

JAMMU & KASHMIR

CM lays foundation for Rs 190 cr urban development projects in Srinagar, Budgam

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 25

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today laid the foundation stone for infrastructure and river conservation projects worth over ₹190 crore across Srinagar and Budgam districts, marking a significant push towards urban transformation and environmental sustainability.

Spanning five constituencies, the projects focus on urban beautification, pollution abatement of the Jhelum River, and advanced sewerage treatment infrastructure for Doodh Ganga, reflecting the Government's commitment to improving civic amenities, enhancing climate resilience, and restoring water bodies.

At Rainawari, the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the construction of BAB-UL-SULTAN-UL-AR-IFEEN, a landmark city gateway featuring artistic calligraphy at Rainawari Chowk. Executed by PW (R&B) at a cost of ₹130 lakh, the project aims to enhance the aesthetic and cultural identity of the historic locality.

He said the gateway would not only beautify the area but also highlight its spiritual and cultural significance.

The Chief Minister also laid the foundation of a major environmental initiative at Brari-Nambal Munawarabad for Pollution Abatement and Conservation of River Jhelum at Chuntikul and Gowkadal. The project, under the Housing & Urban Development Department, will be executed by UEED at a cost of ₹7090.68 lakh. It includes the establishment of an 8 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) to significantly reduce untreated discharge into the river.

At the same venue, the Chief Minister laid the foundation for two major sewage treatment projects under H&UDD (UEED) to curb pollution in Doodh Ganga — a 14 MLD STP at Aloo-chi-Bagh, Srinagar (₹5060.47 lakh), and a 6 MLD STP at Mochua, Budgam (₹6772.32 lakh) to treat dry weather



flow from Chadoora to Baghi-i-Mehtab — significantly strengthening wastewater management and environmental protection in the area.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that although projects worth nearly ₹200 crore across five constituencies would ordinarily warrant a large public function, the programme was deliberately kept modest in view of the holy month of Ramzan.

"If we had organised this programme some other time, it would have been garnered huge public participation. But keeping Ramzan in mind, we did not want to cause inconvenience to people, nor delay projects for which the public has been waiting impatiently," he said.

Highlighting the pressure on the Housing & Urban Development Department and the Srinagar Municipal Corporation, he said drainage, sewerage, roads, parks and development of new colonies fall under their mandate.

"Our two capital cities, Srinagar and Jammu, create the first impression of Jammu and Kashmir. Tourists arrive here first. Millions of residents live here. It is our responsibility to ensure the infrastructure in cities reflects the development of this region."

The Chief Minister stressed that inadequate drainage and sewerage systems often result in water-logging after even brief rainfall.

"It rains for one hour and the whole city is under water. This must change, whether through Central schemes, UT Capex, District Capex or new funding schemes like SASCI, our effort is to upgrade Srinagar's infrastructure comprehensively."

Referring to changing climate patterns, he said rainfall distribution has become increasingly erratic.

"We may not see rain for months, and then receive six months' rain in three days. Instead of water percolating into the ground, it flows away, leading to both flooding and water scarcity. We must prepare infrastructure that can withstand changing weather patterns."

Emphasizing water conservation and reuse, he said treated sewage must improve, not degrade, river water quality.

"We must ensure that if treated water enters the river, it improves its quality instead of harming it. Our lakes and canals must regain their former glory."

Recalling Srinagar's historical identity as the "Venice of the East," he added:

"Once, people travelled

through our canals by boat. I want to see our water bodies restored to that standard. Water quality must improve, scarcity must reduce."

The Chief Minister also stressed the need to decongest the city through planned housing colonies in peripheral areas.

"There is immense pressure on the inner city because we have not developed sufficient planned colonies. This year, we intend to take up at least one or two major housing projects with proper roads, drainage, water and electricity infrastructure, so that people willingly move towards the outskirts."

Assuring speedy implementation, he said several projects are ready for inauguration or foundation laying.

"In the next three to three-and-a-half years, when we go back to the people, we want to present a transformed Srinagar — a city with modern infrastructure and renewed character. That is our commitment."

Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLAs Ali Mohammad Dar, Tanvir Sadiq, Sheikh Ahsan Ahmed and Shamima Firdous, Commissioner Secretary Mandeep Kaur, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation Fazlul Haseeb, and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan: SWD organises awareness rally at Thathri

THATHRI, FEBRUARY 25: The Department of Social Welfare today organised a mega awareness rally at Thathri under the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (Drug-Free India Campaign).

The rally was taken out as part of the nationwide campaign led by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, with the objective of sensitizing communities—particularly the youth—about the perils of drug addiction and encouraging positive lifestyle choices.

Participants, including students, officials, civil society members and local residents actively took part in the rally carrying banners and placards displaying powerful messages such as "Say No to Drugs" and "Choose Life, Not Drugs." The event aimed to mobilize collective community action against substance abuse and strengthen preventive efforts at the grassroots level.



During the programme, awareness activities including street plays (Nukkad Natak) highlighting the social and health consequences of drug abuse were presented to educate the public in an engaging manner.

Informative speeches were delivered by officials, teachers, healthcare professionals and individuals, advocating for a drug-free society, emphasizing the importance of awareness, early prevention and rehabilitation.

Pamphlets and informational materials were also distributed among the public to educate them about the ill effects of drug addiction, available counselling services and rehabilitation support mechanisms.

New batch of Desktop Publishing Training begins at SBI RSETI Kishtwar

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 25

In a meaningful step towards promoting skill development and self-employment among rural youth, SBI RSETI Kishtwar today kicked off a new batch of Desktop Publishing (DTP) training.

A total of 25 candidates have been enrolled in this 45-day basic computer course with a focus on Desktop Publishing.

The training has been designed to impart practical computer operation and design skills to unemployed youth, thereby improving their employability and opening doors to self-employment opportunities.

The programme was inaugurated by Assistant General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) Nikhil Sharma, as the chief guest.

The event was also graced by Lead District Manager Harsh Rawal and Director,



RSETI Sanjay Kumar, along with other staff members of the institute.

Addressing the participants, AGM, NABARD, Nikhil Sharma underscored the increasing importance of skill development in today's economic landscape.

He highlighted NABARD's active role in supporting skill enhancement and capacity-building initiatives through RSETIs to empower rural youth and foster sustainable livelihoods.

Director, RSETI Sanjay Kumar spoke about the core

mandate of RSETIs in promoting self-employment through targeted, need-based training programmes.

He assured the trainees of continued handholding and institutional support in their skill development and entrepreneurial journey. The event concluded with an interactive session during which participants shared their enthusiasm and expressed a strong commitment to completing the training successfully.

Director, RSETI Sanjay Kumar spoke about the core

Zero tolerance policy against illegal mining in J&K: Deputy Chief Minister

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 25

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today reiterated the Government's firm commitment to a zero-tolerance policy against illegal mining across Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that strict action will be taken against violators as well as the negligent officials.

During an inspection of the riverbed area near the 4th Bridge over River Tawi, the Deputy Chief Minister took serious note of mining activities allegedly being carried out in violation of established norms.

The Deputy Chief Minister was accompanied by Director Mining, Chief Engineer PWD, ADC Jammu, ASP South Jammu and other senior officers.

Taking serious note of mining issues near the bridge, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the Chief Engineer, PWD, to register a formal complaint and lodge an FIR to ensure stringent legal action against those involved.

"Presently, all mining blocks are non-functional and no extraction activity should be allowed. Any op-



eration within this prohibited zone is illegal and will invite strict action," the Deputy Chief Minister stated.

He emphasized that, as per the existing mining regulations, no extraction is permitted within 500 meters upstream or downstream of a bridge. "This is very unfortunate that mining activities are carried out under the bridge and the concerned have failed to take action. We have adopted a zero-tolerance approach and will not allow such unlawful operations," he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister informed that the Deputy Commissioner, Jammu, who serves as Chairman of the District Task Force on Mining, along with the Senior Superintendent of Police, Jammu and the District Mineral Officer (DMO), have been directed to en-

sure strict enforcement of mining regulations.

He made it clear that no vehicle shall be allowed to transport mining material without valid documentation.

He further directed the immediate seizure of vehicles involved in illegal transportation, imposition of penalties and prompt initiation of appropriate legal proceedings against the violators.

Expressing concern over reports of extraction from non-functional or unauthorized blocks, the Deputy Chief Minister ordered that responsibility be fixed and accountability ensured. He reiterated that mining can only be undertaken in duly identified and approved blocks after completion of all required formalities.

Voicing displeasure over lapses in enforcement, he remarked that officials must act responsibly and proac-

tively. "It is unacceptable that senior authorities are compelled to intervene due to negligence at the field level," he said.

He also underlined that no department, including those engaged in flood control or dredging works, shall undertake any activity without prior approval from the competent authority. Unauthorized deployment of machinery in riverbeds will not be tolerated, he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister expressed confidence that the inspection would lead to visible improvements on the ground and assured the public that the administration remains fully committed to safeguard the natural resources, upholding the rule of law.

During the tour, the Deputy Chief Minister also took stock of ongoing works at the 4th Bridge and called for expediting the pace of work for timely completion.

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Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today felicitated the winners of the Photography and Reel Competition held as part of the inaugural celebrations of the Chrysanthemum Garden in Srinagar.

The felicitation ceremony, organised by the Department of Floriculture, Gardens and Parks, honoured participants for their exceptional creativity and artistic expression in capturing the beauty and grandeur of the majestic garden.

The Chief Minister presented Certificates of Merit along with cash awards to the winners with ₹20,000 as first prize, ₹10,000 as second prize, and ₹5,000 as third prize in each category.

Congratulating the winners, the Chief Minister said such initiatives provide an important platform for creative engagement and youth participation.

"Kashmir's gardens are not merely landscapes of flowers; they are living symbols of our heritage, creativity and cultural pride. Through photography and reels, our youth have beauti-



fully captured the spirit of this garden and shared it with the world," he said.

He added that encouraging artistic expression around nature and public spaces strengthens community bonding and promotes eco-consciousness.

"When our young people use their talent to celebrate

nature, they become ambassadors of Kashmir's beauty and values. Such platforms must continue to inspire innovation and cultural expression," he remarked.

The competitions witnessed enthusiastic participation from both young and seasoned photographers,

reflecting the growing interest in nature-based creative pursuits and digital storytelling.

The felicitation ceremony was attended by Advisor to the CM Nasir Aslam Wani, Director Floriculture, Gardens and Parks Kashmir, along with senior officers of the department.