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Zoning rectification, data verification delayed timeline: Omar

BJP MLA Yudvir Sethi contended that despite one-and-a-half years of the government being in office, the Jammu Master Plan-2032 was yet to be approved. "When the entire exercise has been completed by the government, why is the cabinet sitting over it? They have failed to approve it," he said.

The chief minister had yesterday told the House that the government had notified master plans of two capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar, besides Udhampur and Katra towns, while the formulation of GIS-based master plan was approved for 25 more towns.

The information was shared by him in the J&K Legislative Assembly, in a written reply to the National Conference MLA from Patti, Javaid Riyaz Bedar.

"The government has notified master plans of Jammu and Srinagar capital cities and Udhampur and Katra towns as of now. Under AMRUT 2.0, 5 more towns, including Patti, have been approved for the formulation of GIS-based master plans. The work is at different stages in respect of each city," he had said in a written reply to a question by MLA Javaid Riyaz Bedar.

"Master plans for major tourism development authorities in the Union Territory, including Patnitop, Pahalgam, Sonamarg and Gulmarg, have already been formulated, notified and are under implementation to ensure planned development, infrastructure upgradation and systematic beautification of these tourist destinations by tourism department," Omar, who is also the minister in-charge of Housing & Urban Development Department, had stated.

Randhawa's claim of valley people encroaching Jammu land triggers uproar

Kashmiris purchase land and construct their houses in Jammu, but they should not construct houses on government land," he added.

Randhawa's claims did not go down well with the ruling NC members.

Itoo rejected the allegations and said encroachment issues should not be viewed through a regional lens and Jammu and Kashmir should not be divided on such grounds.

Randhawa then walked towards the well of the House with some papers in his hands, demanding immediate removal of the encroachments.

Earlier, the minister said that fencing and signboards had been installed to prevent future encroachments and to safeguard the retrieved land.

"Teams comprising junior engineers, patwaris and other field staff regularly visit the areas under their jurisdiction and immediately report any attempt to encroach upon JDA land," she said.

The minister said that JDA had sufficient manpower and, whenever required, Jammu Municipal Corporation, Revenue Department and local police extend full cooperation during eviction and anti-encroachment drives.

On action against erring officials, Itoo assured that appropriate measures, including issuance of warnings, initiation of departmental proceedings, red entries in service books, suspensions and withholding of increments had been taken against delinquent officers and officials of JDA.

"Red entries have been made in the service books of Pankaj Sambyal and Romesh Kumar for their alleged involvement in encroachment of JDA land in Jammu south," she added.

She asserted that responsibility was fixed strictly in accordance with the law after due verification and following the prescribed procedure.

Later, talking to reporters outside the House, Randhawa alleged that the government was hiding the list of encroachers as they belong to the valley.

"Why has the government failed to provide me with the list?" he asked.

Gojri, Pahari taught as mother tongues in schools

classes 1 to 8.

Textbooks for Gojri and Pahari have been developed by JKBOSE and are supplied free of cost to government schools in areas with significant Gojri and Pahari-speaking populations. Additional copies are also made available in the open market.

Officials clarified that there were currently no directions to introduce Gojri or Pahari as full-fledged subjects across all schools in the Union Territory.

The government said teaching these languages as mother tongues aims to preserve cultural heritage and support education in native languages for children in the relevant regions.

Only 3 town planners for 40 ULBs in valley: Govt

Omar Abdullah, who holds the charge of housing and

Kanuyian ZEO organises awareness programme on inclusive education

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
POONCH, FEB 13

In a significant step towards promoting equitable learning, the Zonal Education Office Kanuyian organised an Awareness Programme under Inclusive Education at Government High School Kanuyian. The programme was held under the guidance of Zonal Education Officer Sh. Maqbool Hussain to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children, particularly children with Special Needs (CWSN).

Neeraj Sharma (DySP HQ) graced the occasion as Chief Guest. In his address, he lauded the efforts of Zone Kanuyian and underscored the importance of inclusive and equitable education in shaping a progressive and compassionate society.

The Guest of Honour Prof.



S. Jagbir Singh, President (Pritam Spiritual Trust) emphasised the need for empathy, understanding and collective community support to strengthen inclusive education initiatives.

Headmaster Sh. Gulzar Hussain, Resource Persons Mr. Abrar Ahmed and Madam Sada Kousar, Zonal Coordinator Shri Ajay Kumar

urban development department) said the ratio of town planner to ULBs in Kashmir stands at 1:12.

The government said there were 40 ULBs in the region, i.e. 10 municipal councils and 30 municipal committees.

Responding to a query on whether NOCs from TPO were mandatory for execution of developmental works, the government said section 203 of the Municipal Act 2000 and the J&K Unified Building Bye-laws 2021 mandate that no construction or material alteration of any building be carried out without sanction from the municipality.

It also cited Clause 2.18 of the J&K Building Bye-laws which requires NOCs from various departments including the Town Planning Organisation.

To another question on whether the government intends to deploy a resident architect or engineer in each local body, the reply was in the negative.

However, it said the town planning organisation has been reorganised to create a district cadre to support preparation and implementation of master plans for every town.

The reply did not indicate any timeline for filling the vacancies or augmenting the existing workforce.

Public health can't be compromised: Speaker

standard cheese across the Union Territory.

Replying to a clubbed question from National Conference (NC) MLAs Saifullah Mir, Mubarak Gul, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah and Hasnain Masoodi, Health Minister Sakeena Itoo informed the assembly that more than 12,183.5 kg of rotten meat, worth over Rs 29.19 lakh, was destroyed during 1,676 inspections across Jammu and Kashmir during 2025-26, up to December 2025.

In addition, she said 7,665 kg of adulterated cheese worth more than Rs 16.32 lakh was seized in Jammu region.

A total of 144 samples of meat and meat products and 173 samples of cheese were lifted for analysis at food laboratories within and outside Jammu and Kashmir, Itoo said.

The reports for all the 144 meat and meat product samples have been received, with one declared sub-standard and 17 found unsafe. Similarly, reports have been received for 157 of the 173 cheese samples. Forty-seven of the samples have been declared sub-standard and one was found unsafe, the minister said.

Itoo acknowledged a shortage of technical manpower in both food-testing laboratories in the Union Territory - one each in Srinagar and Jammu - stating that against the 19 sanctioned posts in each, 11 are vacant. However, she said the 22 vacant posts will be referred to recruiting agencies once the recruitment rules are finalised.

To curb food adulteration and safeguard public health, the food safety department has intensified enforcement by conducting regular inspections of food establishments, lifting and testing samples through notified laboratories, and taking strict action against violators, including suspension or cancellation of licences, penalties and prosecution, the minister said.

She said action has been initiated against 18 food-business operators found involved in the sale of unsafe meat and meat products in various districts, including Srinagar and Jammu, with most of the cases currently under process.

In a supplementary to the main question, MLA M Y Tarigami and BJP's Balwant Singh Mankotia made suggestions and sought more details on enforcement action, inter-departmental coordination, legal follow-up and preventive measures to ensure that such incidents are not repeated.

As the minister acknowledged several shortcomings, including the government's lack of authority over police to enforce strict action, the speaker intervened and urged her to plug the loopholes by bringing necessary amendments to the law governing food safety and food products.

"If you feel that the current provisions are not sufficient to end this trend, then why does the government not move a bill to amend the Act? The government should amend it and increase the powers of the food safety department and make those powers more effective so that no complaints arise in this regard," the speaker said, stressing that public health cannot be compromised.

Mir termed the issue "extremely important for the people of Jammu and Kashmir". The NC MLA questioned how such consignments crossed toll posts and sought clarity on the role of police, food safety authorities and municipal bodies.

Shah, Masoodi and Gul also echoed concerns about systemic weaknesses in policy implementation, highlighting staff shortages, inadequate local testing infrastructure and delays in receiving reports from outside laboratories.

They called for stronger punitive provisions, includ-

ing sealing of businesses involved in adulteration.

Tarigami called for clearer delineation of powers and stronger coordination with police, suggesting that a specialised enforcement mechanism could be considered.

Mankotia urged the government to bring amendments in the current session of the Assembly itself, instead of waiting for a private member's bill.

Kavinder reiterates commitment to Ladakh's overall development

quested for the establishment of a memorial in the name of her husband ASI Sonam Dorjee, who had laid down his life while fighting terrorists in Srinagar in 1998.

A delegation from Chuchot Gongma led by former Councillor Mirza Hussain raised issues related to infrastructure development and basic amenities in the village.

A delegation from Taisuru highlighted various issues related to the development of Damsna village and the promotion of tourism activities in the area.

A delegation comprising members of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad informed about a 13-day tour programme organised for 30 students from Ladakh to different states, starting from February 26.

The LG assured the delegations that their issues would be looked into. He reiterated the UT administration's commitment to working for the overall development of the people of Ladakh so that they had access to all basic facilities.

He said that utmost priority would be given to ensuring accessible healthcare, education and telecommunication facilities, along with the promotion of tourism activities for the livelihood of the people of the region.

2 ex-ministers pass away

departed soul. A 2-minute silence was also observed.

Members across party lines acknowledged his contribution to public welfare and his role in articulating the concerns of people from far-flung and high-altitude areas.

Peerzada was forest minister and represented Qazigund constituency. He died after a prolonged illness. He had been undergoing treatment for some time and breathed his last here.

He was the uncle of the sitting Qazigund MLA Peerzada Feroze Ahmad Shah.

First leg of Budget Session over; LS to meet again on Mar 9

President's address.

The prime minister did not speak in the House but later responded to a similar debate in the Rajya Sabha.

The Opposition also submitted a notice to move a resolution to remove Birla as Speaker.

Taking moral grounds, Birla decided not to chair House proceedings till the issue relating to his removal was settled.

The resolution seeking Birla's removal as the speaker is likely to come before House in the second part of the session beginning March 9.

With Gandhi insisting on speaking before the House took up debate on the Union Budget, the House saw uproarious scenes leading to frequent adjournments.

An anguished Birla had told the House that disruptions wasted 19 hours and 13 minutes of House time till last week.

Later, participating in the debate on the Union Budget, Gandhi accused the government of failing to protect India's interest while signing an interim trade agreement with the United States.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman countered the allegations levelled by the LoP, saying it was the previous Congress government which sold the country at World Trade Organisation (WTO).

A Bill to amend the Industrial Relations Code with an aim to bring legal clarity, was passed by Parliament in the first part of the session.

The Bill would help avoid any "future unwarranted complication" over the continuity of certain laws replaced by the Industrial Relations Code of 2020.

It is the first bill to be introduced and passed by Parliament in the Budget session.

The Budget session will conclude on April 2.

Meanwhile, Rajya Sabha proceedings were also adjourned till March 9, as Parliament went into a three-week-long recess to allow standing committees to scrutinise Budget proposals.

The Upper House met for Zero Hour at 11 am and was adjourned at 1 pm after the scheduled Question Hour.

Sitharaman presented the Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27 in Parliament on February 1.

Govt plans modern

development for Qazigund

priority for planned development.

The contours of the development plan for Qazigund include widening and strengthening of roads and streets, improvements to drainage and footpaths, augmentation of water supply, development of sewerage and sanitation systems, and implementation of solid waste management.

Public amenities and urban services were being up-

graded, while landscaping and beautification efforts are also planned to enhance the town's aesthetics.

According to the government, these works are being executed and proposed under various Central and Union Territory government schemes, in accordance with approved norms, technical feasibility, and availability of funds.

The development is being carried out in phases to ensure balanced growth, environmental sustainability, and improved quality of life for residents, while catering to commuters and tourists entering the valley.

Urban Local Bodies and line departments are tasked with implementing the projects under the urban planning framework, the reply added.

BJP got 82 pc of Rs 3,826 cr disbursed by electoral trusts: ADR

nearly 49.89 per cent of the total contributions.

Elevated Avenue Realty LLP was the single-largest donor, contributing Rs 500 crore, followed by Tata Sons Private Limited (Rs 308.1324 crore), Tata Consultancy Services Limited (Rs 217.6216 crore) and Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (Rs 175 crore).

Sector-wise, manufacturing accounted for the largest share of donations at Rs 1,063.128 crore (27.78 per cent), followed by real estate (Rs 629.17 crore or 16.44 per cent) and communication/IT/telecom (Rs 451.8582 crore or 11.81 per cent).

State-wise, Maharashtra emerged as the largest source of contributions at Rs 1,225.4293 crore, followed by Telangana (Rs 358.25 crore), Haryana (Rs 212.9 crore), West Bengal (Rs 203.8538 crore) and Gujarat (Rs 200.50 crore). However, the ADR noted that the donors' addresses were not disclosed for contributions worth Rs 1,065.2048 crore, the bulk of which went to Prudent Electoral Trust.

The report also flagged compliance issues. Five of the 15 trusts that submitted annual reports declared nil contributions in FY25. The contribution reports of five registered trusts - Swadeshi Electoral Trust, AB General Electoral Trust, PD General Electoral Trust, Janta Nirvachak Electoral Trust and Independent Electoral Trust - were not available on the EC's website, the ADR said.

It further pointed out that Harmony Electoral Trust received Rs 35.55 crore but disbursed Rs 35.65 crore - Rs 10 lakh more than it received during the year.

Under the Electoral Trusts Scheme, 2013, notified after amendments to the Income Tax Rules, electoral trusts are set up to receive voluntary contributions from companies and individuals and distribute those to registered political parties in a transparent manner. The approval of such trusts is granted by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and is subject to periodic renewals.

Recommending greater transparency, the ADR said trusts that fail to comply with the EC's guidelines should face strict action and that details of corporate political contributions should be placed in the public domain through company disclosures.

The electoral bonds scheme, which had allowed anonymous corporate and individual donations to political parties through banking instruments, was scrapped in February 2024 by the Supreme Court, which held it unconstitutional and violative of the voters' right to information.

ASI held in graft case

As the complainant in case his demand was not fulfilled, officials said.

Upon receipt of the complaint, a discreet verification was conducted, which *prima facie* substantiated the allegations. Consequently, a case under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 was registered at ACB police station, Srinagar, and investigation was set into motion, officials said.

During the course of investigation, an ACB team laid a successful trap and apprehended the ASI red-handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 8,000 from the complainant, the officials added.

The accused was immediately taken into custody and the bribe money was recovered on the spot in the presence of independent witnesses. Further investigation in the case was in progress.

8,639 complaints against sitting judges since 2016: Law Min tells LS

Justices of high courts competent to receive such complaints, he explained.