

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Modi Govt rebuilt...

370, the Modi government has secured the dignity of life in the Valley by crushing terrorism with a zero-tolerance policy," the home minister said.

In a post on X along similar lines, Shah's office said Jammu and Kashmir struggled with terrorism and extremism for a long time.

The Modi government established peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir by abolishing Article 370, as a result of which the Union Territory is moving forward on the path of development and prosperity, the post said.

Due to the policies of the Modi government, the picture of the youngsters of Jammu and Kashmir has changed and they are no longer joining separatism but development, it added.

"Not a single incident of stone pelting took place in Jammu and Kashmir in 2023," the post said.

Shah's office said the Modi government restored the Panchayati Raj system to strengthen the roots of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir, due to which governance has come into the hands of the common people and a new era of development has dawned in the entire region.

8 dead, 7...

eight injured were received at the facility. However, one of them succumbed, taking the death toll to eight.

According to a police official, the slippery road conditions, exacerbated by recent snowfall, likely contributed to the accident. The vehicle, carrying 15 passengers, was overloaded, which may have further escalated the severity of the incident.

Immediately after the accident, a rescue operation was launched at the accident site, with authorities rushing to provide assistance to the victims. The injured were promptly transported to GMC Baramulla for urgent medical treatment.

Meanwhile, in a tragic incident, an operator was among two dead while two others got injured after a snow cutter machine working on snow clearance of the road met with an accident near Warwan area of Kishtwar.

According to police, the snow cutter machine was clearing snow on the road after heavy snowfall in the area. Two persons including a nurse took lift from them up to Warwan area due to heavy snow on the road.

"After moving some distance, the machine met with accident and fell into gorge," police said, adding that the two persons died on the spot while two others, including the nurse, got injured.

All were shifted to PHC Warwan for the treatment.

The deceased have been identified as Ghulam Mohdeem, 60, son of Shaban, resident of Chopan and Abdul Gani Koka, 48, son of Subhan Koka, resident of Brayan.

The injured have been identified as Nurse in Health Department Shafiya Banoo, 25, daughter Gh Mohdeem Inshan and Khurshid Ahmed, 38, son of Gh Mohd, resident of Brayan.

Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari has expressed grief over the accident and appealed to the administration to mobilize swift and robust rescue efforts and provide medical aid to the injured.

"Heartbroken over the tragic incident in Baramulla's Boniyar. Prayers for the souls lost as a vehicle plunged into a gorge near Bujithala," Bulkhari in his message said.

He urged administration to mobilize swift and robust rescue efforts and provide medical aid to the injured.

"Our deepest condolences to the grieving families," he added.

LG expresses grief...

loved ones. Praying for the speedy recovery of those injured.

An ex-gratia of Rs. 5 lakh to be given to the next of kin of those who have lost their lives in the tragedies. The injured would be given Rs. 1 Lakh. Directed the district administrations to provide all possible assistance to the families expeditiously".

FM Nirmala Sitharaman...

present is technically a vote on account and popularly termed an interim Budget as it seeks Parliament's nod for a grant in advance to meet the central government's essential expenditure for the first four months of the new fiscal year that starts in April. A new government elected after the April/May general elections will present the full Budget, likely in July.

The interim Budget, however, presents an occasion for spectacle just weeks ahead of the Model Code of Conduct coming into force.

While the precedence dictates that no major policy announcements are made in a vote on accounts, going by past conventions hasn't stopped governments from making big announcements like the cash dole for farmers announced in the 2019 interim Budget.

The Budget is expected to focus on infrastructure and buck a trend of spending big on new vote-garnering measures.

The Budget would, however, provide an occasion to assess the fiscal health of the economy against the backdrop of robust economic growth. It would provide an occasion for the government to give a clear roadmap for achieving the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBMA) targets.

The budgeted fiscal deficit of 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for the current fiscal is likely to be achieved, but it is nearly twice the FRBM fiscal deficit to the GDP target of 3 per cent for the central government. Correspondingly, the debt-GDP ratio at 54 per cent is also well above the target of 40 per cent.

EY, in a note, said the possibility of sustaining nominal GDP growth at 10.5 per cent, it may take up to 13 years to reach a debt-GDP level of 40 per cent. This is based on successfully reducing the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio to 3 per cent by FY29.

Suman Chowdhury, chief economist and head - Research, Acute Ratings & Research, said, "Given the priority that is likely to be given for fiscal consolidation in the upcoming Budget, we don't expect any significant fiscal stimulus in it. However, the government may continue to earmark a significant quantum for capital expenditure with a growth of 15 per cent in its budgetary allocation; the latter will continue to be a primary driver of the domestic economy over the medium term".

The government may also enhance the subsidy allocation for some segments like farmers, women, informal sector workers and unemployed youth to strengthen domestic private consumption, which is estimated to show a weak growth of 4.4 per cent in FY24, he said.

"Given the need to sustain the public investments and also support certain social segments through subsidies or budgetary relief, the targeted reduction of fiscal deficit from 5.9 per cent to 5.3 per cent will pose a material challenge for the finance ministry, necessitating significant step-up in non-tax revenues like PSU disinvestments."

A research note from the Bank of Baroda said that with the 2024-25 Budget being an interim one, the government will focus on maintaining continuity of policies while committing itself to the path of fiscal consolidation.

"In the wake of weak monsoon, and subdued Rabi sowing, the Budget will focus on steering rural growth. For this, enhanced spending on MGNREGA, PM KISAN, and PMAY can be expected. Driving investment growth will be another focus area for the government. We thus expect Rs 1.5-2 lakh crore incremental increase in capex for the next year."

Radhika Rao, Senior Economist, DBS Group Research, said the Budget will emphasise an "inclusive and prosperous" policy push in the context of incremental progressive steps in the roadmap over the next 20-plus years toward India@100 (a century since independence).

"In an election year, the government usually tables the vote-on-account or the Interim Budget. A vote-on-account seeks approvals for essential expenditure outlays until the polls, while the interim Budget broadly includes an assessment of the current state of the economy, current/capex expenditures, and receipts, as well as revised estimates of the current financial year and estimates for the year ahead."

Taking a leaf off the pre-election 2019 Budget, "we expect this interim edition to propose modest pro-demand steps to address near-term risks", she said.

In February 2019, the incumbent administration announced fiscal concessions and benefits to the farm sector and other deserving parts of the society. This time, the BJP dominated the recently held state elections, lowering the likelihood of aggressive competitive populism.

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He underscored the noticeable transformation in the region, citing the operational schools, absence of strike calls disrupting daily life, and uninterrupted internet services as evidence of progress.

Chugh highlighted that these improvements are distinct under BJP rule, contrasting with the practices observed during the reign of NC and PDP.

During the proceedings, Tarun Chugh highlighted the party's commitment to garnering votes through the showcasing of its achievements, rather than indulging in politics centered around sensitive issues.

He reiterated the party's focus on addressing real causes, as opposed to engaging in divisive rhetoric.

Highlighting the developmental initiatives undertaken under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, Chugh expressed confidence that these efforts would resonate with the electorate and translate into electoral support.

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She asserted that the armed forces were giving a befitting reply to terrorism and expansionism and India has emerged as a prominent voice against terrorism in the world.

"Today my government is building modern infrastructure along the entire border. This work should have been done long ago on a priority basis. Be it terrorism or expansionism, our forces today are giving a befitting response," Murmu said.

The President said the tangible results of the government's efforts to strengthen internal security were visible.

"There is a sense of security in Jammu and Kashmir today. The earlier deserted look of marketplaces due to strike has been replaced by the hustle and bustle of crowded markets," Murmu said.

The President said there has been significant reduction in the incidents of separatism in the northeast and many organisations have taken steps towards permanent peace.

"Naxal affected areas have shrunk and there has been a steep decline in Naxal violence," Murmu said.

The government, she said, believed the grand edifice of a developed India will stand on the four strong pillars of youth power, women power, farmers and the poor.

After Murmu's speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a post on X said, "The Budget Session began with Rashtrapati Ji's extensive and insightful address highlighting the collective strength of 140 crore Indians, seen in a series of feats our nation has achieved. The Address also highlighted the vision of further developing India in the coming years."

In her address, the President highlighted the government's achievements over the last five years, including India's moon landing and the country's performance in the Asian Games.

"We all have heard the slogan 'Garibi Hatao' since our childhood. Today, for the first time in our lives, we see poverty being alleviated on a large scale. According to the NITI Aayog, in the 10-year rule of my government, nearly 25 crore people have come out of poverty," she said.

Murmu also praised the government for defence production crossing the Rs 1 lakh crore-mark and said that 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' have become the strengths of the nation's development journey.

The President also lauded the members of the Parliament for the smooth passage of the women's reservation bill.

She also hailed the efforts of the government for keeping inflation under control despite global crises, especially during the Covid pandemic and wars.

"Despite such global crises, my government has managed to keep inflation in the country under control, preventing additional burden on our countrymen.

"In the 10 years prior to 2014, the average inflation rate was over 8 per cent. However, the average inflation rate has been maintained at 5 per cent in the last decade. My government's endeavour has been to increase savings in the hands of ordinary citizens," Murmu said.

The President said her government has taken several measures to assist women such as bank loans and programmes to make credit available to them.

"Our government has granted permanent commission to women for the first time in the Armed Forces. For the first time, women cadets have been given admission in Sainik Schools and National Defence Academy. Today, women are also fighter pilots and are also commanding naval ships for the first time," Murmu said.

The efforts of the government in the field of economy also received praise from the President as she pointed out how the Indian economy was now moving in the right direction and at the right pace due to several reforms undertaken in the last 10 years.

"Amidst serious global crises, India emerged as the fastest-growing major economy, consistently maintaining a growth rate of over 7.5 per cent for two consecutive quarters," she said.

Those seated in the front rows included Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, ministers Piyush Goyal and Nitin Gadkari, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress' parliamentary party chief Sonia Gandhi.

Rs 200 Cr...

perpetrated a bank loan fraud of about Rs 200 crore with a consortium of banks with lead bank as the State Bank of India. The other banks include J&K Bank, PNB and Karur Vysya Bank.

It is stated that the accused "siphoned off" funds to sister concerns/bogus entities and undertook sale of imported/indigenous machinery without permission of lender banks by raising "fake" invoices.

The directors of the Bharat Papers Limited are Rajinder Kumar, Parveen Kumar, Baljinder Singh, Anil Kumar, and Anil Kashyap. Further investigation is in progress.

Development journey to...

frequently expressed confidence that his government will retain power in the elections.

The prime minister also took an aim at opposition MPs for frequently disrupting Parliamentary proceedings, saying those habituated to creating a ruckus and disrobing democratic values should introspect as they meet in the last session before the polls.

If these MPs enquire in even their own Parliamentary constituencies, they will find that no one remembers those behind such ruckus and disruptions, Modi said.

But those who benefited Parliament with their superb ideas, even if they were sharply critical in their views, are remembered by a very big section of people, he said.

Their words will become a part of history, he said.

Modi said he believed that a big section of the country's democracy-loving people will appreciate the conduct of those MPs who used their wisdom and talent and showed their concerns for the masses, even though they might have been critical in their views. But no one will probably remember those whose behaviour was all about negativity and creating a ruckus, the prime minister asserted.

These MPs should not let go of the opportunity by the way of this last session before the polls and present the best of their ideas, he said.

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha had suspended 146 MPs in the last session for their relentless disruption of proceedings over a host of issues, including security breach in the lower House.

All of them will be participating in the Budget Session but the government has cautioned that bringing placards in the chambers and causing disruptions in violation of rules may invite disciplinary action.

Expressing confidence about people's support to the ruling BJP-led NDA in the elections, he said, "I am of the firm belief that the country is moving forward and touching new heights of progress ... the country is experiencing all-round and all-inclusive development. This journey will go on continuously with people's blessings."

Modi said President Droupadi Murmu addressing a joint sitting of lawmakers and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presenting the budget on Thursday is in a way festival of women power.

The Republic Day parade saw the showcase of women power and the first session of Parliament in its new building recorded the passage of the women's reservation bill, he said in a reference to a host of developments under his government to boost women's participation in different sectors.

Bill on tackling...

students will not be a target of the proposed law. It will essentially act against organised crime, mafia elements and those found in collusion, including government officials, with them.

The bill also proposes a high-level technical committee that will offer recommendations to make the computerised examination process more secure.

It is a central law and will also oversee competitive exams including Joint Entrance Exams and exams for admission in central universities.

Earlier in the day, addressing a joint sitting of Parliament at the beginning of the Budget session, President Droupadi Murmu said the government is aware of the concerns of the youth regarding irregularities in examinations. "Therefore, it has been decided to enact a new law to deal sternly with such malpractices."

The sources said exam paper leak has become a nationwide problem, therefore, the need for a first-of-its-kind central law was felt. Some states like Gujarat have brought their own laws to deal with the menace.

The teacher recruitment exam in Rajasthan, Common Eligibility Test (CET) for Group-D posts in Haryana, recruitment exam for junior clerks in Gujarat and constable recruitment examination in Bihar were among others cancelled last year following question paper leaks.

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as the utilization of pellet guns, highlighting the need for accountability.

The meeting was attended by key leaders including J&K BJP General Secretary Sunil Sharma, district leaders, and other prominent figures, underscoring the significance of the discussions held.

Avalanche warning issued...

weather office has forecast a possibility of light to moderate rain/snow at many places in the Union Territory on Wednesday and Thursday, with chances of heavy snowfall over a few higher reaches in Kupwara, Bandipora, Baramulla, Ganderbal, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag districts.

The weather would remain mainly dry with a possibility of very light snow at isolated higher reaches on Wednesday 2.

From February 3 to 4, there is a possibility of light to moderate rain or snow in several places, following which the weather would remain dry till February 10.

The 40-day harsh winter period known as 'Chilla-i-Kalan' ended on Tuesday with no snowfall in the plains of Kashmir and below-normal precipitation in the higher reaches of the valley.

While there was light to moderate snowfall in the higher reaches of the valley at the fag-end of the 40-day period, most of the Chilla-i-Kalan -- when the chances of snowfall are maximum and most frequent -- remained dry.

The valley witnessed a prolonged dry spell this winter; with no snowfall in the plains.

During the 40-day harsh winter period, a cold wave sweeps the region and temperatures drop considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies and water in supply pipes.

The cold conditions continue in Kashmir even after the culmination of 'Chilla-i-Kalan' with a 20-day 'Chilla-i-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day 'Chilla-i-Bachha' (baby cold).

Meanwhile, there was an improvement in the night temperature across the Kashmir valley.

Srinagar city, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of 2.2 degrees Celsius up from 0.8 degrees Celsius on the previous night.

Pahalgam recorded a minimum temperature of 0.1 degrees Celsius, Qazigund 0.4 degrees Celsius, Kokernag minus 0.2 degrees Celsius and Kupwara 1.3 degrees Celsius.

Gulmarg registered a low of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius up from minus 6 degrees Celsius and was the coldest place in the valley.

Meanwhile, six Jammu and Kashmir districts received avalanche avalanche warning in the wake of recent snowfall in the Union territory, officials said.

Avalanche with medium danger level is likely to occur above 2,400 metres over Poonch, Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara districts in the next 24 hours, they said.

Officials said avalanche with low danger level is likely to occur above 2,800 and 3,500 metres over Doda and Ganderbal districts respectively in the next 24 hours.

People living in these areas are advised to take precautions and avoid venturing out into areas prone to avalanche, the officials added.

CS visits Tawi...

the reclaimed portions of land on left and right banks including the central island so that it adds to the overall ambience of this project.

Dulloo further stressed on having a plan for the relocation of the adjoining warehouse in consultation with the stakeholders. He asked for having a close coordination between the Divisional, District administrations and the Jammu Smart City Limited (JSCL) for taking expeditious decisions regarding each issue at hand.

The Chief Secretary while having an insight into the component of real estate development for recreational, residential/commercial purposes asked for taking approval for land use plan beforehand so that the ease of doing business is ensured later. He directed for completing these preliminary works in a month's time and lay full focus on their execution in the months ahead.

In the meeting the Chief Secretary was informed by the CEO, JSCL and Chief Engineer, I&FC about the progress on different components of this project. It was given out that the project has been conceived with twin objectives of flood mitigation and creation of recreational spaces.

It was said that the project has two broad components including the construction part and real estate development part. For both these components the concerned executing agencies have taken up the services of consultants also.

As far as the construction part is concerned it includes developing the promenades, diaphragm walls, retaining walls, laying of anchor slabs, embankment filling and interceptor drains on both left and right banks along with the central island near 4th bridge, as was informed in the meeting.

The development of real estate includes creation of recreational, residential, commercial and green spaces on reclaimed land and on the adjoining warehouse.

It was said that an embankment of the length of about 7 Kms has to be laid in phase from Gujjar Nagar Bridge to 4th Bridge thus creating an artificial lake from Bhagwati Nagar barrage to Bikram Bridge. In phase 1 the project embankments are being constructed for a length of 2.7 Kms on both sides of the river from Barrage to Bikram Bridge, the meeting was apprised.

It was said that the total project cost for phase 1 is Rs 194.47 Cr which consists of Rs 156.38 Cr for raising of embankment, diaphragm wall, filling, interceptor drains, pier protection etc while remaining Rs 38.09 Cr on amenities like landscaping, roads, footpaths, toilet block, food courts, lighting etc.

The meeting was further apprised that the overall physical progress of this project is more than 70% slated to be completed by June this year. Moreover it was given out that against the target of 440 panels of Diaphragm wall all stands completed. In addition 7,04,000 m3 embankment filling has been achieved, 3162 m retaining wall, 2188 m anchor slab, 1780 m NP4 pipes has been laid along with 13,310 m3 pier protection works has been completed at an estimated cost of Rs 84.19 Cr.

The meeting also discussed the issues like diversion of 12 nallahs on both right and left side of this river. It also deliberated upon the monetising strategy, proposed land use, lease period, authority for real estate development besides other significant issues for operation and management of this project.



Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo visits Tawi Riverfront Development project site at Jammu on Wednesday.

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It was said that an embankment of the length of about 7 Kms has to be laid in phase from Gujjar Nagar Bridge to 4th Bridge thus creating an artificial lake from Bhagwati Nagar barrage to Bikram Bridge. In phase 1 the project embankments are being constructed for a length of 2.7 Kms on both sides of the river from Barrage to Bikram Bridge, the meeting was apprised.

It was said that the total project cost for phase 1 is Rs 194.47 Cr which consists of Rs 156.38 Cr for raising of embankment, diaphragm wall, filling, interceptor drains, pier protection etc while remaining Rs 38.09 Cr on amenities like landscaping, roads, footpaths, toilet block, food courts, lighting etc.

The meeting was further apprised that the overall physical progress of this project is more than 70% slated to be completed by June this year. Moreover it was given out that against the target of 440 panels of Diaphragm wall all stands completed. In addition 7,04,000 m3 embankment filling has been achieved, 3162 m retaining wall, 2188 m anchor slab, 1780 m NP4 pipes has been laid along with 13,310 m3 pier protection works has been completed at an estimated cost of Rs 84.19 Cr.

The meeting also discussed the issues like diversion of 12 nallahs on both right and left side of this river. It also deliberated upon the monetising strategy, proposed land use, lease period, authority for real estate development besides other significant issues for operation and management of this project.

the reclaimed portions of land on left and right banks including the central island so that it adds to the overall ambience of this project.

Dulloo further stressed on having a plan for the relocation of the adjoining warehouse in consultation with the stakeholders. He asked for having a close coordination between the Divisional, District administrations and the Jammu Smart City Limited (JSCL) for taking expeditious decisions regarding each issue at hand.

The Chief Secretary while having an insight into the component of real estate development for recreational, residential/commercial purposes asked for taking approval for land use plan beforehand so that the ease of doing business is ensured later. He directed for completing these preliminary works in a month's time and lay full focus on their execution in the months ahead.

In the meeting the Chief Secretary was informed by the CEO, JSCL and Chief Engineer, I&FC about the progress on different components of this project. It was given out that the project has been conceived with twin objectives of flood mitigation and creation of recreational spaces.

It was said that the project has two broad components including the construction part and real estate development part. For both these components the concerned executing agencies have taken up the services of consultants also.

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