

SPF delegation meets CM, raises key issues of Sikh Community

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: A delegation of the Sikh Progressive Front (SPF), led by its President Balvinder Singh, met the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Omar Abdullah, to discuss several long-pending issues concerning the Sikh community of the Union Territory. The delegation included General Secretary Manjit Singh, Joint Secretary Rajinder Singh Soodan, along with Paramjit Singh, T.P. Singh and other members. They were accompanied by NC Youth Provincial President Tejinder Pal Singh Aman.

One of the key issues discussed during the meeting was the promotion of the Punjabi language in the education system. The delegation urged the government to ensure the availability of qualified Punjabi teachers in schools and colleges. The Chief Minister assured them that vacant posts of Punjabi teachers would be filled to strengthen the teaching and



SPF delegation led by its President Balvinder Singh calling on CM Omar Abdullah.

promotion of Punjabi in educational institutions. The delegation also raised the issue of early implementation of the Anand Marriage Act in Jammu and Kashmir. They expressed concern over the existing provision that requires a registration fee of ₹1500 along with penalties for delayed registration of Sikh marriages. The Chief Minister

acknowledged that such charges appeared unjustified, especially when only a nominal fee is charged under the Hindu Marriage Act. He assured the delegation that the matter would be reviewed and the order reconsidered. Another important matter highlighted was the pending file regarding additional gratia relief for the next of

kin of 14 persons who lost their lives during the 1989 Anti-Sikh Riots in Jammu. The delegation informed the Chief Minister that the case has reportedly remained pending in the Civil Secretariat for nearly four years and requested his intervention to expedite the relief process for the affected families. The delegation further

demand political reservation or nomination for the Sikh community in Jammu and Kashmir, noting that several other sections of society have been granted representation through reservation or nomination, while the Sikh community remains excluded. They also sought amendment of SRO 425 to include Sikh youth from the Kashmir Valley in the Special Employment Package announced by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The Chief Minister patiently heard all concerns and assured the delegation that he would personally examine the issues with a positive approach. The delegation also expressed concern over the recent attack on Farooq Abdullah and wished him good health. The meeting concluded with the delegation thanking the Chief Minister for giving a constructive hearing to the issues of the Sikh community.

FICCI FLO JKL meets Minister Javed Dar to strengthen cooperative partnerships

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: A delegation from FICCI FLO Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh (JKL) Chapter met with Cabinet Minister Javed Ahmed Dar at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu, to discuss collaborative pathways for strengthening the cooperative ecosystem and empowering grassroots enterprises across the region. The delegation was led by Aarti Chowdhary, Chairperson FICCI FLO JKL (2025-26), along with Varuna Anand, National Initiative Head - Partnerships & Collaborations, FICCI FLO. During the meeting, Chairperson Aarti Chowdhary apprised the Minister of the extensive work undertaken by FICCI FLO JKL with cooperatives, particularly through its collaboration with UAMMCL. She highlighted



FICCI FLO JKL Chapter members meeting with Cabinet Minister Javed Ahmed Dar.

initiatives focused on capacity building, market linkages, and strengthening women-led enterprises through cooperative frameworks. The discussion also touched upon key National Initiatives under FICCI FLO's Policy & Advocacy vertical. Varuna Anand further shared the national perspective of FICCI FLO's initiatives in building strategic Partnerships &

Collaborations that create sustainable livelihood opportunities for women entrepreneurs and grassroots artisans. The Minister appreciated the efforts of FICCI FLO JKL in fostering inclusive economic development and expressed support for initiatives that strengthen cooperatives and enhance women's participation in the economic landscape of Jammu & Kashmir.

Global engagement scheme showcasing India's cultural heritage worldwide: Shekhawat

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Culture India is implementing the Global Engagement Scheme to promote India's rich cultural heritage internationally and strengthen the country's global image. Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat informed the Rajya Sabha. In a written reply in the Upper House of Parliament, Shekhawat said that the scheme aims to strengthen cultural ties with foreign nations, promote bilateral cultural contacts, project India's cultural identity on the global stage and encourage inbound tourism. The scheme has three main components-Festival of India (FoI), Grant-in-Aid to Indo-Foreign Friendship Cultural Societies, and Contributions

to Inter-Governmental Organizations. He further stated that the Festival of India and grant components are implemented through Indian missions abroad to effectively promote India's cultural outreach. Under the scheme, the ministry has empanelled artists and groups from various art forms to participate in festivals organized overseas. At present, 627 artists and groups have been empanelled with the ministry, including 119 artists and groups representing folk arts. "Artists are selected from the empanelled list to perform in Festivals of India held abroad, which serve as a platform to showcase India's diverse cultural traditions and artistic heritage to global audiences," Shekhawat said.

According to the minister, 62 Festivals of India have been organized in different countries so far. Indian folk arts and cultural traditions have been showcased in countries such as Japan, France, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Qatar, Kuwait, Denmark, Hungary and the United Kingdom, among several others. Shekhawat added that 2,348 artists have participated in these festivals till July 2025, highlighting the significant role of Indian artists in promoting the country's cultural diplomacy. The minister also informed that the existing Global Engagement Scheme is valid for the 15th Finance Commission cycle, and continues to serve as an important initiative for strengthening India's cultural presence across the world.

One-day strike observed across Govt Health Institutions in J&K

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Responding to a call given by the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the Jammu & Kashmir Medical Employees Federation, a massive one-day strike was observed on Thursday across government health institutions and medical colleges throughout Jammu and Kashmir. The strike was held to protest against an order issued by the Finance wing of the Health and Medical Education Department that discontinued allowances paid to Non-Gazetted health employees for performing duties on Sundays and Gazetted Holidays under the roster system. The protest was organized against Order No. HME-Acet/236/2022-02 (CC-150945) issued on January 20, 2026, by the Director Finance of the Health and Medical Education Department. According to the employees' representatives, the order discontinued the long-standing provision of allowances equivalent to two and a half days' salary granted to Non-Gazetted staff for working on Sundays and public holidays. JAC expressed dissatisfaction over the constitution of a committee on March



Health employees raising slogans during a protest at Jammu.

11, 2026 to examine the issue of the 2½ days' salary allowance. According to the JAC, the committee appears to be merely a delaying tactic and does not adequately represent paramedical staff, who are the most affected by the decision. The JAC alleged that the committee is largely focused on ministerial staff, which has caused serious concern and resentment among paramedical and other Non-Gazetted health employees. Addressing a large gathering at Government Hospital Gandhi Nagar and GMC Jammu, JKMEF President Jasvinder Singh condemned the withdrawal of allowances and termed it a violation of Government Order No. 274-

HME of 1991 dated March 4, 1991. He stated that for more than three decades, Non-Gazetted health employees have been legally receiving compensation for performing duties on Sundays and Gazetted Holidays, and the sudden stoppage of these payments is unjustified and demoralizing for the workforce. Jasvinder appealed to Omar Abdullah, Sakina Ittoo, and the Administrative Secretary of the Health and Medical Education Department to intervene personally and resolve the issue. During the past few days, representatives of the JAC also met Atal Dulloo and several Members of the Legislative Assembly to highlight the

seriousness of the issue. The federation has also sought an appointment with the Health Minister to present their concerns and demand urgent redressal. Chairman JKMEF and PCI member Sushil Sudan reiterated that employees across the Union Territory remain united and committed to safeguarding their legitimate rights. He urged the government to immediately withdraw the controversial order and release the pending allowances without further delay. The Joint Action Committee warned that if the government fails to revoke the order and resolve the issue by March 23, 2026, the employees will intensify their agitation by observing a two-day complete strike across all government health institutions in Jammu & Kashmir on March 24 and 25. Among the prominent speakers who addressed the gathering were Perfitul Singh, Rakesh Bakshi, Harpal Singh, Ajay Phool, Onkar Singh, Harpreet Kour; Garu Sharma, Anoop Kholi, and Yograj. Similar protest demonstrations were also held at Government Medical College Jammu, where Arun Sharma led the protest and urged the government to resolve the issue at the earliest.

Leverage massive deregulations to boost industrial growth: Chief Secy

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: In a significant step to strengthen the industrial ecosystem of Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo chaired the maiden stakeholders conference on Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) on Thursday. The session, organized with the Department of Industries & Commerce, brought together representatives from government departments, industry bodies, and trade associations to deliberate on reforms aimed at promoting investment and entrepreneurship in the Union Territory. The conference, steered by Commissioner, Industries & Commerce, Vikramjit Singh, was attended by Administrative Secretaries, Director P&ES, MD J&K Bank, HoDs, and major industrial associations including ASSOCHAM, PHDCCI, FICCI, FCIK, JCCI and ICC Jammu. Discussions centered on the revamped industrial policy, deregulation measures, and initiatives supporting Micro, Small, and Medium

Enterprises (MSMEs). Addressing the gathering, Chief Secretary Dulloo emphasized the importance of stakeholders understanding the extensive deregulations and decriminalization measures under Phase-I of EoDB reforms. "Several stringent norms have been eased and replaced with trust-based mechanisms such as self-certification, while government services are now strictly time-bound with auto-approval provisions," he said. Dulloo urged industrialists to actively share their suggestions with the empowered committee, comprising ACS Finance, MD J&K Bank, and Commissioner Secretary, I&C, tasked with ensuring effective implementation of reforms. Highlighting the vision of 'Viksit Bharat', Dulloo said these reforms are designed to reduce procedural delays, simplify business operations, and build investor confidence. He underscored the provisions of the J&K Industrial Policy 2021-2030, which allows new MSME units to obtain a Certificate of In-Principle

Approval through self-declaration and begin operations while availing a three-year grace period for final clearances. The policy also offers fiscal incentives, including financial assistance for fixed capital investment of up to 50% in Zone B, 100% reimbursement of State GST for five years, and additional support for women-led enterprises. Elaborating further the Commissioner Secretary, I&C, Vikramjit Singh detailed that the policy aims to promote inclusive entrepreneurship by providing additional incentives to women-led enterprises. MSMEs with at least 51 percent female ownership will receive an additional 25 percent financial assistance, encouraging greater participation of women in industrial ventures. In addition, the Government has proposed a reimbursement of ₹50 lakh for any J&K registered unit that successfully lists on the National Stock Exchange of India or BSE Limited, thereby encouraging corporate growth and financial transparency among industrial units

in the UT. The conference also introduced the J&K MSME Health Clinic, a digital initiative providing advisory support to MSMEs by monitoring financial health through GST filings, banking data, and operational indicators. Stressed units receive expert guidance and rehabilitation plans, including financial assistance up to Rs 2.77 lakh, accessible via an online portal. Further reforms highlighted by Director I&C, Arun Manhas, included simplified Change of Land Use (CLU) procedures, self-certification for low-risk industries, auto-serutiny of building plans, increased labour retrenchment thresholds, night shift permissions for women, and decriminalization of minor technical lapses under the J&K Jan Vishwas Ordinance 2025. Concluding the session, stakeholders were urged to leverage these reforms and incentives to strengthen entrepreneurship, drive industrial growth, and contribute to the sustainable economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

NC takes out protest march against attack on Farooq

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) on Thursday staged a protest march in Jammu against the attack on its president and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah, demanding a thorough probe into the incident and "restoration of law and order". Carrying NC flags and placards reading "Restore law and order" and "Probe the firing incident", hundreds of workers and leaders began their protest march from the party headquarters, Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan, in Jammu. Raising slogans such as "We want justice" and "Farooq Abdullah zindabad", the protesters marched towards the city centre. The police stopped them at Raghunath Bazaar, leading to a brief jostling as security personnel prevented them from moving ahead.



Some protesters, however, managed to move towards City Chowk, where they staged a brief dharna before dispersing. Talking to reporters, former minister and senior NC leader Ajay Sadhotra termed the incident a "major security lapse". "They had gone to attend the wedding. Dr Sahib, the deputy chief minister and other senior leaders were present, but there was not even a single security person at the venue. How could a person carrying a weapon enter the premises if proper

checking was being conducted?" he said. Sadhotra said that the situation could have turned into a "major tragedy" if the personal security staff with Abdullah had not intervened in time. "The attacker took out the pistol, but the security personnel behind Dr Abdullah immediately pulled him back and the shot went into the air," he said. He demanded that law and order be placed under the control of the chief minister so that the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir improves.

DB directs Sr. AAG to seek instructions in matter

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: A Division Bench of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh at Jammu comprising the Chief Justice Arun Palli and Justice Rajesh Oswal has taken serious note of some documents placed on record by the Amicus Currie Advocate S.S. Ahmed which includes a copy of a communication No. DSHJ/PNDT/10523-24 dated October 28th, 2025 whereby Director, Health Services, Jammu intimated the Principal, Govt. Medical College, Jammu and Commissioner/Secretary to Govt. of J&K, Health & Medical Education Department regarding a complaint against HoD, Department of Radio Diagnosis, GMC, Jammu wherein the said Senior Doctor has been accused of engaging himself in private practice by regularly visiting and providing his services at three private Diagnostic Centres, two in Jammu District and one in District Reasi. The documents also include a copy of the Inquiry Report dated May 22nd, 2024 submitted to the Principal, GMC, Jammu by a Five-Member Committee headed by a Professor of Surgery, GMC, Jammu in the capacity of the Chairman of the Inquiry Committee. When this much publicized PIL registered Suo Moto by the High Court titled Court on its own Motion V/s

Commissioner/Secretary to Govt. Health & Medical Education Department & Ors. came up for hearing, Amicus Currie Advocate S.S. Ahmed informed the Division Bench that he has filed certain documents which establishes that HoD, Department of Radio Diagnosis, GMC, Jammu is involved in private practice de hors the norms and the Govt. Order No.43-HME of 2013 dated January 17, 2013. After considering the submissions of Advocate S.S. Ahmed with Advocate Supriya Chouhan, the Division Bench issued notice in the matter which was accepted in the open court by Sr. AAG Monika Kohli and she prayed for a short accommodation to seek instructions in the matter. Advocate S.S. Ahmed as Amicus Currie highlighted that HoD, Department of Radio Diagnosis, GMC, Jammu is involved in private practice despite Imposition of Ban by the Govt. of J&K way back in January, 2013. During the course of proceedings pursuant to Order dated March 10th, 2026, Tariq H. Ganai, Managing Director, J&K Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd.(JKMSCL) joined the proceedings before the Division Bench online. The said Officer submitted that the purchase orders as regards 07 CT Scan 128 Slice were issued in April, August and December,

2025 respectively; and, out of these machines, four have to be installed in different hospitals in Jammu, whereas rest three in Srinagar Province. The MD, J&K Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd. (JKMSCL) further submitted that the scheduled date of delivery of these machines at Mumbai Port is March, 2026. He further submitted that he joined the Corporation three months back, every possible endeavour is being made to ensure that no time is lost in installing these machines post delivery. At any rate, he prayed for a short accommodation to furnish a specific Affidavit as regards the precise date of delivery of these machines and the time that would be required to make them operational. The Principal, GMC, Jammu Dr. Ashutosh Gupta who had also joined the proceedings through virtual mode also apprised the Division Bench that the dysfunctional MRI Machine at GMC, Jammu has been made functional and patients are now availing the facility. SSP, Jammu Joginder Singh also joined the proceedings through virtual mode whereas R.S. Chowdhary, Sub Inspector/In-Charge, Police Post, GMC, Jammu was present in person. Looking into the importance of the matter, the Division Bench posted the matter for further proceedings on April 7th, 2026.

Amit describes inventive features of Census 2027 in PSU Summit & WhatsApp Mata Event

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Amit Sharma, Director Census Operations (DCO) & Director Citizen Registration (DCR), Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs for the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, elaborated about the inventive and new features of upcoming Census 2027 to be conducted in digital format during two special events, the one PSU Summit & Awards and second WhatsApp Meta Discussion Forum wherein he was exclusively invited as a Key Note Speaker and a Subject Specialist to share his expertise about the current ongoing critical assignment given to him by the Government of India. Amit was requested to share special features of upcoming Census 2026-27 like Self Enumeration feature as first-of-its-kind in Bharat, wherein citizens of the nations shall be privileged to fill their own data, also Census data to be recorded by enumerators and supervisors on their own devices, without usage of pen & paper, swift processing of Census data after its uploading in indigenous Data Centres which are Critical



Amit Sharma, DCO & DCR, Govt, MHA for UTs of J&K and Ladakh with others at a programme.

Infrastructure, as declared by Government of India. Apart from this, during the two special unique events, Amit Sharma described Census 2027 to be error-free, transparent and clean via-a-vis previous exercises, which shall be made possible through extensive usage of technology and e-Governance tools and also, wherein Census as a Service (CaaS) feature has been declared by the Government of India. Amit also utilized this opportunity, during his address, to invite top technology giants to participate in a maiden National Event on Census and AI Use Cases for it, which is coming-up in J&K next month

in which top national experts shall be participating in a big way. The gatherings in both WhatsApp and PSU Events comprised of Deputy CM of Andhra Pradesh, senior bureaucrats from Government of India and different states, technology start-ups, PSU lead

teams, policy makers, national & International Digital Governance Experts, etc. Apart from sharing the novelties of upcoming Census in the nation, Amit also described it as an important founding pillar of Viksit Bharat Mission of Government of India which shall have a far-reaching impact upon the Indian economy, demography, politics and shall also help in re-defining the EXIM Policy of the nation. Amit Sharma expressed gratitude to the organisers of both these events for inviting him in a special gathering of experts to share views in these national discussion forums which helps in shaping-up the technological roadmap of the nation in future.

Power shutdown

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL Jammu has informed that the power supply to Transport Nagar, Narwal, Railway Colony, Upper Chowadi, Part of Channi Himmat, Malik Market, Matto Colony, Bathindi, Sunjwan and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 14 from 9 am to 2 pm. Similarly, the power supply to Keerian Gandyal, Keerian Industry and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 14 from 9 am to 4 pm.