

BUDGET SESSION 2026: QUESTION HOUR

House passes Grants of IT, FCS&CA, ARI, Transport, YSS, S&T departments

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 20

The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly today passed the grants for key departments through voice vote, after daylong debate by the members in the House.

The approved grants included Rs. 7,462.91 Lakh for Information Technology (IT), Rs. 54,389.17 Lakh for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Rs. 3,798.68 Lakh for ARI & Training, Rs. 12,646.11 Lakh for Transport, Rs. 68,009.76 Lakh for Youth Services & Sports (YSS) and Rs. 18,972.06 Lakh for Science & Technology (S&T) Department.

Winding up the discussion on the Demands for Grants, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Transport, Science & Technology Information Technology Youth Services & Sports ARI & Training, Satish Sharma, expressed gratitude to all the legislators for their active participation and valuable inputs. He stated that the feedback and recommendations would form the basis for further strengthening of the policy decisions, ensuring effective execution and impactful implementation of projects.

Satish Sharma said that the members have shown keen interest in deliberating upon matters concerning the departments under his charge. "The questions raised and the cut motions moved have already enabled the departments to share the details sought. Yet, your valuable suggestions remain a guiding light, reminding us that the pursuit of excellence is never complete and there is always room for further refinement" he added.

"Improvement, after all, is a collective endeavour. Together, through dialogue and constructive criticism, we can strengthen the functioning of these departments and ensure that they serve the people with greater efficiency and purpose" he maintained.

"On this occasion, I shall take the opportunity to touch upon each of the departments entrusted to me. I will seek not only to elaborate on the issues raised during today's discussions but also to respond to the concerns expressed through the questions of members", he emphasized.

Referring to the important role of the ARI & Trainings department, he said that it serves as a catalyst for the administrative reforms and innovation, promoting a 'Whole-of-Government' approach by ensuring coordination and convergence across departments in implementation of policies and reforms. "Through its reform-driven initiatives, the department is committed to foster a responsive, accountable and citizen-centric administration that strengthens governance and improves public service outcomes", he added.

This year, the department has launched a single-window online portal for processing Recruitment Rules and introduced the online NDC system. These game-changing digital initiatives have drastically reduced the physical interface, minimized paperwork and accelerated the processing time, thereby enhancing efficiency and transparency, he maintained.

Operating in a mission-oriented framework, the Department is driving systemic change by conducting regular administrative inspections. These inspections aim to identify the procedural delays, eliminate redundant requirements, and remove bottlenecks that hinder effective service delivery", the Minister added.

The Minister also said that in the upcoming financial year, the department of ARI & Trainings will focus on driving administrative reforms and strengthening governance through key priorities like institutional Capacity Building through targeted training programs to enhance skills and competencies, accelerate digitization initiatives to modernize processes besides undertaking re-engineering to improve efficiency and responsiveness.

The Minister highlighted efforts to boost governance, including simplifying rules and procedures, updating Recruitment Rules, and enhancing inter-departmental coordination for seamless policy implementation. Reforms are also underway to simplify rules, adopt outcome-oriented practices, and foster innovation in governance, improving service delivery.

"Constitution of J&K Administrative Reforms Commission to translate the Department's vision into actionable reforms and provide strategic direction for long-term administrative transformation is also underway", he added.

Referring to the importance of the Food and Civil Supplies department, the Minister said that food security is not merely a welfare measure, it is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of

social justice. In this spirit, Jammu and Kashmir has emerged as a national leader in reforming the Public Distribution System, he added.

"Let me inform the House that J&K is among the first States/UTs to fully adopt the Government of India's SMART Public Distribution System, implementing all core components like Ration Card Management System, Supply Chain Management System, Rightful Targeting, Mera Ration Mobile Application and Route Optimization (saving approx. Rs 2 crore annually). These reforms have drastically enhanced transparency, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, ensuring food reaches every deserving household", he emphasized.

The Minister said that presently, 16.4 lakh households comprising 67.39 lakh beneficiaries under NFSA in Jammu & Kashmir are eligible and continue to receive free food-grains every month under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). He said that households receive 35 kg of food-grains per household per month, free of cost, under Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) while Priority Household (PHH) beneficiaries receive 5 kg per person per month free of cost.

"In addition, food grains are made available to Non-Priority Households (NPHH) at highly subsidized rates, ensuring that no deserving family is deprived of essential food support. The department continues to safeguard vulnerable sections from the impact of price fluctuations in the open market", he added.

The Minister said that J&K has achieved 100 percent FPS automation across the UT which has benefited over 102 lakh citizens under multiple schemes. He said that on account of cap on food grain allocation by the Union Government, the bifurcation of Ration Cards has been put on hold. "This concern has been raised by the members of this House time and again.

In this regard, the department is working hard to quantify and project additional allocation demand with the Government of India so that this ban is lifted. Additionally, the department is working out a solution to meet this additional requirement out of the savings post weeding out of duplicities. I am hopeful that in the near future, we will be able to lift the embargo", he maintained.

"I want to inform the House further that we have achieved 100 percent integration of the Migrants Database with the Ration Card Management System in Kashmir Division and Integration in Jammu Division is being done in mission mode, enabling the beneficiaries avail benefits under PDS and have access to various other government welfare schemes.

"Similarly, up-gradation of PoS Machines integrated with weighing-scale using Biometric encryption and iris scanner which is the latest protocol of UIDAI is in its final stage. This will mark J&K as the first UT to shift from L0 to L1 under SMART PDS", he emphasized.

The Minister said that as a sequel, the State Project Implementation Team (SPIT) has been established under SMART PDS project to provide technical guidance and training for up-skilling of the field staff. He said the department has commenced the provision of additional food-grains under SAAY, free of cost, to all eligible AAY beneficiaries with effect from April 2025 onwards, aiming to further strengthen food security for the most economically vulnerable sections of society. Under this scheme, the government is providing approximately 2093.90 tonnes of additional ration every month.

"Creation of new ration cards is to be initiated after 01.04.2026. This requires 100 percent e-KYC in NFSA/Non-NFSA ration cards and cleansing of data base through deletion of fake/bogus ration cards which is on advance stage. This will save food-grains and same can be allocated for creation of new/bifurcation of Ration Cards. In order to enhance FPS viability, the existing FPs are to be rationalized. The process shall be completed shortly, in close coordination with the MLAs giving due consideration to the underlying norms", the Minister informed.

The Minister said that the department also intends to introduce distribution of pulses, oil, millets and other commodities in FPS through NAFED and FPOS to ensure availability of quality items at Fair Price thereby enhancing earnings to FPS dealers. He said that Consumer protection remains a key pillar of good governance. For Grievance redressal powers have been delegated to Assistant and Deputy Controllers to directly file complaints in Consumer Courts.



"A digital platform, e-Jagriti, has been launched in January 2025 streamlining consumer dispute redress. The platform offers paperless complaint filing, case tracking and information access, with an online payment gateway, making consumer justice faster and more accessible," apprised the Minister.

Referring to the initiatives to be initiated under SASCI, an amount of Rs 4.00 crore has been allocated to modernize infrastructure and make Legal Metrology Department more vibrant. "This includes deployment of 20 mobile laboratory-fitted vehicles to reinforce market surveillance and consumer safety", he maintained.

The Minister said that the Petroleum Infrastructure is being augmented across J&K for ensuring energy security. He said that common user Facility at Bajalta with 1.3 Million MT storage capacity is nearing completion and new LPG bottling plant at Jablipura, Anantnag is being explored to enhance the supply resilience.

Referring to Pradhan Mantri Ujwala Yojana-2.0 (PMUY), the Minister said that left over eligible Women shall be provided with LPG connections free of cost, which is over and above the existing 35 lakh connection in the UT.

The Minister said as a part of new initiative, Jammu and Kashmir plans to establish a State Food Commission, which shall act as an ombudsman for effective NFSA implementation. He said that for effective last-mile delivery, new fair price shops and sales centres are being planned in remote, border and difficult areas.

While highlighting the important role of Technology, the Minister said that IT department of Jammu & Kashmir continues to play a pivotal role in advancing the governments' vision of transparent, efficient, inclusive and citizen-centric governance through digital transformation. "Building upon the strong foundations laid in recent years, the department now enters a decisive phase where digital infrastructure, resilience, data-driven governance and service automation converge to deliver measurable outcomes for the citizens", he added.

The Minister said that IT department has consistently pursued a layered and focused digital strategy, anchored in reliable connectivity, robust data infrastructure and secure digital platforms. This approach ensures that technology acts as a true enabler of inclusive growth, equitable service delivery and enhanced administrative efficiency, he added.

"Over the years, the number of online government services has grown significantly, bringing governance closer to the citizens through faceless, paperless, cashless and presence-less service delivery. In the coming financial year, the department shall adopt an outcome-oriented and future-ready digital governance model, guided by the principles of Line to Online, Queue to QR, Ask Only Once, My Data, Secure by Design and Privacy by Default. The Digital J&K vision shall continue to be implemented in a phased manner, following the principle of Think Big, Start Small, Scale Fast", maintained the Minister.

The Minister said that the IT department proposes to implement several transformative initiatives in 2026-27 to strengthen digital infrastructure. These included establishment of IT Parks in Jammu and Srinagar, augmentation of State Data Center (SDC) to support growing digital services and ensure high availability by enhancing compute and storage capacity and modernizing infrastructure. He added that integration with government cloud platforms to enable a hybrid cloud model, ensuring better scalability, reliability and availability of critical government applications will be taken.

"In line with the national target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, JAKEDA is integrating renewable energy into governance and daily life.

About 7,500 government buildings have been solarised with a capacity of 76 MW and work is underway on 2,500 more. By the end of the current financial year, cumulative capacity will reach 320 MW, saving significant electricity expenditure", he maintained.

Under Model Solar Villages program, one village per district is being developed under the PM Surya Ghar Scheme to showcase community-level adoption of solar energy, the Minister said. He added that under PM-KUSUM program, 4,100 Solar Agricultural Pumps have been installed, 800 more are underway, ensuring assured irrigation and reducing diesel dependence.

To boast establishment of Small Hydropower Projects, seven projects of 35.25 MW have been commissioned; 31 projects of 84 MW are under development and preparatory work for 25 more sites is underway, the Minister added.

"An amount of Rs. 18 crore has been allocated for the shrines and tourist locations for Solar Lighting, Rs 10 crore for hybrid solar plants and high-mast lights at playgrounds and public spaces have been allocated. Over 50,000 solar streetlights have been installed in villages across J&K, 20,000 more are being added in the current financial year", informed the Minister.

The Minister said that as a support to Tribal areas, distribution of 12,500 biomass cook-stoves and 2,500 solar home lights has been done. He said that 100 kW floating solar project on Dal Lake has been commissioned, along with pilots for solar EV charging stations.

The Jammu and Kashmir Science, Technology and Innovation Council (JKSTIC) is the backbone of our efforts to promote science, research and innovation. Regional Science Centre, Srinagar, developed at a cost of Rs 182 crore, is nearing completion this year, the Minister added.

"Biotechnology Parks are being set up at Kathua and Handwara at a combined cost of ₹84.66 crore. The Kathua park is complete while Handwara is 75 percent done. An amount of ₹0.50 crore was allocated for operationalization and ₹0.25 crore for demonstration farms," apprised the Minister.

The Minister said that preparatory work on Regional Science Centre, Jammu has also commenced. There are 274 ongoing projects with 77 new Sponsored Research and Extension Programmes sanctioned this year. Besides, 130 scholarships have been awarded this year, with Rs 0.25 crore allocated for scholarships and fellowships, he informed.

"Entrusted with the responsibility of promoting sports culture, engaging youth in constructive activities and creating robust sports infrastructure, the department this year has undertaken several initiatives aimed at enhancing youth participation, organizing national and international sports events and strengthening sports infrastructure at grassroots and institution level", he reiterated.

During the current financial year, a total of 60.85 lakh youth have been engaged in various sports activities, of which, 24.45 lakh have been covered through J&K Sports Council and 36.40 lakh through the directorate of Youth Services & Sports, the Minister informed. The Minister said that at present, 92 Khelo India Centres are operational in which 3000 plus children are being trained for the National and International podiums.

"The department has successfully conducted a number of major events across J&K like 3rd Asian Junior Pencak Silat Championship, 2025, three National level events in the disciplines of Rollball, TenniKoit and Senior National Soft Tennis Championship. Besides, first Water Sports Festival in August 2025, National School Games events, first National Level Sports Conference titled "SRIJAN-J&K Sports (The Making of Legacy)" in January 2026, preparatory activities for conduct of 6th Khelo India Winter Games, conduct of Dastaan-e-mic (open mic activities) in all districts with grand event held at Bahu Plaza Jammu in December, 2025, the Minister maintained.

The Minister said that to boost sports infrastructure development, a total of 216 playfields were completed during the current fiscal. The Olympic standard Swimming Pool at Gindun Rajbagh, has been completed. He said that the first ever certified Rock Climbing Wall at MA Stadium is under progress and shall be completed this year. Besides, two new Youth Hostels at Ganderbal and Khel Gaon Nagrota have been taken up for execution during this fiscal at an estimated cost of Rs. 1541.00 lakh and Rs. 1522.00 lakh respectively, the Minister

added.

The department organized "Rustum-e-J&K", an International-level wrestling event, for the first time at M.A. Stadium, Jammu to promote rural sports in which international wrestlers from Iran, Georgia and Russia participated, informed the Minister.

"With the objective of achieving the status of "Sports Capital of the Country", the department shall be prioritizing major infrastructure projects like completion of Indoor Multipurpose Hall at Khel Gaon Nagrota, establishment of Khel Gaon Srinagar at Hyderpora during the next fiscal while Wushu academy shall be taken up in the first stage during 2026-27", told the Minister.

The Minister said that establishment of sports clubs at school clusters across all the districts for early nurturing and talent identification is being done. Besides, construction of multi-purpose stadium at Jagti Migrant Colony, construction of Volleyball, Kabaddi, Handball and Badminton Courts in Tribal areas for inclusivity of sports is also underway. He said that development of Hockey Turfs for revival of Hockey in areas like Bandal, Samba, Tral and Baramulla, development of playfields at village and block level across the UT including border and tribal areas, establishment of all-weather wrestling akharas for giving fillip to rural sports is also under process.

"Operationalization of Cricket Academies at Srinagar, Udhampur, Anantnag and Jammu besides creation of new four Academies in Ganderbal, Baramulla, Shopian, Poonch, Doda and Samba has also been undertaken", informed the Minister. He apprised that State of Art Kabbadi Centers one each in Jammu Division and Kashmir Division, creation of Badminton Academies one in each division is also being undertaken.

The Minister said that in addition to these initiatives a mega Indoor sport with proper seating facility within the city of Jammu for hosting of National and International events and conventions of sports from time to time is also underway besides creation of Table Tennis Academies one in each division of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister informed that a mega indoor sports complex in Jammu with seating facilities for national and international events and mega sports conventions is also underway. Besides, Table Tennis Academies will also be set up, one in each division of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Lastly, I want to inform the House that long pending selection process of outstanding sports persons has finally been completed and provisional selection list has been issued. Formal appointment orders shall be issued after examining the representations sought", the Minister reiterated. He said that the department is working on the modalities for regularization of Rehbar-i-Khel candidates. The process has been fast-tracked so that regularization orders are issued as per the scheme in the shortest possible time. He added that the department is simultaneously working on conducting DPCs, so that more posts become available for the eligible ReKs for regularization.

The Minister assured the House that all issues and demands raised by members during proceedings or pre-budget consultations are being examined objectively on their merits.

"I further assure that the departments under my charge shall continue to work with commitment, innovation and accountability to fulfil the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir", maintained the Minister.

Last but not the least, I want to express my high gratitude to all the officers and officials who have worked untiringly in compiling the information and making this session of the Assembly a complete success.

Earlier, Abdul Majed Bhat (Larmi), Mir Saifullah, Balwant Singh Mankotia, Hasnain Masoodi, Iftikar Ahmad, Rajiv Kumar Bhagat, Satish Kumar, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi), Altaf Ahmad Wani, Aga Syed Mumtaz Mehdi, Narinder Singh, Salman Sagar, Nizam-ud-Din Bhat, Dr. Sajad Shafi, Qaysar Jamshaid Lone, Vikram Randhawa, Kursheed Ahmad Sheikh, Choudhary Mohammad Akram, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah, Shakti Raj Parihar, Vijay Kumar, Dr. Mohammad Shafi Wani, Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Mir, Devyani Rana, Shabir Ahmad Kullay, Hilal Akbar Lone, Irshad Rasool Kar, Mohan Lal Bhagat, Mir Mohammad Fayaz, Javid Hassan Baig, Kuldeep Raj Dubey and Irfan Hafiz Lone participated in the discussion over Grants.

Later, after assurance by the Minister, the MLAs withdrew their cut motions on the grants.