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CM grants 1...

member comparing his political strategies to cricket, the Chief Minister said: "A smart player adapts to the game. I was bowling pace when conditions favored it; now, I am bowling spin. But I have not changed the game-I remain committed to my responsibilities."
The Chief Minister also addressed concerns regarding legal changes in Jammu and Kashmir: "Five years ago, we spoke of equality. Today, we are still demanding it. Ask yourself-are we truly equal to other states? The reality speaks for itself." He refuted allegations that his government had disrespected the legacy of Maharaja Hari Singh.

"The laws governing state subjects were not altered by us but by others. Before 2019, you practiced under the Ranbir Penal Code, named after Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Today, you follow a different law. Who, then, changed history?"

The Chief Minister highlighted economic disparities and employment challenges, particularly for local youth. "If four people from Haryana can work here, then ensure the same opportunities exist for our people in Haryana, Himachal and beyond. Setting up industries in Himachal is difficult due to strict local policies. In contrast, we have no such restrictions."

Urban Development and Infrastructure Speaking on urban infrastructure, the Chief Minister acknowledged shortcomings in Smart City projects. "We built footpaths, yet people still walk on roads. We created cycle tracks, but motoreycles now occupy them. We constructed multi-level parking facilities, yet vehicles remain parked on the streets. Infrastructure alone is not enough; we need a collective shift in mindset."

He also stressed the importance of decongesting cities through planned residential townships. "We are not settling outsiders. When your government spoke of New Srinagar and New Jammu, no one objected. Our goal remains the same-to develop new residential areas and prevent urban decay."

Regarding disaster management and relief efforts, the Chief Minister reassured members about the government's commitment to providing proper rehabilitation and housing for displaced communities.

On cultural preservation, he highlighted ongoing restoration efforts at 33 heritage sites across Jammu and Kashmir, with a budget of Rs 65 crore. Future plans include restoring 73 additional sites with an estimated cost of Rs 170 crore. "Heritage defines our identity. Projects like the Mubarak Mandi restoration must be completed soon. We cannot let history fade."

The Chief Minister reiterated the need for efficient governance and accountability in planning and finance. "The Planning Department's role is crucial. It is not just about drafting policies but ensuring their execution. We must reconsider the decision to merge planning with finance and restore its independent role."

The Chief Minister emphasized that government expenditure on state guests is a common practice and has been followed by previous governments as well. While he refrained from detailing the exact spending, he assured the House that steps are being taken to utilize existing assets effectively.

Addressing concerns about lost properties after the reorganization of J&K and Ladakh, he stated, "The properties that are gone cannot be reclaimed, but we must make the best use of those that remain."

He highlighted ongoing efforts to convert the structure in Sector 17, Chandigarh, into a state guest house, which will cost approximately Rs 13 crores and cater to patients, students, and public representatives. He reiterated the importance of vertical expansion due to space constraints, drawing parallels with Motibagh in Delhi, and assured the House that alternative accommodations for government officials are being planned.

The Chief Minister acknowledged the acute shortage of government accommodations, forcing many MLAs and ministers to seek private housing or live below their entitlement. At the same time, he pointed out the issue of unauthorized occupation, stating, "There are individuals who exceed their entitlement, and some who have no entitlement yet refuse to vacate. We are working towards enforcing discipline in this regard."

He assured that new infrastructure projects would be undertaken with comprehensive planning and strict adherence to Detailed Project Reports (DPRs).

Responding to queries regarding government spending on chartered planes, the Chief Minister stated that Rs 15 crores were spent over three years.

Expressing concern over the mismanagement of the state aircraft, he criticized its prolonged neglect, saying, "The plane purchased with taxpayers' money was left abandoned at Jammu Airport for five years, exposed to the vagaries of weather. This was an unnecessary and avoidable waste." He lamented the uncertainty over the cost of restoring the aircraft to make it airworthy and stressed that better management of public assets is crucial.

The Chief Minister highlighted the need for robust tourism infrastructure to fully exploit J&K's tourism potential. He noted that many MLAs had requested gondolas for their constituencies but clarified, "Building a gondola does not guarantee tourists will come. We need comprehensive infrastructure development."

He emphasized the importance of promoting pilgrim tourism in Jammu and proposed creating religious tourism circuits to enhance connectivity between different pilgrimage sites.

He invited MLAs to provide insights on their local religious sites to facilitate this development. He also acknowledged the suggestion of developing agri-tourism, particularly in regions known for Basmati rice cultivation, and assured collaboration on this front.

Addressing concerns regarding the distribution of government advertisements, the Chief Minister assured transparency and fairness.

He stated, "Newspapers that rely solely on government ads cannot function as independent media. While we will support media houses, we must discourage mushrooming of newspapers that exist only to publish government press releases."

He also declared that the Srinagar Press Club would be re-established and a fair election would be held to elect its members. He emphasized the need for a unified institution, stating that journalists would be responsible for forming a managing committee to oversee its functioning.

Regarding power amnesty, the Chief Minister announced the extension of the amnesty scheme but stressed that frequent waivers are unfair to those who pay their bills on time.

He said, "We have given amnesty multiple times, but we must not continue this indefinitely. It is unfair to those who pay regularly."

He proposed a new scheme that would offer incentives on outstanding dues in proportion to future payments, encouraging a culture of timely bill payments. He also reiterated the importance of metering to improve revenue collection and reduce losses.

Legislators' Salaries & MLA Constituency Development Fund (CDF)

The Chief Minister addressed concerns over MLAs' salaries, noting that it had not been revised in ten years. He suggested forming a committee comprising leaders of political parties to implement a structured salary revision mechanism based on the parliamentary model. He also proposed aligning the CDF guidelines with the MPLADS framework for better fund utilization. While acknowledging the demand for an increase in CDF allocations, he stated that a reasonable enhancement of Rs 2 crore would be considered to increase it from Rs 3 to Rs 4 crore for each MLA.

The cut motions on Demands for Grants were withdrawn by MLAs.

Nazir Ahmed Khan Gurezi, Qaysar Jamshed Lone, Sham Lal Sharma, Nizamuddin Bhat, Tavvir Sadiq, Mian Mehar Ali, Rafiq Ahmad Naik, Payare Lal Sharma, Shakti Raj Parihar, Farooq Ahmad Shah, Dr. Shafi Ahmed Wani, Balwant Singh Mankotia, Sheikh Ahsan Ahmed (Pardesi), Salman Ali Sagar, Mubarak Gul, Ranbir Singh Pathania, Ali Mohammad Sagar, Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed, Mir Mohammad Fayaz, Satish Kumar Sharma, Sajad Gani Lone, Mir Saifullah, Javed Beigh, Irfan Hafiz Lone, Waheed ur Rehman Parra, Kuldeep Raj Dubey, Aijaz Ahmed Jan, Sajad Shaheen, Mohamad Yousuf Tarigami, Rajiv Jasrotia, Gulam Mohiddin Mir, Mushtaq Guroo, Muzaffar Iqbal Khan, Devinder Kumar Manyal, Javaid Riyaz, Shabir Ahmad Kullay, Baldev Raj Sharma, Choudhary Mohammed Akram, Hilal Akbar Lone, Saif ud Din Bhat, Dr. Narinder Singh Raina, Mehraj Malik, Darshan Kumar, Altaf Ahmed Wani, Reyaz Ahmed Khan, Ifthar Ahmed, Pawan Kumar Gupta, Sajjad Shafi, Zafar Ali Khatana, and Sunil Kumar Sharma (LoP) who took part in the discussions on the Demands for Grants.

Books provide glimpses...

particular, has become ingrained in our consciousness," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor emphasised the significant role of great writers like Shrilal Shukla to inspire the positive change in the society.

The Lieutenant Governor said, "Books are like powerful inner eyes that provide glimpses into the world of knowledge and wisdom. The writer through their alphabets gives us opportunity to think and enlarge our perspective and these writings are the source of cognitive insight. "Shrilal Shukla's novels and stories have served to enlighten the society during that period and his thoughts continue to warn us in our developmental journey to focus on reform and I believe his words are more powerful than any other presentation".
JPS Rathore, Minister of State for Cooperative; Uttar Pradesh; Dileep Sanghani, Chairman, IFFCO and Dr U.S Awasthi, Managing Director, IFFCO also spoke on the occasion and paid homage to Shrilal Shukla.

Bollywood Actors Pankaj Tripathi and Ashok Pathak recited an excerpt from Shrilal Shukla's famous work 'Raag Darbari'.

An Exhibition organised in the revered memory of Shrilal Shukla was also inaugurated by the Lieutenant Governor:

HIGHLIGHTS...

knowledge, his ideas, his imagination, his satire not only entertain us but also guides us to build self-reliant villages, a developed India

Shrilal Shukla's novels, stories have served to enlighten society during that period and his thoughts continue to warn us in our developmental journey to focus on reform and I

believe his words are more powerful than any other presentation

His works contain life's mysteries and intimate experience of everyday living. I believe Shrilal Shukla's words soaked in his experience are eternal. Raag Darbari, in particular, has become ingrained in our consciousness.

LG, CM, Ministers...

spiritual importance of Nauroz, he noted that the festival has been an integral part of Kashmir's rich heritage, celebrated with traditional enthusiasm and devotion.

He urged people to use this occasion to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, compassion and mutual respect, reinforcing the spirit of communal harmony.

Conveying his warm wishes, he hoped that this Nauroz would bring prosperity, happiness, and fulfillment to every household and reinforce the values of peace and coexistence among diverse society of Jammu and Kashmir:

The Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary in his message of greeting on Nauroz said that the festival marks the beginning of spring and symbolizes renewal and hope. He hoped that it would usher in an era of peace, progress and prosperity in entire Jammu and Kashmir:

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, in her message, extending warm greetings on Nauroz, said that this spring festival has tremendous cultural and religious significance in Jammu and Kashmir: She hoped that this festival will foster the spirit of harmony and togetherness amongst the people of J&K. The Minister also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of entire Jammu and Kashmir:

Full Court Reference...

appreciation to Justice Atul Sreedharan for his exemplary services and contributions to the High Court of J&K and Ladakh.

Monika Kohli, Senior Additional Advocate General described Justice Atul Sreedharan a gentleman par excellence and lauded his dedication and commitment towards his judicial responsibilities. His tenure at the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, though brief, has been marked by judicial prudence, a keen sense of justice and a commitment towards upholding the rule of law. His insightful judgments and unwavering dedication to legal principles have left a lasting impression on the judiciary and the legal fraternity alike, he added.

Nirmal Kotwal, President, J&K High Court Bar Association, Jammu in his farewell address, praised Justice Atul Sreedharan for his dedication and commitment both on judicial and administrative front. He also highlighted the positive approach and respect of Justice Atul Sreedharan towards members of the Bar:

Justice Atul Sreedharan expressed gratitude to Judges of High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Officers of the Registry and Judicial Officers for their undaunted professional commitment and the support extended to him during his tenure. He also appreciated the talent of members of J&K Bar for their knowledge of Law and Professional competence. He also thanked his personal staff for their support and cooperation. He emphasised upon the young lawyers to display patience and work hard to ensure success in the profession.

Dignitaries present on the occasion included Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Justice Sindhu Sharma, Justice Rajesh Oswal, Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul, Justice Sanjay Dhar, Justice Puneet Gupta, Justice Mohd. Akram Chowdhary, Justice Rahul Bharti, Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi, Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal, Justice Rajesh Sekhri and Justice Mohd. Yousuf Wani while Justice Javed Iqbal Wani joined virtually from Srinagar wing of the High Court.

Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Inspector General of Police, Jammu, Sr. Additional Advocate General, Deputy Solicitor Generals of India, Jammu/Srinagar, President, J&K High Court Bar Association, Jammu, Sr. Advocates, Principal District and Sessions Judge, Jammu, Judicial Officers and Officers of the Registry of the High Court were also present on the occasion. Besides, officers and officials of the High Court and a large number of advocates joined from Srinagar Wing of the High Court virtually.

Modi Govt moving...

not surrendering despite all the facilities being offered to them, ranging from surrender to inclusion. The country is going to be Naxal-free by March 31 next year," Shah wrote on X in Hindi. As many as 22 members of the banned CPI (Maoists) were killed in two separate encounters in Chhattisgarh. While 18 Naxals were killed in Bijapur district, four Maoists were gunned down in the Kanher area by a joint team of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the District Reserve Guard (DRG) of the state police.

J&K Govt to...

selections already completed. 2,390 Gazetted vacancies were referred to the J&K Public Service Commission (JKPSC), resulting in 2,175 selections over the same period. 10,757 Class-IV (MTS) vacancies have been identified across departments and are under Finance Department scrutiny before being referred for recruitment.

More than 6,000 vacancies are ready for referral and will be sent to recruiting agencies shortly, he said.

To ensure faster and more transparent recruitment, the Chief Minister said, the government has abolished interviews for posts up to Pay Level 5 (Rs 29,200-92,300) through S.O. 180 (dated 28.05.2020).

Eliminated interviews for Level 6 posts, including Junior Engineers and Naib Tehsildars, via S.O. 36 of 2025 (dated 14.02.2025) and d departments to identify additional posts up to Level 6 where interviews can be removed to accelerate recruitment, the CM said.

He said the revised JKSSB regulations (notified on 22.11.2022) to introduce online CBTP-based examinations and a single-exam system for multiple posts where feasible.

Omar Abdullah emphasized that the J&K Public Service Commission and JKSSB have been directed to adopt a proactive, target-based approach for timely recruitment.

He provided updates on key vacancies under recruitment: 150 Junior Engineer (Civil) posts have been referred to JKSSB for selection. Once the Cadre Schedule for Engineering Gazetted and Subordinate Services is finalized, the remaining engineering vacancies will also be referred. 150 Gazetted vacancies (Assistant Professors/Librarians/PTTs) in Higher Education are under process for referral.

Of 840 referred vacancies, 476 have been filled, and 364 are in the final stages of selection. 116 Non-Gazetted vacancies in Higher Education have been forwarded to the Finance Department for concurrence before referral.

56 Gazetted and 660 Non-Gazetted vacancies in Health and Medical Education have been referred for selection.

597 Lecturer posts across 27 disciplines in the School Education Department were referred to JKPSC between November 2024 and January 2025.

Additionally, all Administrative Departments have been directed to refer available vacancies to recruiting agencies without delays, he said.

On the issue of regularizing Daily Wagers, the Chief Minister said the Government has announced a high-level committee, headed by the Chief Secretary, J&K, to examine humanitarian, legal, and financial issues related to the regularization of Casual, Seasonal, and Other Workers (CSLWs).

Govt mulls to...

requirements of new Fair Price Shops in Jammu and Kashmir: He added that further steps will be taken after the required amendments are carried out under Jammu and Kashmir Targeted Public Distribution System.

CB files charge...

to the respective courts, while the case from Bakshi Nagar remains under investigation by the Special Crime Wing. "The total amount involved across these cases is estimated to be approximately Rs. 70 lakh," official said.

"The Crime Branch SCW Jammu remains resolute in its mission to combat and eliminate fraud and financial crimes, ensuring justice and safeguarding public trust," official added.

Former MLA, BJP...

party ticket last year. Police, in a statement, said it has taken cognizance of the incident and launched legal proceedings.

"An incident of firearm discharge was reported today in the Tulsibagh area of Srinagar, resulting in the death of former legislator Faqeer Mohammad Khan, son of Jumma Khan, a resident of Gurez. Police have taken cognizance of the matter, and legal proceedings under section 194 of the BNSS have been initiated at Police Station Shergarhi," Srinagar Police said in a statement.

Initial findings suggest the incident to be a case of suicide. Further investigation is ongoing, considering all aspects, it added.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha condoled the demise of former Member of Legislative Assembly Faqeer Mohammad Khan.

"Faqeer Mohammad Khan's contribution to the development of Gurez is immense and he touched and improved thousands of lives. On this extremely sad occasion, I extend my deepest condolences to his family, friends and followers. I pray for his soul," the LG said. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also expressed grief over the death of the former MLA. "Deeply saddened by the passing of former legislator Faqeer Mohammad Khan. He was a true grassroots leader. My heartfelt condolences to his family. May his soul rest in peace. The House observed a two-minute silence in his honour," Abdullah posted from the official X handle of J-K Chief Minister.

BJP moves breach...

He said, "The office has long been constructed on land purchased by the party. The MLA's claim that it is being constructed on state land now is incorrect."

Langate MLA marshalled...

as Speaker. Gul assured him that he would allow him to speak after the chief minister's reply on the grants

However, Ahmad created a commotion, claiming that everyone else had been given time except him. "You did not allow me to speak on the budget, and now you are denying me the opportunity to speak on my cut motion in these grants too. This is bias. You do not allow me to talk," the MLA said. As he attempted to move towards the well of the House, the Speaker instructed marshals to take him out, and he was subsequently marshalled out. He was marshalled out of the House on Monday also when he attempted to protest in the well over what he described as "selective condemnation" of civilian killings.

Road accident in...

While four of the injured hailed from Mumbai, three are from Rajasthan, and one each from Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

The injured have been admitted to the Government Medical College Anantnag, and their condition is stated to be stable, the officials added.

GDC Akhnoor organises awareness programme on drug abuse

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AKHNOOR: The National Service Scheme (NSS) unit of Government Degree College (GDC) Akhnoor organized an awareness programme on drug abuse at Sohail as part of its winter camp activities. The event aimed to educate locals and youth about the dangers of substance abuse and promote a drug-free society.



Dr. Sanjay Kapoor, NSS Programme Officer, addressed the gathering, emphasizing the harmful effects of drug abuse and urging the youth to adopt a healthy and responsible lifestyle. NSS volunteers actively participated in the event, with Miss Dhristhi, Miss Komal, Miss Shikha, and Miss Jyoti Bhau delivering impactful speeches to raise awareness among the attendees. The programme was conducted under the guidance of Dr. Romilla Malla Bhat, Principal, GDC Akhnoor, who has been instrumental in promoting social awareness initiatives. The event concluded with a pledge on Nasha Mukti taken by locals and students, reaffirming their commitment to a drug-free society. The NSS unit remains dedicated to organizing such awareness campaigns to sensitize youth and the community about pressing social issues.

ECI charts out bold steps towards strengthening election processes

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: In under a month of the assumption of charge as the 26th Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, ECI led by Gyanesh Kumar along with Election Commissioners Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Dr. Vivek Joshi has put the entire election machinery right up to the BLO level on a path firmly on course for promoting participation of all electors and ensuring a pleasant experience for them

- ▶ Digital training planned for continuous capacity augmentation of nearly 1 crore election officials
- ▶ Participation of political parties through nearly 5000 all-party meetings with Election authorities at ERO, DEO & CEO levels
- ▶ Legal framework of objections and appeals guide correction of entries and inclusion of names in electoral rolls
- ▶ Merely 89 1st appeals and only 1 second appeal filed so far

at the polling stations. Political parties, being key stakeholders, are also being involved at the grassroot level.

The Commission reaffirms that the nearly 100 crore electors always stand as the pillar of democracy. Technical consultations between UIDAI and experts of ECI are to begin soon. Though an elector can only vote in the assigned polling booth and nowhere else, the Commission has resolved to remove duplicates countrywide in EPIC numbers and end a decades-long issue within 3 months. Regular updation of the voter list shall be strengthened in close coordination with the birth and death registration authorities.

In the Commission's interactions with political parties, it was clarified that any inclusion or deletion to the draft elector list is governed by the process of appeals under relevant legal provisions for filing claims and objections, available to all political parties in the Representation of People act, 1950. In the absence of such appeals, the list as prepared by the ERO prevails. It may be recalled that the ECI had on 7th March, 2025 clarified that merely 89 first appeals and just the sole second appeal was filed after the completion of the Special Summary Revision (SSR) exercise as of 6th-10th of January 2025.

Ensuring 100% enrolment of all eligible citizens, ensuring ease of voting and a pleasant voting experience are key objectives of ECI. Steps will be taken to ensure that no polling station has more than 1,200 electors and they will be within 2 Kms of the electors. Even in the remotest rural polling station, basic facilities (AMF) will be ensured. To tackle urban apathy and encourage more participation, clusters of high-rise buildings and colonies will also have polling stations within their premises.

In a major step towards comprehensive and continuous capacity building of nearly 1 crore election personnel, a two-day conference of CEOs of all States/UTs at IIT-Delhi was held in New Delhi on the 4th and 5th of March in which, in a first, DEOs and EROs of each of the State/UTs participated.

The conference provided a thrust to energise the entire election machinery with a clear mapping of 28 stakeholders along with their responsibilities as per the framework set by the constitution, electoral laws and guidelines issued by ECI. Electoral handbooks and manuals for instructions will be harmonised with the most recent changes. Digital training kits in multiple Indian languages will be prepared for easy absorption and effective training of frontline functionaries. Animated videos and integrated dashboard will provide a digital push to training. A training module is being devised to train BLOs in days to come.

To ensure full participation of political parties in all aspects of the election processes, CEC Gyanesh Kumar during the CEO conference on 4th March had directed that regular all-party meetings and interactions be held by all the 36 CEOs, 788 DEOs, 4123 EROs. Such meetings across the country will help resolve any outstanding and emergent issues raised by the political parties at the grassroot level itself. This process will be completed pan-India by the 31st of March, 2025.

Nokia, Reacha Foundation organize 4-day Resin Art Training in Palli Panchayat

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SAMBHA: Nokia and Reacha Foundation successfully conducted a four-day Resin Art Training program at Palli Panchayat, Samba, aimed at empowering local women with skill-based learning. The training was led by Balwan Singh (C.M.), who guided 35 women from the region in mastering various resin art techniques.



During the training, participants learned to create a variety of artistic products, including earrings, pooja thalis, photo pendants, and heart-shaped photo frames. The initiative focused on helping women develop new skills that could lead to financial independence through home-based entrepreneurship.

Expressing gratitude, Kusum Lata, Sneha Lata, and other participants from Palli thanked Balwan Singh for his efforts in providing them with a valuable livelihood skill. They highlighted how this training would help them generate a sustainable monthly income and enhance their entrepreneurial opportunities. Many participants also acknowledged that Balwan Singh had previously conducted several beneficial training programs in the region, contributing to their personal and economic growth. The training program was conducted under the supervision of Isha Balli (A.M.), Nokia Reacha, and Ravi Sharma (Supervisor). Additionally, Lalit Sharma (C.A.I.) and Neetan Sharma (C.F.) played a crucial role in assisting Balwan Singh throughout the camp. The women of Palli Panchayat extended their heartfelt gratitude to Nokia and Reacha Foundation, hoping for continued support in future initiatives aimed at skill development and self-reliance.