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God willing, we'll initiate regularisation of daily wagers this year: Omar to take J&K out of the present challenges," he said.

He underlined that the government's foremost responsibility was towards the poorest and the most vulnerable sections of society.

"The first responsibility of every government is to help the weakest and the poorest. Through this budget, we have tried to provide comfort to those who need it the most," he said.

Rejecting criticism over not announcing certain populist measures, he stated firmly that the government's priority remains social justice and targeted welfare.

Clarifying a major welfare promise, Omar announced that the government would provide free LPG cylinders from its own budgetary resources, without depending on any central scheme.

"I want to put it on record that we will give these cylinders with our own money and resources. We do not need to take money from the central government for this," he said.

Responding to allegations that the budget contains only centrally-sponsored schemes, the chief minister highlighted several unique initiatives funded directly through the J&K budget.

"We have said that those who have lost both parents, or who have lost the sole breadwinner, will be declared orphans. If they are not covered under any other scheme, they will receive Rs 4,000 per month," he said.

"Similarly, scholarships for tribal children and poor students have been introduced where no other coverage exists," he said and recalled the success of free bus rider-ships for women announced last year.

"This was not a Government of India scheme. We introduced it through our own budget, and it has been very successful," he said.

"This year, the government has extended free ridership relief to persons with disabilities," he added.

He also spoke about expanding environment-friendly EV bus service while ensuring balanced growth for other transport sectors.

"If we can make EV buses reach more areas, autos and taxis will also run. By closing one thing, we cannot increase the economy," he said.

Refuting claims that the budget was shrinking, Omar clarified expenditure figures and said misleading comparisons were being drawn.

"It is wrong to say we have spent only 12 per cent. If we look only at capital expenditure, it has reached 36 per cent, and by March 31 we will bring it close to last year's level," he informed.

He explained that last year's revenue expenditure was higher due to settlement of expensive loans, which was not the case this year.

"To say that we are shrinking our economy is not true at all. We have put our money where it is most needed," he asserted.

Emphasising that Jammu and Kashmir lives in its villages, the chief minister said the budget gives special attention to strengthening the rural economy.

"As long as village areas do not develop, J&K will not develop," he said.

He listed key thrust areas including agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries and dairy development.

He announced a new dairy scheme aimed at increasing milk production by one lakh litres.

"The central government has praised this initiative and even wants to support us further through the National Dairy Development Board," he said.

He also spoke about improving livestock quality, backyard poultry, and enhancing productivity.

In horticulture, he highlighted the introduction of weather-based crop insurance for the first time.

"If there is nothing in our budget, why did this not happen before?" he asked.

During his address, Omar raised serious concerns over provisions of the Indo-US trade deal, stating it could adversely impact Jammu and Kashmir's dry fruit and horticulture economy.

"Tree nuts-walnuts and almonds-are the origin of Jammu and Kashmir. Allowing them duty-free imports raises questions about sympathy for our farmers," he said.

He added that even apples should have been protected.

On the SASCI scheme, the chief minister said it provides Jammu and Kashmir access to interest-free financial support for the next 50 years, calling it a responsible fiscal measure.

"The value of money after 50 years can be imagined. This is a significant relief," he said.

He cited figures from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to explain how states have benefited under the scheme.

He also underscored his government's strong focus on youth empowerment through Mission YUVA, a flagship initiative aimed at creating sustainable livelihood opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing skill development across Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the scheme was designed to harness the potential of young people by supporting start-ups, self-employment ventures and targeted training programmes, enabling the youth to become active partners in the region's economic growth.

Addressing criticism that the budget is Kashmir-centric, he termed such assertions meaningless and misplaced, stating that his government remains equally committed to balanced development across all regions.

DC Kishtwar finalises comprehensive arrangements for Maha Shivratri and holy month of Ramzan

KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 10: To ensure smooth, peaceful and hassle-free observance of the forthcoming Maha Shivratri and the holy month of Ramzan, coordination meetings were held today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma.

Religious heads and representatives from both communities, including the Majlis-e-Shoura Committee, Kishtwar, led by Imam Jamia Masjid Kishtwar Farooq Ahmed Kitchloo Sahib and the Sanatan Dharma Sabha, Kishtwar, led by its President Mahant Ram Sharhan Dass Ji Maharaj, shared issues related to water supply, electricity, market checking and other concerns.

The Deputy Commissioner patiently heard all issues raised.

At the outset, he directed all line departments to ensure that necessary arrangements and public facilities are put in place well in advance.

Stressing the importance of communal harmony, he called for close coordination between the civil and police administra-

tion to ensure peaceful, organised and festive observance of the religious occasions across the district.

The Jal Shakti Department Kishtwar was directed to ensure uninterrupted supply of clean and safe drinking water with proper chlorination. Standby water tankers were ordered to remain available round the clock to address any supply disruptions.

The Executive Engineer, JPDCL Kishtwar, was directed to ensure 24x7 uninterrupted electricity supply, particularly during peak hours of Sehri and Iftari and on the eve of Maha Shivratri. Dedicated linemen and supervisory staff were directed to remain on standby.

The Chief Medical Officer Kishtwar and Medical Superintendent, District Hospital Kishtwar, were directed to ensure that all PHCs, CHCs and sub-centres remain fully functional, adequately staffed and well equipped. Special medical camps were directed to be established at Gorishankar Mandir and Shiv Mandir on the eve of Maha Shivratri.



The Police Department was directed to ensure adequate deployment of security personnel in Kishtwar town and other subdivisions and tehsils. Foolproof security arrangements were ordered at all religious places where large congregations are expected.

names deleted from their previous polling stations or constituencies. If they could not apply for shifting of their names before the deletion, they can now apply for inclusion at their new address under this provision," an official said.

Applications can be filed with the final electoral roll at the end of the SR exercise being published, he added.

The final electoral roll comprises nearly 1.25 crore men, 1.24 crore women and 343 third gender voters.

At the end of claims and objections, the final roll has been published with a total of 2.49 crore voters, a decrease of 0.97 per cent from the draft roll, said a statement issued by the office of the Assam Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

Within three hours, reduced from 36 hours, according to a

gazette notification issued by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY).

User grievance redressal timelines have also been shortened.

The rules require mandatory labelling of AI content.

Platforms enabling creation or sharing of synthetic content must ensure such content is clearly and prominently labelled and embedded with permanent metadata or identifiers, where technically feasible, it said.

Calling for ban on illegal AI content, it said platforms must

deploy automated tools to prevent AI content that is illegal,

deceptive, sexually exploitative, non-consensual, or related to false documents, child abuse material, explosives, or impersonation.

Intermediaries cannot allow removal or suppression of

AI labels or metadata once applied, it said.

In the final list, over 2.43 lakh names were deleted from the draft roll, according to the statement.

The draft list, published on December 27 last year, had 2.52 crore enrolled voters.

The Assam assembly elections are due in a few months.

ECI extends SIR in poll-bound

Bengal by 2 weeks

stalling of special intensive revision (SIR) of voter rolls in 12 states, but said it was open to suggestions to ensure genuine voters are not left out.

The CJI-led bench extended by a week the February 7 deadline for submission of documents by voters issued notice by EC, including 1.36 crore voters categorised under "logical discrepancy".

It also sought a personal affidavit from the Bengal DGP on EC's charge of TMC functionaries making attempts to derail SIR. "We hope the state remembers the laws of the land," it said.

The bench of CJI Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria, which had heard West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee passionately argue for discontinuing SIR, frowned upon the state govt for not providing the names of 8,500 group B cadre officials to EC for assisting electoral revision officers (EROs) and assistant EROs in the massive document verification work.

The displeasure had a dramatic effect as the West Bengal government provided the list within minutes to EC in the court and said it would verify the suitability of the officials.

The court also dismissed the fear expressed by Banerjee's counsel Shyam Divan who told the bench that the process adopted by EC would lead to mass exclusion of voters given the fact that 50 per cent of the cases of voters facing "logical discrepancy" scrutiny are misspelling of names, which happened due to translation errors.

"This is a speculative apprehension," the bench said, and allayed it by saying suitable officials, inducted by EC from among the 8,500 officers provided by the state government, would assist the EROs and AEROs about the cases where notices have been issued merely because of spelling errors in names and facilitate their inclusion in voter lists.

India, China discuss trade concerns, stress peace to rebuild ties

sues".

Though Jaiswal did not elaborate on the "sensitive issues", it is understood that the Indian side has been concerned over China's export control measures relating to rare earth minerals.

An Indian readout of the Misri-Ma meeting said the discussions primarily "focussed on the recent progress made in stabilising and rebuilding bilateral ties and ways to take bilateral engagement forward." "Both sides underscored the importance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas for overall progress in bilateral relations".

"They reiterated their commitment to implement the guidance provided by their leaders including on the need to proceed from a political and strategic direction to approach issues and concerns related to bilateral trade," it said.

The MEA said Misri noted the successful resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and hoped for the continued expansion of the scale of the Yatra.

"Both sides recognised the need for an early conclusion of an updated air services agreement. The two sides agreed to continue to take practical steps for visa facilitation and promote people-to-people contacts," it said.

Misri and Ma also discussed various regional and international issues.

In the last few months, India and China have initiated a series of measures to normalise their relations after ending the military face-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in October 2024.

2 IAS officers transferred, posted

hankar Pratyush Pathak. The decision has been taken in the interest of administration, says the order.

Govt makes AI-generated sexual abuse images punishable

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