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CM stresses on...

He termed linemen the "actual foot soldiers and indispensable workforce of the power department," and singled out their service during Operation Sindoor and the 2025 floods for special praise. "You brave adverse conditions like war and natural calamities. You put your lives on the line of duty just like our brave defence forces," he said.

Addressing safety, the Chief Minister issued a clear directive: "We have to aim for achieving the goal of zero casualty of linemen during work. The entire J&K government and the power department will ensure the safety of each individual lineman."

He stressed that procuring safety equipment is only half the responsibility. The department must ensure the equipment reaches field linemen and that they receive proper training to use it. Directing the engineering leadership, he said officers on duty must ensure strict adherence to safety precautions and standard operating procedures at all times, leaving no room for carelessness or a hurried approach.

Looking ahead, the Chief Minister suggested introducing cash prizes from the next edition of Lineman Diwas to make the recognition more meaningful for the honoured personnel.

He also felicitated linemen with certificates and mementos for their service. The awardees included Milkhi Ram, Ashiq Hussain, Bharat Bhushan, Ram Lal, Suram Chand, Bal Krishan, Ajit Raj, Parvez Ahmed Shah, Kuldeep Raj, Manohar Lal, Bhim Singh, Ajay Singh, Rakesh Kumar, Asgar Ali, Ajay Kumar, Swami Raj, Saifullah Bhat, Sohan Lal, Manjeet Singh and Mohd Tanveer.

In his welcome address, JPDCL Managing Director Guralp Singh noted that the corporation serves over 12 lakh consumers across the Jammu region. He credited the technical workforce for this achievement and highlighted the daily role of linemen working at heights, in extreme weather and across challenging terrains. He announced the centralised procurement of safety equipment worth Rs 1.5 crore, including safety shoes, belts, helmets and discharge rods, for systematic distribution to field linemen.

Financial Commissioner (ACS) PDD Ashwani Kumar underlined the importance of linemen in a technology-dependent society. He stated their services ensure daily continuity and support essential sectors like healthcare, transport and others. He called for a culture of skills upgradation through structured training programmes. Emphasising quality safety practices, he asserted that proper use of safety equipment and protecting the lives of workers must remain a priority.

A presentation by Assistant Engineer Sachin Tickoo documented the work of linemen during demanding situations. It highlighted how power department personnel ensured electricity supply during the 2025 floods, Operation Sindoor and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Omar welcomes Nepal...

Washington DC or Tel Aviv or New Delhi or Beijing or anywhere else.

"It is for the people of Iran to decide what sort of government they want and how they want to bring about that change. I think the prime minister of the United Kingdom was absolutely correct. You cannot affect regime change by aerial bombardment," the chief minister told reporters on the sidelines of a function here.

He said that in the attempt to bring about a change of government, the life of a religious leader had been sacrificed.

He said that Iran's regime is headed by the president, who is still alive, and therefore the regime has not changed.

"Instead, a religious leader, whose leadership was acknowledged not only by the Shia community but by Muslims across the world, had been killed. This was not regime change but a gross misuse of force and a violation of international law," Abdullah said.

Drawing a parallel with other countries, Abdullah referred to Nepal and Bangladesh, saying governments are chosen by the people themselves.

"That is a good thing. As I said about Nepal - who decided the government of Nepal? The people of Nepal did. Just like earlier, who decided the government of Bangladesh? The people of Bangladesh did.

"Now, the people of Nepal have chosen a young prime minister. Earlier, he was perhaps the mayor of Kathmandu. Now the responsibility of the entire country has been placed on his shoulders. It is good. We can only hope that his country maintains good relations with neighbouring countries - that would be the right thing," Abdullah said.

Rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah's Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) was on Saturday heading towards a landslide victory in Nepal's first general elections since the violent Gen Z protests last year, shattering the dominance of the established political parties.

Asked about the statement of his father and National Conference president Ferooz Abdullah lashing out at the Centre over a US waiver allowing Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil, the chief minister said that when Ferooz Abdullah had spoken about it, he didn't need to say anything more. "Ferooz sahib spoke on behalf of the party and on behalf of all of us. There is no need to say anything beyond that," he said.

Ferooz Abdullah had said that the country should take decisions on its own and nobody should decide for it.

On PDP president Mehbooba Mufti's demand for immediate release of protesters arrested in the valley, the chief minister referred to his recent meeting with civil society in Srinagar and said two points clearly emerged during the discussions.

"First, in the cases where FIRs have been registered, the government - meaning the law and order machinery - should adopt a softer approach. Second, those who have been arrested should be released. Civil society has put forward these suggestions, and we have conveyed them further. Now a request will be made to them to take some initiative in this matter with the improved situation," he said.

J&K undergoing spiritual...

Jammu Kashmir a vibrant, breathing spiritual heart of the nation.

"After five years of sustained efforts, I can say with quiet satisfaction-that dream is no longer distant.

Today I say with deep confidence that after centuries, Jammu Kashmir is experiencing a genuine spiritual, cultural, and social renaissance. This Union Territory is re-emerging as a center of knowledge, art, music, and philosophy," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said that the flame of tapas and dharma for which this land was once renowned across the world - we are relighting it with full conviction.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon the youth to create balance in inner and outer life.

"This renaissance is for you. Come to the sacred shrines of this land and allow yourself to feel what centuries of unbroken devotion feel like when it meets you in silence. That energy does not belong to the past. It flows still- and it is yours to draw from," he further said.

The Lieutenant Governor also highlighted a series of upcoming facilities designed to enhance the safety and convenience of pilgrims at visiting the holy Shri Shiv Khori shrine.

"The new helipad is slated for completion this month. Heli-services for the devotees of Shri Shiv Khori is also expected to start from the month of April. To protect pilgrims from unpredictable weather and shooting stones, a protective track shed will also be completed soon.

A future development roadmap has also been prepared. Recognizing the heavy footfall during festive seasons, an alternative track between Ram Mandir and Shiv Khori will be constructed for decongestion.

Comprehensive repair and renovation work of the Ransoo Shrine building and existing tracks will be taken up, while adequate sanitation facilities will be provided along the track. A serai and langar facility will also come up for pilgrims in Ransoo," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the time has come for the Shri Shiv Khori Shrine Board to introduce a 'Sound and Light Show' to enrich the experience of the devotees. With the collective interest and consensus, the feasibility of a Ropeway project may be explored, he said.

"We are fully committed to creating a thriving ecosystem where local traders, artisans, youth, and women can access new opportunities, ensuring prosperity for every family," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also flagged off garbage collection vehicle donated by J&K Bank to Shri Shiv Khori Shrine Board.

The works inaugurated today includes renovation of Shivam Dwar (Darshani Deodi); repair and renovation of Mahadev Bhawan including Yatra Registration Counter; existing Ghat refurbishment (near Shivam Dwar); Gazebos near bathing Ghat and near Shani Mandir; Toilet Complexes; renovation of Medical Kiosk near Ram Mandir; construction of Pony Shed at Ransoo near Darshani Deodi and installation of Lights at various locations.

Kuldeep Raj Dubey, Member of Legislative Assembly from Reasi; Sajjan Jindal, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD), JSW Group; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu and Chairman Shri Shiv Khori Shrine Board; Sarah Rizvi, DIG Udhampur and Reasi Range; Kumar Abhishek, Deputy Commissioner Reasi; senior officials; prominent citizens from different walks of life and devotees in large number attended the inaugural ceremony.

Congress's appeasement politics...

Modi," Shah said. "Rahul Baba, protest as much as you want. We will grant citizenship; you cannot stop us," he said, referring to the former Congress president.

The home minister said the government removed encroachment by over 10,000 illegal migrants in Uttarakhand, and accused the Congress of spending all its energy in protecting them.

The Centre will expel every single infiltrator from the country, from Kedarnath to Kanyakumari, he asserted.

Shah congratulated 162 refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan who received Indian citizenship certificates at the event. "This is the proof of our resolve to give shelter to the victims of religious harassment."

The minister said that the Universal Civil Code (UCC) will become instrumental in stemming the "demographic change" in the country. "The high-power demography mission brought by the Modi government will soon begin its work."

In 2025, Uttarakhand became the first in the country to implement the UCC, which ordains the same civil laws across religions.

The BJP leader accused Rahul Gandhi of seeing "negative" in everything, including the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) currently underway across states to rid the voter lists of infiltrators.

He said, "The BJP strongly supports the SIR being carried out by the Election Commission."

Shah listed the abolition of Article 370 of the Constitution, the enactment of the CAA, and the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya as among the "historic" feats of the Modi government.

He termed the new Indian Judicial Code (BNS) as the most modern and scientific judicial code in the world.

Shah claimed that the BJP would continue its winning streak and would form governments in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu in 2026, and in Uttarakhand in 2027.

The home minister said that between 2004 and 2014, Uttarakhand received only Rs 54,000 crore from the central government, while the Modi government provided the state with Rs 1,87,000 crore.

He mentioned several other projects, including the All-Weather Char Dham Road Project and the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway, as the achievements of the BJP-led state-Centre. During his visit, the minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various projects worth Rs 1,129.91 crore.

Sex racket crackdown...

policing approach adopted by Police in curbing crimes related to human trafficking and exploitation. The South Zone police have reiterated their commitment to maintaining law and order and ensuring the safety and dignity of vulnerable individuals. Police authorities also stated that strict action will continue against those involved in such unlawful activities and that sustained efforts are being made to dismantle networks engaged in immoral trafficking across the city.

Army holds 'synergy'...

surmount emerging security challenges," it said.

The Army said Lt Gen Sharma interacted with the participants, commending them for their dedicated and resolute approach during operations.

"The deliberations reinforced the spirit of synergy and trust strengthening the collective resolve towards a safer and stronger nation," it said.

An equipment display was also organised at the venue to showcase emerging technologies inducted by the forces as part of efforts to remain future-ready, it said.

DM Jammu closes...

cards by staff; unaccounted payment of employee salaries; non-maintenance of client registers and malfunctioning CCTV cameras.

Notices have been issued to the defaulting establishments and further police and legal action shall be taken against the owners, managers and employees under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) as applicable.

The District Magistrate reiterated that the administration maintains zero tolerance towards the misuse of commercial establishments for unlawful and immoral purposes. Inspection drives will continue on a periodic and surprise basis throughout the operative period of the order. All spa and massage centres operating within District Jammu are directed to ensure strict compliance with the regulatory framework in letter and spirit, failing which they shall face immediate closure and prosecution under the relevant provisions of law.

The inspection teams comprised Tehsildars Raju Sambyal, Mona Chalotra and Sunaina Bharti, Assistant Labour Commissioner Rupali Jasrotia, District Statistics and Evaluation Officer Neeraj Sharma and Naib Tehsildar Bitti, besides officials of the Labour and Legal Metrology Departments.

Attempts to smuggle...

had been booked from south Kashmir's Pulwama district, the officials said.

Following the recovery, the authorities seized the mobile phones and informed the police. A case has been registered and further investigation has been initiated to ascertain the involvement of persons behind the attempt to smuggle the phones into the jail, they said.

LPG price hiked...

Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries -- the over 10 crore poor who have got free LPG connections since 2016 -- will also have to bear the same amount of price increase. They will now pay Rs 613 per 14.2 kg cylinder after accounting for a subsidy of Rs 300 per bottle they get for up to 12 refills in a year.

Top government sources said the increase was necessitated because of a spike in global energy prices. Despite the increase, the price is less than the Rs 1,050 per 14.2-kg cylinder rate required to breakeven at cost.

They said considering an average consumption of 4-5 cylinders per year per household, the increase translates to 80 paise per day for a family of four or just 20 paise per person.

Even at the increased prices, LPG in India is cheaper than most countries in the world, they said adding cooking costs Rs 1,207 per bottle in Katmandhu, Rs 1,241 in Sri Lanka and Rs 1,046 in Pakistan.

Sources ruled out any immediate increase in petrol and diesel price as three fuel marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) with bumper profits in earlier this year - had enough financial muscle to absorb such impact.

Retail petrol and diesel prices have been on a freeze since April 2022, with fuel retailers absorbing losses when crude prices are high and making profits when rates are low.

The LPG price rise of Saturday is the second increase in rate in 11 months. The price was last hiked by Rs 50 in April last year.

Alongside, the price of commercial LPG - the one used by establishments such as hotels and restaurants - was increased by Rs 114.5 per 19-kg cylinder. It now costs Rs 1,883 in Delhi. This increase comes on top of Rs 28 per 19-kg cylinder raised effected on March 1.

Commercial LPG rate has risen by Rs 302.50 this year.

Officials said the increase follows a steep rise in global energy prices since the US and Israel attack on Iran last weekend triggered a wider military conflict in the oil and gas-rich Middle East. The conflict has led to a near halt in tanker movement through the Strait of Hormuz -- the narrow but critical sea lane between Iran and Oman used by Middle Eastern producers to export oil and gas to global markets. The disruption has sharply curtailed energy shipments from the region, triggering a spike in global oil and gas prices.

Since the conflict broke out on February 28, the US crude soared 35.63 per cent for the biggest weekly gain in the history of futures contract dating back to 1983. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures closed at USD 90.90 per barrel. Brent jumped about 28 per cent for its biggest weekly gain since April 2020, to settle at USD 92.69 per barrel.

Asian spot prices for liquefied natural gas (LNG) have also jumped to about USD 25.40 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) -- a three-year high and more than double of last week's levels of around USD 10 per mmbtu amid fears of supply disruptions and halted exports from Qatar.

LPG markets have also tightened as shipments from key Gulf exporters face logistical disruptions, pushing international propane and butane benchmarks higher and raising concerns over supply availability for major importers such as India.

In Mumbai, non-subsidised LPG now costs Rs 912.50, Rs 939 in Kolkata, and Rs 928.50 in Chennai, according to the IOC website.

Rates differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT. The Strait of Hormuz is also a critical conduit for India's energy imports, with roughly half of the crude oil the country buys from overseas transiting through the narrow waterway.

In addition, nearly 40 per cent of India's natural gas imports, largely in the form of LNG from Gulf suppliers like Qatar and the UAE, also pass through the strait. For LPG, the strait is more important. India consumed 31.3 million tonne of LPG in 2024-25, of which only 12.8 million tonne were produced domestically, with the remainder imported. Of the imported quantity, 85-90 per cent come from countries like Saudi Arabia that rely on the Strait of Hormuz for transit.

Drug peddler nabbed with heroin

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Continuing its drive against drug trafficking, Jammu (Rural) Police apprehended one person during naka checking at Dengyali Road, Sidhra under the jurisdiction of Police Station Nagrota.

A police party of Police Post Sidhra laid a naka at Dengyali Road and stopped a suspicious Swift Dzire car bearing registration No. DL3CBC-9123. During checking, approximately 6.37 grams of heroin-like substance was recovered from the possession of the driver The accused has been identified as Shabeek Ahmed S/O Mohd Iqbal R/O Kheri Ladey, Udhampur. In this regard, FIR No. 66/2026 under Sections 8, 21 and 22 of the NDPS Act has been registered at Police Station Nagrota. Further investigation is underway.

Bootlegger arrested; illicit liquor recovered

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu (Rural) Police achieved a significant success in its ongoing drive against illegal liquor by apprehending one person and recovering illicit liquor in the Kanachak area. A police team from Police Station Kanachak apprehended one person identified as Manik Kumar S/O Neeraj Kumar R/O Lane No. 4, Janipur. During checking, 56 quarters (180 ml each) of JK Desi Whisky were recovered from his possession. In this regard, FIR No. 33/2026 under Section 48(a) of the Excise Act has been registered at Police Station Kanachak, and further investigation is underway.

Bovine smuggling bid foiled; 21 bovines rescued

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Continuing its crackdown under Operation Kamdhenu, Jammu (Rural) Police foiled a major bovine smuggling attempt in the Kanachak area and rescued 21 bovine animals.

During the intervening night of 06-07/03/2026, a special naka laid by Police Station Kanachak at Sua No. 1 intercepted a truck bearing registration No. JK13C-8175. During checking, 21 bovines were found loaded in the truck in violation of legal provisions. All the animals were rescued and the vehicle seized.

In this regard, FIR No. 34/2026 under Section 223 BNS and Section 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has been registered at Police Station Kanachak. Investigation is underway.

9 vehicles, 2 JCBs seized for illegal extraction & transportation of minerals

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: As part of its continued efforts to curb illegal mining activities, Police in coordination with officials from the Geology and Mining Department, seized nine vehicles & two JCBs in Baramulla, Ganderbal and Shopian.

In Baramulla, two tractors were found involved in the unauthorized extraction of minerals from the Dargam nallah. Acting promptly, the team seized both vehicles on the spot. The drivers of the seized tractors have been identified as Faisal Ahmad son of Mohd Shafi Khan resident of Bangdara and Mehrjudin Mir son of Gh Mohammad Mir resident of Wussan Khoi. Accordingly, the vehicles have been seized and proceedings have been initiated under the relevant provisions of the MMDR Act.

Meanwhile in Ganderbal, Police seized 02 Tippers involved in the illegal extraction and transportation of minerals within the jurisdiction of PS Gund. These vehicles were found transporting illegally extracted material from Nallah Sindh without the mandatory permissions. Similarly in Shopian, during routine patrolling, a police party from Police Post Turkwangam intercepted JCB and two Dumpers engaged in illegal mining activities without mandatory permissions. In this regard FIR No. 23/2026 under relevant provisions of law has been registered at Police Station Zainapora and further investigation has been initiated. In another similar action in the same area, a police team from Police Post Turkwangam intercepted a JCB and three tippers involved in the unauthorized extraction of minerals. Accordingly, FIR No. 24/2026 under relevant provisions of law has been registered at Police Station Zainapora and investigation is underway.

Mortar shell defused along LoC in Poonch

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MENDHAR/JAMMU: A live mortar shell was safely defused by security forces in a forward village near the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district on Saturday, officials said.

A border resident spotted the mortar shell lying in a secluded area of Brari village in the Savjian sector and alerted the Army unit and the local police post, they said.

A bomb disposal squad was rushed to the scene, and the mortar shell was defused without causing any damage, officials said.

The shell was apparently fired from across the border earlier but had remained unexploded, they said.

Recovery of such mortar shells in forward areas is a routine occurrence as ordnance fired during ceasefire violations often remain buried or undetected for long periods before being found, officials said. They added that such unexploded ordnance poses a serious risk to civilians living in border areas. Security forces and bomb disposal squads are frequently called in to secure the area and safely defuse or dispose of these shells to prevent any untoward incident.

LG hands over appointment letter to SSF personnel's wife

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday handed over the appointment letter, on compassionate ground, to Sapna Bandhral, wife of SGCT Lokesh Singh, Special Security Force (SSF) personnel who had lost his life in an unfortunate road accident.



The Lieutenant Governor assured all possible assistance and support from the Administration to the family of the deceased SSF Personnel.

LG's greetings on International Women's Day

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, has greeted the women of Jammu Kashmir on the occasion of the International Women's Day, which is being celebrated on 8th March.

In his message on this occasion, the Lieutenant Governor has said, "On the occasion of International Women's Day, I extend my greetings and felicitations to all my sisters of Jammu Kashmir in their steadfast commitment and unwavering drive to forge the future of UT and our great nation. I trust this occasion will inspire them to step forward as vital partners in country's development journey.

RailOne app launched by Jammu Div, adds on-berth food delivery feature

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Northern Railway's Jammu Division has launched its official super app RailOne, integrating multiple passenger services, including ticket booking, train tracking and food delivery on a single platform, an official said on Saturday.

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Uhit Singhal said the initiative aims to make rail travel more convenient and hassle-free.

Now, passengers travelling at important railway stations in the Jammu Division, including Jammu, Katra, and Pathankot, can enjoy their meals from the comfort of their seats, he said.

"This technological collaboration with Zomato and Swiggy ensures that passengers receive hygienic and quality food of their choice directly at their berths," Singhal said.

Urging passengers to adopt this all-in-one solution instead of using separate apps, Singhal said the railways' primary goal is to make travel more enjoyable and hassle-free.