

Dr Jitendra updates Lok Sabha about Modi Govt's 'Pension Adalat' concept

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Updating the Lok Sabha about the 'Pension Adalat' concept introduced by the Modi Government which has helped resolve cases, particularly family pension cases pertaining to widows or survivors, that had remained unresolved for decades together under the successive governments in the past, Union Minister for Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that in last less than five years, 4,944 long pending cases have been resolved through these Pension Adalats.

In reply to a question, the Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensure justice for pensioners through the Pension Adalat initiative, a pioneering concept introduced under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Union Minister emphasized that this mechanism, launched in 2017, has successfully resolved 4,944 cases in the last five years, bringing long-overdue relief to thousands of pensioners, particularly destitute widows and elderly citizens who had been waiting for justice for decades.

Dr. Jitendra highlighted that before 2017, there was no structured platform for pension grievance redressal in India. Many cases had been pending for as long as 25-30 years, with successive governments failing to act on repeated representations and complaints from pension-



ers. "Through Pension Adalats, we have been able to deliver on-the-spot resolutions, cutting through bureaucratic delays and ensuring that pensioners receive what is rightfully theirs without unnecessary hurdles," he said.

The Minister further emphasized that these Adalats, conducted in the presence of the Minister and Secretary in charge of pensions, bring together all stakeholders including the Head of Office (HOO), Pay and Account Office (PAO), Central Pension Accounting Office (CPAO), Pension Disbursing Banks, and the pensioners themselves to facilitate swift settlements.

Dr. Jitendra cited several cases where pensioners had suffered due to prolonged administrative delays but found immediate relief through the Pension Adalat. He mentioned the case of Ms. Anita Kanik Rani, a widow who had been denied her family pension for 20 years due to com-

plications surrounding a succession certificate. The Pension Adalat expedited her case, ensuring the sanction of ₹22 lakh in arrears, bringing her long-overdue financial security.

Similarly, Dr. Arvind Kumar, a retired Associate Professor from the Indian Military Academy, had struggled for leave encashment due to pending administrative issues. Diagnosed with prostate cancer and in urgent need of funds, he approached the Pension Adalat, which swiftly facilitated the release of ₹26.75 lakh, enabling his timely medical treatment. Another case was that of Ms. Geeta Devi, the mother of a BSF martyr, who had been receiving only a normal family pension instead of the Extraordinary Family Pension she was entitled to. The Pension Adalat corrected this longstanding injustice, ensuring she finally received the rightful benefits.

Dr. Jitendra Singh underscored that the Pension Adalat initiative is a testament to the government's commitment to citizen-centric governance. He reiterated that pension reforms under the Modi government go beyond financial settlements; they aim to uphold the dignity and well-being of retired employees. He also highlighted the government's push for digital interventions, including face authentication for digital life certificates, reducing pensioners' dependency on physical visits to offices.

"With rising life expectancy, pen-

sioners are an asset to the nation, not dependents. It is our responsibility to ensure their financial security and recognize their contributions to society," Dr. Jitendra Singh remarked.

The Minister concluded by reaffirming the government's unwavering commitment to transparency, efficiency, and citizen welfare. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the Pension Adalat will continue to evolve and expand, ensuring that no pensioner is left unheard and every grievance is addressed with the urgency it deserves.

In reply to the another question, Dr Jitendra Singh informed the House that "Bharat Atta" was launched on 6.11.2023 with a view to provide atta (wheat flour) to general consumers at subsidized rates under Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) policy through Semi-Government and Cooperative Organizations like Kendriya Bhandar/NAFED/NCCF and tie-ups of these Organizations with other retail outlets (like SAFAL in Delhi, other retail chains/cooperatives in other States) to make Bharat Atta available at large number of outlets throughout the country. A quantity of 5,09,000 MT of wheat was allocated to Kendriya Bhandar For sale as Bharat Atta during Phase-I. A total of 5,07,399 MT of wheat was lifted for Bharat Atta by Kendriya Bhandar from FCI during Phase-1 and the entire quantity of lifted wheat was sold as Bharat Atta.



Power shutdown

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL Jammu has informed that the power supply to Chatha Mill, Chatha Pind, Brij Nagar, SKUAST, Chatha Bhour, Lower Gadigarh, Dharap, Indranagar, Sudan Heart Care, Airport, Airforce Station and adjoining areas will remain affected on April 07 from 8 am to 12 noon.

Similarly, the power supply to Bathindi, Sunjan and adjoining areas will

remain affected on April 03, 05, 08 and 12 from 8 am to 1 pm.

Likewise, the power supply to Vijaypur Town, Kolpur, Bandral, Sarore, Jakh, Jogpur, Industry, Patil and adjoining areas will remain affected on April 03 from 9 am to 2 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Sehora, Kunjwani, Industrial Estate Digiana, Sanjay Nagar, Jeevan Nagar, Maha Kali Nagar, Ajit Nagar, Raina Colony, Sant Nagar, Vishal Colony

and 11KV feeders emanating from Bablina will remain affected on April 03 from 8 am to 1 pm.

Likewise, the power supply to Satraiyan, Flora, BOP and adjoining areas will remain affected on April 03 from 8 am to 3 pm.

Meanwhile, the Superintending Engineer, O&M Circle-III, JPDCL Batote has informed that the power supply to Batote and adjoining areas will remain affected on April 03 and 04 from 9 am to 4 pm.

FICCI FLO JKL, JKMPCL collaborate on Financial Literacy Event for Women



FICCI FLO JKL Advisory member CA Samriti Kohl along with others and women folk during the event.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: FICCI FLO JKL, in partnership with Jammu and Kashmir Milk Producers Cooperatives Ltd (JKMPCL), hosted a special event focused on financial literacy for women at the grassroots level.

The event, led by FICCI FLO JKL Advisory member CA Samriti Kohl, aimed to educate women on the importance of financial management and provide them with valuable information on topics such as net banking and the services offered by cooperatives.

The event was attended by guests including Bal Krishan, Assistant Registrar of JKAS, Tasbina Sheikh, Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies Jammu, and Chirag Bhensadadia, CEO of JKMP-

CL.

FICCI FLO JKL members also participated in the event, engaging in discussions and sharing insights on financial literacy.

"We are thrilled to have hosted this event in collaboration with JKMPCL, as it is crucial for women to have a strong understanding of financial matters," said CA Samriti Kohl. "By providing women with the knowledge and tools to manage their finances effectively, we empower them to take control of their financial futures," Samriti Kohl added.

The event featured interactive sessions, presentations, and discussions on various aspects of financial literacy, with a focus on practical tips and advice for women at the grassroots level.

Participants had the opportunity to learn about the benefits of net banking, the importance of financial planning, and the services available to them through cooperatives.

Aarti Chowdhary, Chairperson FICCI FLO JKL, was accompanied by Varuna Anand, Rupika Sahai, Sona Mehta, Nandita Bajaj, Shipra Aggarwal, CA Samriti Kohli, Neha Mahajan, Purnima Chowdhary, Ritika Mahajan and Pooja Puri.

FICCI FLO JKL and JKMPCL are committed to continuing their efforts to promote financial literacy among women in Jammu and Kashmir, with a shared goal of empowering women to make informed financial decisions and secure their financial well-being.

Union Minister Rijju praises Dr Andrabi for Waqf transformation in J&K during Waqf Amendment Bill discussion in Parliament

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: During the discussion on Waqf Amendment Bill in Parliament, Union Minister of Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijju praised Chairperson J&K Waqf Board, Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi for her transformation in J&K Waqf Board during the past three years, when for the first time ever J&K got its



first Board under Central Waqf Act in 2022.

Dr Darakhshan became the first Female Chairperson of any Waqf Board ever and her tenure along with her team of newly appointed well educated team of Board Members bulldozed the old ailing Waqf management system in J&K which was full of loop-holes and leakages, and there was no development at the shrines

and mosques.

Dr Andrabi amid huge criticism from the politicians who used to manipulate Waqf assets and revenues and other beneficiaries, reformed the whole system and ushered in a new era of development and transformation in Waqf in whole of J&K. Andrabi today expressed her gratitude for the Union Minister

for praising her for the exceptional work done by J&K Waqf Board in J&K.

"This is the endorsement of our dedicated work and Honourable Union Minister has infused in us all energy beyond words. Team Waqf J&K has worked hard and Inshallah the transformative work will go on with more zeal & dedication", said Andrabi.

Sakeena Ito reviews performance, functioning of JKBOSE

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Ito, on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the performance and functioning of Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE).

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary Education and Chairman JKBOSE, Shantamanu; Director School Education Jammu /Kashmir, Special Secretary School Education department, Secretary JKBOSE and other concerned officers.

The Minister evaluated key operational aspects of JKBOSE like examination processes, curriculum implementation and other IT interventions. She emphasized on strengthening board's infrastructure and streamlining



Health Minister Sakeena Ito chairing a meeting at Srinagar on Wednesday.

administrative mechanisms to ensure smooth academic operations and other related activities of the board. She urged the JKBOSE to incorporate advanced technological solutions for better accessibility and efficiency in the working of Board. She also underlined the necessity of timely syllabus updates, improved teacher training programs and student-centric policies to meet the evolving educational

needs.

She directed the officers to declare the results of 10th, 11th and 12th classes by the end of this month so that they can join next classes without loss of any academic activities.

She called upon both the Directors to collaborate with JKBOSE for holistic development of education sector across J&K.

Highlighting the need for

robust and student-friendly educational framework across Jammu and Kashmir, Sakeena Ito emphasized on continuous stakeholder engagement and proactive measures to uplift academic standards across the region.

While reviewing other measures of JKBOSE, including Equitable and Inclusive Education facility for Divyang and Children With Special Needs (CWSN), the

Minister called upon both the Directors and JKBOSE authorities to create maximum awareness among these specially abled students about benefits being provided to them. These included flexibility in academics and assessment, exemption in exam fee for CWSN with 40% or more disability of permanent nature, relaxation of 5% in pass percentage in 10th to 12th class Board examination and others. She asked them to organise regular awareness camps, involving PRIs and other tools like mass media for maximising awareness among the target group.

During the meeting, Secretary JKBOSE gave a detailed presentation on functioning of the board. She also informed the Minister about various IT interventions launched by the board for facilitation of students.

In 2012 Centre decided to list long pending Jammu-Poonch Rail Link as National Project entitled for priority with special financial provisions

Now it is time for NC Congress J&K Government to take up Jammu Poonch Rail project with Centre for start as 'National Project'

■ DAYA SAGAR

Member Parliament from Jammu-Poonch and senior BJP leader Jugal Kishore Sharma had on 15th March 2022 while appreciating 2022-23 Union Railway Budget as pro far flung area with huge amount of Rs 140367.13 crores for the development of Railways in the country had requested that since survey for laying of Jammu to Rajouri and Poonch railway line had been completed so provision of funds should be made available soon for laying that new railway line. People of J&K have been since very hopefully waiting to see the inauguration of the laying of the project. But as per information shared by a senior RTI Activist Sh. Raman Sharma of J&K in response to his RTI applications in 2022 the Jammu- Poonch rail project is said to have been 'shelved'/ not taken ahead by Railway Board since project had been found financially unviable. Application of Raman Sharma dated 26-02-2022 was replied 08-03-22 s/d Director Project Management & CPIO < Survey of new broad gauge line between Jammu and Poonch (223km) was completed in 2018. As per survey report the project was unviable. As such the project could not be taken forward.>and Application of Raman Sharma dated

12-03-2022 was replied 15-03-2022 s/d & CPIO < Survey for new line Jammu to Poonch was completed in 2017-18. The project could not be taken forward being economically unviable. Presently there is no proposal under consideration on this line. The survey has been shelved with the approval of Railway Board>.

It was on 7th Jan 2025 that LG J&K Shri Manoj Sinha, expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for dedicating the new Jammu Railway Division, was quoted as having said on 6 Jan 2025 that enhanced connectivity was unlocking J&K's potential and DPR is under examination for new line between Baramulla-Uri (46kms), Baramulla-Kupwara (39kms), Jammu-Poonch via Akhnour- Rajouri (223kms), Manwal-Talra via Rankote, Billawar and Dunera (117kms), Sopore-Kupwara (37kms), Pathankot-Leh (664kms), Bilaspur-Manali-Leh (489kms) and doubling of Baramulla-Banihal line where as surveys were ongoing for the Anantnag-Bijbehara-Pahalgam (78km) and Awantipora-Shopian (28kms) rail lines. And now on March 28, 2025 in a written reply to unstarred Q 3314 by Rajay Sabha MP Shri Gulam Ali from Jammu & Kashmir asking < "Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state: (a) whether

Government has a proposal to establish railway connectivity to Jammu - Rajouri - Poonch? and (b) if so, the towns to be connected under the project and the proposed timelines?" > Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw has been quoted as having said on 28-03-2025 that a survey for a new 223-km rail line between Jammu and Poonch via Akhnour and Rajouri was carried out and the project cost was assessed as Rs 22,771 crore but it has low traffic projections. Before that according to PTI input of 17 Mar 2025 it was also reported that 223- km Jammu-Poonch railway line project had been shelved 'again' for being 'financially unviable' by the central government as per the information given by The Ministry of Railways in response to two applications filed by Jammu-based activist Raman Sharma under the Right To Information (RTI) Act for which the final survey report (estimated cost of Rs 22,771 crore) for laying broad-gauge line between Jammu & border district of Poonch via Rajouri was submitted in 2018 . In was on 13 March 2025 also that the Railway Minister was quoted as having said in Lok Sabha that Rajouri and Poonch



A Look through the Mist

new Jammu-Poonch rail line via Akhnour and Rajouri (223 km) had been completed earlier, with an estimated cost of Rs 22,771 crore and that had not moved forward due to low passenger demand

Earlier also Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw had said in Lok Sabha on 31-07-2024 that a survey for the railway line between Jammu and Poonch via Akhnour and Rajouri was carried out, and the cost of the 223 km long project was assessed at Rs 22,771 crore and while responding to a question raised by Anantnag-Rajouri MP Mian Altaf from J&K about the Government's plans to connect the twin districts of Rajouri- Poonch by way of railway he did not quote any plans for implementing the project .

It is not out of place to mention here that in was as far back as 2012 (22-03-2012) that the then Railway Minister Shri Mukul Roy while replying to the Railway Budget in Lok Sabha had said that the Jammu- Poonch rail link that will pass through treacherous hilly areas

was first approved during the UPA-1 times when Lalu Prasad Yadav was the Minister and a survey was also got conducted by him which was a long pending project of a railway line via historic township of Akhnour which will finally see light of the day with Centre deciding to include it in the list of national projects which are under this category are taken up on priority with special financial provisions. The then Jammu-Poonch MP, Shri Madan Lal Sharma had said in 2012 that in the earlier year's Budget also it had been decided to include the project in the 12th five year plan as it was an important rail link that would connect strategic areas all along the Line of Control. Shri Madan Lal Sharma had in 2012 while welcoming listing the Jammu Poonch rail line project as a national project worth taking up on priority with special financial provisions had informed that Jammu- Poonch rial line will help in the economic development of large number of backward and hill areas in the region opening up new vistas of tourism in the historic Poonch and Rajouri districts and even in 2012 itself demanded that Jammu should be made the Divisional Headquarter of the Railways instead of Ferozepur suggesting that was necessary as with the growing railway net-

work in J&K it will not be feasible to control the areas from Ferozepur.

The information that has been available in public domain all these years about Jammu- Poonch rail project has been giving sweet & bitter tastes to the common man and the J&K Government need to take up the matter with Central Government for taking up the execution immediately (if not held back) and if there are any reservations that may be got dismissed keeping in view the truthful needs of such like projects which have been denied to these areas for decades even after independence . NC Election Manifesto-2024 on page -19 said "We will explore new tourist destination in J&K, including regions in Pir Panjal, Chenab, and other areas."; on page 23 said "In pursuit of lasting peace, we will strive to revive LOC trade and explore possibilities for opening additional routes.". Now it is time for the NC- Congress Omar Abdullah lead J&K Government to take up the Jammu Poonch Rail project with centre for start as first priority shedding all pleas like economic viability / low anticipated passenger traffic.

Continued
(The writer is a Sr Journalist & a known analyst of J&K affairs)