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LA impasse ends after CM Omar withdraws his 'remarks'

"I did not mention any of their relatives. However, their field commander (LoP) dragged my parents and my late grandfather into the matter. But let that also go. I am willing to leave that aside," he said.

"Your field commander left, but I would not. I care about the Opposition MLAs and want them not to miss raising issues concerning their electorate," Omar said before leaving the House again.

The CM's regret paved the way for restoration of order in the assembly which had witnessed repeated disruptions by BJP members.

"I care as much about my MLAs as I care about them. If I say that I am the elected chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, then I represent the voters here (treasury benches) as well as their voters (opposition).

"This morning, all their questions were pending. It would have been very easy for us; there were many questions that might have been difficult for us to answer. Now, because of this commotion, those questions will remain unanswered. And the Minister rightly said that departments like education, health, and social welfare are very important. I do not want their voters to feel ignored," he said.

Addressing the Speaker, the chief minister said, "I leave it to you - if in my speech yesterday I used any unparliamentary word, you may expunge it from the record. I have no objection."

Earlier, as the House assembled for the day, BJP legislator Sham Lal Sharma stood up and demanded that the Leader of the House should apologise for his remarks or a statement be made by the speaker in absence of the chief minister.

"Such an incident has no precedent. The language used by the chief minister, the Leader of the House, is not language that can be used in any Parliament... I want to ask the Leader of the House whether he withdraws the words he used yesterday in this House about the BJP legislative party," Sharma said.

"If he does not withdraw them, then we leave it to his conscience, what his inner voice tells him; whether the words used in this House were appropriate or not. If the chief minister is not present here, then I leave it to the Chair and to make a response. It is your responsibility to say something about this matter," he said.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather tried to persuade BJP members to allow the Question Hour to continue and rake up the issue when the Leader of the House was on the floor.

"Whatever happened yesterday was unfortunate. Let the chief minister come and if he wishes he can make a statement. I can't make a statement on his behalf," the speaker said.

Health minister Sakeena Itoo accused BJP members of using unparliamentary words as well, particularly against Deputy chief minister Surinder Choudhary and speaking lies in the house.

Choudhary suggested the chair to examine all the unparliamentary words used from both sides and expunge these from the records to continue the proceedings without any disruption.

Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma opposed the suggestion and refused to budge and later led the walkout, chanting slogans like "derogatory sarkar hai hai and unparliamentary sarkar hai hai" besides 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'.

Pandemonium broke out in the House during Abdullah's speech on Tuesday when BJP members objected to some of his remarks against them and demanded an apology. Abdullah was winding up the discussion on the Union Territory's Budget presented on February 6 when BJP members termed certain remarks made by him "unparliamentary."

'Agri First' policy will ensure developed India, Aatma Nirbhar J&K: LG

novation.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has envisioned a future where every plate in the world features at least one Indian dish. The day this milestone is achieved, the agricultural sector will emerge as the largest contributor to a Viksit Bharat," he said.

The LG stated that Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while chairing a high-level review meeting during his recent visit to the UT, had also reiterated the Government of India's commitment to boosting the J&K's dairy sector by prioritising 2 lakh liters per day milk processing capacity through National Dairy Development Board (NDBB).

He directed officials, SKUAST and experts to deploy IoT sensors and satellite imagery to create digital farm twins which will enable precision irrigation that slashes water use by 50-60 pc.

He called for building farmer-centric AI tools that boost yields 15-30 pc, cut input costs by 50 pc, and deliver real-time soil, crop health, and nutrient data to small and marginal farmers.

"AI-technology will revolutionise agriculture and allied sectors. We need viable, affordable, high-impact solutions designed for small and marginal farmers in J&K UT," the LG said.

He also directed officials and SKUAST to establish vil-

Divisional Commissioner Honors Lambardar for Heroic Role in 'Operation Sindoor 2025'

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local community. His proactive role in maintaining communal harmony, assisting displaced families, and coordinating relief efforts in affected border areas was in-

strumental in ensuring public safety and stability.

During the felicitation, the Commissioner lauded Digras bravery, and said that he played a pivotal role in the

success of this critical operation. Through his tireless efforts in mobilizing community support, coordinating logistics, and ensuring the welfare of all, he has exemplified true spirit of selfless service and leadership. He said, his actions not only strengthened the village's resilience but also inspired everyone around him, setting a benchmark for exemplary public service. He is grateful for Digras unwavering commitment and the positive impact he has made on society.

Lambardar Naresh Digras expressed his gratitude for the recognition, reaffirming his commitment to the service of the nation and the people of Jammu.

the provisions of the SCST Act to be established, several elements must be present.

The bench said under the SC/ST Act the accused must have knowledge that the victim belongs to a scheduled caste or scheduled tribe or that the property belongs to such a person.

"In view of the requirements of the sections proposed to be charged..., we are at a loss to understand that when the trial court itself acknowledges that none of the statements under Section 161 CrPC, state the specific slurs uttered by the accused with the intent to insult threaten or kill, then how is it found, on the same bundle of evidence, and with the same level of scrutiny thereof, that the alleged acts of the accused were informed by caste awareness.

"There does not appear to be any other material on record either, to establish knowledge on part of the accused. Once the knowledge on part of the alleged offender is in question, it is but certain that the charge cannot stand," the top court said.

The bench said curiously, the impugned judgment of the high court, although running into eighteen pages, does not deal at all with the charge under SC/ST Act and all that is said, is that the trial court has 'assigned elaborate reasons'.

"As demonstrated above, those reasons are lacking and insufficient. Only for the reason that on a facial analysis of the evidence placed on record, some of the charges of the IPC, appear to be met, the SC/ST sections have also been charged against the accused," it said, adding that there is also no averment whatsoever that the complainant was a member of the SC/ST community.

The bench ordered that the charges upon the accused in so far as the SC/ST Act stand quashed and remitted the matter back to the trial court to proceed in accordance with law regarding the other charges framed against the accused.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal and advocate Sumeer Sodhi appeared for Rai, an ophthalmologist from Madhya Pradesh and one of the whistleblowers in the VYAPAM examination scam.

The incident took place on November 15, 2022, at village Dharad in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district during a programme organised on the occasion of Birsa Munda Jayanti for the unveiling of a statue of Bhagwan Birsa Munda.

It was alleged that Rai stopped the vehicles of a MP, an MLA, the collector and other officials. The FIR lodged by a person called Vikas Pargi alleged that a group blocked the road for nearly one hour, abused the lawmakers and engaged in a scuffle with police personnel who attempted to clear the way.

Reservation report sent to Centre: Sakeena Itoo

On December 10, 2024, the government had constituted a cabinet sub-committee to look into grievances raised by various sections of aspirants against the existing reservation policy in the Union Territory and submitted it to the LG in October last year.

Relying to discussion on grants for departments of health, social welfare and education in the legislative assembly, the minister said the government had taken a serious & consultative approach on the reservation issue and assured that the interests of youth were kept at the centre of deliberations.

"After cabinet discussion and approval, the report was submitted to the LG. The day before yesterday, the chief minister said in his speech here that the LG has forwarded it to the home minister," Itoo said.

"Now, whatever decision is taken there, when the file comes back to us, it will be placed before the public," she said.

She said several representations were received by CM Omar Abdullah after formation of the government, following which a sub-committee comprising three ministers was constituted to examine the issue.

"The committee held consultations with delegations from different regions, including Rajouri, Srinagar, Barumulla, Jammu and Kathua," she said.

"We met delegations across political lines and prepared a detailed report after consultations. The report was submitted to the government, examined by departments and discussed again before final submission," she said.

The minister said that the report was subsequently approved by the Cabinet and forwarded to the LG, who has further sent it to the Union Home Ministry for consideration.

She said that the matter is currently confidential and under examination, but assured that the government will place the report in the public domain once it is returned after a final decision. "We have worked sincerely on merit and kept youth welfare in mind rather than indulging in vote politics," she added.

The minister also thanked members of the House for participating in discussions on grants of her departments and raising constituency-specific issues, assuring that all concerns would be examined for necessary follow-up.

She said the Budget 2026-27 presented by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reflects inclusive growth and strong focus on education, healthcare, social welfare and women empowerment, aimed at improving service delivery and strengthening public welfare across Jammu and Kashmir.

Reservations have become a major issue in J&K following the Central government's decision to add more communities to the reserved category and expand quotas in the UT over the past five years.

There have been growing objections to the Centre's move to push the reservation quota to 70 per cent in J&K, following last year's announcements introducing a separate 10 per cent reservation for Paharis and other tribes and enhancing the OBC quota to eight per cent.

US used Pakistan, then threw it away like toilet paper: Pak Def Min

said.

In the post-2001 period, he said, Islamabad aligned itself with Washington in the US-led Afghan war. While US withdrew from the region, Pakistan was left with radicalisation and strained economy, he added.

He argued against the claim that Pakistan's role in the Afghan wars was based on religious commitment.

He told lawmakers that "two former military dictators (Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf) had joined the war in Afghanistan, not for the sake of Islam, but to appease a superpower."

"Terrorism is a blowback of the mistakes committed by

dictators in the past," he added.

50 pc polling stations considered 'risky', CCTVs installed

polling centres in Dhaka, 1,614 were risk-prone.

However, the army, in a media briefing earlier, said they have identified two centres in Dhaka city to be "risky".

Officials said policemen would use body-worn cameras for the first time at these specific locations.

EC data showed that first-time voters made up some 3.58 per cent of the total 1,27,700,597 voters.

The polls are being held simultaneously along with a referendum on a complex 84-point reform package.

The contest is mainly between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its once ally, Jamaat-e-Islami.

Chief adviser Muhammad Yunus' interim government last year disbanded prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and barred it from contesting the polls.

A series of pre-poll surveys conducted in the past two months by consulting firms, research organisations and think tanks suggest that the BNP was the frontrunner and that its new chairman, Tarique Rahman, is in pole position to be the next prime minister.

Hasina's Awami League government was ousted in a student-led violent street protest, dubbed the July Uprising, on August 5, 2024.

Ladakh has potential to become India's first AI region: Kavinder

Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The summit reflects a collective effort to use AI for inclusive growth and sustainable development, reinforcing Ladakh's role in shaping India's national AI agenda," he said.

Gupta underlined that AI must remain people-centric, empowering citizens, strengthening government-public trust, and fostering inclusive growth. "Technology should serve people, not the other way around," he said, emphasising that AI solutions must focus on improving the lives of all sections of society.

He outlined Artificial Intelligence as a practical solution for sustainable tourism, agriculture/animal husbandry, healthcare, education/skill development, energy/water management, disaster management, infrastructure, governance, citizen services, and space/astronomy-enhancing quality of life and service reach.

He also highlighted Ladakh's unique position as a geographically remote yet strategically vital, environmentally fragile yet naturally and culturally rich, where traditional development models face limitations, but AI offers opportunities to transform challenges.

The LG also highlighted the significant potential of AI to transform economic opportunities for Ladakh's youth, who constitute nearly 60 pc of the population.

AI, he said, can drive innovation, skill development, entrepreneurship, and economic progress, overcoming the limitations of geographic remoteness.

He pointed out that Ladakh's cold climate offers a natural advantage for energy-efficient AI data centers, while the region's vast renewable energy potential-including solar, hydro, geothermal, and hydrogen sources-could power advanced AI infrastructure with minimal carbon impact.

Gupta emphasised that Ladakh's governance framework, supported by strong road networks and aligned with national missions, is business- and innovation-friendly. However, he noted that high-speed data connectivity remains a priority to fully realize AI's potential. He proposed the creation of an AI Centre of Excellence in Ladakh to develop tailored solutions, establish data standards, and serve as a global model for high-altitude and border regions.

He called for collaboration among government, industry, academia, and civil society, urging Ladakh to emerge not just as a consumer of technology but as a creator of AI solutions that enhance governance, empower citizens, and preserve the region's unique cultural and environmental heritage.

"Ladakh's future will not shape itself; together, starting today, we will build it," he affirmed.

Earlier, the LG launched e-Seva Model and Village Assessment Module portals for efficient, transparent government services and accessible governance.

Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra credited the LG's initiative, noting PM Modi's declaration that AI is "writing the code for humanity in this century," paradigm shift from computing-based intelligence assessment, perils of excessive AI usage diminishing thinking abilities and impacting jobs, need for natural-artificial intelligence balance, and youth opportunity to learn AI skills turning adversity into advantage.

Administrative secretary, IT, Shashanka Ala described the Summit as prelude to New Delhi's main AI Impact Summit, briefing sessions on AI in Governance, Transforming Education through AI, Innovation Infrastructure, Leveraging AI for Accessible/Efficient Healthcare, full-stack sovereign AI including tourism applications, talks by Rigo Mind and Acres of Ice.

She highlighted key takeaways, required institutional mechanisms, background rationale, three flagship pillars (government processes re-engineering, climate resilience green platform, inclusive edge AI solutions), implementation roadmap, and expected 2026 outcomes.

NIC consultant Rizgin Namgyal delivered vote of thanks.

Among those present during the event were Ladakh DGP Mukesh Singh, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ladakh Prof Saket Kushwaha, Directors/Head of Departments, senior government officials, students, and speakers from different parts of the country.

Deputation of 2 IAS officers extended

MUT Cadre (Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir).

According to official orders issued by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Personnel and Training, the ACC has granted a one-year extension to Basharat Qayoom from Jharkhand Cadre to AGMUT Cadre beyond February 23, 2026, in relaxation of the extant policy. The approval was issued vide order dated February 10, 2026, following a reference from DoPT dated January 28, 2026.

In a separate order, the ACC also approved the extension of inter-cadre deputation tenure of Athar Aamir-ul-Shafi Khan from Rajasthan Cadre to AGMUT Cadre for a period of one year beyond February 15, 2026, also in relaxation of the existing policy.

Both orders were issued by the Department of Personnel and Training after due approval from the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.