

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Committed to fulfil...

in 1996 under former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, benefiting thousands. Responding to the three-day-long debate, Omar Abdullah, who is also the Leader of the House, expressed gratitude to all legislators who participated in the discussion.

"For the last three days, I have been standing here to respond to the debate about the Budget. I thank all the honourable MLAs who took part. They gave valuable suggestions and we will try to implement many of them in the future," he said.

He noted that the Budget was widely discussed not only inside the House but also outside, and that people have largely responded positively.

"Generally, people were satisfied with the Budget. They understand that it is not easy to propel Jammu and Kashmir forward in these circumstances, but through this Budget, a roadmap has been laid out to take J&K out of the present challenges," he remarked.

The Chief Minister underlined that the Government's foremost responsibility is towards the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society.

"The first responsibility of every government is to help the weakest and the poorest. Through this Budget, we have tried to provide comfort to those who need it the most," he said.

Rejecting criticism over not announcing certain populist measures, he stated firmly that the Government's priority remains social justice and targeted welfare.

Clarifying a major welfare promise, the CM announced that the Government will provide free LPG cylinders from its own budgetary resources, without depending on any central scheme.

"I want to put it on record that we will give these cylinders with our own money and resources. We do not need to take money from the central government for this," he said.

Responding to allegations that the Budget contains only centrally-sponsored schemes, the Chief Minister highlighted several unique initiatives funded directly through the J&K Budget.

He announced monthly assistance for orphans and vulnerable families:

"We have said that those who have lost both parents, or who have lost the sole breadwinner, will be declared orphans. If they are not covered under any other scheme, they will receive Rs 4,000 per month," he said.

Similarly, scholarships for tribal children and poor students have been introduced where no other coverage exists.

He also recalled the success of free bus ridership for women announced last year.

"This was not a Government of India scheme. We introduced it through our own Budget, and it has been very successful," he said.

This year, the Government has extended free ridership relief to persons with disabilities.

The Chief Minister also spoke about expanding environmentally-friendly EV bus service while ensuring balanced growth for other transport sectors.

"If we can make EV buses reach more areas, autos and taxis will also run. By closing one thing, we cannot increase the economy," he said.

Refuting claims that the Budget is shrinking, the CM clarified expenditure figures and said misleading comparisons were being drawn.

"It is wrong to say we have spent only 12 per cent. If we look only at capital expenditure, it has reached 36 per cent, and by March 31 we will bring it close to last year's level," he informed.

He explained that last year's revenue expenditure was higher due to settlement of expensive loans, which is not the case this year.

"To say that we are shrinking our economy is not true at all. We have put our money where it is most needed," he asserted.

Emphasising that Jammu and Kashmir lives in its villages, the Chief Minister said the Budget gives special attention to strengthening the rural economy.

"As long as village areas do not develop, J&K will not develop," he said.

He listed key thrust areas including agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries and dairy development.

The Chief Minister announced a new dairy scheme aimed at increasing milk production by one lakh litres.

"The central government has praised this initiative and even wants to support us further through the National Dairy Development Board," he said.

He also spoke about improving livestock quality, backyard poultry, and enhancing productivity.

In horticulture, he highlighted the introduction of weather-based crop insurance for the first time.

"If there is nothing in our Budget, then why did this not happen before?" he asked.

During his address, the CM raised serious concerns over provisions of the Indo-US trade deal, stating it could adversely impact Jammu and Kashmir's dry fruit and horticulture economy.

"Tree nuts-walnuts and almonds-are the origin of Jammu and Kashmir. Allowing them duty-free imports raises questions about sympathy for our farmers," he said.

He added that even apples should have been protected.

On the SASCI scheme, the Chief Minister said it provides Jammu and Kashmir access to interest-free financial support for the next 50 years, calling it a responsible fiscal measure.

"The value of money after 50 years can be imagined. This is a significant relief," he said.

He cited figures from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to explain how states have benefited under the scheme.

The Chief Minister also underscored his Government's strong focus on youth empowerment through Mission YUVA, a flagship initiative aimed at creating sustainable livelihood opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing skill development across Jammu and Kashmir. He said the scheme is designed to harness the potential of young people by supporting start-ups, self-employment ventures and targeted training programmes, enabling the youth to become active partners in the region's economic growth.

Addressing criticism that the Budget is Kashmir-centric, the Chief Minister termed such assertions meaningless and misplaced, stating that his Government remains equally committed to balanced development across all regions. He pointed out that the Government would not have restored the Darbar Move to Jammu if it did not intend to correct the wrongs done with Jammu and ensure equitable attention to its aspirations and needs.

He emphasised that industries benefiting from the incentives and support provided by the Jammu and Kashmir Government must also contribute meaningfully to local employment generation. He noted that industrial units receive substantial facilitation in the form of subsidies, land, power supply and other concessions, and therefore have a responsibility to prioritise the recruitment of local youth. The Government, he said, has impressed upon such industries to ensure that the people of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the younger generation, are given adequate employment opportunities so that industrial growth translates into inclusive development and real benefits for the region.

Ruckus in LA...

"There is no question of offering an apology now. What has been said is already on record. Had they allowed me even a second to speak, I was standing there to say that fine, I would withdraw those words and put the same point differently. But since they did not allow me to speak, there is no question of apologising," Abdullah said.

He also asked whom he was expected to apologise to, alleging that those "lecturing" in the Assembly about the nation and the Constitution could not even sit through the entire Republic Day function on January 26.

"The Leader of Opposition (Sunil Sharma), who teaches us lessons on patriotism, I was sitting right next to him. He could not remain seated for the entire duration. At the half-way mark, you (Sharma) got up and left. And then you come here to lecture us on nationalism," the chief minister said.

Asked about his statement that the India-US trade deal was detrimental to the interests of J-K, Abdullah said, "If you look at it now - chestnuts, dry fruits, fresh fruits, dairy products - if these are imported duty-free, what do we have left?"

"We do not have any marine industry, no marine food, no seafood. What we have is horticulture - dry fruits, walnut, almond, saffron, apple, kiwi... This is what we have. Now, if all these items start coming duty-free from the US, Jammu and Kashmir is bound to suffer losses."

Abdullah also claimed that the BJP members were upset because he placed certain realities before the people.

"What may benefit the rest of the country, cannot necessarily support us. I am the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir. I have to speak about the interests of the people. We have no benefits from the India-US trade deal - there are only losses," he said.

Law Deptt reshuffles...

orders.; and Mohd. Irfan Khan, Assistant Legal Remembrancer presently posted in the Directorate of Industries and Commerce, Jammu holding Additional Charge of litigation work of Financial Commissioner, Revenue, Jammu has been transferred and posted in the office of Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti, Jammu. However, he shall continue to hold the additional charge of Litigation work of Financial

Commissioner, Revenue, Jammu till further orders.

Northern Railway extends...

Vaishno Devi Katra," a public relations inspector (PRI) of the Jammu Division said.

In a significant addition to the tourism infrastructure of the Valley, a Vistadome coach has been attached to the special train to offer passengers an enhanced travel experience with a glass roof and large panoramic windows, the PRI said.

Railway officials said the Vistadome coach provides a 360-degree view of the surrounding natural landscape, including mountains, rivers and tunnels, making the journey more attractive for the visitors.

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singhal, said the initiative is expected to promote tourism and provide the passengers with a comfortable and memorable experience.

"This is a pioneering passenger amenity, offering a view of the sky through a glass roof and unobstructed views of natural beauty through large windows, making the journey exciting," Singhal said.

The USBRL project, connecting Katra with Baramulla, is considered a major engineering feat designed to link Kashmir with the rest of the country through rail connectivity across the challenging Himalayan terrain.

The project includes several key infrastructural landmarks, including the Chenab bridge in Reasi district, which stands at 359 metres above the riverbed, making it the world's highest railway arch bridge.

Another highlight is the Anji Khad bridge, India's first cable-stayed railway bridge, spanning the Anji River in Reasi district with 96 high-tensile cables.

The project also features the T-49 tunnel between Khari and Sumber, the country's longest transportation tunnel at 12.77 km, besides 38 tunnels covering 119 km and 927 bridges spanning about 13 km.

Two Thailand girls...

On December 28, 2025, a similar operation was conducted at O2 Spa Centre in the Channi Himmat area, where a Thai woman was detained and another individual from Kurukshetra, Haryana, was booked. In that case, the spa owner, Jai Singh of Kurukshetra, was booked under FIR 237/2025 at Police Station Channi Himmat under Section 24 of the Immigration Act and Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for keeping a foreign national without permission or prior intimation to authorities.

In the latest incident at Shine Spa, Narwal, police have detained two Thai women and initiated further investigations to verify their immigration status and the role of other persons connected with the spa. The entire operation was conducted under the supervision of SP City South Dr Ajay Kumar Sharma.

J&K Government notifies...

Retail liquor vends under Type C (JKEL-2) will be allotted through a transparent e-auction process. Only domiciles of Jammu and Kashmir above 21 years of age, meeting property, solvency and character requirements, will be eligible to participate. Detailed provisions have been laid down for premises clearance, operational timelines, temporary structures, electricity supply, fire safety and distance norms from educational and religious institutions.

The policy mandates strict compliance with Minimum Guaranteed Revenue (MGR) and Minimum Guaranteed Quota (MGQ) norms. Failure to deposit MGR on time may lead to suspension or cancellation of licence, forfeiture of deposits and re-auction of vends. Provisions for quota transfer of JK Special Whisky and JK Country Liquor have also been incorporated to safeguard government revenue.

As part of the Excise Policy 2026-27, the Excise Department of Jammu and Kashmir has announced that the allotment of retail liquor vends (JKEL-2/Type C) will be conducted exclusively through a secure and transparent e-auction process. The online auctions will be carried out on the official portal jkexcisedept.procure247.com, while detailed bidding instructions and procedures will also be available on the Department's website jkexcise.nic.in.

According to the policy provisions, locations that fail to receive adequate response during the initial e-auction will be re-auctioned in the same manner. The Department has also reserved the right to cancel the auction process for any location where bidder participation is poor or where bid amounts are found to be disproportionately low compared to the sale potential of the area or earlier quoted bids, even after the declaration of the highest (H1) bidder.

To ensure responsible participation, strict eligibility criteria have been laid down. Bidders must be at least 21 years of age, be a domicile of Jammu and Kashmir, and possess immovable property in the UT equivalent to 100 percent of the minimum reserve bid value, or alternatively 50 percent property with the remaining amount furnished as a Bank Guarantee. Applicants must also have a clean criminal record and are required to submit a character certificate issued by the concerned District Superintendent of Police.

After being declared the H1 bidder, applicants must obtain premises clearance from the District Magistrate, who is required to convey approval or rejection within 15 days, failing which the premises shall be deemed cleared. However, to prevent loss of government revenue, such clearance will not be required where liquor vends were operational at the same premises in previous years. The licensing authority may also permit immediate operationalisation of vends under relevant rules to avoid procedural delays.

In cases where successful bidders are unable to arrange private premises, District Magistrates have been empowered to provide government land within 15 days for setting up temporary structures. Power supply to such temporary vends will be ensured within five days by the Power Development Department, subject to payment of electricity charges by the licensee. License holders must also ensure adequate fire safety arrangements.

For issuance of Immovable Property or Solvency Certificates, vendors must apply within 20 days of licence issuance, and the competent authority is mandated to issue the certificate within one month under the J&K Public Service Guarantee Act, 2011. Failure to act within the stipulated time will result in the certificate being deemed issued.

These provisions aim to ensure efficient vend allotment, revenue protection, transparency, and regulatory compliance under the Excise Policy 2026-27.

Overall, the Excise Policy 2026-27 seeks to balance public health concerns, economic interests and regulatory efficiency, while strengthening governance and promoting transparency in the excise sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

Seven PSIs transferred...

Magotra has been posted to Police Station Banihal and PSI Sunil Raskotra has been posted to Police Station Gool.

The order states that all the officers shall be relieved forthwith to join their new places of posting.

Amit Shah asks...

Telecommunications (DoT), Department of Financial Services (DFS), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), public and private sector banks, cooperative banks, NABARD, fintech companies and payment platforms, telecom service providers, social media and Cloud service intermediaries, cybersecurity experts and domain specialists, and international law enforcement and policy representatives.

This multi-stakeholder engagement reflects a "whole-of-ecosystem" approach to tackling cybercrime, an official statement said.

Shah also inaugurated a new cybercrime branch of the CBI and launched a State Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (S4C) dashboard of the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), besides conferring medals to CBI officers.

Welcoming the home minister, CBI Director Praveen Sood said the hubs of cybercrime have shifted from Jamtara, Mewat and Bharatpur to Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar.

The agency has achieved a 90 per cent conviction rate in cybercrimes in the last 10 years and filed chargesheets in 82 per cent of cybercrime cases registered by it, Sood said. Shah said that while progress has definitely been made in terms of action against cybercriminals, criminal justice processes, and money recovery cases, there is still a need to strengthen many dimensions more effectively.

"Cybercriminals, who once relied on simple manual hacking, are now using complex automated techniques. What were once isolated 'lone wolf' attacks have evolved into organised and systematic criminal operations. Cybercrime has now become an industry where accounts are bought and sold as a service.

"Since criminals continuously adopt new technologies, there is a need for collective and sustained efforts to stay two steps ahead by moving beyond traditional approaches," he said. The I4C, state police forces, the CBI, the NIA, the ED, the Department of Telecommunications, the banking sector, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the RBI, and the judiciary are collectively making every possible effort to curb cybercrime, the home minister said.

Fresh snowfall in...

south Kashmir, which serves as a base camp for the Amarnath yatra, settled at minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, the officials added.

Among other places, Qazigund's minimum temperature settled at 2.6 degrees, Kokernag recorded a low of minus 1.3 degrees Celsius, and Kupwara's minimum temperature settled at zero degrees Celsius, the Met said.

Forest Department seizes truck loaded with illegal Khairwood

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In a significant action against timber smuggling, the Jammu Forest Range on Monday seized a truck loaded with illegally felled khairwood, dealing a major blow to smugglers operating in the region.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs about illegal timber transportation, the forest team intercepted a truck bearing registration number JK02AL-2955. On inspection, the vehicle was found carrying khairwood billets without valid permits or legal documentation, confirming the illicit nature of the consignment.

The operation was carried out under the overall supervision of Shri Anurag Arya, IFS, Divisional Forest Officer, Jammu, and was led on the ground by Shri Kailash Choudhary, Range Forest Officer, Jammu. The interception was executed by the forest staff of Nagrota-I Block, with Block Officer Shri Rakeshwar Singh playing a key role, along with other field officials.

The seized vehicle and illegal timber have been taken into custody, and further legal action under the relevant provisions of the Forest Act has been initiated. Forest Department officials reiterated their commitment to intensifying vigilance and strict enforcement to curb forest-related crimes and protect valuable forest resources. Investigations are underway to identify those involved in the smuggling network.

Police exposes QR Code Fraud; accused arrested

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AWANTIPORA: Police in Awantipora have taken cognizance of complaints regarding cheating of local shopkeepers through misuse of QR codes for digital payments.

During the course of inquiry under the supervision of SHO PS Awantipora Insp Aijaz Ahmad, it was revealed that Sameer Ahmad Hajam son of Shabir Ahmad Hajam resident of Boh, Awantipora was involved in cheating shopkeepers by showing fake/forged payment confirmation through QR codes and dishonestly obtaining money. Subsequently, he was arrested in the instant case.

Police have initiated necessary legal action as per law, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the full extent of the fraud and involvement of any other persons.

Four drug peddlers arrested with heroin

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

UDHAMPUR: Police team of PS Udhampur led by its SHO, while performing patrolling duty near Subash Stadium, Udhampur. Police party noticed two suspicious persons coming from Bharat Nagar Cut, NH-44 towards TCP Domain. On spotting the police vehicle, both persons sharply turned back and started moving towards the NH-44 side in haste.

The police party immediately apprehended them. Upon questioning, they disclosed their identities as Shamsher Singh S/O Shubdev Singh R/O Chang, Tehsil & District Samba and Aditya Kumar S/O Vijay Kumar R/O Jourian, Tehsil Akhnoor, District Jammu. During personal search, 4.41 grams of heroin was recovered from the possession of Shamsher Singh while 1.57 grams of heroin was recovered from Aditya Kumar. Accordingly, a case FIR No. 43/2026 under Sections 8/21/22 NDPS Act has been registered at Police Station Udhampur and further investigation is underway.

A police team of Police Post Tikri while conducting routine traffic checking intercepted an Innova taxi bearing Registration No. DL2CAZ 1209 which was coming from Jammu towards Srinagar. During the checking, two persons were found travelling in the vehicle. On questioning the driver disclosed his identity as Danish Butt S/O Sabder Mohd. R/O Butpora, Doda while the co-passenger disclosed his identity as Jawaz Ahmed Wani S/O Ab. Rashid Wani R/O Akramabad, Doda

Upon conducting their personal search, a total of 21.40 grams of heroin was recovered from their possession. Both the accused failed to give any satisfactory explanation regarding the recovered contraband.

Accordingly both persons were arrested on the spot, and FIR No. 32/2026 U/S 8/21/22 of the NDPS Act has been registered at Police Station Rehambal.

Jammu Police cracks down on illegal mining activities under operation Ploughing

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In a significant operation against illegal mining, PP Chatha, Jammu Police, South Zone, carried out a night-time seizure on the intervening night of 9/10 February 2026. During the operation, one dumper bearing registration number JK03-J0023, loaded with crushed stones (Bajri), was apprehended for transporting mining minerals without the mandatory Form-A permit.

This action highlights the proactive measures being undertaken by Jammu Police, South Zone, in collaboration with regulatory authorities to ensure strict compliance with legal norms governing the transportation of mineral resources.

Authorities have confirmed that the District Mining Officer (DMO) will be promptly informed to initiate further investigation and take action under the applicable laws. Police officials emphasized that such operations form part of ongoing efforts to curb illegal mining, protect the environment, and maintain regulatory oversight over the region's natural resources.

Union Budget 2026 Strengthens Viksit Bharat Vision: Gopal Mahajan

Modi Govt delivers women-centric, security-driven Budget: Purnima

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

REASI: BJP General Secretary Gopal Mahajan on Tuesday hailed the Union Budget 2026-27, stating that it reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat and lays a strong foundation for inclusive development, economic growth, and social welfare across the country.



Mahajan, who was introduced by BJP District President Reasi Rohit Dubey during a press conference at BJP office Reasi, said the Centre has ensured balanced growth by prioritising infrastructure development, social welfare, employment generation, and fiscal stability.

Highlighting key provisions, Mahajan said the Union Budget continues to provide strong financial support to Jammu and Kashmir, with over ₹43,000 crore allocated as grant-in-aid, reflecting the Centre's commitment towards accelerated development in the Union Territory.

He said increased allocation for centrally sponsored schemes and capital investment support will strengthen infrastructure, rural development, and public welfare initiatives. He added that enhanced funding for security and policing will further strengthen peace and stability in the region, which is essential for sustained economic growth.

BJP Spokesperson and former Deputy Mayor Advocate Purnima Sharma also strongly welcomed the Union Budget, terming it a "visionary, progressive and women-centric budget" that ensures inclusive growth while strengthening national security.

She said the Modi government has placed special emphasis on women empowerment by expanding Self Help Groups (SHGs) and providing enhanced financial assistance, skill development training, and market linkages. Sharma said strengthening SHGs will significantly improve rural and urban economies while promoting women entrepreneurship.

She particularly appreciated the expansion of the "Lakhpati Didi" scheme, stating that it will help rural women achieve sustainable income and become financially independent entrepreneurs. She added that easier loan facilities, credit guarantees, and subsidies for women-led startups and micro enterprises will remove financial barriers and encourage greater participation of women in business sectors.

Purnima also welcomed the government's push to strengthen the textile sector, stating that enhanced support for traditional handloom and handicraft industries will generate employment, especially for women artisans and rural workers. She said the textile sector plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage while boosting local economies.

Highlighting social welfare measures, Sharma praised the government for expanding healthcare support, including provisions ensuring free cancer treatment for economically weaker sections, which she described as a major relief for poor families. She said the focus on maternal health, nutrition schemes, and education of girl children will contribute towards building a healthier and empowered society.