed a conspiracy where the accused worked with local and outside operatives to exploit the bank accounts of vulnerable and economically weak individuals. These were converted into 'mule accounts' to move large volumes of illicit money from scams, banned gaming platforms, and fake investment applications.

Officials suspect that these illegally generated funds were channelled into terror financing and other activities prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of the nation. The syndicate operated by violating banking norms and abusing KYC procedures. They also registered non-existing business establishments on UDHAAYAM portal to open accounts and used Virtual Account Numbers, identity theft and complex money-laundering techniques to hide the origin of the funds, the officials added.

GDP to grow...

moderated to 3.1 per cent in the current fiscal from 4.6 per cent in the 2024-25. "Real GDP or GDP at constant prices is estimated to attain a level of Rs 201.90 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, against the provisional estimates (PE) of GDP for FY 2024-25 of Rs 187.97 lakh crore, registering a growth rate of 7.4 per cent," NSO said.

The nominal GDP, which factors in inflation, is estimated to attain a level of Rs 357.14 lakh crore in 2025-26, against Rs 330.68 lakh crore in 2024-25, showing a growth rate of 8 per cent. The government had estimated the nominal GDP expansion at 10.1 per cent in the Union Budget presented in February last year.

The First Advance Estimates are used in preparation of the Union Budget, likely

to be presented on February 1.

In US dollar terms, the GDP is likely to be USD 3.97 trillion (1 USD = Rs 90). According to World Bank's China economic update issued in December, the country is estimated to grow at 4.9 per cent in 2025 and 4.4 per cent in 2026.

The NSO's GDP estimate for the current fiscal is marginally higher than the Reserve Bank's projection of 7.3 per cent.

The real private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) has been estimated to attain a growth rate of 7 per cent during 2025-26.

Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) has been estimated to have 7.8 per cent growth rate at constant prices during 2025-26, compared to 7.1 per cent in previous financial year.

Despite global headwinds, the Indian economy has been on a steady trajectory, and the government has come out with various reform measures this fiscal, including income tax relief and reduction in GST rates.

Commenting on the data, Rahul Agrawal, senior economist, ICRA, said the rating agency does not expect a fiscal slippage over the targeted 4.4 per cent of GDP, as higher-than-budgeted non-tax revenues and likely expenditure savings would provide a buffer against the expected miss on taxes.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist Crisil, said growth in real GDP this fiscal will be 7.4 per cent, nearly 100 basis points higher than anticipated at the start of the fiscal year.

"India's growth momentum has sustained despite elevated global uncertainty due to tariff tensions, riding on accommodative monetary and fiscal policies, robust corporate balance sheets, and favourable developments such as above-normal monsoons and low crude oil prices," he said.

Jahnavi Prabhakar, Economist, Bank of Baroda, said the Indian economy remains resilient on the back of the festive demand and steady improvement in economic activity. Strong festive sales along with GST rationalization 2.0 and income tax cuts are expected to boost the consumption sector. Even the post festive demand has been holding up, Prabhakar said.

SFs tighten cordon...

the whole area has been strengthened further to neutralize the terrorists, the official said, adding the search parties are moving cautiously to avoid any casualty.

Kathua district witnessed several encounters between security forces and terrorists in the past two years, resulting in the killing of 16 people - 11 security personnel and five terrorists.

While seven security personnel and two militants were killed in 2024 when terrorists revived their activities in the district after more than a decade, seven persons - four security personnel and three terrorists - were killed last year, the officials said.

In addition, four civilians died under mysterious circumstances with locals suspecting the involvement of terrorists in their killings.

CB registers cheating...

assuring that the entire amount would be repaid in cash within a short period.

Trusting the accused, the complainant refrained from depositing the cheque, which later expired. Despite repeated demands, the accused neither repaid the amount nor honoured his commitments. The complainant further alleged that when he personally approached the accused for repayment, he was not only refused payment but was also threatened with dire consequences if he pursued the matter further.

A senior official of the Crime Branch, while confirming the registration of the case, said, "A preliminary verification was conducted by the Special Crime Wing, which established that the accused had adopted fraudulent means and misrepresentation of facts to dishonestly misappropriate the complainant's money. Prima facie, the offence of cheating under Section 420 IPC is made out."

Following the verification, a formal FIR has been registered at Police Station Special Crime Wing, Crime Branch Jammu, against the accused. The investigation of the case has been entrusted to Inspector Kali Charan, Investigating Officer, SCW Crime Branch Jammu. The Crime Branch has assured that a thorough investigation will be conducted and appropriate legal action will be taken against the accused in accordance with law.

'Act of terror' under...

Act to note the residuary phrase of "by another means". The top court said the statutory intent was not to limit the definition of terror to the use of weapons, asserting that emphasis is not solely on the instrumentality but the design, intent and effect of the act.

"Confining Section 15 to only conventional modes of violence will be to unduly narrow its ambit contrary to plain language," it said.

"The means by which such acts may be committed or not confined to the use of bombs, explosives, firearms, or other conventional weapons alone.

"Parliament has consciously employed the expression court by 'any other means of whatever nature' which expression cannot be rendered otiose. The statutory emphasis is thus not solely on the instrumentality employed but the design, intent and effect of the act," the court said.

The apex court said a 'terrorist act' under the UAPA extended to the disruption of essential supplies leading to economic insecurity and destabilisation of civic life even if violence was not committed in the process.

Criminal liability is not confined only to the final execution, but extends to those who contribute to the commission of such acts through planning, coordination, mobilisation, or other forms of concerted action, the court said.

"The prosecution case, as placed before this Court, does not proceed on the footing that the protests merely inconvenienced commuters or strained policing resources. It proceeds on the footing that a deliberate method of agitation was conceived and executed, namely sustained and replicated 'chakka jams' at strategically selected arterial locations, with the object of choking movement across the National Capital, disrupting essential services, and overwhelming the administrative capacity of the State," it said.

The top court said offences covered under the UAPA go beyond the ordinary offences and affect the security and integrity of the nation.

A terrorist act is not an isolated, solitary and final act; it was the culmination of 'organised, sustained and conspiratorial activities unfolding over time', it added.

The apex court said not every disruption of traffic, not every blockade, and not every law-and-order incident engages the statutory framework of the UAPA.

"The statute is attracted only where the conduct alleged, taken cumulatively, is capable of being understood as threatening the unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty of the nation, or as creating a climate of fear and paralysis transcending ordinary disorder," it said.

The February 2020 riots in northeast Delhi left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured. The violence erupted during widespread protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens.

The accused moved the apex court, challenging the Delhi High Court's September 2, 2025, order denying them bail in the larger conspiracy case of the riots.

Shah to inaugurate...

of the major ones abroad. The national IED data management system (NIDMS) will be a digital platform developed by the NBDC for systematic collection, collation, and dissemination of IED-related data, supporting post-blast investigations and a common understanding among state police forces, central paramilitary forces and federal probe and intelligence agencies.

Shah is expected to launch the platform on January 9, officials said.

Raised in 1984, the NSG's 'black cat' commandos are tasked to undertake specific counter-terrorist and counter-hijack operations besides protecting select high-risk VIPs.

BJP, Sangarsh Samiti...

by the competent authority of the Union Territory administration.

"We welcome the decision of the National Medical Commission's Medical Assessment and Rating Board, Union Health Minister J P Nadda and Lt Governor Manoj Sinha for withdrawing the permission but at the same time securing the future of the students," J-K BJP president Sat Sharma told reporters here.

He credited the groups who pressed for the cancellation of the admissions, saying the institute is run by donations by Hindus.

"I want to give the credit for this success to Mata Vaishno Devi because this was a matter of faith. Had this been the case with any other medical college, we would not have politicised the issue. NMC acted on the complaints and Nadda ensured that the future of the admitted students is secured which is worth praise," Sharma said.

The Sangharsh Samiti celebrated the decision of the NMC by beating drums and distributing sweets here.

"We call off our 45-day long successful agitation but we will continue to keep watch on the activities of Shrine Board which should work only for the welfare of the Hindus rather than interfering in government activities," Samiti convener Col (ret'd) Sukhvir Singh Mankotia told reporters.

Israeli PM calls...

Partnership in the year ahead, guided by shared democratic values, deep mutual trust and a forward-looking vision.

"They reiterated their zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism in all its forms

and manifestations and reaffirmed their commitment to fight this menace," the statement said.

Modi and Netanyahu also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest and agreed to remain in touch.

In a post on X, Modi said they also reaffirmed their shared resolve to fight terrorism with greater determination.

"Glad to speak with my friend, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and convey New Year greetings to him and the people of Israel," Modi said.

"We discussed ways to further strengthen the India-Israel Strategic Partnership in the year ahead," he said.

Courage, curiosity, youth...

discipline, clarity, and determination, combined with the experience will be your guide in this journey toward Viksit Bharat," the Lieutenant Governor told the Youth. Yasha Mudgal, Commissioner/Secretary to Government, Youth Services and Sports; Anuradha Gupta, Director General Youth Services and Sports; senior officials, participating youth and officials accompanying the Contingent were present.

Fresh snowfall covers...

experience creating lasting memories, particularly for first-time visitors from different parts of the country.

"It is very cold due to the heavy snowfall, but we are enjoying every moment of it. The snow-covered landscape is truly beautiful, and experiencing this for the first time is something we will always remember," said Aarti Galpe (18) from Nashik, Maharashtra. Dattaray Phaude, another visitor from Maharashtra, said the experience of witnessing snowfall for the first time is like a fairy tale.

"I have seen this only in movies, this place is worth visiting and everyone should come at least once in a lifetime," he said.

Vaiuo Dattero from Nashik said they have been visiting Vaishno Devi shrine since last seven years and this is their first visit to Bhaderwah.

"This time, we decided to visit Bhaderwah as well and the decision is turning out to be a memorable one. I suggest that whosoever comes to visit Kashmir should also come here as well to make their trip memorable," Dattero said.

SC to hear bail plea of Shabir Shah on Jan 13

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would hear on January 13 the bail plea of Kashmiri separatist leader Shabir Ahmed Shah in a terror funding case.

The plea came up for hearing before a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta while senior advocate Colin Gonsalves appeared for Shah in the matter.

Nehru hated Lord Somnath most, glorified Muslim invaders: BJP

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The BJP on Wednesday launched a fresh attack on the Congress, alleging that while the Somnath temple was plundered by Mahmud of Ghazni and Alauddin Khilji in the past but in independent India, the country's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, hated Lord Somnath the most.

In a series of posts on X, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi alleged that Nehru did not want the rebuilding of Somnath temple after Independence due his blind appeasement politics in pursuance of which he did not refrain from even glorifying Mughal invaders.

Instead of countering Pakistani propaganda or defending India's civilisational memory, Nehru chose to "appease" Pakistan by downplaying historic symbols of Hindu and prioritised "external appeasement over internal self-confidence", the BJP Rajya Sabha MP charged, citing letters of the first prime minister.

"Somnath was plundered by Mahmud Ghazni and Khilji in the past, but in independent India, Pandit Nehru harboured the greatest hatred towards Lord Somnath," Trivedi said.

He said the most "striking example" of this is a letter by Nehru to the prime minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, on April 21, 1951.

Addressing Khan as "Dear Nawabzada", Nehru described the story of the Somnath temple gates as "completely false", the BJP leader alleged.

"Pandit Nehru, in a way, surrendered to Liaquat Ali Khan, writing that nothing like the reconstruction of the Somnath temple was taking place," he said.

"What exactly was Pandit Nehru's fear from Liaquat Ali Khan that he felt the need to write him a letter about the Somnath temple? What else was this if not blind appeasement politics and the glorification of Mughal invaders?" he asked.

People dying not only due to dog bites but also because of road accidents caused by strays: SC

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Flaggng non-compliances of rules and directions by civic bodies, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said that people were dying not only due to dog bites alone in the country but also because of accidents caused by stray animals on roads.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and N V Anjaria, which was hearing pleas for modification of its earlier orders of the apex court filed by dog lovers and those seeking stringent compliance of orders, said it is conducting the hearing as many lawyers and animal activists claimed that they were not heard before passing of the order on November 7.

"The roads should be clear of dogs and stray animals. It is not only the dog bites but also the roaming of stray animals on roads that are proving dangerous and causing accidents. No one knows which dog is in what mood in the morning. Civic bodies have to implement the rules, modules and directions strictly," the bench said.

Justice Mehta pointed out that two Rajasthan high court judges have suffered accidents in the last 20 days and one of the judges is still suffering from spinal injuries. "It's a serious issue," he told lawyers appearing in the matter.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioner seeking modification of the earlier order of the court in the matter, said that the solution is not to capture all dogs but to adopt a scientific formula, accepted worldwide for reducing animal-human conflict.

He submitted that the court can adopt the formula of CSVR (Capture, Sterilise, Vaccinate and Release) for managing and controlling the population of stray dogs which will gradually reduce the dog bite incidents.

"Prevention is always better than cure," Justice Nath said and pointed out that there was nothing much to argue in the matter as the court is only directed to remove the stray dogs from institutional areas and has not interfered with any rules and regulations.

The bench said what it is trying in the matter is the strict enforcement of rules, regulations, modules and standard operating procedures (SOPs) by states and civic bodies.

"Some states have not responded to compliance with our orders and implementation of the arguments. We will be very harsh with those states. All the rules, regulations and SOPs need to be followed," the top court said.

When some counsels, appearing for different parties, submitted that dog attacks are happening, the bench said that it understands that children and adults are being bitten and losing their lives.

At the outset, senior advocate Gaurav Agarwal, who has been appointed as amicus curiae in the matter, said that the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has prepared an SOP to implement the court order.

"They have identified 1,400 km of road as a vulnerable stretch. However, after detection, the NHAI says that the state governments have to take care of it," Agarwal said.

The bench suggested fencing the roads and expressways to prevent stray animals from coming onto the roads.

Agarwal submitted that states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab are yet to file compliance affidavits while some states have filed very "disappointing" affidavits.

Justice Nath said that the court will deal with those states.

In his arguments, Sibal submitted that the response against this stray dog issue should be reflective of a mature and responsible society.

"First of all, this is not an adversarial issue and we are here as dog lovers. If one tiger is a man-eater, we don't kill all tigers. "We must make sure that sterilisation takes place and the population must come down. There is a process for that," Sibal submitted while pointing to the CSVR model and said it has brought down the dog population in Lucknow to almost zero. He added that if dogs that have rabies and those that do not have rabies are put in the same shelter, all of them will get rabies. The bench in a lighter vein said, "The only thing missing is providing counselling to the dogs as well so that he doesn't bite when released back." Similar arguments were made by senior advocates Colin Gonsalves, Anand Grover, C U Singh and some animal rights activists appearing in-person. Senior advocate K K Venugopal, appearing for NALSAR, Hyderabad, also made his arguments and highlighted the data on the inadequate number of shelters needed for housing the stray dogs.