

"If you are working on something that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you."
—Steve Jobs

IN BRIEF

Parliament clears unified CAPF framework Bill

NEW DELHI: A Bill to create a unified legal framework governing personnel across different Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), replacing the current patchwork of separate service-rule regimes for the five central forces, was approved by Parliament on Thursday.

Several opposition members said the bill should be referred to a joint committee of Parliament for threadbare scrutiny and stakeholder consultations. They said personnel and officers should be consulted before bringing in a new legal framework.

They said had the government understood the grievances of the personnel and officers of the CAPFs, a better law would have been in place long ago.

The bill, passed by the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, was approved by the Lok Sabha by a voice vote.

Separately, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the government is bent on legally perpetuating the injustice of discrimination against CAPF jawans through the bill and asserted that his party ► P11

India's defence export hit record Rs 38,424 Cr
Any 'misadventure' from Pakistan will invite strong response: Rajnath

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said that there is "no dearth of fuel or gas in the country" and India was ready to deal with any energy crisis resulting from the ongoing West Asia conflict.

Speaking at a Sainik Samman Sammelan in poll-bound Kerala, Singh said the Indian Navy ships were safely escorting the country's tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, a key chokepoint for maritime trade and an Iranian territory.

The defence minister further said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was using his diplomatic skills to protect Indian interests in the Gulf region.

"We are closely monitoring the state of affairs in West Asia and are prepared to deal with any situation," he said, adding that India will do anything to help its citizens living in the region. Singh also referred to



West Asia crisis: DM chairs IGoM meeting

NEW DELHI: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday emphasised the need for round-the-clock monitoring of the West Asia conflict and called for a calibrated response to deal with any eventuality to ensure that national interests remain protected.

Singh made the comments while chairing a high-level meeting of the Informal Group of Ministers (IGoM) set-up to monitor the situation in West Asia.

The meeting was attended by External Affairs ► P11

the issue of cross-border terrorism and warned that if there was any "misadventure" from its neighbour (Pakistan), in the prevailing situation, India's response would be "unprecedented and decisive".

He said that since the NDA government came to power at the Centre, there has been zero tolerance towards terrorism.

The defence minister said that under PM Modi, national security has been strengthened and the government's attitude and mode of action has changed.

This, he said, was evident from 'Operation Sindoor'— India's response to the Pahalgam terror attack of April 2025 that claimed 26 lives.

He contended that after the Pahalgam attack, Indian forces, during operation Sindoor, brought Pakistan to its knees within 22 minutes and it was the biggest operation against terrorism yet. ► P11

J&K Land Grants Bill: Protection of locals or preservation of privilege?



Shivang Satya Gupta
Editor-in-Chief

The introduction of the J&K Land Grants (Restoration & Protection) Bill, 2025 in the Legislative Assembly has once again brought land policy to the centre of political and economic debate in the Union Territory. At its core, the proposed legislation seeks to undo the sweeping changes introduced through the Land Grants Rules, 2022—changes that had aimed to dismantle decades-old lease-based control over prime government land and replace it with a more transparent, auction-driven system.

The 2022 framework marked a decisive shift. Long-term leases—many of them running up to 99 years in high-value areas like Gulmarg and Pahalgam—were discontinued or subjected to non-renewal, and government land was opened for fresh allocation through competitive bidding. The stated objective was clear: end monopolistic control, increase state revenue, and align J&K with modern land governance practices seen

across India. However, the fallout was immediate. Hundreds of leaseholders—ranging from small tourism operators to large hotel owners—faced uncertainty. For many, these leases were not merely commercial arrangements but the foundation of their livelihoods built over generations. It is within this context that the new bill positions itself as a corrective measure.

Supporters of the bill argue that the 2022 rules were abrupt, insensitive to ground realities, and disproportionately harmful to local stakeholders. They contend that replacing long-standing occupants with new bidders risks displacing established economic networks and transferring control of local assets to financially stronger, possibly external players. In this view, the bill is less about reversing reform and more about restoring balance.

Yet, critics raise a fundamental question: who exactly benefits from this "restoration"? The opposition has been quick to point out that many of the most valuable land parcels under lease are controlled not by marginal players, but by well-established and influential entities. Reinstating old protections without a robust audit mechanism could risk perpetuating a system where public land continues to generate private windfalls at historically low lease values.

The policy dilemma, therefore, is not binary. It is not merely a choice

between eviction and protection, or between auction and lease. It is a question of designing a framework that distinguishes between genuine livelihood concerns and entrenched privilege.

A calibrated approach is the need of the hour. If the objective is to protect local stakeholders, then criteria must be clearly defined—prioritising small operators, employment generators, and those with demonstrable dependence on leased land. Simultaneously, high-value commercial assets must not remain locked in outdated agreements that under-value public resources. Transparent re-evaluation, periodic revision of lease terms, and hybrid models combining protection with accountability could offer a way forward.

Jammu and Kashmir stands at a critical juncture in its economic transition. Land, as always, remains at the heart of this transition. The Land Grants Bill, in its present form, risks being seen either as a rollback of reform or as a shield for the status quo. Its true test will lie in whether it can evolve into a policy instrument that protects the vulnerable without preserving inequity.

The debate must move beyond political binaries. What J&K needs is neither unchecked liberalisation nor unconditional protectionism—but a principled framework where public land serves public interest first.

Global events beyond Centre's limit; no current shortage of essentials in J-K: CM
Will raise Ranjit Sagar Dam issue with Punjab: Omar

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said the developments at the international level remain beyond the control of both the Union government and the people, asserting that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir will largely mirror the broader national scenario.

He said the Union territory is currently not facing any shortage of essential supplies, including fuel, and that stocks are sufficient for the next 10 to 15 days.

Abdullah was speaking to media persons on the West Asia crisis after attending the



Omar tables CAG Reports

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday laid on the Table of the House copies of the Reports of the ► P11

Legislative Assembly here, accompanied by his father and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah.

"Whatever the situation in the rest of the country, the same will reflect in Jammu and Kashmir," the chief minister said, adding that there is no immediate cause for concern.

He, however, cautioned that in case the ongoing conflict prolongs and leads to shortages elsewhere in the country, its impact could extend to the Union territory as well.

Referring to a recent review meeting chaired by Prime Minister ► P11

Northern Railways enhances 40 runs of Delhi-Katra special train

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Amid an anticipated surge in pilgrim traffic during the summer vacation period, the Northern Railway's Jammu Division on Thursday announced 40 additional runs of the special train between New Delhi and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra railway station, an official said.

Jammu Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Uchit Singhal said the extension from April 15 to July 16 has been approved in view of the train's immense popularity and the 100 per cent occupancy

recorded during its earlier runs. He said the Train No 04081 (New Delhi to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra) will operate from April 15 to July 15, completing a total of 40 runs, while Train No 04082 (Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to New Delhi) will run from April 16 to July 16, also undertaking 40 additional runs during the period.

"This service has proven to be an affordable and convenient option not only for devotees travelling to Katra but also for tourists heading to Kashmir and passengers boarding at intermediate stations along the ► P11

LG assents 3 Bills passed in LA; Govt introduces 2 more, BJP MLA's resolution on varsity rejected

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday introduced two bills in the legislative assembly aimed at decriminalising certain offences to ease doing business and establishing private universities in the Union Territory.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah introduced "a Bill to amend certain enactments, decriminalising and rationalising offences for ease of living and ease of doing business and also to repeal certain enactments" in the assembly.

Education Minister Sakeena Itoo introduced a bill

for the establishment and incorporation of private universities and to ensure academic standards to safeguard quality education and protect the interests of students.

Meanwhile, the legislative assembly Secretary, Manoj Kumar Pandit, informed the House that Lt Governor Manoj Sinha has assented to three bills passed by the House.

Informing the House, the secretary said, "The Jammu and Kashmir Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026; the Jammu and Kashmir Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy Bill, 2026,

and Jammu and Kashmir State Civil Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2026 passed by Legislative Assembly have been assented to by the Lt Governor on March 31."

Abdullah also tabled in the House copies of the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Union Territory Finances for two financial years -- 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Thursday rejected a Private Members' resolution seeking establishment of Veterinary and Animal Sciences University in Jammu region. The resolution was ► P11

Sinha hands over job letter to martyred police officer's wife

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday handed over a government job letter to the wife of a police sub-inspector, who was martyred in a gunfight with gangsters two years ago.

The appointment letter under the J-K Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme 2022 was given to Alka Sharma, wife of martyr Sub-Inspector Deepak Sharma, at the Lok Bhavan here, an official said.

Inspector General of Police, Jammu zone, Bhim Sen Tuti was also present on the occasion.



The Lt Governor also assured all possible assistance and support to the bereaved family.

Sharma made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty in April 2024 while fighting and neutralising a most-wanted ► P11

34 IPS among 82 officers shifted in major rejig; CID, Crime get new IGs

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday ordered a major reshuffle in the police department, transferring 82 officers, including 34 IPS officers, with immediate effect, with the CID and Crime units getting new IGs.

According to a government order issued by Principal Secretary Chandraker Bharti, Sinha ordered the transfer and postings of police officers in the interest of the administration.

The rejig saw 15 DIGs and several SSPs, SPs, and DSPs shifted to new post-

ings. Among the key changes, DIG Tejinder Singh has been posted as IGP, CID, while DIG Udhampur-Reasi range, Sarah Rizvi, has been transferred and posted as IGP, Crime, relieving Sujit Kumar of the additional charge.

DIG Doda-Kishtwar-Ramban range has been transferred and posted as DIG Jammu-Samba-Kathua range, replacing Shiv Kumar Sharma, who has been shifted to Udhampur-Reasi range.

Haseeb-ur-Rehman (IPS) has been appointed DIG Traffic, Kashmir, while Vinod Kumar will be the new DIG for north Kashmir, re-

placing Maqsood-ul-Zaman who will assume charge as DIG Armed Police, Kashmir.

Sandeep Wazir will take over as the new DIG of Rajouri-Poonch range, Sargun as DIG of Doda-Kishtwar-Ramban range, while Zahid Naseem Manhas has been transferred and posted as DIG, Railways.

At the SSP level, Amod Nagpure Ashok and Amritpal Singh have swapped postings between Udhampur and Anantnag districts, while Kartik Shrotriya will be the new district chief for Doda, Anuj Kumar for Samba, Mukund Tibrewal for Reasi, Hariprasad K K for Budgam, and Sudhanshu ► P11

Over 16K kanals of JDA land under encroachment: Omar
'J&K Power dues cross Rs 3,747 Cr'

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Thursday that over 16,000 kanals of land under the Jammu Development Authority (JDA) are currently being encroached upon, and that eviction drives are being carried out in a phased and time-bound manner. In response to a question from BJP MLA Dr Narinder



Singh Raina in the assembly, the chief minister stated that the total land managed by the JDA amounts to 80,976 kanals and 10 marlas, of which 16,127 kanals and 10 marlas are under illegal occupation.

In Jammu and Kashmir, land is traditionally measured using units like 'kanal' and 'marla', which are part of an older system still widely used in property and agriculture.

One kanal is equal to 20 marlas, and a kanal measures about 5,445 square feet, while one marla is approximately 272.25 square feet (though slight variations can exist locally).

Abdullah explained that encroachments are identified through inspections conducted by field staff and records maintained by the Revenue Department.

"Eviction notices ► P11

Finance Dept conveys Capex ceilings for FY 2026-27 DCs directed to finalise, upload plans in consultation with MLAs

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Jammu & Kashmir Government has issued detailed guidelines and conveyed Capital Expenditure (Capex) ceilings to all departments including District Capex, by the Budget Estimates 2026-27, aimed at ensuring timely authorization, efficient utilization, and outcome-driven implementation of development works across Jammu and Kashmir.

The office memorandum issued by Finance Department has directed all Administrative Departments and

District Development Commissioners (DDCs) to upload approved works and activities on the BEAMS portal as per the prescribed B12 statement, enabling the Finance Department to authorize 50 percent of the allocated funds immediately for execution of development works.

To ensure timely budget authorization and expenditure, all departments and districts have been asked to upload approved works by April 21, 2026. The responsibility for timely and accurate uploading has been fixed on Director(s) Finance, Financial

Advisors, Chief Accounts Officers, Planning Officers, and Controlling Officers at the departmental level.

Similarly, District Development Commissioners have been directed to finalize and upload District Plans, in consultation with MLAs and other elected representatives, within the stipulated timeline. The planning process is to reflect a "whole-of-government and whole-of-society" approach, integrating departmental and district-level priorities.

The Finance Department has laid ► P11

61 illegal structures demolished

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday said that a total of 233 illegal commercial and residential structures have been identified in Jammu city in the last 13 months.

In reply to a question of BJP MLA Vikram Randhawa in the assembly, the government said the violations pertain to 122 residential structures, 107 commercial establishments, and four falling under mixed residential-commercial use.

Providing further details, the authorities ► P11