

CLAWS Newsletter



Jammu & Kashmir and PoJK Lens

by Nomita Chandola

Jammu and Kashmir News

Political and Economic Developments

1. PDP Protests Alleged Attacks on Kashmiris Outside J&K ([Kashmir Life, 1st Feb 2026](#))

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) staged a peaceful demonstration in Srinagar condemning what it described as a rise in harassment and violence against Kashmiris outside Jammu and Kashmir, following the recent assault on an 18-year-old shawl seller in Vikas Nagar, Uttarakhand. Protesters claimed Kashmiris are being targeted due to their identity, with the party's women's wing calling the incident part of a troubling pattern of intolerance. While police in Uttarakhand have registered an FIR and arrested one suspect, the PDP has demanded strict action and greater safeguards to ensure the safety and dignity of Kashmiris living and working outside the region, amid reports of similar harassment in parts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

2. India Drills First Geothermal Mapping Well in Puga Valley ([The Tribune, 1st Feb 2026](#))

Seros has nearly completed drilling India's first geothermal resource-mapping well in Puga Valley, marking a significant step towards harnessing geothermal energy and potentially placing the country on the global geothermal map. Begun in mid-2024, the project has progressed through extreme high-altitude conditions and a narrow summer working window, with the well expected to reach a depth of 900–1,000 metres this season after earlier phases reached 60 and 400 metres. Executed in collaboration with the ONGC Energy Centre, the initiative aims to demonstrate the feasibility of round-the-clock geothermal power generation using binary cycle technology, with subsurface temperatures exceeding 200°C. The first identified reservoir is estimated to have a 10 MW potential, and further exploration wells are planned. Despite considerable logistical and environmental challenges, the project could diversify India's clean energy mix and reduce Ladakh's reliance on diesel, though commercial viability and exploration risks remain key hurdles.

3. Ladakh Allocated ₹4,869.31 Crore in Union Budget 2026–27 ([India Budget, 1st Feb 2026](#))

The Union Government has proposed an allocation of ₹4,869.31 crore for Ladakh in the 2026–27 financial year, as announced in the Union Budget presented by Nirmala Sitharaman. Of the total outlay, ₹2,542.26 crore has been earmarked for revenue expenditure and ₹2,327.05 crore for capital expenditure. The allocation is slightly higher than the ₹4,692.15 crore originally allotted in 2025–26, though revised estimates for that year rose significantly to ₹7,377.43 crore. Ladakh has been under direct Central administration since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, when the former state of Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated into two Union Territories.

4. Jammu and Kashmir Allocated ₹43,290 Crore in Union Budget 2026–27 ([India Budget, 1st Feb 2026](#))

The Union Government has allocated ₹43,290.29 crore to Jammu and Kashmir in the 2026–27 Union Budget, presented by Nirmala Sitharaman. Of this, ₹42,650 crore has been earmarked as Central assistance, marking an increase from the previous year's revised estimates. The Budget also provides ₹279 crore as a grant towards the Union Territory Disaster Response Fund and ₹101.77 crore for capital expenditure. Additionally, the Jammu and Kashmir Police will receive ₹9,925.50 crore, higher than last year's revised allocation, reflecting continued Central oversight following the abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of the former state.

5. Ministry of Home Affairs Talks on Ladakh End Without Breakthrough ([Kashmir Life, 5th February 2026](#))

A meeting of the High-Powered Committee convened by the Ministry of Home Affairs to discuss key demands of Ladakh concluded in New Delhi without any concrete outcome. Chaired by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, the talks were attended by representatives of the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance, who reiterated their demands for full statehood, inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, greater political representation, and safeguards for land, jobs and ecology. While the Centre referred to possible protections under Article 371 and strengthening of Hill Councils, no consensus was reached. Both sides agreed to

hold another round of discussions within 15 to 20 days, with issues such as the release of detained activist Sonam Wangchuk also raised during the meeting.

6. Omar Abdullah Presents J&K Budget 2026–27 Focused on Inclusive Growth and Fiscal Discipline ([Kashmir Life, 6th Feb 2026](#))

Omar Abdullah presented the 2026–27 Budget for Jammu and Kashmir in the Legislative Assembly, outlining a roadmap for sustainable growth, social harmony and economic prosperity despite fiscal constraints. Emphasising investment, infrastructure development, youth and women's opportunities, and a business-friendly environment, he noted that the Budget was shaped through wide consultations. Abdullah highlighted challenges including geopolitical factors, floods in Jammu and the Pahalgam terror attack, which impacted tourism and other sectors. With own revenues covering only about 25 per cent of expenditure and nearly 60 per cent committed to salaries, pensions and debt servicing, he stressed austerity, debt management and power sector reforms. He also acknowledged continued Central support, including assistance under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment scheme for infrastructure, hydroelectric and disaster mitigation projects.

7. BRO Boosts Connectivity in Rajouri district Border Areas ([The Tribune, 11th Feb 2026](#))

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has significantly improved road connectivity in remote border areas of Qila Dharhal tehsil in Rajouri district under Project Sampark. Key developments include the 60-metre Jambhir Steel Bridge along the Balavenue–Lam–Dharal axis, providing all-weather access to villages previously cut off during heavy rain and snowfall, and the newly inaugurated Bhawani Sethu Bridge over the Bhawani Nala, which has reduced travel distance from 30 km to 11 km and strengthened links to the Akhnoor–Poonch National Highway. The projects have enhanced access to education and healthcare, created local employment opportunities, and improved strategic mobility by offering safer movement routes near the Line of Control.

Security Updates

8. Counter-Terror Operation Intensifies in Kishtwar as Drone Activity Reported Along IB ([The Tribune, 1st Feb 2026](#))

Security forces have re-established contact with a group of militants in the forests of Kishtwar district during an ongoing counter-terrorism operation codenamed TRASHI-I, involving the White Knight Corps, Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Central Reserve Police Force. The militants have been engaged multiple times since 18 January in the Chhatri forest area, with fresh contact made near Dolgam on 31 January. A special forces commando was killed during the operation, which has been hampered by difficult terrain, prompting a large-scale deployment and temporary suspension of mobile internet services. Meanwhile, Army Northern Commander Lt Gen Pratik Sharma reviewed operational preparedness in the district. Separately, security forces launched searches in Samba district after suspected Pakistani drones were sighted hovering briefly over Indian territory along the International Border before returning across the border.

9. Top Jaish-e-Mohammad Commander Among Two Killed in Udhampur district Encounter ([The Tribune, 4th Feb 2026](#))

Two Pakistani militants, including self-styled top Jaish-e-Mohammad commander Rubani alias Abu Mavia, were killed after a more than 20-hour joint operation named 'Kiya' in the Basantgarh area of Udhampur district. The encounter began on Tuesday following specific intelligence inputs, with Army troops from the White Knight Corps, Counter-Intelligence Force Delta, police and the Central Reserve Police Force trapping the militants inside a cave in Jophar Forest. After sustained exchanges of fire and overnight surveillance using drones, forces launched a final assault on Wednesday, killing both militants and recovering arms including an M4 carbine and an AK rifle. The Army said the operation demonstrated close inter-agency coordination, and although it has concluded, the area remains under surveillance.

10. Home Minister Visits Jammu to Review Border Security and Development

(NDTV, 6th Feb 2026)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Jammu on a two-day visit to assess anti-infiltration measures and review security and development initiatives. He visited the Border Security Force outposts at Gurnam and Bobiyian in the Hiranagar sector, where he interacted with personnel and e-inaugurated six welfare schemes for the Border Security Force, besides reviewing flood-damaged infrastructure. Shah is scheduled to chair security and development review meetings at Lok Bhawan with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. His visit comes amid intensified counter-terror operations in the region, including the recent killing of three top Jaish-e-Mohammad commanders in Udhampur and Kishtwar, and will also include meetings with martyrs' families and the distribution of compassionate appointment letters.

11. Jammu and Kashmir Police Bust ₹209 Crore Online Investment Scam

(Kashmir Life, 17th Feb 2026)

The Jammu and Kashmir Police have uncovered a transnational online investment fraud worth at least ₹209 crore, with the total suspected to exceed ₹400 crore, and arrested nine people including alleged kingpin Ekant Yogdutt alias "Dr Morphine" from Hisar, Haryana. Yogdutt was apprehended at Indira Gandhi International Airport after returning from China. The scam, exposed following a complaint in Ganderbal district, involved fake investment platforms promising high cryptocurrency returns, with funds routed through 835 identified bank accounts across districts including Budgam, Srinagar and Baramulla before being layered and transferred outside the region. Police allege the network used mule accounts, encrypted messaging apps and possible bank employee collusion to launder money. Authorities have frozen thousands of such accounts in recent years and are continuing investigations to trace the full money trail and attach properties linked to the accused.

12. NIA Probes 'White-Collar' Terror Module Behind Red Fort Blast

A 'white-collar' terror module comprising radicalised doctors in Jammu and Kashmir has been uncovered, with the National Investigation Agency now leading the probe. The accused — including Muzamil Gannie, Dr Umer-un Nabi (deceased), Adeel

Rather and others — allegedly formed a new outfit named “Ansar Interim” in Srinagar in April 2022 to carry out attacks in J&K and across India. Umer, described as the key operative, is believed to have orchestrated a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) plot and prepared Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP) after procuring chemicals from Haryana. The conspiracy culminated in a premature explosion outside the Red Fort on 10 November, killing over a dozen people. Investigations suggest the group assigned structured roles, attempted to recruit a suicide attacker, and maintained links across several states. The network was exposed following a separate probe into Jaish-e-Mohammad posters in Srinagar, which led to multiple arrests and unravelled the wider conspiracy.

PoJK Updates

13. Education Crisis Deepens in Gilgit-Baltistan (Dawn, 4th Feb 2026)

Despite relatively high literacy rates, Gilgit-Baltistan continues to face a severe higher education crisis, lacking even a single medical college due to years of bipartisan political neglect. The region’s two universities — Karakoram International University and University of Baltistan — struggle with chronic underfunding, limited faculty, outdated curricula and weak research facilities, preventing them from developing into strong regional institutions. As a result, over 25,000 students leave the region annually to pursue degrees elsewhere, forcing many families into financial hardship simply to secure basic educational opportunities.

14. Political Momentum Builds Ahead of ‘AJK’ Presidential Election (Pakistan Today, 2nd Feb 2026)

Following the death of President Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, political manoeuvring has intensified in ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ as parties lobby to elect a new head of state. Consultations and behind-the-scenes meetings are underway in Islamabad and Muzaffarabad to build consensus on a suitable candidate. Prominent names under consideration include Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Sardar Atiq Ahmed Khan, Raja Farooq Haider Khan, Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, former President Sardar Masood Khan, and former Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam. Given the constitutional and symbolic importance of the office, major political

parties are stepping up consultations, with the election expected to proceed in accordance with constitutional requirements in the coming days.



About the Author

Nomita Chandola is a budding researcher in International Relations, with a strong academic foundation and a passion for understanding complex global issues. She recently earned her master's degree in International Relations from the University of Leeds, where she focused on modules such as global governance and climate security. Prior to this, she completed her bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Economics from Kamla Nehru College, University of Delhi.

Currently, Nomita is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where she delves into critical issues of strategic affairs and geopolitical dynamics. Her primary area of interest lies European Studies, emphasising security dynamics and their intersections with global politics. She aspires to pursue a PhD to further explore these themes. With a keen eye for policy analysis and research, Nomita aims to contribute meaningfully to the academic and policy discourse on international security and regional stability.



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