

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Fulfilling aspirations of..

hundreds of districts and through the Ayushman Bharat scheme, access to health services has been extended to villages via wellness centres.

Modi also talked about the "youth power" of the country and said it becomes "national power" only when it is healthy, disciplined, and brimming with self-confidence.

"That is why, in the past few years, sports have been viewed as an important stream of national development," he said. The prime minister said initiatives like Khelo India have infused a new energy into the country's sports ecosystem and sports infrastructure is being strengthened across the country.

MoD releases new..

periodically to address the changing security scenario," the ministry said in a statement. In his address, the defence secretary "emphasised the need for strict adherence to security discipline amid emerging threats and evolving security challenges".

He stressed that all officers and security personnel must "rigorously follow" the prescribed security procedures, the statement said. Singh appreciated the efforts of the Security Office of the ministry in preparing these detailed security guidelines.

He urged the security personnel and officials to ensure their effective implementation, stating that the new manual would help maintain a secure environment within the ministry.

J&K eyes AI..

governance and delivery of public services across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting besides the concerned Administrative Secretaries was attended by the Director, Indian Institute of Technology Jammu, CEO, India AI Mission; Special Director General, Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N), and other concerned officers of the Union Territory.

The meeting held detailed discussions on the potential of AI-based interventions in a range of citizen-centric governance sectors and explored ways to establish a robust institutional and technological framework for accelerating such initiatives in the UT. Participants deliberated on how advanced technologies could improve administrative efficiency, decision-making and accessibility of government services for citizens.

Speaking during the meeting, the Chief Secretary emphasized that Artificial Intelligence offers enormous potential to transform governance and enhance the quality and reach of public services across Jammu and Kashmir. He urged all departments to proactively identify areas where AI-driven solutions could improve efficiency, transparency and outcomes in their respective sectors. He stressed the importance of strong coordination between the UT administration, the Union Ministry concerned, IIT Jammu, BISAG-N and other technical institutions to ensure timely and effective implementation of all these AI-enabled initiatives. To provide strategic direction and oversight, the Chief Secretary proposed the constitution of a high-level Steering Committee to be chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Department. The committee would include representatives from IIT Jammu, BISAG-N with Secretary Information Technology and Inspector General of Police Jammu being the members of this committee and would guide the implementation of AI projects while addressing operational bottlenecks.

The Chief Secretary also directed the Information Technology Department to establish a dedicated anchoring mechanism within the department to coordinate AI-related initiatives with different departments. He stressed the need for identifying and deploying specialized human resources to support this institutional framework and ensure effective on-ground implementation. Highlighting the importance of capacity building, he underscored the need for earlier establishment of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Emerging Technologies in Jammu and Kashmir and setting up Data Innovation Labs in skill development institutions. He maintained that such facilities would play a key role in preparing the region for future technological challenges and creating a skilled workforce in data science and AI-related domains. The Chief Secretary further called upon the School Education Department to explore the possibility of introducing basic introductory courses on Artificial Intelligence at the secondary school level. He also suggested that AI-related skill programmes could be incorporated under Mission YUVA to enable youth to acquire emerging technology skills and improve their employment prospects. During the meeting, Administrative Secretaries from various departments shared their perspectives on the use of AI-enabled tools to improve efficiency, data analysis, service delivery and decision-making within their sectors. CEO of the IndiaAI Mission, Abhishek Singh, suggested the creation of a core AI team within the Union Territory to guide the mission's implementation locally. He noted that the national mission has been mandated to catalyse AI-driven initiatives across the country and assured full support to Jammu and Kashmir for its AI-related programmes. He further recommended that the Union Territory may initially identify five priority sectors for pilot-based AI implementation. Once these projects demonstrate success, additional initiatives could be gradually scaled up based on the expertise developed. He also emphasized the importance of establishing the proposed Centre of Excellence and Data Labs to develop a strong pool of local talent capable of driving AI innovation in the region. Director, Indian Institute of Technology Jammu, Prof Manoj Gaur, described the proposed initiatives as timely and significant. He stated that the institute possesses strong research capabilities in the area of disaster mitigation, risk reduction which could be leveraged to support AI-driven governance solutions in Jammu and Kashmir. He also highlighted the institute's work on developing data pipelines in local languages, which could further strengthen AI applications in the region. Special Director General, BISAG-N, Vinay Thakur, assured full support from the organisation in rolling out AI-based solutions for governance in Jammu and Kashmir. He also stressed the importance of establishing a dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) to facilitate smooth implementation and monitoring of these initiatives across departments.

Inspector General of Police Jammu, Bhim Sen Tuti, informed the meeting that the police department as per the earlier directions had developed an AI-based tool aimed at improving investigation and litigation processes. He said that the project is currently at an advanced stage and would significantly enhance operational efficiency. Notably, the tool is being designed to function entirely in-house without the need for internet connectivity, he apprised the meeting. Earlier, Secretary Information Technology, Dr Piyush Singla, briefed the meeting about the progress made by the Union Territory in leveraging AI for governance. He informed that a Detailed Project Report (DPR) worth ₹20 Cr for establishing a Centre of Excellence in Emerging Technologies has been jointly prepared by the IT Department and Indian IIT, Jammu and submitted to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for approval. The proposed centre is expected to be set up under a Centre-UT funding pattern of 90:10.

He further stated that eight additional Data Innovation Labs are proposed to be established with central funding in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) across the Union Territory. These labs are expected to play a pivotal role in strengthening the AI and data ecosystem and building grassroots-level capacity in data science.

The Secretary also highlighted the need for establishing a dedicated Jammu and Kashmir AI Mission (JK AIM) to coordinate AI-related initiatives across departments in a structured manner. During the meeting, several potential AI applications across governance sectors were identified, including AI-based disaster risk and early warning systems, agriculture and horticulture advisory platforms, health triage and disease surveillance tools, office workflow automation, AI-supported learning systems in education, land asset and infrastructure monitoring, youth employment and skill-matching platforms, and AI-based grievance redressal systems along with a dozen of initiatives across different departments.

On the occasion, the Chief Secretary also launched the inaugural issue of 'Digital Dhara', a bi-monthly magazine of the Information Technology Department. The publication aims to promote digital awareness and transparency while documenting key milestones in IT governance in Jammu and Kashmir. It will also highlight emerging technological trends and innovations to inform and engage readers across the UT on regular basis from today.

CS, RG&CCI sensitise..

and proactive preparations for the smooth conduct of the census operations. He stated that the meeting had clearly delineated the roles and responsibilities of each department and called upon all departments and field functionaries to extend full support to the census machinery so that the exercise is carried out in a systematic, transparent and efficient manner. He also underscored the importance of public awareness and outreach, stressing that citizens must be encouraged to actively participate in the census process and provide accurate information. He observed that a successful census depends on the cooperation of both the administration and the public, and all stakeholders must work together to ensure the credibility and completeness of the data collected during this mega UT wide programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Mritunjay Kumar Narayan expressed satisfaction over the level of preparedness and the comprehensive sensitisation carried out for officers at different levels of the administration in Jammu and Kashmir. He observed that the discussions and briefings held during the session had instilled confidence that the census operations in both phases would be completed diligently and within the prescribed timelines.

Highlighting the significance of the census exercise, he said that census data plays a pivotal role in determining the share of states and Union Territories in various Finance Commission allocations and government development programmes. He noted that the census serves as the foundational dataset guiding policy planning and development initiatives for the next decade. He urged officers and field functionaries to exercise utmost diligence while collecting information, stressing that the quality and reliability of census data are critical for ensuring evidence-based planning and objective policy outcomes. He also emphasised the importance of rigorous training for field staff engaged in the exercise, noting that a clear understanding of procedures and digital tools would ensure smooth and efficient operations on the ground. During the session, Director Census Operations for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma delivered a detailed presentation outlining the strate-

gy, methodology, administrative arrangements and digital systems planned for conducting the census operations in the Union Territory. He informed that the Census of India 2027 will be conducted in two phases across the country. The first phase will comprise the House Listing Operations (HLO), followed by the second phase of Population Enumeration. To effectively manage the massive scale of the enumeration process, he apprised that a structured hierarchy of trainers had been envisaged by the Department. This includes a core team of National Trainers and Master Trainers who will subsequently train 614 Field Trainers. These trainers will further impart training to approximately 30,871 Enumerators and Supervisors at the Charge level across the Union Territory. The field functionaries are scheduled to undergo specialised three-day training programmes between May 7 and May 25, 2026, equipping them with the required skills and operational knowledge before the commencement of fieldwork. As per the operational plan, Phase-I (Houselisting and Housing Census) will begin with a 15-day self-enumeration window from May 17 to May 31, 2026, allowing citizens to submit their details digitally. This will be followed by 30 days of house-to-house enumeration throughout June 2026. The phase will focus on documenting housing conditions, household amenities and related infrastructure, which will form the statistical framework for the subsequent population enumeration phase. Considering the unique geographic and climatic conditions of Jammu and Kashmir, Phase-II (Population Enumeration) will commence in September 2026 for snow-bound areas and in February 2027 for non-snowbound regions. This phase will collect detailed data on demographic, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the population.

Recognising the crucial role of grassroots personnel in the census exercise, the Government has sanctioned an honorarium of Rs 25,000 each for Enumerators and Supervisors, including Rs 9,000 for the Houselisting phase and Rs 16,000 for the Population Enumeration phase. The Director further informed that the Census Reference Date has been fixed as March 1, 2027 for most areas, while October 1, 2026 will serve as the reference date for snow-bound regions. The upcoming census will capture comprehensive information related to housing conditions, household amenities, assets, demographic characteristics, language, literacy, education, economic activity, migration patterns and other socio-economic indicators. Such data forms the backbone for policy formulation, planning and development programmes at the national, state and local levels. A major highlight of the upcoming census will be digital data collection through a dedicated mobile application specifically developed for census operations. The application will be available on both Android and iOS platforms and will support multiple regional languages, including Hindi, English and Urdu in Jammu and Kashmir. The application will also function in offline mode, enabling enumerators to collect data in areas with limited or no internet connectivity, while internet access will only be required for device registration and uploading of the collected data. It was also highlighted that census data serves as the primary basis for delimitation and reservation of constituencies for Parliament, Legislative Assemblies, Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies, besides being extensively used by government agencies, researchers and development institutions. Providing details of the administrative framework for census operations in the Union Territory, the Director Census Operations informed that the exercise will cover 20 districts, 207 tehsils, 6,462 villages and 78 towns, in addition to two Municipal Corporations. He added that only enumerators registered on the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) will be authorised to collect and upload data. The information will subsequently be verified by supervisors through the system to ensure accuracy, transparency and authenticity of the data collected during the enumeration process.

Iran sought permission..

was the right thing to do and the Iranian foreign minister has expressed his country's thanks for this humane gesture," Jaishankar said.

"In view of the implications of this conflict for our energy security, I also seek to address that particular concern. The government remains committed to ensuring that fully, taking into account the availability, costs and risks of the energy markets," the external affairs minister said. "For us, the interests of the Indian consumers have and will always be the overriding priority. Where required, Indian diplomacy has supported the endeavours of our energy enterprises in this volatile situation," he said. He said India favours a return to dialogue and diplomacy for ensuring peace in West Asia and its overriding priority is the well-being of the Indian community in that region. Jaishankar said national interest, including energy security and trade flows, will always be paramount for the government. Speaking amid loud slogans by opposition MPs demanding a full-fledged discussion on the situation in West Asia, Jaishankar said developments in the region are a cause of deep concern to "all of us". The minister, who had addressed the Rajya Sabha earlier in the morning, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to closely monitor emerging developments and the relevant ministries are coordinating to ensure effective responses.

"The wellbeing and security of the Indian community in the region is our overriding priority. We will continue to work with the governments of the region towards that end," the external affairs minister said. "Our national interest, including energy security and trade flows, will always be paramount," Jaishankar said.

No immediate hike..

The minimum gap for booking a domestic LPG refill has been increased to 25 days from the current 21 days, a move aimed at preventing hoarding and ensuring equitable distribution of cylinders. Sources said the minimum waiting period for booking a domestic LPG cylinder refill increased from 21 days to 25 days to prevent hoarding.

Average households consume 7-8 LPG cylinders of 14.2 kg in a year and should normally not need a refill in less than 6 weeks, they said, adding the refill booking period has been increased to prevent hoarding and creation of artificial scarcity in the market. The oil companies have an adequate stock of LPG, they added. Sources said the government is closely monitoring the evolving global energy situation and has taken steps to ensure that supply chains remain stable. The widening conflict in the Middle East, which began on February 28 when the United States and Israel carried out strikes on Iran, followed by retaliatory attacks from Tehran, has disrupted energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

The narrow shipping corridor is a crucial artery for India's energy supplies, with about 40-50 per cent of the country's crude oil imports and nearly 85-90 per cent of its LPG shipments from Gulf nations passing through the route.

Policeman arrested for..

Bureau (ACB) said.

He said the accused public servant, posted in police post Talwara, demanded the bribe from the complainant for manipulating the course of the investigation in the case.

As the complainant did not wish to pay the bribe, he approached the ACB and accordingly, a discreet verification was conducted which corroborated the demand of bribe by the cop, the spokesperson said. He further said a case under relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act was registered, and a trap team was constituted.

The accused public servant was caught red-handed while demanding and accepting the bribe amount of Rs 5,000 from the complainant in the presence of independent witnesses, the spokesperson said. He said the accused was arrested on the spot and later a search was also conducted in his residential quarter in the presence of a magistrate.

HC holds Full..

The Reference was attended by all the Judges of the High Court with the Judges from the Jammu Wing joined the Reference physically, while those present in the Srinagar Wing joined through virtual mode. The proceedings were also attended by family members of Justice V. K. Jhanji, former Chief Justices and former Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh; Senior Additional Advocate General; Deputy Solicitors General of India at Jammu and Srinagar; President, Jammu & Kashmir High Court Bar Association, Jammu; Senior Advocates; Principal District and Sessions Judge, Jammu; Judicial Officers and officers of the Registry. Besides, officers and officials and Advocates of the High Court from the Srinagar Wing joined the proceedings through virtual mode.

On the occasion, the Senior Additional Advocate General and the President, Jammu and Kashmir High Court Bar Association, Jammu, in their condolence addresses, remembered the distinguished judicial career and invaluable contribution of late Justice V. K. Jhanji to the administration of justice.

They prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and strength to the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss. Chief Justice of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Arun Palli, in his condolence address, recalled the remarkable judicial career of Justice V. K. Jhanji and observed that his profound knowledge of law and commitment to justice has left a lasting impression on the legal fraternity. He recalled the justice Jhanji's capacity to decide the complex legal issues. The Chief Justice, on behalf of all the Judges of the High Court, placed on record collective respect and gratitude for the life and service of Justice Jhanji. The proceedings concluded with observance of a minute's silence as a mark of respect to the departed soul and the Court work was suspended for the rest of the day. The proceedings were conducted by M.K Sharma, Registrar General.

Azad supports 'one..

"In the interest of the country" and suggested that everyone should come together for the initiative keeping aside party lines. He said time will be saved and government resources will be saved if a single election for both the assembly and the Lok Sabha is held with a single voters' list.

"When elections are held at different times, government employees and teachers are deployed. They are given training and that results in suffering of the students as the teachers can not teach the students," he said. Chaudhary said even some opposition members sought a single voters' list. "Today's meeting was held in a very cordial manner. I want to thank Azad Sahab," Chaudhary said. He said Azad has a long experience. He shared his legal and political experience with the members. He cleared many doubts of the members, Chaudhary said. "He (Azad) told us that during his time, he had been in campaigning mode for years together," he said.

445 traffic violation notices issued in Jammu, 60 vehicles seized

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Authorities have issued 445 traffic violation notices for breaches of the Motor Vehicles Act and seized 60 vehicles for serious offences during a special enforcement drive aimed at strengthening road safety across Jammu division, an official said on Monday.

He said 64 driving licences and 20 registration certificates have been recommended for suspension for grave violations that adversely affect road safety. The total penalty amount realised during the drive was Rs 18.18 lakh.

The official said the Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) conducted the special drive on the directions of Transport Commissioner, J-K, Vishesh Paul Mahajan in the districts of Jammu, Udhampur, Samba, Reasi, Rajouri, Poonch, Ramban, Kishtwar and Doda on Sunday.

A total of 24 check points were established at strategic locations where 2,494 vehicles were checked, the official said, adding a total of 445 challans were issued for the violation of the Motor Vehicles Act and 60 vehicles were seized for serious offences.

The district-wise enforcement revealed significant violations, including overloading, driving without valid documents, permit violations, over-speeding, dangerous driving, the official said.

Soldier goes missing during river crossing exercise in Rajouri; rescue ops on

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: An army soldier went missing during a river crossing exercise in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district on Monday, prompting the launch of a joint rescue operation to trace him, officials said. They said the incident occurred in Manawar river in Khour area and a team of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) joined Army and police in the operation to trace him.

"During a river crossing training exercise conducted in general area of Sunderbani, Sepoy Akshit Sharma was reported missing at around 12 pm today (Monday). Extensive search operations are underway with all available resources of the Indian Army and civil agencies being employed to locate the soldier," Army's White Knight Corps said in a post on X.

The officials said an army unit was conducting a training drill in the water body as part of routine operational preparedness.

Divers and specialised rescue equipment have been deployed, and the search operation is ongoing, they said.

Drug peddler's property worth Rs 55 lakh attached in Shopian

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: A double-storey residential house valued at Rs 55 lakh belonging to an alleged drug peddler was attached in Shopian on Monday, police said.

The property, belonging to Ghulam Mohammad Khanday, a resident of Zrakan Keller area, was identified as having been acquired through proceeds generated from the illegal sale of drugs and narcotics, a police spokesperson said.

Accordingly, the property was attached in connection with case registered at Keller Police Station, he said.

The attachment process was carried out in the presence of a duly constituted police team, Executive Magistrate, Lambardar and Chowkidar ensuring full compliance with all legal procedures and protocols, the spokesperson added.

Woman, her newborn baby among 3 killed in Rajouri, Jammu accidents

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

RAJOURI/JAMMU: Three persons, including a woman and her newborn baby, were killed and three injured in two separate road accidents in Rajouri and Jammu districts of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, officials said.

Shanaz Akhter (40), a resident of Mandi Poonch, and her five-day-old baby were killed when their car collided with a school bus in the Sunderbani area of Rajouri, the officials said. Shakeel Ahmad, who was driving the car, was also injured in the accident and was hospitalised, they said, adding the victims were on their way to Poonch from Jammu. In another accident, one person was killed and two were injured after their motorcycle collided with a truck coming from the wrong side near Miran Sahib in Jammu, officials said. The condition of the injured was stated to be serious.

Bovines rescued, vehicle intercepted during Naka checking at Mankote

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

POONCH: Continuing its drive against illegal transportation of bovine animals, Police Post Mankote of District Police Poonch intercepted a vehicle during routine naka checking at Mankote. During the checking, a Tata Mobile bearing registration number JK12A-3286 was stopped by the police party. Upon inspection, the vehicle was found carrying bovine animals. The driver failed to produce any valid permission or documents regarding their transportation.

Taking cognizance of the matter, four bovine animals were rescued and necessary legal action has been initiated as per law.

11 vehicles including JCBs, dumpers seized in Jammu Rural Police crackdown on illegal mining

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu (Rural) Police intensified its drive against illegal mining by detaining eleven vehicles involved in unlawful extraction and transportation of mining material from various locations across the rural zone.

In a major operation, a police team from Police Post Jourian, along with the Naib Tehsildar Jourian, conducted a joint raid in the Jad area and seized multiple vehicles engaged in illegal mining activities. The seized vehicles included a JCB bearing registration number JK02CK-5572, a JCB Ranger (Chassis No. PUNJD21AK3274506), another Ranger JCB (Chassis No. PUNJD21AKN3146869), a tipper bearing registration number JK02CS-8455, and four dumpers bearing registration numbers JK02CV-9799, JK02CH-5966, JK02DC-9181 and JK02CJ-7986.

In a separate action, a police party from Police Post Chinore detained a tractor trolley bearing registration number JK02BH-3998 that was found involved in illegal mining without valid permission.

Similarly, a team from Police Post Pounichak seized another tractor trolley (Chassis No. BXADL1540732S3) engaged in unauthorized mining operations. In yet another operation, a police team from Police Post Pallanwala detained a tractor trolley bearing registration number JK02DE-4334, which was found loaded with limestone and operating without valid authorization.

Officials stated that all the vehicles were found violating mining regulations and were immediately taken into custody.

The District Mineral Office Jammu has been informed in all cases to initiate further legal proceedings under the relevant provisions of mining laws.

MVD Kishtwar disqualifies 16 driving licences for traffic violations

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KISHTWAR: To curb traffic violations and enhance road safety, the Motor Vehicle Department Kishtwar led by ARTO Tasleem Wani has disqualified 16 driving licences of motorists found involved in serious violations of traffic rules.

The action was carried out under the overall supervision and directions of Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma and in compliance with the directions of Transport Commissioner J&K Vishesh Paul Mahajan to strengthen enforcement of road safety regulations across the district. The offenders were found involved in violations such as Fatal road accidents, dangerous driving, overloading, reckless driving, using mobile phones while driving, not wearing seat belt and helmet while driving and other breaches of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

Those whose Driving Licenses have been disqualified includes Musharaf Ahmed DL no JK17201900006675, Akhter Hussain JK1720150028483, Jarnail Singh JK1720150029077, Ajaz Hussain JK1720150028499, Mohammad Imran JK1720220002582, Mudassar Ahmed JK1720210000216, Zahid Hussain JK172020000606, Muzamil Hussain Shah JK1720220001237, Danish Ahmed JK172020000622, Rajinder Kumar JK1720220000282, Khalid Hussain JK1720210001378, Nadim Raja JK 0620090000313, Saqib Ahmed Mir JK0620200001194, Nasir Hussain JK1720210000161, Rinku Kumar JK2020180001173 and Mohd Mirza JK1720180002030.