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## Govt to promote Jammu's religious tourism circuit, boost economy: CM

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday reaffirmed his government's commitment to promoting Jammu's religious tourism circuit to boost the region's economy.

Responding to a supplementary query by MLA Yudhvir Sethi in the Legislative Assembly, the Chief Minister, who also holds charge of the Tourism Department, stated that concerted efforts are being made to publicize every tourism asset in the region.

"The department is actively working on developing the Jammu pilgrimage circuit. I have repeatedly emphasized this to more than one crore Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrims. If even ten to fifteen percent of them can be encouraged to visit other tourist destinations in Jammu, it will significantly benefit the region. However, we have not been able to achieve this so far," he



CM Omar Abdullah replying to a question in Legislative Assembly on Tuesday.

said.

He acknowledged that a key challenge is the lack of comprehensive information about Jammu's pilgrimage sites.

"We aim to develop struc-

tured itineraries for three-day, four-day, and seven-day pilgrimage tours and promote them effectively. We will ensure widespread distribution of promotional literature at trade and tourism fairs to

### 4.40 Cr tourists visited J&K in 2 years

JAMMU: Over 4.40 crore tourists, including 1.20 lakh foreigners, visited Jammu and Kashmir in the past two years, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah told the assembly on Tuesday while stressing the sector's potential in generating employment in the region.

CM Abdullah, who is also in charge of the tourism department, said Rs 35.08 crore has been allocated for the promotion, advertisement and related activities of the department over the past two financial years.

Rs 12.54 crore was spent in FY 2023-24 and Rs 22.54 crore in 2024-25, he told the House, he said.

Responding to a question from National Conference member Mubarak Gul, the chief minister said 4.48 crore pilgrims, including 1.20 lakh foreigners, visited Jammu and Kashmir in the past two years.

He added that 2,11,24,674 tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir in 2023 and 2,35,24,629 in 2024. Of these, 55,337 foreign tourists visited in 2023 and 65,452 in 2024.

Abdullah said the tourism sector holds extensive employment potential for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He acknowledged that while the

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attract visitors," he added.

Addressing concerns about the impact of direct train connectivity to Kashmir and the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway by passing Jammu, the Chief Minister

acknowledged the apprehensions of the local tourism industry. "There is concern that with the railway now extending not just to Katra but also to Srinagar

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## India reach ICC Champions Trophy final with victory over Australia

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

DUBAI: Virat Kohli did not finish the chase for once but his measured 84-run knock steered India into their fifth Champions Trophy final with a clinical four-wicket win over an under-strength and profligate Australia in the first last-four clash here on Tuesday.

The Indian triumph ensures that the final of the eight-team competition will now be held here instead of Lahore, the original host of the marquee clash, as Rohit Sharma's men will not travel there owing to security concerns.

Player of the match Kohli (84, 98 balls, 5x4) was the fulcrum of Indian batting as they sealed down 265 in 48.1 overs after Steve Smith (73) and Alex Carey (61) led the Aussies to 264.

Now, India will await the winner of the second semifinal between South Africa and New Zealand at Lahore



on Wednesday.

Kohli had wonderful support from Shreyas Iyer (45) with whom he realised 91 runs for the third wicket, and steadied the ship after the early departures of skipper Rohit Sharma (28) and Shubman Gill (9).

Australia were weakened by the absence of some of their premier stars, but India had not beaten them in the knockouts of an ICC tournament since the quar-

terfinal of the 2011 World Cup.

However, Kohli was determined to correct that anomaly. The pitch used for the semifinal was fresh but much smoother than the ones on which the previous matches were played.

Kohli does not need a second invitation to exploit such conditions and a near-perfect control helped him keep

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## Discussion on 'Motion of Thanks' on LG's address commences in LA

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Tuesday started the discussion on Motion of Thanks on Lieutenant Governor's address, tabled by Speaker, Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather before the house.

The motion moved by Mubarak Gul was seconded by Ghulam Ahmad Mir.

Speaking during the Motion of Thanks, Mubarak Gul said that people gave overwhelming mandate to this government. He also called for restoration statehood. "Restoration of Statehood for Jammu and

Kashmir is our right", he said.

Ghulam Ahmad Mir, during the address, thanked people for showing faith in the electoral process and participating during Assembly elections in large numbers. He also called upon the legislators to make judicious use of the time of the house.

Sham Lal Sharma, while participating in the discussion said that our approach should be for making our institutions strong and work collectively in this regard.

Sajad Ahmad Shaheen appreciated the Government for presenting a

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### Sajjad Lone walks out of J&K Assembly

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: People's Conference leader Sajad Gani Lone on Tuesday walked out from the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly after his motion seeking inclusion of amendments, including restoration of Article 370, was disallowed by Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather.

Lone, a former minister who represents Handwara constituency, walked out of the assembly shortly after the end of the

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## Mapping, demarcation of J&K wetlands to be completed by March end

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Mapping and demarcation of wetlands in Jammu and Kashmir is underway and scheduled to be completed by the end of March, Forest Minister Javad Ahmad Rana said on Tuesday.

Rana provided the information in a written reply to a starred question by Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) MLA Waheed ur Rehman Para seeking information about the measures taken by the government for protection and preservation of depleting wetlands during the past two years.

"The (forest) department has taken up the mapping of wetlands using remote sensing data and the ground truthing and subsequent demarcation of these wetlands exercise, in collaboration with the stakeholder departments revenue and wildlife for wetlands, above 2.25 hectares, as per the directions of the Supreme Court," the minister said.

The exercise is underway at present and scheduled to be completed by March end, he added.

In accordance with the Wetlands (Conservation and Management Rules), 2017,

brief documents for six wetlands have been prepared by the district working groups concerned. Of these, four -- Ahansur-Waskursar Wetland Complex; Sanasar Lake; Khushalsar and Gilsar Lake (complex); and Anchar and Rakh-i-Kujar (complex) are almost finalised and two (Manasbal Lake and Narkara) are under examination of the technical committee, the minister said.

Rana said district wetland management units headed by the deputy commissioner concerned were constituted on December 19 for

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## J&K halts decline in saffron cultivation, plans expansion

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government said it has successfully halted the decline in saffron cultivation, maintaining the saffron-growing area at 3,715 hectares.

Agriculture Minister Javed Ahmed Dar said new areas have been identified for expansion and an inquiry will be conducted into the working of the department in the growth of saffron cultivation in the Union territory.

"The government has successfully halted the decline in saffron cultivation. Since 2010-11, the

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## Modi to participate in post-Budget webinar on employment today

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in a post-Budget webinar on employment on Wednesday.

Employment generation has been one of the key focus areas of the government and driven by the prime minister's vision, the government has taken multiple steps to promote job growth and generate greater avenues of employment, a statement from the Prime Minister's



Office said.

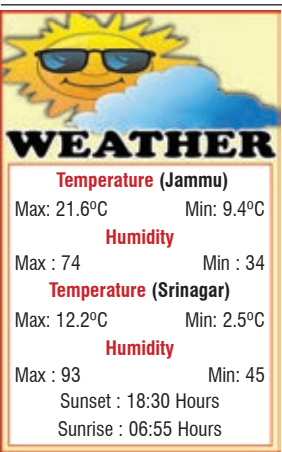
Prime Minister Modi will participate in the post-Budget Webinar on

Employment on March 5 around 1:30 PM via video conferencing.

The key themes of the webinar include Investing in People, Economy, and Innovation, the statement said, adding the prime minister will also address the gathering on the occasion.

The webinar will foster collaboration among government and citizens, encouraging discussions to help

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## Aao Pakistan Chalein!

■ PROF NUTAN K RESUTRA

Scene I, 1947: Tragic, foolhardy and unwanted slicing off of India into two; birth of an illegitimate child named Pakistan.

Scene II, 1947-48: Attack of Pakistani Army in the garb of Kabailies in Jammu and Kashmir. Brutal rape, murder and ruthless plundering of Kashmiris by Kabailies in Baramulla. Illegal occupation of Mirpur, Kotli, Muzaffarabad, Baluchistan by Pakistani forces with ulterior intentions of some of the Indian so-called leaders too. World's biggest migration from Pakistan to India and vice-versa occurs. Our Prime Minister is too prompt to take the matter to the UN. Stalemate on Jammu and Kashmir.

Scene III, 1965: Pakistan attacks India with the night of Pattan Tanks to capture Jammu and Kashmir. Attempt turns out futile. We lose many braves, and also the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. Gains? You tell me.

Scene IV, 1971: Another war between India and Pakistan. India helps in liber-

ation of Bengali majority East Pakistan that becomes Bangladesh. Almost one lakh Pakistani soldiers surrender before Indian Army in Dhakka. Indira-Bhutto Accord in Shimla. India gains nothing except wah-wah!

Scene V, late Eighties and Nineties: Operation Topaz of Pakistan President General Zia-ul-Haq is put into action and the Valley of Kashmir bears the ugly brunt of terrorism that becomes an infected wound or nasoor. Unaccounted and unrecorded killings take place. Yet another migration of Kashmiri Pandits occurs who leave their hearth and home in Kashmir and leave for anywhere and everywhere with a dismal hope to return one day. As of today, many of them have died, their desire of returning to their lost homes being cremated with them.

I can myself feel their pain as we are also bhukht-bhogi; the sufferers. My parents too were forced to migrate in 1947 from Kotli. During the last days of his life, my father Master Karam Chand Ji would sometimes tell me: Last night, I again saw Kotli in my dreams. And

then, with the innocence of a child, he would ask me: Shall we ever be able to go to Kotli again? To that, I just had no answer!

Scene VI, The Kargil War: Pakistan makes yet another attempt to capture Jammu and Kashmir; this time through Drass. Brave Indian forces foil that nefarious attempt, but do not cross the borders. So again, many brave-heart tales, but Pakistan remains Pakistan.

Scene VII, Uri, Balakot Surgical Strikes and there-after: The Defence Minister of India Rajnath Singh Ji has reiterated that PoK will itself come and join with India. Same sentiments were aired by Yogi Adityanath Ji too. As a common man, we can presume that an action akin to the liberation of Bangladesh may take place and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir may also become part of India again.

Politically and emotionally, perhaps an excellent issue. But practically, is it a viable one? Should we have with us a new generation of financially weak, politically

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**Apply For - Chief Financial Officer (CFO)**

Applications are invited for the position of Chief Financial Officer - CFO (On Contract) in J&K Bank. Interested candidates are requested to apply online from 05.03.2025 to 19.03.2025 through the link made available on Banks website ([www.jkbank.com](http://www.jkbank.com)) under careers tab. Interested candidate will have to pay the requisite fee of Rs. 1000/- per application. The detailed notification for the position of Chief Financial Officer - CFO (On Contract) is available on Bank's website.

Sd/-  
**General Manager-HR**

No.: JKB/HR/Rectt/2025-92    DIP/J-4124-P/24    Dated:-03.03.2025

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