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Achieve specified core benchmarks expeditiously: CS to Admn Secys

achieve the benchmarks in core areas to receive the borrowings from the Government of India", sources said quoting the directions issued by the Chief Secretary in the meeting, adding "the Chief Secretary has explicitly told the concerned Administrative Secretaries to put in their best efforts forward to ensure the release of funds from the Government of India at the earliest".

No doubt Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory has made substantial progress in the Business Reforms Action Plan but much is required to be done especially in the light of the fact that under the 4th edition of State Reform Action Plan 2019 announced by the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the month of September last year the ranking of Jammu and Kashmir was 21st.

As far as One Nation One Ration Card is concerned, J&K had joined the initiative of the Government of India which enables ration cardholders to access PDS benefits from any fair price shop in the country in the month of August last year.

About power sector reforms, the Government of J&K UT in the month of June last year had constituted a Task Force headed by Principal Secretary, Power Development Department and comprising of Managing Directors of Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited and J&K Power Transmission Corporation Limited.

"The initiatives to be implemented by the Task Force

include Rs 90,000 crore liquidity infusion to DISCOMS as a concessional loan offering by PFC & REC Limited, tariff policy reforms encompassing consumer rights, promotion of industry and sustainability of power sector and distribution reforms in power sector", sources said while disclosing that Chief Secretary has directed the Task Force to make all out efforts to achieve the objective behind its constitution.

About benchmark relating to Urban Local Body Revenues, sources said, "either the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has to issue directions for the imposition of Property Tax to pave the way for generation of revenue for the Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Municipal Committees or find out some alternative".

In the month of October last year, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had empowered the Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to impose Property Tax through the Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Municipal Committees in their respective areas.

The powers were vested by way of several amendments in the Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Act, 2000 and Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, 2000 carried through the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Adaptation of State Laws) Order, 2020. Earlier, there were no explicit provisions vis-a-vis imposition of Property Tax in both these laws enacted by the Legislature of erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir.

PC pulls out of PAGD over proxy candidates' issue

against PAGD alliance or its leaders", he said.

"We convened a meeting of our leaders yesterday and deliberated on the issue in detail. The predominant feeling in the meeting was that the PAGD sentiment at top was not emulated on the ground. It was felt that the results of a sincere alliance should have meant that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts", the letter read, adding, "Instead, "the whole was not greater than the sum of parts, sadly not even equal to the sum of parts, but much lesser and equal to just one part of the many parts." If you remove the inverted commas, the sad reality that emerges is that in majority of the places the party fielding the candidate on behalf of PAGD was left to fend for itself and secured the votes that his party managed. In most places other parties were silent bystanders or worst compounded the problem by fielding proxy candidates."

The DDC elections, Lone said, perse may not matter institutionally. "But these elections were distinctive by virtue of the timing. Firstly, the context of these DDC elections was politically very important. It was the first election post August 5. And secondly it was a combined show of strength of a majority of the J&K political mainstream. It was less of an election more of an opportunity to send a strong unanimous political message", he said.

"On the face of it, PAGD won these elections unambiguously having won the maximum number of seats. We can't hide statistics and apart from the number of seats that PAGD

won, other important statistical variable in the context of August 5 is the number of votes polled against the PAGD," Lone said, adding, "We believe that the votes polled against the PAGD are majority the votes cast by proxies of PAGD constituent parties against official PAGD candidates. And the net outcome of selectively voting for and against PAGD is a very poor vote share. This is certainly not the vote share that people of J and K deserved post August 5."

Lone said that the party leaders in Srinagar looked at the statistics but out there on the ground people look at "our actions and our intentions."

"They are eye witnesses to our actions. They are the actors in the political theatre scripted by us. And we think that people don't know what we were up to. People know that blinded by political greed we fielded candidates against each other and the question they are asking, if we can't trust the PAGD leadership on something as basic as a DDC seat how can we trust them for larger issues," Lone said, adding, "We might have inflicted irreversible damage on to ourselves and on to the very people that we are supposed to represent. Trust between allyng partners who have been rivals all along can be very elusive and extremely fragile proxies have made it perpetually elusive."

Lone said that the PAGD needed sacrifice. "Every party had to sacrifice on the ground in terms of giving space to fellow allies. No party is willing to cede space, no party is willing to sacrifice. We fought against each other in Kashmir province not against the perpetrators of August 5. And those who perpetrated August 5 and their minions are now vocally gleeful."

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SC paves way for construction of NH

Bench of J&K High Court. The High Court on December 31, while hearing the appeal filed by the persons whose land was acquired for the purpose of the project, had directed for maintaining status quo with regard to the land in question.

The executing agency of the project National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) challenged the order of High Court before the Supreme Court on various grounds. Before filing of appeal by the aggrieved persons they had approached the writ court and the writ court dismissed their plea by recording that there is no merit in their petition by challenging the land acquisition for the purpose of project.

Their plea was dismissed by the then Acting Chief Justice of High Court on the ground made by the counsels appearing for executing agency as well as Government advocates Seema Shekhar (Sr. AAG) and Ashish Singh Kotwal that major part of the acquired land is owned by the State and the aggrieved petitioners not shown to be owners of the acquired land and the project is of public importance as the road caters to need of armed forces in border areas.

Court had said that the challenge of acquisition process has been made of a very small portion of land and after the announcement of award. The project as per the court also is of immense public importance and major part of that is already complete and remaining working has hampered due to litigation and restraint orders from court.

The four lanning project of the said road is a Government of India funded project and the arguments made by the counsel for aggrieved persons court said, do not carry any weight with regard to knowledge about the acquisition of land much before even the notification was issued.

Apart from road widening, a flyover is also being constructed and out of 126 pillars for the said flyover, about 99 have already been constructed and the said project also got stalled due to pending litigation filed by the